

Careless Gun Accidents From a Century Ago

The third column that I shared with you last year on February 22 dealt with a careless gun accident at a chivarie in 1880. This column will share additional unfortunate accidents from the use of guns. Some of them were because of a senseless use of the firearm and others were simply accidents.

The first incident was shared in the November 22, 1865 issue of the Monroe Sentinel. We may not know where the people lived, but the event is the same. I am guessing that Seminary Street would now be 15th Avenue, probably north of 9th Street. Henry Clark, a boy living with Levi Starr, while driving a team along Seminary Street, was shot through the leg just below the knee. It just missed to bone on the back side. It seemed that some careless boy, whose name was withheld by the paper, was practicing the firing of a pistol near Mr. Shrake's house and thought he was making a good shot.

The Sentinel had written some time before this about the careless use of firearms within the corporation and moderately suggested that the village fathers should adopt some measures to prevent the same. The editor felt that this incident sent another hint to those fathers.

We jump ahead several decades for the rest of these incidents. Byron Bennett shot himself in his foot on the evening of July 15, 1909. He was out looking for owls on the Bennett farm east of the city and was taken to the Loofbourow hospital afterwards. He had been carrying "a safety hammerless shotgun," which was discharged as he stood with the muzzle of the gun on his right shoe. The load went through his foot between the great toe and the one next to it. The injury was not dangerous, but there remained a danger of developing blood poisoning.

A similar incident occurred four months later on November 7 when Arthur Murphy was hunting two miles south of Monroe. He also rested the end of the barrel of a shotgun on his toe. The hammer had been cocked so the contents of the barrel went into his shoe when he thoughtlessly pressed the trigger. The big toe of the right foot was so badly injured that the member had to be amputated.

On the Fourth of July in the following year, Harrison Grenzow and Herman Rather were conducting a shooting booth at the Oakley celebration. Grenzow received a bullet wound in the neck when a lad stopped at the counter, picked up a revolver, and discarded it. The ball struck the collar bone, but it was believed that it glanced off rather than being lodged there. The wound was about an inch and a half deep, but was not considered serious. He returned to his home a mile and a half south of Oakley the following day.

W. E. Kern came into Monroe from Jordan on the same Fourth to celebrate and became the victim off a "fool friend." Kern was going down the west side of the square just before the greased pig was released. At the same time he was surprised by a playful young acquaintance who poked a revolver in his face and discharged a blank cartridge. Kern had his nose peppered with powder and the ball of his left eye was cut. However, it did not give him much pain. Dr. Loofbourow treated the wound and Kern was able to enjoy the rest of the day in town.

The following incident happened on Sunday, October 29, 1911. David Negus, a 25-year-old farm hand who worked for August Hibner in Cadiz township, was accidentally shot shortly after noon while out hunting. Negus' shotgun exploded and the charge entered his right hand, badly injuring it and mangling the fourth finger. When he had started out, he was dragging his gun behind him with his hand over the muzzle. It was presumed that the brush he was passing through caught the trigger or hammer and discharged the gun. Frank Hibner, who was also hunting at the time, helped the injured man back to the house. Dr. M. A. Rouse of Browntown and Dr. R. B. Clark of Monroe amputated the mangled finger and removed some of the bones from the hand.

CADIZ MAN LOSES FINGER BY GUNSHOT

**DAVID NEGUS SHOT IN HAND
WHEN BRUSH CATCHES
TRIGGER.**

Headline from the October 30, 1911 issue of the Monroe Evening Times.

A few days later on Thursday, a hunting party consisting of Justice of the Peace M. E. Baltzer, Night Policeman John W. Sickinger, George Baltzer, and J. H. Theiler had been hunting all afternoon in a woods ten miles northwest of Monroe. They were heading back to Theiler's automobile at dusk when the dog started on a trail behind them. Baltzer followed the canine into the woods a fair distance. Thinking he saw a rabbit, he fired and hit Sickinger in the calf of his left leg from about 100 feet away. The gun was a 10-gauge, double barrel shotgun - and a hard shooting firearm. Sickinger was transported to his home in Monroe using Theiler's automobile and Dr. Clark was summoned to the house.

It was determined that about 25 shot entered Sickinger's leg below the knee. Only one shot grazed the right leg. Sickinger rested comfortably that night and had almost no swelling. Dr. Clark removed several of the shot and the wounds were not expected to prove serious unless infection should set in. Baltzer was "greatly grieved over the accident as he has always used the utmost care while hunting."