

## Horrific Farm Accidents

I am quite sure that farm accidents have been around as long as people have been farming. Some were more serious than others as we will see today. I'll share here some of the mishaps that happened locally more than a century ago. It may help us to understand why so many safety features have been implemented since that time.

The first article was printed in the Monroe Evening Times on July 3, 1908 and involved Samuel Sinclair, of Winslow. He had lost an eye a few years prior to this event while he was driving a spike. The nail rebounded as he struck it and hit him in the eye. They were afraid that he would lose both eyes at that time, but one was finally able to be saved. A similar accident occurred a second time. While driving a nail, it rebounded again and hit Mr. Sinclair in the remaining eye. It was thought that he might now lose it. Everything was done for him that could be done. The newspaper added, "Mr. Sinclair has the sympathy of everyone in Winslow and all hope that it will not be necessary for him to continue life in total darkness."

Matt Wittenwyler, who resided a short distance south of the village [probably Monticello] had four fingers of his right hand severely injured by getting them caught in the gearing of a binder while harvesting oats on Saturday, July 25. He was making the last round, and in attempting to throw the machine out of gear, he reached too high and his four fingers were caught in the gearing and badly lacerated. "Happening as it did, the busiest season of the year for farmers, the accident is a most unfortunate one for Mr. Wittenwyler and, in consequence, he will doubtless be disabled for several weeks."

Jesse Whitehead, who was operating the Henry Whitehead farm, met with an accident on Saturday afternoon, October 1, 1909. While operating the corn binder he had the ends of the first two fingers of his left hand cut off. No more details were given.

The next incident is a sad situation involving a little boy [no age given]. Kenneth, son of the L. I. Fairmans, of Brodhead, met with a very painful accident shortly before the article appeared on April 18, 1910. As a manure spreader was passing by, he ran out and climbed onto it. In some manner, he set the cylinder going and was drawn over it and thrown onto the ground below. He sustained a severe hole in the scalp near the forehead, a severe cut from the inner corner of the right eye down and across his cheek, and a smaller one on his left cheek besides receiving bruises and scratches. Twelve stitches were required to close the wound on his right cheek and four were taken in the other.

In July 1910 Mrs. Myron Rinehart got her hand caught in the hay fork at the Rinehart farm east of the Divan cheese factory in Cadiz township and was pulled up to the barn door before her plight was discovered and the horses stopped. Owing to the illness of the hired man, Mrs. Rinehart was helping the boys put the hay in the barn. The load was almost finished when Mrs. Rinehart set the fork and gave the word to the boys who were driving the horses. As the fork full of hay went up, she was drawn with it. After the horses were stopped and she was let down, she had two fingers caught in the rope. The members were bruised, but not severely injured.

A rather odd fatal accident occurred on the J. U. Elmer farm east of Monroe on Sunday, November 13, 1910. The Elmers' adopted son, John Williams, was injured while unhitch-



This photo, from the collection of the late Leila Golackson Meyer, shows a crew on the Golackson farm about 1940. It is easy to see from this photo that farm accidents could happen often. The column today shares a few unfortunate incidents from a few decades earlier than the photo.

ing a team of horses shortly before noon. One of the horses ran away and attracted the attention of the neighbors, who went to the Elmer home and found the young man sitting on a box in the barn. Apparently dazed, he remarked, "he got a good bump on the head," but did not complain of his injuries. A son of the Elmers, who had been working out in the field, noticed when he got home that Williams seemed to be feeling badly. The son took Williams into the house and placed him on the lounge. The other members of the family returned home from church a few minutes later and called for a doctor. He soon lapsed into unconsciousness and remained so until that evening at 6:00 when he began to talk incoherently. He then seemed to be in much pain during the night.

Williams passed away shortly before 11:00 the next morning. Dr. L. A. Moore was called and found a fracture at the base of Williams' skull. It was never determined what caused his death. It was thought that he might have been kicked by one of the horses. He had unhitched one horse from the wagon and possibly neglected to unhitch the tug [short buckle-fitted strap] on the other horse, which was seen by the neighbors dashing down to the creek pulling the wagon with it.

Williams would have turned 20 at the end of the month. The Elmers had taken him from the Home for Dependent Children in Sparta ten years earlier. "He was an industrious young man and treated as one of the members of the family at the Elmer home, where his death brings deep sorrow."

On Monday, November 14, the same day that Williams passed away, Henry Jensen was quite badly injured. He was working around a corn shredder at the home of Peter Mortenson, near Brooklyn. His clothing caught on a set screw on the blower shaft and he was whirled against the machine with great force and his clothing was torn to shreds. Fortunately, no bones were broken. At that time they believed that there were no internal injuries, but he was severely bruised.