

## Accidental Juda Shooting Injures Two

When Frank N. Miller and Florence G. Bagley were married in Juda at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 4, 1911, I'm sure that nobody there could have imagined what was going to happen that evening. At the wedding performed by Rev. H. E. Lewis, Earl N. Dunwiddie and Grace Eugenia Miller were the attendants. Later that evening, several people showed up at their home to charivari the couple at about the time the couple would be going off to bed on their wedding night. In general the crowd would aim to "make as much noise as possible by beating on pots and pans or anything that came to hand." This crowd in Juda "had been shooting revolvers and making other noise incident to such an occasion."

At about 10:30 five boys and three girls, all from prominent families, were walking on their way home from the charivari on North Main Street in Juda. One of the young men began to brandish his .32 caliber pistol to frighten some of the girls. Thinking the chambers were empty, the revolver was somehow accidentally discharged.

The bullet first passed through the hand of Amos Stuart, 18, and then entered the breast of Ira Coates, 20, just two inches above the heart and then penetrated his left lung. Coates staggered and began



Ira Coates, who was shot after a charivari in Juda in 1911, is shown on the right inside the garage he operated in Juda for many years. His brother, Wilmer, is shown on the left with a man named Earl

to fall; he was caught by the friends who were walking with him. He was then taken to his home where Dr. H. B. Gifford, of Juda, and Dr. L. A. Moore, of Monroe, were summoned. The doctors decided not to x-ray Coates to find where the bullet was located in his chest until he "shows greater vitality."

The accident caused great excitement in the village of Juda. Scores of people rushed onto the streets as soon as they heard about the shooting.

The newspaper reported the next morning that Coates was in critical condition at his home and Stuart was “not seriously hurt.” The identity of the young man who held the revolver was being kept quiet “as he is greatly grieved over the shooting.”

The Friday Monroe Evening Times reported that Ira was “resting very comfortably today.” He had some pain in his wound when he swallowed; the act of swallowing seemed to strain the muscles near the injury. He had “a temperature of one degree.” The same newspaper reported that Stuart’s right hand and arm were swollen due to the fact that he let it hang down since he was shot; he had been in school that day.

The newspaper reported on Monday that Coates’ condition was “improving despite rumors that his condition was growing more alarming.” At noon that day, Dr. Gifford stated, “I opened the wound in Mr. Coates’ left breast this morning at 11 o’clock and found there was no puss gathering. The swelling is gradually going down and the soreness he has suffered when swallowing is decreasing. I consider his condition very satisfactory and he is improving.” Stuart’s hand was also healing.

The last report that I saw was on Wednesday, a week after the shooting. It reported that Coates was “getting along nicely and his recovery is expected within a short time.”

I always like to learn more about what happened with the people I write about. Coates was the son of Charles and Mary Coates. In 1910 he was living with his parents, older sister, Mabel, and younger brother, Wilmer, in Jefferson township where his dad was a farmer on his mortgaged farm. Charles Coates passed away in March 1914. In 1920 Mary Coates and her children, who ranged in age from 20 to 30, were living together on North Street in Juda. Ira and Wilmer were both working in a garage.

Ira was listed as the head of household in 1930 living in the house that he owned in Juda. The home was valued at \$2,500 and only he and his mother lived there at this time. He was the manager of his garage in Juda.

In spite of being shot as a young man, Ira lived to the ripe old age of 99 passing away on January 13, 1992. His address at that time was W2966 Washington Street. More can be learned from Ira’s obituary. He owned and operated Coates Auto Service Garage in Juda until the late 1950s. Then he operated a car service to take people shopping and to run errands. He was married to Mabel Newman on May 26, 1934 in Galena; she passed away in 1963. The only survivor listed for Ira was his nephew, Roger Dunwiddie, who was the son of Ira’s sister Mabel Dunwiddie who died in 1980. Wilmer passed away in Arizona in 1983.