

## Odd Accidents of Days Gone By

Accidents have probably been happening since the beginning of mankind. I'm going to share with you today a few "interesting" accidents I came across in the Monroe papers from decades ago. Most of them will probably make you cringe; you've been warned!

According to the Monroe Sentinel, Frank Hodges had a narrow escape from a serious accident on Monday, September 16, 1889. "He was leaning out the second story window over the front entrance of the High School building catching some books as they were tossed up to him by a school mate on the platform below, then he lost his balance and fell into the platform, a distance of fourteen or fifteen feet, striking on his back. He sustained no injuries beyond a severe jar. In descending he turned a somersault." At that time the high school was held in the building known as Center School, which was located where Lincoln School was later located.

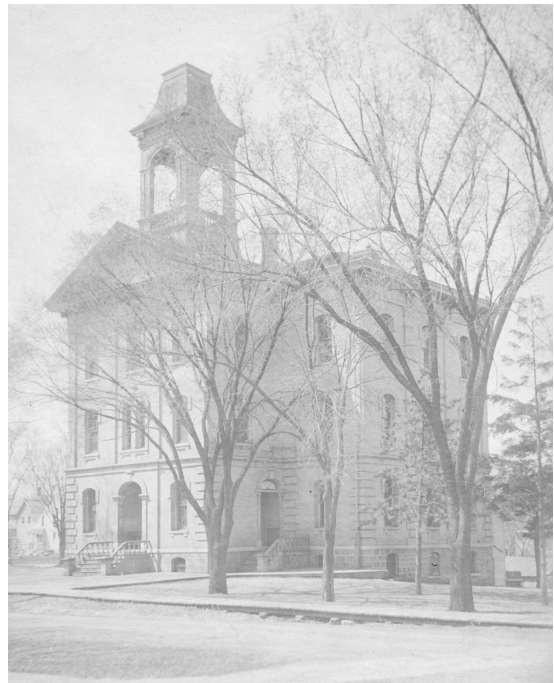
Miss Gertrude White suffered a painful and peculiar injury at her home on March 19, 1913 when two sewing needles were forced, with heads down, deep into the flesh of her left hand, between the thumb and forefinger. One of the needles broke off so that two-thirds of it remained embedded in the flesh with no visible signs of the point of entrance. She was quickly taken to a local physician's office where an X-ray was taken and the needle located. The needle was removed with the aid of a local anesthetic.

A similar accident was reported on November 10, 1915. On the previous afternoon, Mrs. George Stauffacher, Sr. had part of a needle removed from her right hand near the little finger. The hand had been troubling her for three weeks, so an x-ray was taken where part of a needle was found beneath the skin. Dr. L. A. Moore removed the needle with the assistance of Dr. Monroe and Dr. Moyer.

Mrs. Mae Smith was able to take her little son home to Orangeville from a Freeport hospital on Wednesday, February 6, 1918. One of his eyes had been badly injured the previous week when he was struck by the runner of a hand sled. "While there is hope of his recovering his sight, yet there is not much chance for him."

I saved the most heart-wrenching of all accidents for the last. On Monday morning, August 31, 1914. Mrs. Jennie Clark, who lived just south of Brodhead, had an accident which it was thought might cause her death. She was watching a cream separator that was operated by a gasoline engine, which was about 20 feet away. She "attempted to go underneath the rod connecting both machines, when her hair was caught on a set screw in the rod, tearing the scalp off her head, from the base of the brain over the top of the skull to the left ear and completely tearing off her eyebrows." She was taken to a Janesville hospital in an unconscious state. There had been no improvement by that afternoon. It was felt at that time that there was but a slight chance for recovery.

The Times copied from the Janesville Gazette and shared it on September 18 that Janesville physicians and many in that area were watching the case of Mrs. Clark at Mercy Hospital with interest. "An unusual operation in the annals of surgery has been performed in the attempt to restore Mrs. Clark to normal health conditions. The skin from a point just above her eyebrows, over the right ear and top of the head and well down to the upper portion of the neck was torn away. Drs. Frank Pember and T. W. Nuzum have grafted skin from the limbs to the woman's head. Only one portion of the skull has been covered at present, the right. Later the left side will be covered, but now it is impossible to proceed further because of Mrs. Clark's condition. The strain on her system for both operations, it is felt, will not be so great as



Frank Hodges fell out of a second story window of Center School while trying to catch a book in 1889. Fortunately, he landed on a platform 14 or 15 feet below and was not injured. Another photo of the former high school is shown on the cover of the Monroe Area Pictorial History.

were the entire grafting to be done at a single operation.” It added that she was doing nicely and growing stronger each day.

Another report from five days later shared that Mrs. Clark was improving nicely. At this time she was still awaiting the second operation to cover the entire skull. Unfortunately, I saw no more information about Jennie Clark’s recovery, nor did I find any death or burial record for her or her husband, Ben.