

Lightning strikes two in Monroe County in a month

What is the probability of two persons in the same county being struck by lightning in the same month and year? It certainly happened in Monroe County in July of 1906 and with tragic consequences.

On July 11, Mrs. Charles Curry, the wife of a farmer living three miles west of Bloomington between "the Stanford and Whitehall pikes" was hit during a thunderstorm. The Bloomington *Telephone* of July 13 described the tragedy.

"The horrible and unexpected accident occurred about 4:30. Mrs. Curry was standing in the barnyard about 10 feet from the kitchen, and Mr. Curry was walking from the barn to the house when there was a vivid flash of lightning. It struck a large tree about 50 feet from the house, from which was hung a telephone wire leading to the kitchen of the house."

Apparently, as the lightning charge traveled along the wire, it knocked Mrs. Curry to the ground. Her husband was momentarily stunned.

Continued the *Telephone*, "Mr. Curry was slightly shocked, but he immediately ran to his wife, and realizing her condition, sum-



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

moned the neighbors, who attempted to revive her, but she died in about 15 minutes. Drs. F.P. and John Tourner were sent for, but Mrs. Curry was dead when they arrived."

The doctors did not find a mark on Mrs. Curry's body. It was assumed that "the electricity had evidently engaged the entire body."

The newspaper remarked, "This is the first death from lightning (in) the county for a number of years." It was also pointed out that that particular storm brought with it a heavy rainfall but little electrical disturbance.

The funeral was delayed for several days to allow one of the Currys' sons to return from his studies at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y. The other son lived at home.

The article concluded, "Mrs. Curry was a member of the United Presbyterian Church and is a devout Christian lady. The sympathy of the entire community is extended to the husband and sons in their bereavement in the unexpected calamity that has overtaken the happy household."

Six days after the Curry death the *Telephone* had another lightning strike to report to its readers. On July 17 under a headline, "LIGHTNING'S WORK," a front-page story described what happened to Mrs. John Schovel, "wife of a well-known butcher."

Began the article, "Lightning seems to be unusually dangerous these hot, sultry days. Shortly before 5 o'clock Thursday afternoon an electrical shaft struck and fired a 4-room cottage belonging to the Indianapolis Southern railway on north Forest Avenue, that would have been totally destroyed but for the prompt work of the fire department."

The occupant was Mrs. Martha Nash. Three small children were with her in the house when lightning struck. Fortunately, they were not injured and "only slightly shocked."

More serious was the condition of Mrs. Schovel, who happened to be walking to her house on 11th Street. "Mrs. Schovel was within a hundred feet of the building (the railroad cottage) and was so severely shocked that she had to be assisted to her home. She was very ill through the night, but is much better today."

Added the *Telephone*, "the fire department made the longest run in its history and within a few minutes after the alarm had the house flooded with water from the hydrant at 11th and Sluss (Woodlawn) Avenue."

Mrs. Schovel was not the only person affected by that particular bolt of lightning. The *Telephone* of July 17 had an extra paragraph at the end of the Schovel story.

"The 14-year-old son of James Goodman, who lives just across the street, was attending to his father's horses in the stable, when the current flashed through the barn, knocking the boy down. The little fellow was found 10 minutes later and carried to the house where restoratives were applied, and he regained consciousness after being in that condition for more than an hour. The boy is out of danger . . ."

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