

# Clerical error chilled some couples' marital flame

It is likely that the telephone in the Monroe County clerk's office began ringing off the hook, if that office had a phone, in 1897. The callers would have been angry or frantic, depending upon their reaction to an article that appeared in *The World* on May 25.

Under a headline, "NO CERTIFICATES Filed by Ministers and Officers in Many Cases — Interesting Facts Gleaned In The Clerk's Office," the article hinted that some Monroe County marriages of the past weren't really valid. Consider the sensibilities of the children and relatives of such unions!

The problem was this: Persons having the authority to conduct weddings were required to report the ceremonies to the clerk's office within 90 days after they had taken place. A *World* reporter had discovered a considerable number of oversights.

"It would be well for persons interested to look this law up as they will probably be surprised at the number of instances in which the officiating clergyman has failed to follow out the provisions of the law," wrote the reporter.



## LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

Such an allegation was not worth the paper it was printed on without specific examples. *The World* obliged.

In 1874, for example, a marriage license was issued to Wilford G. Koons and Elizabeth Johns. In the clerk's office there was no record that the wedding had been performed. Did they change their minds some time after the license was issued?

Or were they, as the moralists among our forefathers would say, "living in sin?"

Other hapless couples were listed in the newspaper article. There were Joshua F. Hendricks and Maria J. Woodwin in 1875; William M. Golden and Sarah Waterford in 1877; William Hartwell and Mary Easley in 1884;

and Joseph L. Warshaw and Edith Smith in 1885.

Nor were they the only ones revealed in *The World*. The article continued, "James B. Dunning and Elizabeth Brough in 1886; Columbus McNeeley and Cynthania Baugh in 1886; Andrew Johnson and Ellen Foggy in 1886; and a bunch of 1888 oversights — Joseph N. McNeeley and Lou M. Seeks, David L. Stanger and Eva Holsapple, Robert E. Baugh and Lizzie Vaught and Sidney Matson and Ida B. Turner.

The names of persons married between 1888 and 1896 did not escape the eye of the reporter. He listed them, too. They were James T. Richardson and Mamie Asher; Samuel A. Cully and Jennie M. Aiken; Thomas Elgan and Jane Hacker; Marion Stivers and Ollie Huey; Louis A. Gibbs and Mary E. Whaley; Edward Borland and Mary E. Bullard; George Bomes and Jessie Harford; William C. East and Luella Rush; and Cyrus F. Reed and Josephine Woodward.

Also Joseph C. Bates and Mary Prather;

Robert Halford and Annie Swan; Acquilla W. Knight and Rebecca Carter; Albert Oliver and Susannah Grubb; James Meadows and Addie Clark; Charles A. Pate and Mery Sherlock; Joshua A. Howe and Lorena Hopewell; Elizabeth T.M. Cown and Louisa Stine; and Addie Southern and Elsie Scott.

Even the most casual student of Monroe County history will find the names of some "prominent" families in the community. Perhaps the most well-known were Borland, East, Reed and Howe.

After revealing the names, *The World* gave those mentioned a piece of advice. "It would be well for those interested to have such returns made as soon as possible."

Two questions remain: what was *The World* reporter looking for when he ran across the problem of marriage licenses without their equivalent confirmations by those who officiated and was there really a license issued to Elizabeth T.M. Cown and Louisa Stine?

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