

Assault follows threat to sanctity of the home in 1900

The Bloomington *Evening World* of Sept. 20, 1900, called the incident the "SAD ENDING Of an Illicit Affair." Between the lines of the story of John Gray and Sherman Baker there are Victorian overtones that sound somewhat discordant today.

It all began when Gray, a carpenter, found himself attracted to Baker's wife. There is some speculation about how many trysts they had before Baker discovered that something had happened to disrupt the harmony of his household.

On the day of the incident, according to the *Evening World*, Gray and Mrs. Baker had agreed to meet at the "Red Cut up the Monon." Suddenly, Baker appeared,



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

waving a rifle.

Related the newspaper, "Baker, uttering an oath, struck Gray with the gun and broke his left arm. The gun was discharged . . . The only defense that Gray made was to ward off the blows with his umbrella . . . He said if he had had a gun there would have been more trouble for Baker."

During the fight, Mrs. Baker disappeared. Gray took refuge in a nearby house. Continued the *Evening World*, "Marshal Jones arrived on the scene and brought Gray to a doctor's office where his injuries were dressed. Owing to his weak condition, *it has not yet been decided to place Gray in jail this afternoon.*

Adultery had a legal name in those days, but there is no indication in the newspaper that Baker had found his wife and Gray engaged in same. In fact, the *Evening World* of Sept. 21 stated that Gray wanted Baker prosecuted for assault and battery. After all, he had a broken arm, sprained wrist and oth-

er injuries.

What was called "the sanctity of the home" was at the heart of this case this was reflected in the newspaper account — "...the general sentiment was against Gray and he received little sympathy from the crowd that was attracted by the trial."

Gray stated that he and Mrs. Baker had met by accident on the day of the incident, and his account contains some touches of humor. He told the court, "So after passing the time of day, they sat down on a convenient log, and after discussing the probable strength of William McKinley in Indiana and the possibility of Mark Hanna swinging New York

into line, they were just on the verge of separating . . . when here came the enraged Mr. Baker, scaring the two of them almost to death."

But the *Evening World* indicated that there was evidence to the contrary. Indeed, the rendezvous that deteriorated into a confrontation between would-be lover and irate husband was apparently the violent end of a longstanding clandestine relationship between Gray and Mrs. Baker.

Baker, according to the newspaper, "instantly won the sympathy of his hearers" and had warned Gray

see Looking Back, page C2