

(Handwritten date: Monday, July 15, 1940)

WELL KNOWN FRENCH TWP. FARMER IS DRAGGED 30 RODS ACROSS WHEAT FIELD UNDER BINDER

No One Witnessed Gruesome Accident On Farm Which Happened About Noon - Funeral is Thursday 10:30 D. S. T. at Defenseless Mennonite Church

Evert O. Rich, 43, prominent French township farmer was the victim of a gruesome harvest field tragedy about noon today, when he was killed under his grain binder when his team of horses ran away with the heavy implement. There were no witnesses to the tragedy which was discovered by his 11-year-old son, Maynard, who went back to the field upon his mother's request to see if his father wished to come to dinner or finish cutting the field.

SON FINDS BODY

The field being located on the back part of the farm, known as the John Rich farm seven miles northwest of Berne, it had been arranged that the dinner signal be given by starting the wind mill at the home. Since Mr. Rich failed to come in with the team, Maynard went back to the field on his bicycle. He found the team at the south end of the field near the gate entrance standing crowded against the fence and the binder behind them partly in the fence.

Maynard found his father's lifeless body under the platform partially under the cutter bar. He called to him, getting no answer and seeing that he was terribly mangled fairly yelled to him and then touched him with his hands, so shocked was he to find and to believe that his father had been killed.

In excitement he ran home and cried to his mother that daddy was under the binder and was dead.

He returned with his grief shocked mother and an older brother, Norval, 17, to the field where the three beheld a scene almost too gruesome to describe.

NO WITNESS TO TRAGEDY

Since no one saw the tragedy it is not known what caused it or just at what time it occurred. Word soon reached neighbors who gathered in the field and reconstructed the event as nearly as possible from marks found in the field.

DRAGGED 30 RODS

In the runaway Mr. Rich was dragged about 30 rods through standing wheat and stubble before the outfit lodged in a fence. The body was terribly torn and cut about the groin and abdomen and clothes almost torn from the body. His face also showed ugly marks from being dragged.

At the point from whence the three-horse team started going, a piece of broken wooden pitman and a monkey wrench were found. This would indicate that Mr. Rich had experienced some binder trouble and was making repairs when the team became frightened and started moving. Apparently, too, Mr. Rich was in front of the binder and could not get out of the way and was caught in an extremely dangerous

position. The team veered into the uncut wheat and ran out to the end of the field, dragging the unfortunate victim all the way.

Whether he was killed almost (cut off)

The eldest son, Norval, had been in the field earlier in the day, but his father suggested that the field would be finished cutting early in the day, they would help each other with the shocking of the bundles and suggested that he go into another field to hoe corn. The fields adjoin, however Norval did not notice that anything was wrong, leaving the cornfield when the windmill was put into gear. Shortly before the tragedy was discovered, a neighbor drove past the north side of the farm and saw that Mr. Rich was cutting wheat and everything seemed to be alright at that time.

MRS. RICH NOT WELL

The family was extremely heartbroken over the sad incident and Mrs. Rich was under the care of a physician this afternoon. A nurse was being taken to the Rich home to administer to her comfort. Mrs. Rich has not been very well.

About a year ago Mr. Rich was hurt in another accident when he was preparing a field for corn planting with tractor and disc.

In today's accident the horses were not hurt and the binder was not greatly damaged. Neighbors, this afternoon, joined in finishing the wheat harvest and also put up the balance of hay, left in a field, for the Rich family.

OBITUARY

The decedent was born on the farm on which he was killed on January 9, 1897, the son of John and Mary Klopfenstein Rich.

Mr. Rich was known as an excellent, prosperous farmer of French township, and had a modern, beautiful country home.

His marriage to Mary Roth, a daughter of Jacob Roth, was an event of March 5, 1921.

Two sons were born to the union and survive with the grief stricken mother. They are Norval, 17, who graduated from the Kirkland high school this spring, and Maynard, age 11.

His parents, who reside on the west side of the C. C. Sprunger grove near Berne, survive, as do two brothers, Albert and Elmer, both of Kirkland township.

Mr. Rich was an active member of the Defenseless Mennonite church of west of town. He served as a member of the church council and was treasurer to the pastor, and was also a member of the church building committee.

FUNERAL THURSDAY A.M.

The final rites will be held Thursday morning at 10 o'clock Daylight Savings Time, at the home seven miles northwest of town, and at 10:30 DST at the Defenseless Mennonite Church. The Rev. N. J. Schmucker, pastor of the church, will officiate.

Note: Buried in MRE.

(Handwritten date: Tuesday, 1940)

RICH FUNERAL IS SET

Rites for Victim of Bolting Horses Will be Conducted Thursday

DECATUR, Ind., July 16 - Funeral services for Everett Rich, 43, farmer of French Township, who was killed Monday afternoon on his farm when a team of horses bolted and dragged him 300 feet under a binder, will be held Thursday morning at 10 o'clock (CDT) at the home and at 10:30 o'clock at the Defenseless Mennonite Church. Burial in the church cemetery.

Rich suffered a deep gash in the abdomen and other injuries. He apparently was fixing harness on the team or repairing the binder when the accident occurred. The team finally was stopped by a fence. Rich last year narrowly escaped death when he was caught between a tractor and a disc, being saved by a son, who managed to stop the tractor in time.

Surviving are the widow, the parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Rich, of Berne; two sons and two brothers.

(Handwritten date: Saturday, July 20, 1940)

BERNE NEWS

One of the largest funerals held in this community recently was that of Evert O. Rich, 43 year old French township farmer, who was killed Monday when a team of horses hitched to a grain binder bolted, dragging Rich to his death. The funeral was held at the Defenseless Mennonite church, the main auditorium, the balcony, and the basement being filled. Burial was made in the M.R.E. cemetery instead of the Defenseless church cemetery as first announced. The true and exact version of how Rich met death will never be known, but it is believed that he was repairing something in front of the binder when the horses bolted. Unable to get out of the way, Rich became tangled up with part of his body underneath the platform and part doubled over the cutting bar on top of the platform. While death probably occurred within a few minutes, he no doubt suffered immensely for some time. Besides being badly cut and mutilated, his entire body was crushed and there were many fractures. His body was found by the youngest son, Maynard, age 11, who went to investigate when he failed to answer the call for dinner.

Adams County Historical Museum - 1939-40 Scrapbook, Image 62-64

Transcribed by Karin King