Handwritten-Wed. Nov. 28, 1945

42-YEAR-OLD FARM WOMAN IS TRAGEDY VICTIM

Cremated in Car While on Bee-Tending Mission:

            Mrs. Joe Schrock tragically burned  to death near the Rumschlag farm where the tragedy occurred.

            Mrs. Schrock burned to death in their automobile.  She had one of the small hand smokers used by persons tending bees and apparently her dress caught fire and burned her to a crisp before her husband was able to go to her aid.  The accident occurred along the road near the Rumschlag woods.

            While the exact version of the time, it is believed that Schrock was in the woods working with the bees and Mrs. Schrock was in the car and some way her clothes are believed to have become ignited.  Schrock is believed to have heard her screams and rushed to her aid.  He was burned, not seriously, while trying to rescue her and also suffered from the Schrock.  He was taken to a nearby farm house.  The Decatur fire department was called to extinguish the blaze in the car.  The back end of the machine was gutted.  Sheriff Gillig was called and is investigating the case.

            The remains were to be brought to the Yager mortuary here late today.

            Mrs. Schrock was born in Monroe township on November 10, 1903, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dan and Lena Mazelin-Habegger.  Her mother died many years ago but her step-mother, Mrs. Barbara Habegger, survives.  She was married to Joseph Schrock on May 3, 1931.

            Surviving are the husband the following children:  Alice May, Loretta, Harold Wayne, Viola Ruth Raymond and Frederick. A son, Richard preceded.

            The step-mother and a sister, Mrs. Rufus Inniger survive, also the following half-brothers and half-sisters—Martin, Mrs. Noah???

            She was a member of the Reformed Amish Christian Church. Funeral arrangements have not been made yet.

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Handwritten date-none

Details of Tragedy Wednesday Afternoon Given by Husband, Sheriff

 Funeral services were held this afternoon for Mrs. Helen Schrock, 42, wife of Joseph J. Schrock of north Berne, who was burned to death Wednesday afternoon in the family car southeast of Decatur.  Services were held at the Schrock home, with Rev. David J. Graber and Rev. ??? Habegger officiating. Burial was in the Mazelin cemetery two miles north and a half mile west of Berne.

            The casket was not opened as Mrs. Schrock was virtually cremated.  The remains were taken to the home this morning

                                                            Details Bared

            Details of the gruesome tragedy which snuffed out the life of Mrs. Schrock were given to the press by Sheriff Leo Gillig after a careful investigation. Sheriff Gillis said Mr. Schrock give his version of the tragedy and reconstructed the mishap to give a clearer picture of what happened.

            According to the sheriff Schrock and his wife had driven their car into the woods on the William Meyers farm southeast of Decatur where they have several hives of bees located.  They parked the car in the woods and Schrock left the machine to go and tend the bees while his wife remained in the car to start the smoker, a device used to pacify the bees while working around them.  Schrock said he was several yards away from the car when he heard his wife scream and call him by name.  Schrock found his wife in the back seat of the car surrounded by very dense smoke. Mrs. Schrock was immediately enveloped in a mass of flames.  She cried for him to try the other door.  By the time he reached the other side of the car his wife had already collapsed.  He tried to pull here out, reaching for her leg but his gloves started to burn and the heat was so intense that he could not rescue her.

                                                            Gas Can in Car

            Sheriff Gillig said that there was a gallon gasoline can and a five-gallon fuel oil can in the back of the car, which accounts for the fury of the blaze. Schrock used the fuel oil and gasoline to disinfect the bee hives, mixing the gasoline with the oil, according to the sheriff.  The gasoline can had the spout uncovered, allowing the fumes to escape. The back end of the car was loaded with all kinds of bee supplies, including lumber to put under the bee stands, wax, burlap bags and other material.  The automobile was a two-door coach and one of the doors was obstructed by these supplies.  Why Mrs. Habegger did not attempt to escape through the other door will never be known, the sheriff said, but it is probable that in the excitement and with the dense smoke perhaps blinding and almost suffocating her, she was unable to reach the door even if she tried.  According to the opinion voiced by the sheriff Mrs. Schrock struck a match to light the smoker while in the back end of the car. The match was apparently struck near the gas can, permitting the spark of the match to ignite the fumes and the fire apparently went down into the can and when Schrock opened the door the can exploded, showering the back end of the machine with blazing gas. There is evidence that the blaze had gone inside the can because there was pressure from the inside which made the seams of the can bulge out, the sheriff said.

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Handwritten-Thurs. Nov. 29, 1945

Funeral Rites For Fire Victim Friday

Services At Home Friday Afternoon

            Funeral services for Mrs. Joseph Schrock, 42, who burned to death yesterday afternoon in her automobile when a can of gasoline exploded as she was moving bees from the William “Pete” Meyers farm, southeast of Decatur, under protection of a smudge of fire, will be held Friday afternoon at 2 o’clock at the Schrock farm home, four miles north of Berne.

            Due to the condition of the body the casket will not be opened, the Yager funeral home in Berne announced.

            Mr. and Mrs. Schrock had gone to the Meyer’s woods to tend their bees, when the terrible tragedy occurred.  Mrs. Schrock was in the car when flames enveloped her and her body was almost cremated.  Mr. Schrock came to her aid and was burned and he suffered greatly form shock.

            Mrs. Schrock was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dan Habegger of Monroe township. She was born Nov. 10, 1903.  She was a member of the Reformed Amis Christian church.

            Besides the husband, she is survived by six children in ages from three to ?? years.  They are Alice May, Loretta, Harold Wayne, Viola Ruth, Raymond and Frederick.  One son is deceased.  Also surviving are the step-mother, Mrs. Daniel Habegger; one sister, Mrs. Rufus Inniger; two (rest is cut off)

Adams County, Indiana Historical Museum

1945a Scrapbook, image 029-031

Transcribed by Janice Vasilovski