

## Fred Bechtel

### Friend of John Mack

*“Would to God that Jackson had killed him; then justice would have been done on the spot.”*

On Saturday, June 27, 1908, Fred Bechtel took the stand to tell his story, repeatedly pleading that the shooting was accidental. Specifically, he claimed that the pistol unexpectedly fired when Sergeant Boyle grabbed Bechtel’s hand as he was taking it out of his pocket. Bechtel said he had no idea how the pistol was oriented in his pocket, but was absolute in his assertion that it went off accidentally.



Bechtel described how, immediately after the shot was fired, he was shot as he ran, finally collapsing from loss of blood in an alley south of Monroe at Ontario Street. He said that when three men who were standing nearby asked if he needed help, he offered them a dollar each to cart him to Helen O’Connell’s house, which they did, using a stolen buggy.

The revolver used in the shooting, Bechtel testified, was purchased from John Mack three days earlier in Fostoria, where the two had been arrested and charged with burglary and larceny. Those charges were later dismissed. He claimed that he did not know that the gun was in his pocket until confronted by the officers in the railyards. Further, he testified that he did not know what became of it after the shooting. Police recovered it in a pawn shop a few days later.

Bechtel said he had never been in trouble before and had never been arrested. When confronted by the policemen, he claimed, “I started to pull my gun out of my pocket and was going to hand it over to the officers. Boyle grabbed my hand and the gun went off.” [Toledo Blade, June 26, 1908.]

The afternoon court session Monday, June 29, 1908, was consumed by opening arguments for the defense, which were wrapped up the next morning. The defense focused on the message to

the jury that Bechtel was seeking justice, not sympathy, further arguing the absurdity of any logic that Bechtel would shoot an unarmed Sergeant Boyle instead of Patrolman Jackson, who was the one standing directly in front of Bechtel pointing a revolver at him.

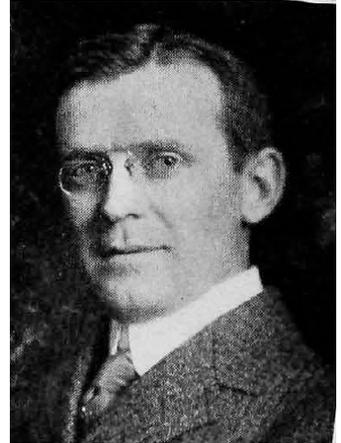
The arguments concluded Wednesday, July 1, 1908, with Prosecutor Wachenheimer's final statement to the jury that, "If men were permitted to go free upon such flimsy explanations as that this shooting was accidental, the police force would become craven in the discharge of the duties in which it would not be upheld." [Toledo Blade, July 2, 1908.]

With respect to the possibility that one of the bullets Jackson fired could have killed Bechtel, Wachenheimer told the jury, "Would to God that Jackson had killed him; then justice would have been done on the spot." [Toledo News-Bee, July 2, 1908.] Judge Brough handed the case to the jury at 4:10 that afternoon.

Deliberations continued until 11 p.m. that night, with the jury retiring to cots in an upstairs room that was miserable with summer heat and mosquitos. At 9:30 a.m. the next morning, the jury reported to Judge Brough that they were hopelessly deadlocked. But Brough ignored their conclusion and ordered them to break for lunch, then return to continue deliberations.

At 4:10 p.m. on Thursday, July 2, 1908, after a total of 22 hours of deliberation, the jury reached a verdict: guilty of manslaughter for the murder of Sergeant Boyle.

Bechtel remained composed as he heard the verdict.



Judge Bernard Brough



Sergeant Boyle was killed near the side doorway of Seyfang Bakery, which has now been converted into lofts and living space. The Clover Leaf railroad tracks at the intersection of Lafayette and Ontario were frequently targeted by criminals who routinely broke into railcars.

