

This Day in History... March 5, 1922

Annie Oakley Shatters Women's Trap Shooting Record

On March 5, 1922, Annie Oakley broke all existing records for women's trap shooting.

Born Phoebe Ann Mosey in Ohio in 1860, Annie Oakley learned to shoot at an early age. She showed remarkable skill with guns and would often shoot and sell wild game to local restaurants to help support her impoverished family. When an admirer suggested she compete against professional marksman Frank Butler in a shooting exhibition, 15-year-old Annie reluctantly agreed. To the cheers of the amazed crowd she defeated Butler on the last shot, 25 to 24. The two sharpshooters married in 1876. Taking the stage name Oakley, she toured with vaudeville shows and circuses.



*Oakley Stamp from 1994
Legends of the West Sheet*



*Oakley was part of
Buffalo Bill's Wild
West from 1885-1901.*

In 1885, Oakley joined *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show*. So enthusiastic was the response to her daring feats, she was given top billing as "Miss Annie Oakley – the Peerless Lady Wingshot," while her husband served as her assistant. As part of her act she would shoot a dime held in Butler's hand, use a mirror to shoot at a target behind her, shoot a playing card thrown in the air 90 feet away from her, and fire shots while riding a bicycle. While performing in Berlin, she shot a cigarette out of Kaiser Wilhelm's hand.

In 1916, Oakley and Butler moved to Pinehurst, North Carolina. They joined the staff of the Carolina Hotel and the Pinehurst Gun Club. Oakley gave shooting lessons and exhibitions twice a week, teaching some 125,000 men and women over the course of four years. During one of these demonstrations, on March 5, 1922, Oakley hit 98 out of 100 clay targets from 16 yards away (some sources say she hit all 100). This broke all existing records, showing that at age 62, she was still one of the best shooters in the world.

Many believed Oakley was going to stage a comeback in 1922, but that summer she and her husband were in a serious car accident. After two years, Oakley was able to perform again – and even set new records – but her health began to decline in 1925, and she died the following year.

The popular Broadway musical *Annie Get Your Gun* was loosely based on Oakley's life. Although the musical portrays her as an outspoken tomboy, she was actually a quiet person who practiced needlepoint in her spare time.



*Ethel Merman starred in the
original 1946 Broadway play
Annie Get Your Gun. She reprised
the role 20 years later in the play's
second Broadway revival.*

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