

Philadelphia's Two Gun Clubs (Trapshooting) and Stevenson M. Crothers: In the years leading up to World War II, and for many years thereafter, the Philadelphia area had two well-run gun clubs, Roxborough and Quaker City. The Roxborough club was just off Ridge Avenue near the Water Works, probably 8 miles east of Norristown, and Quaker City was next to a prison near Holmesburg Junction, about two miles upstream from the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge over the Delaware River. On average, my father and I would attend a shoot at Roxborough about three times annually and at Quaker City about twice annually. Through a cooperative arrangement, one club would have shoots on the first and third Saturdays of each month and the other on the second and fourth. About once a month one or the other would hold a "Registered" shoot, which meant that the scores would be included in the official records of the Amateur Trapshooting Association of America.

Clubs all over Pennsylvania would bid for the State Championship Tournament; Quaker City hosted it in 1934 and Roxborough in 1940. I was too young to attend the first, but I remember well the '40 tournament at Roxborough. My father and I attended for three of the four days. On a windy preliminary day, I won Class B with 139 x 150 and the next day broke 190 x 200 in the state championship event (anyone could shoot, but only Pennsylvania residents were eligible to win the state championship). The wind kept the scores low, and Steve Crothers of Chestnut Hill, who won the state championship 14 out of 21 times between 1921 and 1941, prevailed with a score of 194, winning a shoot-off with Howard Nice of Abington.

My father shot over 60,000 registered targets between 1924 and 1950, but he had only a few winning scores. About 1935 at Roxborough, however, he won a 50-target handicap event with 50 straight from 20 yards, and at Quaker City in 1939, he won the handicap with 25 straight from 21 yards and the doubles with 24 x 24, being perfect in both short races. Most Wilmington-area shooters, going to Roxborough or Quaker City, would go through Philadelphia to get there but not my father. He hated to drive in cities. For our Roxborough trip, we would take Route 202 to Norristown, then work our way east to pick up Ridge Avenue and continue to the vicinity of the Club. To get to Quaker City, we would usually cross the Chester-Bridgeport Ferry, drive up the New Jersey side of the river past the "Airport Circle" outside Camden and cross back over the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge.

What brought all this to mind was my remembrance of April 26, 1941, a Saturday when my father and I went to a registered shoot at Quaker City. The great Steve Crothers, standing behind our squad as we shot the third 25-target event, congratulated me on my 25 straight as we finished that round (I broke 96 x 100). Less than two months later Steve won his 14th and last state championship at Bradford with 199 x 200, and 175 straight in seven shoot-offs with Walter Beaver of Conshohocken. Somewhat beyond his prime, he shot in my squad at the Delaware State Shoot in 1947, when I broke 100 straight for the win (Steve broke 95 but would not have been eligible for the Delaware championship, anyway). When top shooters missed a target, they often blamed the trappers, the ammunition, or something other than themselves, but never Steve Crothers. When he missed a target, and he didn't miss many, he was disgusted with himself. He was one of trapshooting's greatest sportsmen, and he loved the sport.