

Rain of terror hit with tornado-like force in 1914

Walter and Blaine Bradfute, proprietors of the *Bloomington Telephone*, were usually restrained when it came to splashy banner headlines on the front page.

July 14, 1914, was an exception.

"NEAR TORNADO SWEEPS OVER BLOOMINGTON" sat atop four separate stories about the effects of the storm.

"RAIN WAS REFRESHING" said one headline, which hardly dealt with the point of that particular article. "Dale Foster escaped with a broken arm and some stock was killed," wrote the reporter.

Some telephone lines were down and "electrical circuits" damaged. The reactions of the public to the storm during its worst moments were varied. "Many took refuge in cellars while others did not realize how strong the wind was blowing until all danger was past."

Some Bloomington merchants were busy sweeping up glass, including at the Buckley



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

building on the east side and the Breeden store. Other casualties were the skylight in the Shaw and Cosner studio and the roof of the Central Telephone office.

Many trees were damaged. (The July 15 edition of the *Telephone* gave some suggestions about their care. "The scarred places where the limbs were torn off should have all of the ragged parts smoothed by the use of a chisel and mallet or some other convenient instrument ... then treat thoroughly with the following disinfectant." A recipe followed.)

The John Campbell farm suffered, and so did he, financially, that is. The new roof on his barn was lifted and carried more than 100 feet

away.

Silos belonging to Joseph Henry, M.H. Waterman, Harvey Stephenson, George Burbank and Elmer Buzzaird were damaged. Lightning struck the J.C. Hunter barn, but his cow and four horses escaped alive. A cow on another farm was struck by the lightning and killed.

Then there was the William Clark boarding house at McDoel. It was not yet completed, and the storm damaged the in-progress building so badly that the workers had to start all over again.

Mrs. James Mesmer suffered an unfortunate injury in trying to escape from the storm. "When the storm came up Mrs. Mesmer made an effort to save her chickens but had to flee into the house. As she was entering her room the door blew shut and broke her ankle. Dr. Frank Tournier set the fracture."

The Mesmer fowls didn't escape. "175 frying chickens and 25 turkeys were picked up by the wind and slapped down on the ground,

killing them." There were a couple of escapees on the farm. "An old hen with 21 small chicks beneath her survived the storm, and only one chick was drowned. A pig weighing 150 pounds was in a pen but the wind picked it up bodily and threw it over a high fence. His pig-ship was only dazed by the fall."

The fury of the storm could be seen at the William Ison farm southwest of town. Two separate gusts of wind picked up a barn they had been living in and tossed it some 900 feet from the foundation. Commented the *Telephone*, "Mr. Ison was not at home at the time and was picked off his feet and carried a short distance until he seized a post and laid clinging to it upon the ground until the storm was over."

Ison's wife and children were in the barn as it sailed through the air, but mercifully were uninjured.

While Monroe countians were picking up the pieces, they did, indeed, have reason to feel thankful.

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