

Storm of 1901 was devastating to people, property

No matter what they called it afterward — electric and hail storm, tornado or whatever — the storm that passed through Monroe County on June 24, 1901, was devastating. Residents were picking up the pieces for days to come.

Between 8 and 9:30 p.m., the storm rampaged through the area. The extent of the damage was not immediately known, since the storm took down telephone and telegraph wires, isolating Bloomington from the rest of the county.

Scattered reports began coming in the next day. William F. Bunger's estimated his loss at \$1,000, a great deal of money in those days. The Bloomington *Courier* of June 25 said Bunger's "timber was blown down, and his wheat, oats and corn fields were laid low by the large hail stones that pelted the ground."



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

William Ward had to shovel hail stones out of his house, because they broke the windows and continued to pour inside the broken ones. His shutters had been torn off by flying chunks of ice.

The barn of a man living near the water works was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. He did manage to save his livestock.

Residents in the neighborhood of the Carter Schoolhouse south of town were wondering how the building could be repaired. The storm had taken off the roof, and one end of the structure had col-

lapsed. All of the windows were gone.

On the James B. Mathers farm the huge barn was "blown to pieces." The *Courier* described what happened. "Roleigh Morgan and Horace Johnson of this city had just driven to Mr. Mathers' place and had hitched in the barn. The horse they had driven was buried beneath two tons of hay, and it required considerable work before the animal was released. The horse was not killed on account of a log wagon which protected it."

Not so fortunate were three of Mathers' horses, also in the barn. They were injured severely, but survived anyway.

Twenty-five window panes in the home of J.G. Eller (west of town) were broken by the storm. Included in his \$600 loss were seven acres of

wheat, 10 acres of corn and 14 acres of oats.

T.E. Randall, who lived two miles south of town, lost two large barns. The wind also lifted a wagon bed from the spot where it was parked to the highway.

Contributing to the feeling of isolation was the delay in the arrival of the Monon train. It took three hours to repair a washout of the rails in Montgomery County.

Ellettsville did not escape the fury of the storm. The new Methodist Episcopal Church lost all of its windows. Jack's Defeat Creek spilled over its banks and forced residents to leave their homes for the night, at least.

At press time on June 25, it was reported that four barns in the neighborhood of Ketcham's Mill were demolished, but that had not

been confirmed. William Fess's home lost its roof, and his large "sugar orchard" was wiped out.

Other casualties of the storm: the Fleener Mill near Unionville (blown down); a fire in the vicinity of Harrodsburg; and the 25-acre wheat field at the Poor Farm.

Perhaps it was John Stipp who had the most frightening experience. His house lost its roof and was moved about six inches off its foundation. If that wasn't enough, in addition, his large ice house was overturned.

A timely ad appeared in the *Courier* at the end of the article about the storm. It said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth and we hear the sound thereof, but no man knoweth whence it cometh or whither it goeth.' Are you insured against cyclones? See Wooley & Barnhart."

H-T 11/14/94