

Monroe Countians suffered during 1928 cold wave

Monroe Countians were shivering even in their warmest clothes in January of 1928. They didn't need a thermometer to tell them the temperature was below zero.

It was, in fact, 5½ degrees below the zero mark during the night, and there was no immediate relief in sight. There were the usual warnings against prolonged exposure to the cold air.

The *Bloomington Evening World* reported to its readers that the cold wave, which had come immediately behind a blizzard, was widespread. It was zero and sub-zero in parts of Georgia and Alabama.

Although the temperature was 72 at Miami, Fla., the rest of that state was chilly as far south as Tampa. The newspaper also informed its readers that "New York City reported three deaths from exposure with the temperature reaching 10 above."

Evening World readers were saddened to learn from a front page story on Jan. 4 that a 68-year-old resident had been a victim of the cold weather. The newspaper, which had been known at times to give all of the graphic details of a tragedy, was strangely terse in connection with the death of the victim.

"The cold wave caused the death of



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

James Alvin Alexander, aged 68, who died from exposure Tuesday night at his home on east Cottage Grove avenue. Alexander, who lived alone in a small one-room house adjoining his rental property, was seen last night."

It was his neighbor, J.E. Mahan, who found him. Perhaps no other details were available at press time. But the remarks of DePauw University's president (who spoke to the Bloomington Rotary Club) got more attention than Alexander.

Alexander's daughter, Mrs. Fannie Trisler, who lived southwest of Bloomington, was his only survivor. Burial was in Rose Hill Cemetery.

The man's death may have prompted recollections of earlier wintertime deaths in the county. There was the tragedy of Marion Hinkle of Feb. 8, 1899.

Hinkle may have thought he could beat

the odds of survival when he set out for home from his meat market on the east side of the Bloomington square. His destination was only about three miles to the northeast.

The father of 12 children, Hinkle was 48 years old. He left the market on foot at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

When he did not arrive home, it was not considered unusual. As E. Earl East described it in his book, *Relive It*. "Because he had a sort of sleeping room over the market, which he had used off and on, it was quite some time before Mr. Hinkle was missed. In fact, when the *Morning World* went to press at 1 a.m. on Friday ... (there was) no mention of his disappearance."

The temperature was 19 degrees below zero on a government thermometer located on Maple's West Side Drug Store. (The record in Indiana was 40 below on New Year's in 1864.)

It was Hinkle's son who found him 49 hours after he had left the store. According to East, "Scratches on Hinkle's hands seemed to indicate he had sought in vain to push his way in darkness through a dense hedge fence. Apparently he had missed the opening, which those cutting across fields always used. Finally, exhausted and cold, Marion

Hinkle had slumped down to a rest and a sleep from which there was to be no awakening."

Another death related to cold weather was in 1923. It was also described by East. He called her, simply, "Martha," perhaps out of consideration for her family.

She had been trained as a nurse, but suffered from bouts of depression. After her hospitalization in Indianapolis, the depression returned.

On Thursday, Feb. 1 Martha left home, saying she was going to walk to her sister's house. She never arrived. By the next day, search parties that included Indiana University men and high school boys were organized, and two witnesses told the authorities they had seen her walking westward out in the country.

During Martha's disappearance the temperature at night had gone down to zero. On Sunday it was a farmer by the name of Melvin Reeves of the Garrison Chapel neighborhood, who found her. She was lying in a fence corner, still wearing her coat. Her hat and shoes were on the other side of the fence.

East added, "At ten o'clock the big whistle (at the Showers Factory) was telling the county the search was over."

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