Cyclone 1885

When in the process of researching for our book “May 21st 1918 Cyclone: A Path of Destruction,” the first step was to read through Hildegarde Thering’s book “A History of Plain, Wisconsin.” In doing so I ran across a cyclone/storm passing through the Plain area on pages 65 & 66. I have searched through the Baraboo & Reedsburg newspapers seeking more information on this storm, but to no avail. On the following pages you will find scanned copies from a page of the Weekly Home News, Thursday, June 11, 1885.

SUNDAY’S STORM.

The most destructive storms that has visited this section for a number of years prevailed last Sabbath afternoon. Shortly after noon ominous clouds appeared in the north and west, approaching slowly but threateningly. At about 3 p.m. the storms seemingly joined, when their fierceness and velocity was increased to alarming proportions.

In this village the damage was confined to the destruction of a few shade trees, but the rain poured in torrents for nearly an hour.

The barn of Jno. Proctor, a couple of miles east of this place, was unroofed.

In the towns north of here the destruction of property was great, which together with accounts from a distance makes it evident that the Wisconsin River was the southern limit of the body of the storm.

Following are reports sent in by our worthy correspondents, giving a description of the storm and its effects in their respective neighborhoods:

LONE ROCK.

The storm was quite severe Sunday. Some of our shade trees suffered the loss of limbs, but when we hear of other places suffering the loss of homes, crops, and other valuable property, we think we were favored. Sam. Reames, who lives across the river, opposite Lone Rock, had the roof blown off his house and carried some distance. He has contemplated building a new house, and no doubt this will settle the question. Our merchants had not enough window glass to supply the demand.
WHITE MOUND—TOWN FRANKLIN.

A heavy wind and hail storm passed through this vicinity last Sunday afternoon, doing considerable damage in the way of leveling fences and destroying crops, also blowing some out-buildings, such as old hop-houses and summer-kitchens, away. About one mile north of the White Mound P.O. it was reported that hail could be found by the wagon load, at noon the next day. Mr. Derig lost his crops. A great many were compelled to stuff their windows with rags and old pillows. Glass was broken in Mr. Young's house to quite an extent. It is reported that the heaviest of the storm passed through Plain.

BLACK HAWK—TOWN TROY.

Last Sunday afternoon one of the most terrific storms that ever occurred in this part of the country visited this vicinity. About 3:30 o'clock p.m. two storms, one from the west and another from the southwest, which had been visible for about two hours, began to discharge their fury in a rain and wind storm, clothing the country in almost night's darkness for about 45 minutes.

After the storm cleared away the crops were found flattened to the ground, in some places scarcely to be visible, in others flooded and in others washed out.

Fences were blown down and trees

of great size uprooted. The barns belonging to Wm. Schaefer and Conrad Schaefer were unroofed.

LITTLE BEAR CREEK—BEAR CREEK.

The storm of last Sunday afternoon that passed through this section came as near being a tornado as people in this vicinity care to have it. It did considerable damage in this town and in the town of Franklin. It unroofed a shanty for Simon George, broke nearly all the glass out of Wm. Cole's windows; unroofed the dwelling and stables of M. Nacheriner, and blew a stable and grainery down for John Ruland. A large barn belonging to Wolfgang Alt, which stands on a basement wall about ten feet high was raised into the air a few feet at one end and let back onto the foundation without injury of any consequence, though the building was moved at this end about three inches and the wall of the basement badly cracked. An apple tree about three inches through was uprooted and blown over a six-board fence, landing about twenty rods distant. Several large oaks were torn out at the roots or broken off and twisted in various shapes. In one place five panels of a rail fence were carried about ten rods and set down with scarcely a rail misplaced. The out-buildings on T. McNulty's place were badly damaged, and Bernard McNulty's house was blown down.

BEAR VALLEY—BEAR CREEK.

The storm of Sunday first struck the upper or north end of the valley, passing in a southeasterly direction. So great was its force that trees were taken out at the roots; fruit buildings of all kinds were unroofed or completely crushed, and the valley was strewn with timber and fences. Geo. Hoke suffered a heavy loss—his orchard of 500 trees was stripped of young fruit and leaves, and a fine piece of winter wheat was destroyed. Many windows were broken by the heavy hail. John Hipps and wife were in their house when the roof went off, and several articles were blown away that have not been found. Great damage was done to growing crops, fences and buildings.
Elsewhere.

In the village of Prairie du Sac the hail did the greatest damage. There fell hailstones as large as walnuts, which broke the window-glass on the north side of buildings. There was scarcely a house in the village but had broken windows. The Briggs house lost 130 lights of glass and the Baxter house 60; the large stained-glass window in the Universalist church was entirely destroyed. The Presbyterian church also suffered badly, the hail breaking the windows and the wind blowing open the inside shutters, so that the hail and rain had full sweep across the church. On Sauk Prairie, the damage is immense. Of about fifty windmills, there are few but what are more or less damaged, and some of them entirely demolished. Large trees have their leaves stripped entirely, so that they are now standing with branches bare to the breeze. Much damage was done to growing crops. Henry Steffler had his large barn raised up from the foundation eight feet Saturday, intending to build a stone basement under it. Harvey Highland, a livery-man, was on his way with a load of passengers to the Methodist camp meeting, being held at the foot of the Baraboo bluffs, when the storm approached. He drove fast and was making for the barn, when just before he reached it, the gale blew it over with a crush. This was only one of many narrow escapes. Monday morning the farmers were seen all coming to town for window glass. There was not a light of glass or a pound of putty in town.

At Lodi three or four thousands lights of glass were broken and other damages were sustained.

At Mazomanie the damage was slight, the storm having divided just before reaching the place, but many of the villagers sought their cellars. On Monday Prairie du Sac merchants were in the village buying all the window glass in the market, as their home supply was exhausted.

The damage at Prairie du Chien, Madison, Baraboo and other points was very light.

From other sources we learn that great damage was done in Dakota and other western states, by this storm which crossed the Mississippi river at New Albin, opposite the village of Victory, in Vernon county. Great damage to property was done in the former place, and many people were injured. Victory was also badly used by the wind. The storm then passed over the southern part of Vernon county, in a path which could not be more than ten miles in width. It touched the northern part of Walworth and Racine counties and was somewhat violent in Milwaukee county. In the path of the storm, the greatest destruction was done by the hail which fell to a depth of four inches in some localities, the stones frequently measuring six, eight and nine inches in circumference. Thousands upon thousands of window panes were shattered garden truck, trees, grains and vegetables generally was badly cut up, while buildings were overturned and fields flooded.