

[Blizzard of 1888]

ES [??] [??]

O.W. Meier Relates Experience He Had in the Blizzard of 1888.

“The awful blizzard of Jan 12, 1888,” said O. W. Meier, cannot be forgotten by anyone who experienced it as I did.” He and his brothers were attending school in District 71, 15 miles [wouthwest?] of Lincoln, and this is his story of that blizzard which swept over the country 50 years ago.

“The weather had been mild, after a heavy fall of snow. Deep snow lay over all the ground in fields and on the roads. Long hanging icecicles dripped melting snow water from the eaves of the house and barn. The sky was dark and heavy. Beautiful big white flakes were falling fast that morning of the fateful day. Father and mother said, “The girls must stay at home, but the boys may go to school.”

“At half past eight Walter, then 8, Henry 12, and I, 15 years of age, started out thru the deep white snow. Pretty starry flakes made us look like snow men before we reached the school, a mile and a half from home. When we got there we found other boys, and some girls, playing “fox and geese”. Henry and I jointed in the game.

“The bell rang, calling us in to study and recite. The heavy snow kept falling all that day. By the middle of the afternoon, at the last recess, the snow was about two feet deep, and on the top it was almost as light as feathers. At a quarter to three, the school bell rang for the last time that day. We rushed for the brooms to sweep the wet snow from our boots. Just when we got settled down to our books as swiftly as lightning, the storm struck the north side of the house. The whole building shivered and quaked. With deafening whack the shutters were slammed shut by the terrific wind. In an instant the room became black as night, then for a moment there came a ray of light, I stood and said, “May my brothers

Library of Congress

and I go home?" The teacher said. "Those boys who live south may put on their coats and go, but the rest of you must stay here in this house."

"The two Strelow boys, Robert and George, with John Conrad, my two brothers, and I, put out into the storm for our homes. We had not gone a rod when we found ourselves in a heap, in a heavy drift of snow. We took hold of each others' hands, pulled ourselves out, got into the road, and the cold north wind blew us down the road a half mile south, where the Strelow boys and John Conrad had to go west a mile or more. When they reached a bridge in a ravine, the little fellows sheltered a while under the bridge, a wooden culvert, but Robert, the oldest, insisted that they push on thru the blinding storm for their homes. In the darkness they stumbled in, and by degrees their parents thawed them out, bathed their frozen hands, noses, ears and cheeks, while the boys cried in pain.

"My brothers and I could not walk thru the deep snow in the road, so we took down the rows of corn stalks to keep from losing ourselves "till we reached our pasture fence. Walter was too short to wade the deep snow in the field, so Henry and I dragged him over the top. For nearly a mile we followed the fence "till we reached the corral and pens. In the howling storm, we could hear the pigs squeal as they were freezing in the mud and snow. Sister Ida had opened the gate and let the cows in from the field to the sheds, just as the cold wind struck and froze her skirts stiff around her like hoops. The barn and stables were drifted over when we reached there. The roaring wind and stiffling snow blinded us so that we had to feel thru the yard to the door of our house. C15 - 2/27/41 - Nebraska

"The lamp was lighted. Mother was walking the floor, wringing her hands and calling for her boys. Pa was shaking the ice and snow from his coat and boots. He had gone out to meet us but was forced back by the storm. We stayed in the house all that night. It was so cold that many people froze 2 to death in the snow, and the loss in livestock was big. The next morning we walked out upon the hard deep drifts shoveled a way thru to the barn where we gound our cows and horses alive on top of the snow that had drifted into their

Library of Congress

stalls, but a lot of our hogs were frozen stiff in mud, ice and snow. The road we came over on our way home was strewn with frozen quails rabbits, dead.

“That was an awful night on the open plains. Many teachers and school children lost their lives in that blinding storm, while trying to find their way home. The blizzard of 1888 has not been forgotten.”