

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Thurs., June 1, 1967

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Damage Severe In Freak Storm

By NEIL A. MATHESON

IT'S EXACTLY 30 years ago today that a freak storm swept across a strip of Western Prince County and left destruction and severe damage in its wake. The "twister" originated in the St. Louis village area, apparently, and left the province at Kildare shore.

I recall talking several years ago to Preston Clark about it when I attended the Golden Wedding anniversary of his parents Mr. and Mrs. Clark at Alma.

He had been working with a team of horses in the field and had driven the animals into a barn that was nearby. He had barely entered the building when it started to come apart. The last conscious memory he had was of seeing the roof lifting off the building. When he became conscious again he was pinned to the ground by a beam, and was badly injured. His knee was so shattered a Montreal surgeon said he would never walk on it again. There were numerous other injuries. He had a broken arm and head injuries, for example.

Preston lives now in Saint John, N.B. with his family and he fooled the doctor. He seemed physically normal when I saw and talked with him.

The barn was scattered all over the field. The horses were in a nearby bush, uninjured. But the harness had been stripped from the animals. It was only one of the freak occurrences of that eventful seven or eight minutes the storm lasted.

Ralph Hardy's barn on the Western Road, had just been completed, but the storm lifted it off the foundation, twisted and tore it and blew bits of it all over a large field.

Here's another of the freak effects of the storm. Across a line fence a pile of boards on the property of Hammond S. Crockett was left undisturbed. Not one board had been moved out of place.

The roof was torn from a barn belonging to John Mountain in Alma.

A hen house on the same property was picked up by the storm, turned around and deposited by the kitchen door. A clucking Plymouth Rock hen never moved from her nest, and a dozen chickens were hatched out a few days later.

A news story at the time said buildings were leveled, some carried from 10 to 30 chains, trees uprooted. The wind was accompanied by tremendously heavy rain that washed out planted and sown fields, swept grass and roots toward the lower levels.

Hail In Windows Three Feet Wide

HAIL STRUCK in some sections and the story said there were windows of it in some places three feet wide, and more than a foot in depth.

Some of the property victims of the storm in St. Louis included James O'Brien, who had a barn demolished and a fox ranch destroyed. Cyril Perry had a barn blown down and other buildings damaged. Thomas Mockier had a barn wrecked. Fred Peters, Jerry Bernard, Alfred Gallant and Cyril Arsenault were others who suffered severely from damaged buildings and machinery, the old news story says.

The foxes escaped when Herman Dymont's ranch was destroyed and portions of the ranch were blown over his house. One pen landed on the roof of the granary. Fox pens belonging to Daniel Morrison were lifted over the telephone wires in places, and lodged in trees across the road.

All of the telephone lines on the Montrose Bridge were blown into the River. Many beautiful Maple trees and giant White Birches around the Montrose Church "were snapped off like pipe stems".

Practically every house in St. Louis had windows smashed, or blown in completely. Numerous chimneys were toppled by the terrific storm.

Visibility Stopped At Radiator Cap

"CARS CAUGHT in the storm were compelled to stop owing to the impenetrable darkness," one news story said. Visibility did not extend beyond the radiator cap, the story added.

Take this story with a large helping of salt, but it's worth a laugh anyway. It was told at Allan Clark's anniversary. One chap who had his barn blown away stopped a friend on the road and asked:

"Did you see my barn?" The friend replied, "It didn't pass this way."

Indicative of the tremendously heavy rain is the story Gordon Barbour told me a few weeks ago at Alma. They were out of the path of the storm so far as damage was concerned, but they could hear the tremendous roaring sound, trees were whipping around, with the more slender ones bent almost double. The storm lasted an estimated eight minutes, one story said, but the water was so deep in the Barbour's garden that it came to the top of a round-pointed shovel when they measured the depth after the storm had passed.

Queries Came From Will Johnstone

WILLIAM E. JOHNSTONE, Kensington sent me the queries last week about the people crossing the ice, and shooting on it at Richmond Bay on May 24. If anyone knows the date please let me know. I used Mrs. Elsie Laird's name in error.

Bill Bevins, 27 Passmore Street tells me that he remembers hearing Archibald MacKinnon telling of a time when the teams crossed the ice from Inkerman Shore to North River, perhaps three miles, on May 8. He doesn't know the year but Mr. MacKinnon died in 1915, so it would be sometime prior to that. One reader suggests that the spring of 1904, or 1905 produced some of the latest ice on record, but I have no details.

TALKING OF ICE here's a story that will start some arguments. Frank MacKinnon of the Guardian staff tells me that a farmer in the Goose River area – that's near St. Peter's – was plowing in a shore field one spring. When he was plowing toward the shore he could look ahead and see the ice, but the ice was gone, and all he could see was blue water, when he next turned into the furrow that pointed toward the shore, the ice had sunk into the water.

This story revives an old argument as to what does happen to the ice when it disappears. Some people say it does sink into the water, others insist it blows out to

sea. This is an argument I'm going to avoid. I live close to the shore at Southport, our place fronts on the shore where we have our summer cottages, but there are tall trees between our house and the water; I have never observed what does happen to the ice.

I would appreciate comment, though, from veterans who have watched the ice disappear each spring.