



In Their Own Words

Curated by Gina Neist

We are entering another severe weather season. The Eagle Historical Society Newsletters document the memories of Bea Delaney from a storm in 1933, and local historian Mike Rice shares his research into the incidence of tornadoes in Eagle.

Tornado of 1933 *by Bea Delaney, EHS Newsletter, July 2011*

Here is my memory of a fateful day in 1933. As I remember, my mother, Anna Schroeder, was doing some sewing in my bedroom as I had had my tonsils removed a day before and was feeling weak and was spending most of the time in bed. She decided to spend her time sewing and working in my bedroom to keep me quiet and comfortable.

Sometime in the afternoon, it got very dark, like night, and my mother went downstairs and sent my father to get me. I suppose the rest of the family was already there, and she wanted us to be together. It was very dark, like the middle of the night and no lights were showing. My father and I passed one another on the stairs without seeing or touching. I remember my father calling down "Beatrice isn't here," and my mother called back, "It's all right, she is here." During storms, we always came together in the living room. We'd get down on our knees and pray the rosary, which we did that day.

The next day, my dad drove us through the carnage, dead cows in the fields, in the exact area that last year's tornado hit. Only then it was all farm land. We saw straw, pieces of straw driven through tree limbs unbroken. How could that be, straw being so fragile? The barn, south of the road that passes southward past the BP station and goes toward LO, was shifted partially off the foundation but otherwise was unharmed. And most importantly, there were no human fatalities.

Tornadoes in Eagle *by Mike Rice, EHS Newsletter, April 2011*

Though rare, Eagle has had tornados in the past. Back then, they were called cyclones. Though nearly every spring has its share of storms that cause damage, as far back as July of 1861, the Waukesha Freeman reported high winds that damaged barns and outbuildings around Eagle.

The afternoon of Sunday September 17, 1895 saw a small cyclone partially destroy several houses and barns, with corn fields laid flat. The paper reported that Mr. Wilsey Crawley's new house was struck and damaged by lightning.

A powerful storm passed through Waukesha County on Thursday, August 16, 1907 and made front page headlines in the Waukesha Freeman. The cyclones that passed through Waukesha, Brookfield, Genesee, Dousman, Waterville, Ottawa, North Prairie, Palmyra, and Eagle destroyed barns filled with grain and hay, killed scores of cows, horses and other livestock, damaged tractors and equipment, and destroyed many homes along its path. Luckily, there was no loss of life. It was after this event that Tornado Insurance was advertised and became popular among farmers.

Another cyclone we found on record came through Eagle on Thursday, April 24, 1914 striking the J. Bogie family farm. The barn and house were destroyed and several cattle and horses were killed. Mrs. Bogie escaped near death when the hot kitchen stove nearly crushed and burned her. She escaped with minor injuries.

Lifelong resident and historian Jean Bowey remembers a cyclone in Eagle as a young child in about 1933. Her father had just finished laying the cement sidewalk in front of the Methodist church, and since it was raining, the men put tar paper over the cement so it wouldn't be pitted by the rain. Jean remembers the wind blowing so hard down Main Street that the tar paper rolled itself up and blew down the street. She also remembers the Agathen farm on Hwy 67 and the Godfrey farm on NN having their barns destroyed in high wind storms.

Finally, on June 21, 2010, an F2 tornado sliced through Eagle, leaving a path of destruction one-half mile wide and five miles long. The tornado touched down on Hwy S by the Kettle Moraine Ranch west of the Village. Reaching winds of 130 mph, it followed a path due east cutting through several subdivisions and finally lost strength just east of Hwy E in the Town of Mukwonago. The tornado caused \$7.5 million damage, and yet, homes on the north side of Main Street were left untouched.

