

1927 Tornado Tore Up Cornland; Killed Six

Buffalo Hart and Cornland Almost Destroyed; Chestnut Hit

Two Killed Here; Two At Cornland; Two At Chestnut

(Taken from Mount Pulaski News, April, 1927)

Buffalo Hart and Cornland Nearly Destroyed — Chestnut Was Badly Damaged — Many Farm Buildings Ruined — William H. Mattingly and Son Henry, Killed Near Mount Pulaski.

A tornado entered Illinois (from Missouri) in Greene county, Tuesday, April 19, 1927, and sped rapidly in a northeasterly direction, coming into Sangamon county, doing some damage at Riverton, then coming on to Buffalo Hart, almost wrecking the village. From there the tornado followed the Illinois Central Railroad and all but took Cornland off the face of the earth; sped east along the lake ditch, and wrecked the Oakland school house one mile south of Lake Fork; then turned again to the tracks, damaging homes and farm buildings in its path, reached the home of Hubert Buckles along north side of tracks, half way between Lake Fork and Mt. Pulaski; then turned east and damaged buildings on the Cecil Buckles farm; then struck the tenant house on the Wilford K. Scroggin, Sr., farm, occupied by Henry Mattingly and family, and his father, William H. Mattingly and so badly injured the men that they both died that day from their injuries.

Headed Toward Hill

The storm did some damage to the Scroggin home, and passed on to the Fred Kemmer farm occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Riedle and family. Then the tornado headed toward Mt. Pulaski, and almost demolished the Wm. Ayers place about 200 yards south of the city limits. Then, changing its course east as though avoiding the hill. The old tile factory was hit and so was the Fred Horn place, and the

storm then swerved past Mrs. Elizabeth Romer's home on the old Latham road, then on the dirt road east until it reached the William F. Stoll farm, turned north thru the George A. Tomlinson place, the former Richard Leslie farm, now owned by Geo. F. Dittus and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Laughery. Reaching the Illinois Central tracks again, the storm followed the railroad to Chestnut, where great damage was done, and two children killed.

Six Killed

The storm, which occurred between 1 and 2 o'clock, left a path of destruction all along its wake, but after a few miles past Chestnut the damage was not so great. The tornado caused two deaths at Cornland, two near Mount Pulaski and two at Chestnut, all residents of Logan county.

Many persons were injured. The fast Illinois Central Daylight Special passenger train, stopped in Chestnut, where the injured were placed on the train and also at Cornland and Buffalo Hart, to take others on board, and they were taken to the hospitals in Springfield. Fortunately the train was not damaged much, and could proceed with the injured. When the train reached Cornland doctors and nurses were already there from Springfield, to care for the injured.

During the time the tornado was passing along the south city limits of Mount Pulaski, there was a terrific rain falling all over the old hill, and not until after the storm did hundreds of citizens know how miraculously the city had escaped destruction.

Warned by Telegraph

Word was telegraphed ahead that a tornado was approaching and both the township high school and the grade school were at once notified. Several others heard about it, but the majority were unaware of the serious situation. The news spread rapidly and soon many people gathered at the Illinois Central station. First reports were that many peo-

ple had been killed in both Cornland and Chestnut. Local doctors and many willing people hurried to these places to give aid.

The first word of the Mattingly tragedy was brought in by Herman Hahn, who ran almost all the way to town. People rushed to the scene to give aid, but Henry Mattingly was so badly injured that he died about 3:30 p.m. His father was also fatally injured. The Hershey ambulance went to the Scroggin farm and brought the father and also Mrs. Henry Mattingly to the railroad station, and they were taken on the train to the Deaconess hospital in Lincoln, where William Mattingly died at 9 p.m. Mrs. Henry Mattingly was badly hurt, but is improving. The youngest Mattingly child was at home, but was only slightly hurt when the house was crushed. The other three Mattingly children were in town at school and Mrs. William Mattingly was also in town at the home of her sister, Mrs. Wm. Fultz.

Two Chestnut Boys Killed

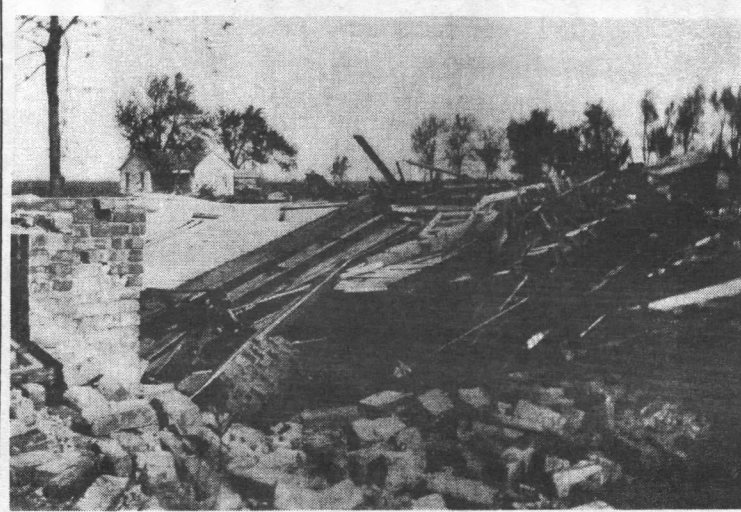
Clarence Gallagher, principal of the Chestnut school, also received a report of the approaching storm and marched the 80 pupils from the second floor to the first floor, where they were huddled while the wind crashed through the upper floor and carried it away. The two youths who were killed were struck as they dashed from the building when the storm struck.

Thirty school children at Buffalo Hart were saved when their teacher herded them into the basement of a church, which was being used as a school. The first floor of the building was badly damaged.

Cornland Almost Destroyed

Cornland was the hardest hit of any town in the storm's path, and hardly a building was left intact. It was a sorrowful scene following this terrible storm, but the citizens immediately started in with the task of providing temporary quarters out of wreckage that necessitated an outlay of \$100,000 for complete restoration of buildings, furnishings and equipment. Aiding them in their heroic efforts were many

CORNLAND METHODIST CHURCH DESTROYED



workers from nearby farms from Elkhart, Mt. Pulaski, Lake Fork, and other places, the citizens being designated by a single band of red string tied around the left arm, while those from out-of-town wore a circlet of white string.

The destruction in Cornland is too big a story to tell in detail in a weekly paper. Hundreds of people have already been there to see the terrible wreckage and many to give their help. Wednesday morning a shipment of roofing paper was sent from Mt. Pulaski to Cornland, and construction work was pushed with a view toward roofing many of the homes, temporarily.

Both the Cornland Methodist and Christian churches were almost completely destroyed.

Bankers Get In Vault

The Cornland State Bank, a brick structure, erected in 1920 at a cost of \$10,000, was badly damaged. M. B. Drake, the cashier, and his assistant, Mervin Voile (of Mount Pulaski), had just returned to the bank following dinner, when the storm broke, and they dashed into the vault for safety. The currency and securities had been locked up when they went to dinner and they had not taken them out when the crash came.

Baby Crushed In Mother's Arms

Not a building in Cornland es-

caped damage completely. But, with all their hardships and cares people of the town were looking after the welfare of the R. A. McIntyre family. Their infant daughter was crushed in her mother's arms during the destruction of their home, which also injured Mrs. McIntyre and her 4-year-old son. Mr. McIntyre has been without regular employment for some time.

Pupils To Basement

Miss Zenobia Zimmermann, who was principal of the Cornland school, had a rather unusual story to tell of the disaster. The weather conditions had been quite unsettled with strong and fast-moving clouds causing her to cut short the noon hour of her pupils.

Deciding it far better to be safe than sorry, the pupils were sent down to the basement, and no sooner had this been done than the storm struck, with debris flying through the air and the sky turning to a yellowish green. It became so dark that it was impossible to see outside thru the basement windows, and there was a dead silence. It was then that the most impressive scene of Miss Zimmermann's life was enacted, as she had her young charges repeat in unison, the Lord's Prayer. The school

(Continued on next page)

HOME AND STORES DEMOLISHED AT CORNLAND BY TORNADO



CORNLAND AS IT LOOKED IN 1927 FOLLOWING A TORNADO which almost destroyed the town 10 miles southwest of here, and killed two persons. A more desolate scene would be hard to imagine. Store buildings of Ford & Son and G. W. Hughes across the street south of the bank and the Phares

general store to the west, were totally destroyed. The Cornland State Bank, in upper right, shows the vault and a backroom still intact. The Methodist and Christian churches were ruined but the school house in the upper left was scarcely touched.