

tornado hit in middle of the night

children, Stanley and Naomi, and a friend, Mardell Leitner, who was spending the night, dead.

"I just remember crying as I tried to pick up the glass from the broken windows, along with scattered stalks from a nearby field, but I had no idea at the time how many had been hurt or killed in the storm. We used scattered tin from the outbuildings to cover the windows," Mrs. Lohofener said.

The Oberlin Herald reported, "No other tragedy has ever reaped such a toll of death, injuries and destruction in Decatur County, except the Indian raid of Sept. 30, 1878, when 16 settlers were massacred by the raiding Cheyenne Indians."

Though the twister first came to earth on the Dr. L. C. Tilden farm eight miles south of Oberlin, the first buildings struck were at the Frank Urban farm southeast of town.

There, Norma Nicholson was killed and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Nicholson, were injured. Their son, Clarence, was in the basement and was not injured.

From there it traveled north to the Fred Bliss property, where Mr. and Mrs. James Beneda Jr., and daughter, Alene, 14, and Duane Harold were living.

Alene was killed and the others injured. However, Mrs. Beneda and Mr. Harold died later

from their injuries.

Next in the path of the storm was the Jay Paddock farm a half mile north, occupied by the Dale Paddock family. He and his wife, their son, Elvin, 4, and Mrs. Paddock's brother and sister, Gail and Leon Railsback, were killed. The three Railsbacks were siblings of Olive (Railsback) Hafner of Herndon.

From there, the tornado swerved to the west and traveled some 400 yards up the Sappa Creek. The farmstead of Mr. and Mrs. Charley Kirkendall was on the edge of the storm and only windows in the house and part of the roof were torn off.

It then headed toward the Lohofener and Leinwetter farmsteads. Farther north on the Harold Andrews place, an unoccupied house was demolished before the killer headed for the Robert Castle home, a mile north.

Here the house was turned around and moved about 100 feet off the foundation. Windows and doors were blown out, but all of the family, which included Shirley (Castle) Ward of Oberlin, escaped injury.

Continuing its devastating drive, the tornado hurled itself against the home and farm building of Fred Euhus, where by an unexplained miracle, seven people were scattered about the yard with parts of the house without loss of life. However, Mr. Euhus, and a hired boy, Lloyd



Irel Lohofener

were demolished. The Benedas were injured and their son, Frank, 22, was hospitalized with a broken back.

The twister apparently lifted for several miles and then, with less fury, came to earth east of Cedar Bluffs to damage buildings on the Dem Moore farm.

"After we survived that tornado," Mrs. Lohofener said. "whenever a storm came up, we always headed for the basement. It had only dirt, since it has not been finished so we'd take turns holding Jerry until the storm passed."

"I shall never forget going to the Leinwetter farm after the storm. I had been there the previous day and had gone to the cellar to get eggs from Mrs. Leinwetter. After the storm, everything in the cellar was still in perfect order."

"When I think back, I have to very thankful our family was spared — even our car, which was needed so badly that stormy night to get help and take the dead to Oberlin. There was only one ambulance, so my husband and Mr. Schmoker took some in a wagon, pulled by our car."

Total property damage was estimated at \$100,000 by R. F. Landau, who inspected all farms affected, but it was thought to be a minimum figure.

The greatest loss, however, was to the many families who lost loved ones.

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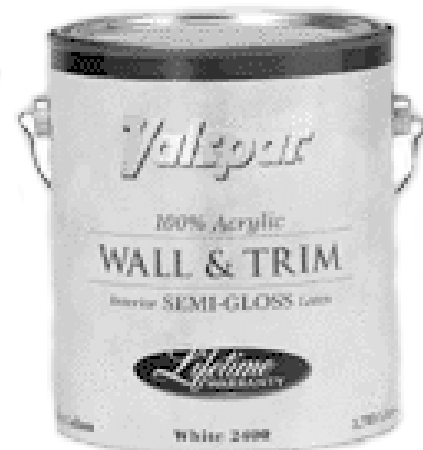
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