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Tornadoes Crush Many Buildings

Tornadoes dived to the ground Sunday in several Clinton area communities, leaving injured person, dead livestock, squashed buildings and many leveled trees near Lowden, Springbrook, Toronto and Clarence. Richard Dircks, 65, who farms south of Clarence was reported in “critical” condition this morning in Iowa City University Hospitals after a tornado blew his house off its foundation and the building flew into bits.

Charles and Bert McDermott of east of Massillon suffered cuts and bruises when a large tree fell, demolishing their small home. A part of their house was swept away by the gate. They were not reported hospitalized. Dozens of farms were severely damaged in the combined wind, hail and rain storm that death its deadliest blows between 12:30 and 1:30 p.m. Cedar, Clinton and Jackson Counties felt the blunt of the onslaught.

At the Dircks’ farm, four miles south of Clarence Dircks and his wife and son, Dewey, were in the two-story house when they saw the funnel sweeping toward the, according to Cedar Deputy Sheriff Dick Hancock. Mrs. Dircks and Dewey ran to the basement from the first floor, but Dircks was trapped on the second floor. Ripped from its foundation and sailed through the air about 75 feet, the structure was torn to kindling wood when it struck the ground. Neighbors found Dircks in the debris and was rushed to University Hospitals where he reportedly was being treated for head injuries. Mrs. Dircks received severe body bruises and the son was reported only slightly injured. Only one small machine shed survived on the Dircks place. Spectators after the wind had passed said the farmyard looked as if it had been “Shelled.”

From Clarence the twister tore into the Lowden farming area where the Mrs. Werner Kruckenberg farm also was “shelled” and was reported the worst hit. Miss Dorothy Kruckenberg, a member of the family told the Herald she had “just laid down to rest about 12:55 p.m. when I heard the terrible wind I heard my brother Hugo yell get down on the floor but it was too late the twister hit before the words were off his lips. It only lasted two minutes.”

The house and garage were badly damaged and all the other buildings on the well improved place were crushed. “I can’t bear to see it,” cried Mrs. Kruckenberg, 80. She had spent her entire life on the farm. The farmstead use to be kept immaculately. She was taken from the scene of devastation to Lowden to spend a time with friends and relatives.

Dozens of farms were badly damaged in the Lowden community. Several Lowden citizens said they saw more than one funnel churning in from the southwest, narrowly missing the town, the funnels swept off to the northeast. “I saw object flying through the air and the church and rectory looked as though they would split apart,” said the Rev. B. W. Frommelt in describing the storm at Springbrook. He was attending a baptismal dinner in a home across the street from the rectory when he saw debris hurling through the air. Trees falling on the tile roof of SS Peter and Paul’s Catholic Church at Springbrook took a heavy toll in damage. The church is one of the finer in Easter Iowa. West windows of the rectory were blown out. The picture window was smashed in a nearby house under construction. Tombstones were toppled when trees crashed in the churchyard cemetery.

Twenty five apple trees were reportedly uprooted on the James Rubel farm between Springbrook and Bellevue. The Rubel barn and hog house were damaged. The farm appeared to be caught between two storms, one accompanied by pitch black clouds and the other by luminous clouds, one spectator said. A mile east of the Dircks’ farm, between Clarence and Lowden, two barns, a hog house and some livestock were destroyed on the Hugo Schroeder place. East of the Schroeder property, a barn was torn to bits on the Fred Kahl farm. Two hundred head of livestock were unscathed.

Northeast of the Kahls at the Lester K. place, two barns were ripped apart like jackstraws. The house was damaged, the barn roof disappeared, the windmill was twisted and a cistern pump set in concrete was yanked from the ground, on the William P. old farm north of Lowden.

At Albert Nielings' near the Kruckenberg farm, the top of the house was damaged and some pigs were lost. All buildings except the residence were crushed and several cattle reportedly died on the Arthur Wendt farm northeast of Lowden. A barn, milk house and shed collapsed on the Charles Caes farm nearby.

Electrical and telephone lines were damaged over much of Eastern Iowa. Utilities in some areas were out for hours. DeWitt, Lowden, Maquoketa and Olin were among communities blacked out. "We might just as well sell out," Miss Kruckenberg told a Herald writer shortly after the storm. Miss Kruckenberg, with her brother, Hugo, have lived on the farm all their lives. They are the children of Mrs. Werner Kruckenberg. The Kruckenbergs' machinery, like on several other farms, was ruined. "If the machinery wasn't broken we could start spring work," Hugo said. The Kruckenberg loss is insured.

Three head of livestock were killed on the place. Other animals were pulled from under rubble by neighbors. Foaming at the mouth, they appeared uninjured. How many of the 600 chickens were missing on the Kruckenberg place was unknown. After the hen house was leveled, distant witnesses said they saw chickens flying through the air. Floors in the house were covered by several inches of hay. Hay had been driven through cracks in the house. A tractor driven generator was secured to prevent a large stock of foodstuffs from thawing in the family deep freeze. Portable hog houses were drawn by tractors from neighboring farms to house swine.

Some believe the Kruckenberg house is twisted and cracked beyond repair. Buildings demolished were three small machine sheds, a large swine house, brooder houses, a separator room, tool shed and hen house, granary and hen house. All windows were knocked from the house on the Harry Hamdorf farm near Lowden. Other farms damaged were those of Myron Conrad where part of the barn roof was torn off, and Richard Kimzel, where a barn was destroyed.

Heavy damage also resulted in the resort area on the Wapsie River near Toronto, a cabin owned at the resort by James Mitota of Lowden simply disappeared. Another Milota cabin was cabin was crumpled like a cardboard toy. A cabin owned jointly by Charles Wentworth of Toronto and Carl R. of Lowden was destroyed. Residents of the Lowden and Toronto communities described the impending storm "like the sound of a freight train coming,"

The Lowden devastated area was estimated as about 11miles long and several miles wide. Mrs. Milota said the TV set was wrecked at the family's Toronto summer cabin, but the picture tube lay safely undamaged on the ground. Some dishes, thrown from a cabinet and onto the ground outside, were unbroken. Two inches of rain fell in 5 minutes at Bellevue. A downpour also was reported at Sabula. One spectator said he saw a funnel sweep across the Mississippi River from Jackson County and disappear into Illinois about 1:15 p.m.