



Anna District
Historical Society
Anna • Kettlersville • McCartyville

Skipping Village Gazette

1965 Palm Sunday Tornado

Written and edited by Carol Wentz

Taking advantage of one of the first unseasonably warm spring evenings in April 1965, the members of Immanuel United Church of Christ in Kettlersville stopped to visit in front of the church after the last Lenten service of the season ended. The time was probably 9:00-9:15. Outdoors it was quiet. Deadly quiet as many of those who were present that night remember it. Not a leaf moving on the trees. Just oppressively, eerily quiet. It should have been a sign of what was to come later that night.

About an hour later, the storms swept into western Ohio, and Kettlersville lost electric power. Instant communication that we enjoy today wasn't a thing back in 1965. The folks in Kettlersville had no idea what their neighbors just a few miles south of the village were experiencing. Most didn't find out until the following morning.

Shortly before 10:00pm a tornado touched down just south of Fort Loramie. For the next fifteen minutes it roared east through northern Shelby County cutting a deadly half mile wide path for 23 miles, first along Ft. Loramie-Swanders Road and finally parallel to Meranda Road, south of Anna. It left in its wake three persons dead, over 50 injured, and 150 structures destroyed.

New Lifetime Membership:

Ron and Shirley Finkenbine
Eric and Danielle Sielschott

Thanks for your generous support of the Anna District Historical Society!



Path of Palm Sunday Tornado in Shelby County

Those who experienced the tornado first hand still have vivid memories from that night 61 years ago.

Roger Lentz:

"My brother, my nephew, and I had been at the drive-in movie in Sidney that night. We headed for home around 10:00 in the midst of wind, lightning, and a hard rain. Traveling on SR 29, we got as far as Ft. Loramie-Swanders road when we noticed all the electric poles leaning east. A little farther up, the poles were completely down and across the road blocking the way to our family farm on Hardin-Wapak Road. We could see the farmstead through the lightning flashes and took off running towards it. All of the buildings looked a lot lower than they should have been. When we reached our farm we could see that all the farm buildings were leveled to the ground. The house was still standing but had shifted about 8 inches on the foundation. My parents, who were at home when the tornado hit, never made it to the basement. They said it felt like the house was floating.



Front and back view of Lentz home after tornado

My brother, Gary, and I were in partnership with our parents in the dairy and farming operation at that time.. We milked about 60 cows. The morning after the tornado had hit we found that we had only lost three cows and three heifers. Obviously, the rest of the herd didn't get milked that morning. We hired semi trucks to move our cows to Cecil Long's place a few miles away. He had just sold his dairy herd, but the milking equipment was still there. We milked there for about six months until our new barn and milking parlor were ready."

Paul Workman:

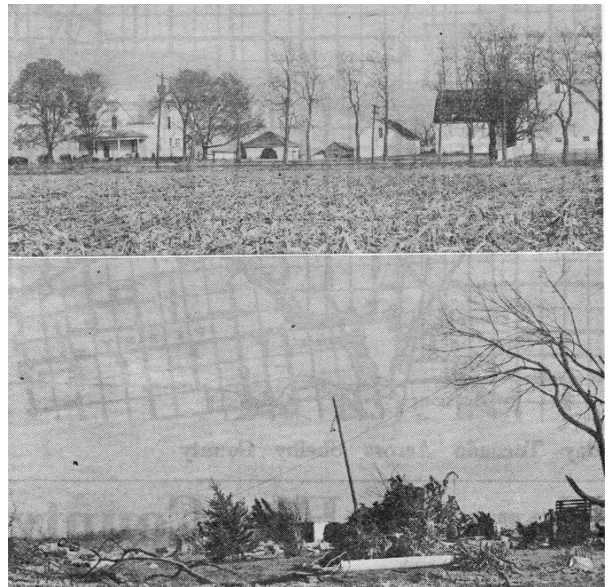
"Janice and I were still living in the upstairs apartment at Fredonia Wilt's house in Anna the night of the tornado. Following the storm we heard the fire siren and watched as the fire truck headed west. Of course, the train was blocking the tracks. We had no idea that there was a derailment south of Anna because of a tornado.

We had talked with Julius Thobe just the previous Sunday about purchasing 10 acres of woods on his farm along Meranda Road. This woods was located less than a mile away from his farm on Harmon Road. All of their buildings were severely damaged by the tornado the very next Sunday evening. Mrs. Thobe was upstairs in the house when it hit and unable to make it out of the house in time. Her husband found her on top of the rubble of their demolished house and climbed up to get her. She was alive, but in getting to her Mr. Thobe suffered many, many puncture wounds. Later on that year, we did purchase the woods and built our first house there.

School was cancelled on Monday after the tornado. On Tuesday when the students returned to classes, the Anna superintendent, Arlen McRill, asked for volunteers to help pick up the debris left in the fields. Busloads of Anna students, along with two teachers, helped greatly in cleaning up the fields."



Remains of Mr. and Mrs. Julius Thobe's house on Monday morning



Before and after pictures of the John and Eileen Boyer residence where they lived for exactly one day before the tornado hit

Eileen Boyer:

"We moved out to my brother-in-law's farm on Saturday, the day before Palm Sunday. The next morning, we had our daughter, Beth, baptized at church. She was 3 months old. It was a hot day, but by evening we'd had a little rain which made us have the front door unlocked, and it was cooler. There was lightning going on everywhere, sideways and up and down. We just got the kids to sleep and were watching the approaching storm when the electricity went out. I was sitting on a rocking chair right beside our bed watching out the window.

We heard the train whistle a mile and a half west of us. Unbeknownst to us, 53 train cars had already been derailed by the storm coming our way. When my husband John opened our front door, we could hear both the train whistle and the roar of the tornado. He told me to get Beth, and he would get Bobby and David to the basement. By the time I crossed the room--about 15 seconds--the storm was hitting the south side of the house. Luckily, the cellar door was already propped open, or we never would have made it. As I was crossing the room with Beth, I felt like the storm was pulling her out of my arms. I held onto her so tightly, that she had bruises on her face from my robe. John pushed the boys down the steps, and the door slammed shut on David's arm cracking the bone.

In another 15 seconds, the house was picked up over the shrubs in the backyard, and taken 300 yards into the field where it literally exploded.

New Electronic Digital Book

Twelve farm buildings and our house were destroyed within a matter of seconds. We had lived there exactly one day. Everything we owned was gone except for a single dresser. The rocking chair I had been watching from was found later with the sheet from the bed wrapped around a barn beam stuck completely through the seat of the chair. Beth's crib was found under the kitchen floor. The family dog was found alive but wrapped up in a piece of tin.

When it finally stopped, we could hear the motor of a car running. It turned out to be a neighbor boy, Frank Riethman, who was trying to make his way around all the downed trees and electrical wires to get home after a date. He ended up instead taking us to the hospital.

It was complete chaos at the hospital. It was filled with families just like us who were covered in mud and silt. We all had small pebbles embedded in our skin, even Beth, who didn't cry for three days after the storm. But when we looked around the ER, we realized how lucky we were. Other than David's fractured arm, we had no other serious injuries.

I believe God was watching over us as everything happened to make us safe--from the unlocked front door, to the cellar door being up, to the concrete blocks landing in such a way in our basement that they formed steps for us to get out, to Frankie being right there at that moment. We can endure much. It's life that matters."



Nine year old Bobby Boyer keeping a promise to his brother to look for their toys after the storm



Old Saint Jacob Lutheran Church cemetery as it appears today just north of Pearl Cemetery. After the tornado scattered the headstones, it was decided to put them all together in the middle of the cemetery.

Due to the generosity of the Thaman Family, the Shelby County Community Foundation, and the Bensman Foundation, a new electronic digital historical book has been added to the Packer Historical Center and is ready for viewing. This electronic book was designed and installed for the Anna District Historical Society by Fire Watch, a company that specializes in this kind of interactive media.

Presently, there are eight local history stories loaded into the digital book. The ADHS will have the ability to add new stories and also store the older stories for viewing. Please stop by during our new monthly Sunday hours for a demonstration, or call Carol Carity, ADHS President, at 937-394-3581 to schedule a time to see this wonderful new digital historical tool.

Anna District Historical Society

112 West Main St.

P.O. Box 133

Anna, OH 45302

**POSTAL CUSTOMER
ANNA, OH 45302**

Five Sundays This Summer

The Packer Historical Center will be open on the first Sunday of each month from May through September.

Please mark your calendars and stop by!

Sunday, May 3rd, 1-3pm

Sunday, June 7th, 1-3pm

Sunday, July 5th, 1-3pm

Sunday, August 2nd, 1-3pm

Sunday, September 6th, 1-3pm

The Anna District Historical Society

Packer Historical Center

112 W. Main Street, P.O. Box 133

Anna, Ohio 45302

Website: adhs-oh.org

**To schedule a private tour of the
Packer Historical Center, call ADHS
President Carol Carity at
937-394-3581.**

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ANNA DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 133, Anna, Ohio 4530

Attention: Susan Bertsch