

Codell Cyclone Days' Stories

May 20 - 1916, 1917 and 1918
Codell & beyond

1917



←3 Miles West

1918



Town of Codell

1916



1 Mile East→

Compiled by Nila LaRea Denton

Revised March 2022

In memory of two special ladies in my life who survived the Codell Tornadoes: my grandmother, Mary (Netherland) Zeigler who, along with her step-grandfather, Willis Johnson, were in the 1916 tornado that hit the farm east of Codell I grew up knowing as the “Ekey” place that Willis Johnson owned at the time. And Celeste (Lesta Adams) Glendening, a dear neighbor lady of ours when I was growing up, who, along with her family, were in the 1918 tornado. Their farm was just a few miles south of us. Also I am most grateful Lesta years later wrote down so vividly her 1918 tornado memories. Her Lesta’s written testimony made it easy to figure out what really happened to her son, Max, that night.

My thanks to all who contributed to my research. The memories others shared of stories they had heard. (A more complete list of my resources is found at the end of this document.)

Special Note: I have had several ask me how much I charge for this EBook. It is free. Completion of this project has been a twenty year or so life goal for me. If you feel you want to give something monetary, and I restate that this is completely voluntary, then I would suggest making a contribution to the Codell Community Service Center, 304 4th St, Codell KS 67663. Again, may I stress this is only a suggestion, not a requirement. I want this research to reach as many as possible. Please feel free to share this ebook. And I thank you in advance. Your interest in my work and this subject is one of the reasons I put in all the hours on this project over a seven year period. Enjoy! – Nila LaRea (Brown) Denton, March 2022

Introduction

Kansas ranks 4th in the United States in tornado frequency per square mile. In Kansas, with an area of 82,000 square miles, the total area swept by an average tornado is around 10 square miles. Statistics collected from 1916-1928 showed an average of 12 tornadoes per year. This means that any particular 10 square miles, the chances of a tornado in any specific 10 square mile area is about once in 680 years. The chances of a tornado of any strength striking within any specific square mile during the year are about one in 1,900 (Grazulis, Significant Tornadoes 1680-1991, 1993). Therefore, since a Kansas Township equals 36 square miles, you might expect a tornado strike about once every 50 years.

The number of reported tornadoes increases in the north central region of the state compared to the entire state, upping the chances of a tornado strike to around once every 35-40 years. The chances of it happening on the same date, three years in a row, is astronomical. Yet, this very thing happened on May 20, three years in a row - 1916, 1917 and 1918. And this ebook is a collection of those Codell tornadoes’ stories compiled from local newspaper articles, first hand accounts and stories handed down through families.

Codell Cyclone Days' Stories

May 20, 1916

1917



←3 Miles West

1918



Town of Codell

1916



1 Mile East→

On a Saturday night, around 7 P.M., on May 20, 1916, a F2 (considerable damage) tornado hit the ground three miles south of Codell and traveled northeast for 15 miles, to about a mile northeast of Chalk Mound, north of Laton, Kansas.

The following is a collection of reports of the destruction taken from local newspapers and first hand accounts:

1. Arthur Hoskins, tenant / Henry Overholser, owner – The stables were badly damaged, and also his brother's automobile. The Codell Notes published in the Plainville Times reported after the cyclone (old fashioned term for tornado), the Overholser boys killed 281 rats.
2. Werner Overholser, (son of W.F.) – Everything was reported torn up; the windmill, chickens, chicken house, barn, cattle shed, the hayrack, and all the machinery destroyed, including three wagons. The house was torn to pieces, except for one room. All their clothing, bedding and household effects in the damaged portion of the house were swept away. Mr. Overholser and his family were able to get to the cave (old fashioned term for the cellar), and thus were protected. Unfortunately, their washing machine and debris ended up dumped in the cave with them. Later after the cyclone passed over, they reported finding a board with a nail in it and a chicken's heart sticking on the nail. A calf tied to a tree prior to the tornado was later found one-half mile away, dropped unhurt in a wheat field.
3. Willis H. Johnson (3/4 mile east of Codell) - His step-granddaughter, Mary Netherland was living with him at the time. Mr. Johnson's wife, Mary, had died just a few months before. The cyclone took a few shingles off the roof of the two story stone house and tore down a stone cow shed 50-60 feet long. Mr. Johnson was "cooping" some little chicks and did not see the tornado until it was a "rod or two away" (about 30 feet). Mr. Johnson threw himself down to the ground in the barnyard (as later told to me by his granddaughter Mary). Another account said the force of the storm pinned him there tightly. The barn, stables, corral, woodshed, and windmill were totally destroyed, and a calf killed. Trees were uprooted. 14 year old Mary would later tell how she and her cousin, Agnes, who was visiting her at the time, were in the stone house when the storm hit. When they heard the wind, they were scared, and ran downstairs where they tried to open the front door, however they were unable to do so. Later, they were told, if they had been able to open the door, they probably would have been sucked out of the house and into the tornado.
4. W. J. Overholser (1/2 mile north of the Johnson place) - The tornado moved the barn off its foundation, twisting it considerably. It carried the surrey up in the air some distance and when it hit the ground, it was only a "pile of wreck." The tornado took the windmill, and badly damaged their apple and cherry trees. The heaviest force of the storm hit east of the barn where it twisted up large trees. One of them came down top foremost and was driven into the ground.

5. George Otis – The tornado passed 10 rods east (165 feet). No damage reported.
6. John Hoskins – According to the Plainville Times, the Hoskins' place had the most damage; the tornado described as being one-fourth mile wide. The house was right in the center of the path, however the main part of the house spared; the roof was partially torn off, with large patches of shingles left missing and the wrap around porch destroyed. The cement roof on the smoke house was lifted off, and 400 pounds of meat attached to a ridge pole scattered about the yard. However, a basket of eggs in the smoke house was left unmolested. A tin can lid on a jar was later found in the tin roofed building. Mr. Hoskins especially felt the loss of his 35 year old apple orchard, one of the finest in the county, according to the Rooks County Record. Great plum and apple trees, up to 18" in diameter, were torn up by their roots. One landed in a pasture one-quarter mile away. The garage disappeared completely; their automobile found sticking upon the side of a large tree, with only the engine, front axle and radiator left on it. There were deep furrows, five to six feet long as if plowed by a lister (a plow with sub-soil attachment) where the automobile first landed. A 200 pound stone, buried underground to which a wire brace on the garage was attached, was lifted and carried several 100 feet away. 25 tons of alfalfa in the barn was attributed to being saved only because the roof was partially taken and twisted out of shape. Practically all of their sheds, granaries, and various farm buildings were damaged. The blacksmith shop was blown away, and some of the tools never found. One vice bolted to a 2x2 plank blew away. Another source said all outbuildings were blown away, and total damage estimated at \$2500.
7. Three accounts were given of what happened to Mr. and Mrs. Hoskins, both who were injured. The Natoma Independent further stated "Mr. and Mrs. Hoskins are both old people and rather large. In trying to make their escape were stricken down by flying boards. Mrs. Hoskins was hurt most severely, but not seriously... The garage was swept away and their car taken about two hundred yards and wrecked against a tree."

The Plainville Times reported Mr. and Mrs. Hoskins saw the "cyclone" was going to hit the house, so they started running out of its path, but only got 30 feet from the house. Mrs. Hoskins was so excited she fell, and they hastily got behind a small shed nearby for shelter. The windmill crashed down a few feet behind them.

The Rooks County Record gave further details that Mr. and Mrs. Hoskins saw the tornado coming and ran out of the house to the west. A flying stick struck Mrs. Hoskins across the face and knocked her down. She then crawled to some trees. Later when going back to look at the damage to the house, a loose stone from the house fell on Mrs. Hoskins' foot, mashing it badly.

8. Frank Jones – The main path of the storm seemed to go east of the house. A 40 foot square shed was destroyed. The large barn with a stone basement was completely wrecked. Two windmills, two wagons, a surrey and buggy destroyed, leaving Mr. Jones "without a rig of any kind." That evening, Mr. Jones had rushed his chores, attending to his horses first and turned them out of the barn and into the pasture without feeding them as was his usual custom. He had barely got to the house when his wife remarked, "There

is a cyclone coming.” She had seen it on the hill south of John Hoskins’ place. Mr. Jones and his wife each took part of their children to the cave and ran back to the house after Mr. Jones’ mother. They had just got in the cave when the storm passed over. A minute or two later when the noise had ceased, Mr. Jones looked out and saw the “big whirlwind” passing over the hill northeast of the house. He did not see any debris flying (probably because it was too high). He did not imagine any damage was done until his wife called his attention to the barn moved off its foundation and a shed destroyed.

Later someone would repeat what Mr. Jones said that “he did not believe anything could have stood in the direct path of the twister that was a rod or two wide.” At his place, he thought the main force passed between the barn and the pond. Afterwards, Mr. Jones found his fields, for several hundred yards wide, all covered with debris. Boards with nails scattered all over the fields, making it dangerous for his horses. Many things were driven into the ground so deep, making it impossible to pull them out. Since it was quite a problem, he used a harrow, dragging the debris into piles. Later he found the radiator cap of Mr. Hoskins’ auto out in the middle of his field. Estimate damage \$500-600.

9. A. J. Yowells (Andreson place) - The binder, three wagons and “other things too numerous to mention” were totally destroyed and dumped into a pond of three to four feet of water.
10. Art Bessey (farm owned by Mrs. S. N. Bessey) – The windmill was destroyed, walls of the house “spread out in a manner hard to fix.” Another article stated it this way, “it racked the house to some extent.” Part of the fence was tore up and the roof off the milk house blown away. There were damage to header boxes and outbuildings. Mrs. Bessey, the owner, carried insurance, and was thought to be about the only one suffering damage who did. One source told she had some former cyclone experience some 20 years ago, at which time she had no insurance to cover the loss.

Pleasant Plains Area:

1. Tom Barnett of Corning Township – Everything was blown away except the house and the granary.
2. Harry Howe – No record of damage.

Other Related Stories:

Charles Carmichael saw the tornado a quarter mile away, and he thought it was simply a whirlwind. He didn’t even tell his wife about it. Afterwards some would report they did not see any debris or dust flying. Just prior to the tornado sightings, in places, some reported heavy rain, and the air filled with mud. – Plainville Times

Guy Hockett, Blaine Hoskins and a boy were passing the Hoskins' place. The boy got out of the buggy and started to get behind a big cottonwood tree standing beside the road. They would not let him and pulled him back in the buggy and had just reached the top of the hill as the storm passed a few rods behind. The big cottonwood, about two and one half feet or more in diameter, fell across the road entirely blocking the way. If the boy had gotten behind it, he would have been killed. - Plainville Times (To date, I have not been able to identify the boy's name.)

Reverend Robert Parker had been out to E. M. Sidwell's home and was returning when he saw the cyclone coming. He had no time to dodge it, but he jumped from his horse and laid flat to the ground. - Natoma Independent

At Tom Byrnes' place, a porch was torn off and out buildings destroyed. Some damage is also reported at Owen Smith's. - Natoma Independent

As of June 1, 1916, "the big tree has been cleared from the road past the Hoskins place but the auto is still sticking to the side of the tree." - Plainville Times

"Jean Leshner called us down for calling the storm near Codell a 'cyclone', and makes a good case against us by quoting Webster's dictionary. We will compromise if when Jean gets his cyclone cave dug he will call it a twister cellar." - Plainville Times

"A cyclone visited the community Saturday evening. When first seen it was in the Plainville community and was traveling northeast. When about a mile northeast of Chalk Mound church it raised and disappeared." - Pleasant Plains news item in the Natoma Independent.

It seems almost a miracle that no one was killed. A heavy rain had just preceded the cyclone and the air was full of mud. - Natoma Independent

A week after the tornado, members of the Natoma Independent staff traveled by auto to visit the various sites. The Ford auto was still wrapped about a tree, and debris scattered about the yard. At the Jones' place, they found a fourth of the barn had been "chucked" into the basement. A mule at the Jones' place had one of its legs cut and was standing nearby tied to a tree. A. J. Yowell "took pains" telling the staff of his experience, including the fact he had "watched the tornado practically all the time, dodging into his cave only while the storm was passing over." He said that there was no wind either before or after the twister, and said it was "perfectly safe to keep an eye on it if you were just out of its path."

The Rooks County Record reported that "many people were damaged more or less by the storm.. All unite in saying it was the worst storm since the big cyclone of 1885."

In September 1916, W. H. (Willis) Johnson had just finished building his new barn, and he thought it was a great improvement over the old one. - Natoma Independent

The Topeka Daily Capital reported “It was reported the funnel shaped cloud was plainly seen. No towns were struck and the damage, which was mainly confined to farm buildings, was estimated at \$12,000. No one was injured by the storm, tho there were some very narrow escapes.”

The Weather Doctor Almanac 2006 article, Three Strikes on Codell, stated, “When storm clouds gathered over Rooks County on the afternoon of May 20, 1916, it is likely no one was greatly surprised. This was, after all, Kansas and six tornados had struck the eastern portions of the state just a month previous. Indeed, according to some reports, Codell missed a strike in 1915 (Gazulis, however, has no mention of a “significant” tornado, F2 or greater, in that area in 1915.)

An April 9, 1995 article in the Wichita Eagle newspaper entitled, “Echoes of Cyclone Day, Codell was still leery of the day the tornadoes came.” Later in the article, it said “the echoes of the Cyclone Day are that strong, after nearly 80 years.”

Codell Cyclone Days' Stories

May 20, 1917

1917



← 3 Miles West

1918



Town of Codell

1916



1 Mile East →

On Sunday evening, May 20, 1917, around 6 P.M., a F3 storm (critical damage) hit the ground, considered one of the most extensive tornadoes ever visiting this area. The following is a collection of reports of the tornado destruction taken from local newspapers, first hand accounts and stories passed down through families:

1. Cochran Ranch - The tornado crossed the Saline River at the Cochran Ranch around 6 P.M. (The ranch was located 9 miles south of Plainville or 12 miles southwest of Codell.) Big trees, which it took almost two people to reach around, were blown down. The loss at the Cochran ranch as estimated at \$10,000. It was noted Mr. Cochran had always been strong on fire insurance, but not on windstorms, so there was only a few hundred dollars of insurance against wind damage.
2. Swenson Ranch - All the main ranch buildings were destroyed. The destruction of the buildings, sheds and barns were "about as complete as could have been made."
3. Joe Lee – Afterwards, there was not enough left of the Lee house to be able to tell where the house stood. The furniture was scattered for two miles as far as to where Bob Johnson lived two miles north. The family lost all their belongings and clothing except what meager apparel they had on at the time of the storm. Fortunately, they had left the house and taken refuge in a cement chicken house partially built in a washed out place in the creek bank, thus "protecting them from the fury of the wind." Afterwards, the Lee family went to stay with Henry Kleinschmidt who cared for them until they could once again "get a house."
4. O.M. Loveland - At the main ranch house, the roof and top story were blown off, even with the first story walls. The Loveland family fortunately were gone at the time, but three men employed at the ranch took shelter in the cellar and escaped injury. The large 250 foot long barn was totaled. The 40 foot by 100 foot two story addition recently added was included in the destruction. As the bookkeeper, Mr. Lintner expressed it, all they had "left was the land the deed called for." All the sheds and outbuildings were destroyed. The steel 20 foot by 56 foot cement silo "stood in lonely vigil untouched." It was believed at the time that the storm could find "no place to get ahold so the cement silos were seldom phased by cyclones." Later, after the storm, three horses and a cow were found with broken legs.

Another account in the May 31, 1917 issue of the Plainville Times further details the losses and incidences at the Loveland and Lee homes; unfortunately the descriptions given did not specify which farmsteads were being described: An eight foot galvanized watering tank was picked up, crushed, a sideboard of a wagon was split in two, and then one of the pieces was thrashed through the flattened tank, the tank and board carried one-half mile away. One end of the board was found in the trunk of a cottonwood tree, and the tank was left dangling on the board.

The kitchen was lifted into the air, and not one trace, not even the cook stove, was ever found, the only exception a large tea kettle was placed in the center of the round where the kitchen had stood.

One of the chiffarobes (defined as a closet like piece of furniture that combines a long space for hanging clothes, that is a wardrobe or armoire, with a chest of drawers) had set a small aquarium full of water with a gold fish in it. The aquarium was “gently placed” on the floor of the room, then the stone wall of the house was piled over it. Also the furniture was rolled up, twisted, crushed, and pitched into the yard.

From the stock corral, with the fence blown away, 25 head of mules and horses ran out unhurt. A large windmill tower was picked up, whirled into the air, mashed, thrown into the corral, and a “farm wagon was pitched in to keep the tower company.” A 100 foot stock shed was wrecked, but an old shed only “stripped of its ridge boards,” while the great stone barn standing nearby was demolished, leaving it “a pile of jabbed stones.”

The forest located just west of the barn “seemed to have angered the storm,” for some of the trees had been wrenched from the ground, others twisted and broken, while some had been stripped of their branches. All of this forest wreckage had been left in the “middle of a little creek running nearby.” Hundreds of feet of barbed wire were torn from nearby fences, rolled into a large ball and left at the south end of the ruined barn. Five boys were in the cellar of the house, none hurt, and the incubator (for chicks) in the basement was not disturbed.

Further comment in the May 31, 1917 Plainville Times article, “It would be easy to mention many other things this storm did to the ranch, but in order to appreciate it, make a visit to the scene of disaster, and then you will be able to learn what organized wind on a wild spree can do.”

5. Sam Groves - One mile west of O.M. Loveland’s ranch, the new bungalow and house where Sam Groves lived were untouched. Harold Carpenter, the brother of Mrs. Roscoe Loveland, who was visiting the ranch at the time had started home on horseback across the path of the storm just about 20 minutes before it occurred. There was a great amount of worrying over his fate by those interested until the next morning when telephone communication was restored, and it was found he had made it back safe to the ranch and was with the others.
6. John Coleman - The tornado picked up a 1” x 12” board and drove it endways through a steer, killing it. Outbuildings were demolished.
7. Brison place (Ed Hageman, tenant) - The barn was destroyed.
8. L L. Huber - At 6:30 P.M., when the storm arrived, Mr. and Mrs. Huber, along with five children, had taken refuge in the cellar. Part of the house was blown away, and the other leaned way over. The cellar wall caved in on them. One of the little boy’s leg was hurt. The house was so badly twisted it had to be completely rebuilt. The barn and outbuildings were destroyed, with the exception of a small granary. The farm machinery was demolished. Fortunately, Mr. Huber had \$1,100 insurance coverage, but this would not begin to repair the damage. It was thought the most damage in the vicinity was done there, according to the Plainville Times.

Further comments in the Plainville Times: The cyclone rose and continued north from the Huber place to the end of the trees near Ora Benedick's house. There it arose from the ground and passed over the Benedick place. It landed again in the Hrabe district.

9. George Watkins - Four inches of rain accompanied the storm in the Watkins' vicinity. Over two inches of hail fell. It was piled up against the fence 18" high. So much hail fell that it dammed the lister rows and prevented the corn from washing out. (A lister is defined as also being called lister plow, middlebreaker, middlebuster, a plow with a double moldboard, used to prepare the ground for planting by producing furrows and ridges.) Parties coming up from the Saline River said that hail fell as large as goose eggs.
 10. Norris Grove - Evangelist Whiston, his wife and their invalid nephew, Frank Fisher, had been camped there. The water arose on both sides of the temporary house where they resided and threatened to carry it away. Hail went through the light roof, and Mrs. Whiston started to assist Mr. Fisher to the nearest house over a quarter of a mile away, wading in water nearly knee deep, as they watched fearfully, "lest the cyclone would strike them." Mr. Whiston had driven to Palco that morning to fill his regular appointment and was unaware of the storm until he reached Zurich on his return trip home after the evening services.
 11. Ben McCarroll - The garage was moved off its foundation, and the silo's foundation cracked. His fences were badly blown down. At this point, the tornado was thought to be about an eighth of a mile wide. No rain occurred at his ranch, but it was noted the next day, "they got a soaker." The Natoma Independent described the damage done at the McCarroll place as slight.
- Azel Cochran, who had been in Plainville, passed the path of the storm a little while before it occurred, and was at the bungalow about a mile west. He remained there to help get things straightened out. A "large gang of men" later assisted in getting the debris cleared out.
12. J. E. Garvin - The fences were blown down.
 13. Will Smith - The stable and most of the buildings were destroyed.
 14. Ed Madden Ranch - The tornado jumped "clear over."
 15. Ed Hockett farm (Ora Dougherty, tenant) - Everything was demolished. Not even a piece of furniture was left, with the exception of the head of a sewing machine. The Dougherty's escaped by being in the cave (old fashioned term for cellar). It was said they saved nothing but a few clothes, a ham and their marriage certificate. The Natoma Independent said of the destruction at the Dougherty place: "the storm did its worst, destroying everything... Complete destruction prevailed here."
 16. L. B. Smith place - All the buildings were demolished except the house. They attempted to get chains on their auto to escape, but failed, and then laid in a nearby draw while lumber and sticks were driven in the ground around them.

17. Hi Keas - Three inches of rain fell at his place, and it hailed for nearly an hour. Mr. Keas thought from his place he could plainly see two storms. He thought the one that struck the Huber place was different from the one at Ora Dougherty's. (Mr. Keas also referenced a previous tornado, on May 16, 1885, that swept past his place and Twin Mounds, ending at a bluff on the Solomon. One lady, Mrs. Grimes lost her life.)
18. City of Woodston - Heavy hail was reported towards Woodston, where the cyclone struck the northeast edge of town at 7 P.M., tearing up barns and outbuildings, but no residences, though shingles were ripped badly. (Later it was reported some houses sustained damage.) Several cars were blown from the side track and demolished. Part of the main line track was blown out so that the Missouri Pacific train had to use the side track in getting through town. The next morning, one source reported, anyone going over the ground, would say it was fortunately no one was hurt, which appeared almost a miracle.
19. Will Morrissey - Struck there first in Woodston, tearing down buildings and scattering them in all directions. The wheel from his windmill was torn and carried north about a quarter of a mile and left in a cornfield.
20. Mattie Foss - The house was moved from the foundation, turned partly around and at the southeast corner, driven quite a ways into the ground, leaving it partly lopped over. Every window was broken, the chimney torn down, and part of the roof taken off. Mrs. Foss and her children were in the house at the time, though fortunately not hurt, but had to get out through windows as every door was wedged fast. The barn was torn down, but her cow received no injury.
21. Brogan place - The house was badly wrecked and partly unroofed, the barn torn down, wagons and other implements "scattered to the winds."
22. Grandpa LaRue - The home was greatly damaged.
23. James Reeves - The house was carried away, and the chimney smashed down on the floor. The deck roof was pushed down to the floor. The storm picked up one of his horses and carried it about one-half mile and put it down without injury, except for a broken tail and a very "drabbled appearance." (defined as to make or become wet and dirty). Another account said his horse was blown over 300 yards away. The bunkhouse at the stockyards was carried south and the siding laid down on the side lengthwise of the main track.
24. John Haynes - The house was taken off its foundation, turned partly around and one corner driven into the ground.
25. The grandstand at the ball park - It was blown several rods south and landed in a very badly wrecked condition.
26. Lumber yard - One shed at the lumber yard was entirely demolished and the other badly damaged.
27. Morrow Stanley - All of his outbuildings were destroyed and the house roof injured.

28. Otto Bourbon - The barn was destroyed, along with three windmills.

Those receiving smaller damages to windmills, sheds, barns, roofs, outhouses, etc., were as follows: A Still, Lista Peacock, Mrs. Brown, Tom Henshaw, Went Downing, Jack Michener, and Mrs. Cochell.

Other storm notes from the Record (as quoted in the Plainville Times):

The old Yoxall house on the Medicine Creek - Collapsed under the pressure of the wind.

Frank Murphy - Outbuildings destroyed. The wind "played many pranks." A house had all the shingles torn off, but a porch that ran around three sides of the building was not disturbed. The barn and a horse in it were moved 50 feet.

W. W. Murphy (in Ash Rock Township) - The barn was wrecked, likewise the Jones' silo. Some 50 trees at Fred Jones' place south of Woodston were uprooted. A cement silo was blown over.

Other related Items in the Plainville Times:

The telephone company had 16 of their large poles broken down four miles east of town (Plainville) and running east.

West of Palco only enough rain fell to "properly lay the dust." Plainville received one inch of rain.

Another source reported that from town, there appeared to be three storms. The cyclone on the Saline River was plainly visible, and many were out watching it. Another appeared to form east of town, the third, north of town.

Additional excerpts from the Natoma Independent's article "Tornado Near Codell": W. A. Smith - the barn and granary gone. Dutton pasture - farthest east fencing blown away. The Reppert's - shingles torn off the house, sheds torn up and a steel granary carried one-half mile away. Slight damage was done on the Stick farm.

Natoma Independent comments: Many from the Natoma area saw the funnel shaped cloud. G.M. Palmer was quoted as saying it raised and lowered as many as 20 times. The paper reported "over at Woodston three residences were reported destroyed and others damaged. No one has been reported injured, which was very fortunate, considering the violence of the storm."

According to an article in the Plainville times, many thought there were several different tornadoes in the storm of May 20, 1917, especially considering the storm struck at intervening points between the Cochran Ranch and Woodston in an hour. There were evidently two different storms or sometimes three, two miles apart as the storm cloud moved over the country.

Eyewitness observer B. F. McCarroll explained the phenomena as follows: As the storm passed over his place, it had the appearance of an immense hollow cone with a lower circumference of about two miles wide. As it passed over him, he ran to the top of the hill and saw it pass north

after it had rolled up his fence, At times, Mr. McCarroll could see as many as three funnels drop down from the cloud at one time. Later he saw them unite into one. When divided into several parts, they did not do much damage, but when they united into one, the effect was devastating. Others would claim they saw the intervening places with such regularly of time that it was evidenced by all one storm. Its rising and lowering frequently gave it the appearance of different storms.

Comment recorded in the Plainville Times: "In 45 years of western Kansas life this is the closest call we ever received from a cyclone and we were not extending any invitations to come again."

Codell and Beyond
Cyclone Days' Stories
(Not Just Codell – from WaKeeney to Portis)

May 20, 1918

1917



←3 Miles West

1918



Town of Codell

1916



1 Mile East→

On May 20, 1918 between 10 and 11 P.M., a F4 (severe damage) tornado developed. It was reported on the ground southwest of Wakeeney, traveling northeast, doing considerable damage in Ellis County. Following along the Saline River past Ira Kollman's place where it turned north and came into Codell from the south, where it wiped out most of the main street businesses and two churches. Traveling northeast, the tornado hit more farmsteads, the Shiloh Presbyterian church, farmsteads north of Natoma, from there, devastating a strip of land about seven or eight miles wide in the Kill Creek area in Osborne County, passing just east of Alton. The property damage in Trego, Ellis, Rooks and Osborne Counties were predicted to amount in the millions. It was estimated the storm traveled 60 miles, and one estimate was it lasted around 40-60 minutes.

Another source said the F4 tornado, with wind velocities from 207-260 m.p.h., spanned four counties (Trego, Ellis, Rooks and Osborne), traveling from Wakeeney, Kansas to Portis, Kansas, a distance of approximately 60 miles over a six hour period.

On May 20, 1918, people joked that it was Codell's day for a storm. It was cool for May, and they had to wear extra clothes. And they felt no little relief because they had heard storms only formed on hot, sultry days....

W. A. Barry, correspondent for the Plainville Times, wrote and mailed the following article to the Times office about two hours before the storm struck Codell: "Monday, May 20th, has been considered cyclone anniversary day at Codell. Two years ago a cyclone passed just east of town one mile on the 20th of May and one year ago three miles west, but so far, at 8:00 p.m., no cyclone but thundering and looks like we are going to get a rain." Later, it was reported two inches of rain preceded the tornado.

The following is a collection of reports of the tornado destruction taken from local newspapers and first hand accounts:

1. Cochran Ranch (Ellis County) – Property destruction greater than the year before. Destroyed buildings rebuilt from the tornado the previous year on May 20, 1917. Five people killed (the Geist family members referenced below) and three seriously injured. Three purebred cows and two horses also killed. Another report: The Cochran Ranch, along the Saline River, was hit on May 20, two years in a row – 1917 & 1918. In 1917, outbuildings were destroyed. In 1918, one newspaper reported "the entire set of buildings on the ranch, were torn to pieces and completely demolished."
2. Adam Geist and family (Ellis County) – Four miles southwest of the main Cochran ranch house at the home of Adam Geist, his father, Alexander and mother, Catherine, and three children - Agnes, Paul and Regina - were killed. His brother and wife were injured. Mr. Geist passed through the storm at the Deane ranch where he was working.
3. Deane Ranch – The residence, silo, barns, sheds, etc. totally wrecked.

4. B. F. McCarroll – Mr. McCarroll gave a very detailed description of the development of the storm. He told that as the storm passed over his place it had the appearance of an immense hollow cone with lower circumference about two miles wide. As it passed over him, he ran to the top of the hill and saw it pass on north after it rolled up his fence. At times he could see as many as three funnels drop down from the cloud at one time. Later he saw it unite into one. When it divided into several parts, it did not do much damage, but when it united into one, the effect, he said, was terrible. He further said that when the storm came up, he and his family fled up the canyon hoping to escape it. Instead, they ran right into it. They got down in a washed out place in the canyon and the storm passed over them without any injuries. A 16 foot x 24 foot shed was moved off the foundation, and the base of his cement silo cracked. When he visited the Cochran Ranch, he didn't think the damage at his place was much at all compared to their damage.

5. Walter Adams and family - The Adams' were pinned beneath the stone wall of their home near Old Motor townsite. The three year old baby Lawrence was killed instantly as the father never heard the baby make a sound. Walter's wife, Ethel, who was pinned beneath the rocks, kept tugging on his sleeve for a time, but Mr. Adams was pinned down in the debris and was unable to help her. She died before assistance arrived. Alice Romine Richmond, Mrs. Adams' sister, who was staying with them, fell under a table which protected her, and she escaped with slight bruises. Walter Adams was seriously injured and not expected to live, however he did, but had a long recovery time. May 30, 1918 article, "Codell Accounts of Tornado" by W.A. Barry, Plainville Times later reported Mr. Adams was badly crippled, but recovering. He further reported Mr. Adams was taken to the home of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Adams, east of town to receive care, along with his sister, Mrs. George (Celeste) Glendening, where they were said "to be getting along as well as can be expected."

Another source mentioned the Adams lived two miles northeast of town where "a terrible tragedy occurred." It stated the Adams, along with Mrs. Adams' sister, were living in a small stone house. During the storm, they went into the kitchen, and that part of the house was completely demolished. Mr. and Mrs. Adams and their baby were caught by the falling limestone rock which covered the mother and child in a depth of 18 inches, crushing and killing them. Mr. Adams was pinned down by the heavy weight up to his hips, holding him there until help came. Two hours and forty-five minutes passed before he was extricated. Mr. Adams was badly bruised, but had no broken bones. He had a bolt jammed in his back, and his sister, Celesta (Lesta) Glendening, later said, "it was a long time before he was well." Mrs. Adams lived a time, but he was unable to help her, and had to endure the torture of listening to her dying agony. The unfortunate woman was about 25 years old. Alice, young lady living with them, was thrown or fell under the table, upon which the rock piled, imprisoning her, but she was unhurt. Another source said Alice fell under the table which saved her from injury.

H. L. Adams, father of Walter, living a half mile away, sent his boy over to see how they fared, and then went to "assist in getting out the living and the dead."

Additional details: Two incubators filled with eggs were in the Adams' house, but happened to be in a corner that was not blown down. The eggs were undisturbed, but the lamp was blown out. (Side note: Later Mr. Adams left Kansas, eventually settling in Colorado. He died in 1981.)

6. Frank Jones and family – Six miles northeast of Codell the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jones near Shiloh Church was totally destroyed. Mrs. (Iva) Jones, six children, and Alva Cross, working at the Jones' place, were in the house when the storm broke. Mrs. Jones, three of the children, and Mr. Cross were blown some distance from the place where the house formerly stood. Their one six week old baby, Lloyd F. Jones, was found lying dead in an alfalfa field some distance from the house. The family dog, which had been injured, was found keeping watch of the baby. The Jones baby was buried Tuesday in the Shiloh Cemetery. Mrs. Jones was injured, and her condition considered serious. Two of the children were very seriously injured, and the other three hurt. Another source said, "At the residence of Frank Jones 4 miles north east of Codell, it simply destroyed his home and scattered it to the four winds and in getting to the cave, his baby was hit with a piece of flying timber, and killed, and one of his other children was badly hurt." Another source said Nola, Norma and Urcel were the children badly injured.

Alva Cross (son of J. N. Cross) and the Jones' hired man, was also severely injured, his head bandaged, bruised and sore from his ordeal. He later told what happened: Mr. Cross was in the south room when the window lights went out, and the bed he was lying on went up in the air. Something struck him in the head, and it was the last he knew for half an hour. When he came to his senses, he found he was close to where the house stood, lying in the mud. His head was cut pretty bad. Hearing the children crying, he went to them and gathered four of them out of the mud and trash. Mrs. Jones came to where he was, and they waited till the wind went down. Two of the children were missing. They found the cave (cellar) and carried the children to it, and he helped Mrs. Jones to get in. She had a broken collarbone and was bruised all over. They stayed in the cave for a little while, then they started out to find the other children. Upon leaving the cave, Mr. Cross was struck by flying articles, rendering him unable to walk. He was brought to Stockton on Tuesday evening.

Mr. Cross further stated in a quarter of an hour or so, a neighbor's daughter came and found the baby, six weeks old, lying in the side of the road, with a big gash in her head. She died three hours later. Across the road in an alfalfa field lay one of the girls, a six year old, unconscious and bruised all over her body. At 2 P.M., a car came and took them to J. L. Hoskins' place a quarter of a mile away.

One newspaper reported all were brought to Plainville, along with Mr. and Mrs. L. R. Newlin, and cared for in the home of Mrs. Overholser in the southeast part of town. Three of the Jones' children worst injured were transported to the Hays hospital. Mr. Jones had taken one of his older daughters, Leta, to Concordia hospital Saturday on account of her having an eye injured by a wire. (Later reported, he took her to Concordia to have an eye removed because of a wire fracture, leaving Mrs. Jones at home with

several small children.) Upon receiving word of the storm, Mr. Jones left Concordia by auto at 11:15 A.M., arriving home at 2:15 P.M. He was most frantic with grief.

Additional details: In the cellar of the Jones' house, an incubator was found uninjured, and the lamp was still burning. The automobile at the Jones' home was the only thing left standing.

Another source: "The Jones family had previously been hit by the 1916 tornado when they occupied the Dametz farm."

7. Shiloh (Presbyterian) Church, Cemetery and School – The church and school were completely destroyed. Nearly all the tombstones in the cemetery were blown down or overturned, some weighing tons. North of the cemetery the osage fence for a half mile was uprooted, roots eight feet long laid bare. The fence around the cemetery and a number of tombstones torn down. However, another newspaper reported the "church was a completely wreck while very few of the monuments in the cemetery grounds were disturbed." W. A. Barry reported under the Codell Items in the Natoma Independent that "the monument man from Stockton" said he would come down after Decoration Day and help the persons interested in fixing the stones. Another source said the church "...was pushed down flat and the schoolhouse in that neighborhood was blown entirely away, not even the foundation stones were left."
8. George Glendening family (Dr. Wilbur Andreson place) – "not a thing is left." Celesta (Lesta) Glendening later wrote that her husband George was not wearing shoes, and his feet were cut in several places. Lesta went on to say George didn't wear his shoes for quite a while afterwards. Her brother, Evart, had a few scratches and cuts. Lesta had a bad cut on her leg below the knee requiring stitches, and she came close to losing her leg. Their son Worden sustained a broken arm, and 18 month old Max was the "only one not injured in any way and without a scratch." Mrs. Geo. Glendening was taken to the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Adams, east of town to receive care, along with her brother Walter Adams, where they were said 'to be getting along as well as can be expected.'"

The Glendening's were unable to make it to the cave before the storm hit. George had tucked one of the boys, Worden, in the front of his overalls, and Lesta clutched 18 month old Max, wrapped in a blanket. It was reported that "Mrs. Glendening's baby was blown from her arms. With difficulty she was restrained from going in search." In a flash of lightning, they saw Max sitting up just a few feet off the floor, and was shortly thereafter restored to his mother's arms. They crawled to the cave, and as Lesta later said, when they came out after the storm, all they had left was their mailbox.

Years later, George Glendening shared with Howard Hockett, "he'd never forget the screeching sound of the nails pulling out" that night. Debris had fallen everywhere as the house collapsed around the family – except, remarkably, where they stood in the kitchen... The tornado dragged the flooring of the house from the foundation down into a ravine more than 100 yards – with the family still on it.

After the storm had passed, someone found a few of their things in the mud puddles, some clothing and such, a tablecloth, a towel or two, and Lesta's wedding dress "scarcely torn at all." (Note: Lesta was pregnant at the time of the tornado and her daughter, Wanda, was born September 18, 1918, while they lived in the house on Herb Darland's farm, one and a half miles northwest of Codell. Also, Walter Adams, referred above in No. 5, was Lesta's brother.)

Other stories of what happened to 18 month old Max that day: 1. According to Lesta, after Max was old enough to hear the story, he used to tell children at school some "pretty wild tales about his flying around up in the sky with a quilt wrapped around him." 2. Max was found in a basket nearby. 3. "the boy was found near a pile of wood, without the quilt or nightclothes, unharmed." 4. Max was found in a nearby field with only minor scratches. 5. Found in a draw, naked. 6. The Brown's, neighbors a few miles to the north would tell for many years the story as the tornado whipped Max out of his father's arms, George reached up just in time to catch Max by the heel and pulled him back down.

(Personal note: Of all the findings in my research of the Codell tornadoes for all three years, I found more variations or discrepancies in what really happened to 18 month old Max Glendening that night. I had personally heard this story many times all my life. No. 6, referenced above, is the story my grandparents, who were friends of the family, told as fact. I am most grateful Max's mother Lesta wrote what really happened that night in 1918.)

**Please note: Celesta (Lesta) Adams Glendening wrote down her account of the 1918 tornado for her family, as she vividly remembered it several decades later in 1976. Her full story can be found at <http://rookscounty.net/cyclone-day> and other websites online.

9. Dametz farm (located one-half mile east of Shiloh Cemetery) – Hilda Newlin, baby daughter of Russell and Clara Mae Newlin, was blown away from her parents by the storm. When the storm waned, her badly injured parents made their way to a neighbor's home for help. Neighbors scoured the wreckage in the dark of night, eventually finding Hilda uninjured. The Dametz farm had been previously hit by the 1916 tornado when it was occupied by the Frank Jones' family. Also, one source reported at Russell Newland's all buildings destroyed. I am assuming Russell Newlin and Russell Newland are the same person. (Note: Hilda Newlin Perkins would die tragically in an auto / train accident east of Codell in 1937 at age 20.)
10. Newland farm – Alva Cross, working for Frank Jones, also told a correspondent of the experience of the Newland's family a half mile from the Jones' place. Their house was broken in two just below the upper floor. Mrs. Newland had started upstairs with the youngest girl in her arms. After the crash, she found her husband on the outside with their other children. (Personal note: Because of the discrepancy in the spelling of the last name, this may be the same family as referenced in Nos. 9 & 11.)
11. L. R. Newlin (Frank Demetz place) – The home was destroyed, and both Mr. and Mrs. Newlin injured. With their little girl, who was uninjured, they made their way to the

home of John Hoskins, one-half mile south. The Hoskins house was only home in the Shiloh church neighborhood not wrecked. They could not find the baby. Mr. Hoskins went to the place and finally found the little one underneath some boards, uninjured, and then restored to her parents. All the building were destroyed except their residence. As noted earlier, the injured members of the Jones and Newlin families were taken to Plainville. ((Personal note: Because of the discrepancy in different first names or initials given and the spelling of the last name, this may be the same family as referenced in Nos. 10 & 11.)

12. C. T. Husted place – All building wrecked. House damaged quite a bit. Most of the windows gone. Their car was found upside down out in the road.
13. Joe Westhusen – Straight east of Plainville, the first damage outside to telephone wires as seen on the road from Plainville to Codell. Part of the old barn destroyed. A steel granary which set across the road south of his house, after the storm, lay crumpled up in Elmer Bice's pasture about one-half mile southwest of where it formerly stood. Another source said no serious loss was reported at either place.
14. Will Westhusen – All buildings wrecked. Another source said no serious loss was reported at either place.
15. J. W. Jones – Reported \$150 loss.
16. J. A. Leshner – Stable and outbuildings were all destroyed, and the house badly damaged. Had about \$1,000 damage. No insurance.
17. Eugene Bice – Outbuildings destroyed.
18. John Coleman – “Suffered great damage.” No description of damage given.
19. Virge Richmond – Lost everything but the house.
20. Harrison house - Part standing. No further description given.
21. John Overholser – Place torn all to pieces. He lost buildings last year (1917) also.
22. Wilber Overholser – Nearly \$1,000 damage to barn and buildings.
23. Wm. (Will) Wells – Lost all outbuildings. Another source stated considerable damage, but not as much as others.
24. Frank Hoaglands – Barn destroyed.
25. Al Bice - Lost north end of the barn.

26. John Hoskins – Barn destroyed. House damaged, while it left a part of the house standing. A pig was cut square in two.
27. Jos. Hrabe, Sr. - \$150 damage to buildings. He had insurance.
28. Albert Hrabe – “Lost quite a bit.” No description of damage.
29. Joe Hrabe, Jr. – About \$1,000 damage to barn and out buildings.
30. Art Bessey – Reported seriously injured. Buildings all torn up. Barn so completely destroyed while the “house was so badly wrecked it was practically beyond repair.”
31. Tom Casey – Badly injured.
32. C. E. Glendening – House destroyed.
33. George McCord – Barn torn to pieces, swept away; house damaged.
34. M. C. Bessey – The barn and all out buildings destroyed. The barn had recently been built to take the place of the one destroyed by fire.
35. Guy Hockett – Recently purchased by S. Carley, everything destroyed. The house was so badly wrecked it was “practically beyond repair.” No one living there at the time of the tornado. Another paper reported “...but those at home escaped without injury.”
36. Will Conger – Steel granary, garage, etc. blown down.
37. Reed Ranch – Big trees uprooted and sheds torn down.
38. Ed Sites – Lost all buildings, but the house.
39. P. Jorgenson – “Loss was heavy.” No description given.
40. Henry Klienschmidt – Lost everything
41. Lew Gosser – Lost barn and sheds. Machinery and house damaged.
42. D. L. Carmichael (Ordway place) – Seven miles due south of Plainville sustained much damage.
43. Hugh Carmichael – Lost all buildings except the house. Also lost a cow, hog and 500 little chicks.
44. Ben McCarroll – Garage moved.

45. C. H. Carmichael (old Mina Watkins place) – Much damage done. No description given.
46. James Kennedy – All outbuildings gone.
47. Gilpin & Beal Ranch –13 miles southwest of Codell, barn and new house not occupied, totally destroyed.
48. Mrs. Mary Hoagland – Five miles southwest of Codell, barn blown down
49. W. J. Overholser – Barn where he lived and other out buildings blown to pieces.
50. Roy Workman farm (north of W. J. Overholser, owner) – House, barn and outbuildings entirely destroyed, while Mr. Workman and his family escaped with only a few bruises.
51. Earl Snapp and sister (not named) – on Chas. Gucallman property, badly wrecked.
52. J. L. Hoskins – Barn blown to pieces and house damaged.
53. N. R. Zeigler – Moved his family into E. A. Darland’s house in the northwest part of town since his farm house was wrecked by the cyclone.
54. Albert Maline – Outbuildings destroyed.
55. Tom McNeeley – Lost nearly everything.
56. Art Henn – Barn and residence badly damaged. The wind sucked an oil stove out from one room through another and out a large window.
57. Mrs. Emma Hockett – Barn destroyed.
58. B. L. McReynolds - Tenant house totally destroyed.
59. E. A. Darland - Barn totally destroyed.
60. F. W. Splitters - Barn totally destroyed.
61. A. Barry - Barn totally destroyed.
62. James Casey – House torn down and trees and hedge all uprooted and broken to pieces. His large barn on the opposite side of the road from the house was also destroyed. Tom Casey sustained a broken collar bone.

63. Elmer and Alma Bice (Orin McCue's) - The house was not damaged, but their garage was blown away, leaving their new car which was inside untouched.
64. Hilda Newlin – House completely destroyed. She was buried under the wreckage of her house, but she was taken out unharmed.
65. A. L. Dougherty farm – All the outbuildings destroyed, and the house was “so badly wrecked as to make it unsafe for a dwelling.” Mr. Dougherty was among the first to begin reconstructing the buildings.
66. Will Wells – Home was considerably damaged, “although the loss there was slightly compared with that of some of the others.”

When the word was heard in Stockton the next morning several auto loads started for the scene of desolation. Before reaching there, many evidences of the fury of the hurricane were seen in the innumerable telephone poles lying prostrate with outbuildings, wind mills and trees broken down. The pretty little village was covered with wreckage of all sorts, several of its best buildings were in utter ruins, and the place was swarming with visitors in automobiles brought there by the catastrophe. The ground everywhere was strewn with splintered boards and timbers, torn from scores of dislocated structures. – Stockton Review, May 23, 1918 issue

Town of Codell damage (descriptions include those written by Mrs. Florence (Barry) Macy (Mrs. Warren) and various area newspapers:

1. Codell Schoolhouse – The public school building erected several years before was a total wreck. The loss of the building estimated at \$5,000. Furniture, \$3,000. The district had a fire policy, but no windstorm insurance so the loss was almost total. Some of the furniture was saved. Another source reported the school had been a good modern structure constructed eight years before for between \$8,000 and \$9,000. After the tornado, it was “simply a huge pile of broken timbers and rubbish. It had not blown away but had been crushed down under a mighty pressure into a hopeless heap of rubbish.” Another source said “the fine school house that cost \$9,000 eight years ago...” Another source said the school was completed in 1916 and only used two years.

Lesta Glendening recalled there was no schoolhouse in Codell when school time came in September 1918, so the children went to school in Natoma and Plainville. They had the first grades in private homes in Codell.

(Personal note: My grandmother, Mary (Netherland) Zeigler was a sophomore the year the school house “blew away.” At the time, she was staying with her step-grandfather, Willis Johnson, on the farm one mile east of Codell I grew up knowing as the “Ekey place.” Grandma Zeigler later recalled her grandfather rented an apartment for one school year in Natoma where she stayed with their housekeeper, Mrs. Blessing, while my grandmother attended her junior year of high school at Natoma. She resumed classes her senior year in the new “red brick school house,” and she said she was in the first class, the class of 1920, to graduate from the “red schoolhouse” on the north side of the street.

2. M.E. Church, built in 1908, and parsonage – Both were wrecked. Parsonage north of the church. Loss estimated \$4,600. No insurance. The destruction of the church was reported as not as complete as the schoolhouse. “It is a big pile of flattened out sections on the top of which is the bell tower lying prostrate. All around are scattered the cement blocks of the basement walls.” Rev. Charles Hall and his wife had just left the evening before for western Kansas or they would have likely been killed. First moved to Chas. Darlan farm west of town, then to the Davenport property in the northwest of town. In the May 30, 1918, paper, W.A. Barry reported “I have not learned what the M.E. Church contemplate doing, whether they intend rebuilding the church and parsonage or not, but presume they will. For the present they have made arrangements and are holding services in the opera house. Another source called the church “...the handsome new Methodist church...”
3. Pentecostal (Holy Roller) Church – Gone with nothing, but the flooring lying nearby and organ thereon visible. This was the old Quaker church which used to stand north of Codell.
4. Charley Rolfe – (Faye Role, of Plainville, parents’ home) “Charley was a dairyman who, with his team of mules, hauled freight - cream cans, egg crates, etc. - from stores to the depot and from the depot to stores. He was a good natured man and we kids were always welcome to ride in his wagon.” – Mrs. Warren (Florence) Barry Macy. Another source

said Mr. Rolfe was the first to start rebuilding after the cyclone wreck. He hired Mr. McMichael as chief carpenter to rebuild his barn that was unroofed in the recent storm.

5. Codell Baptist Church established in 1879 and under the leadership of Rev. A. L. King. - This was the only church left standing after the 1918 tornado.
6. Codell Baptist Church parsonage
7. Leshner's blacksmith shop
8. Leshner's blacksmith office
9. "J.OO F Hall" (Note: I was unable to decipher the spelling on the handwritten legend. Possibly the Odd Fellow Building referenced below in No. 25?)
10. W. A. Barry's Variety Store - Store porch damage estimate \$50.
11. W. A. Barry home – House loss, \$75, barn \$100, He had insurance. Mr. Barry was an agent for the Farmers Alliance Insurance Company, McPherson, Kansas, and he reported 14 losses in his territory. Claims settled amounted to \$4,566.31, and "every man will get his money within a week... it means a whole lot to a man when out of a home to have his needs attended to quickly you know. This company is known for prompt and satisfactory settlements." He reported the Farmers Alliance was the first Insurance company to get an adjuster on the field. It is interesting to note, Mr. Barry was also a correspondent for the Plainville Times and the Natoma Independent, and he included these comments in his column, Codell Items.
12. Fink's barbershop
13. Gilpine's cream station
14. Gilpine's general store
15. Post Office in small corner of Gilpine store. The Gilpine's were the postmasters. Rural mail carriers carried mail from this post office.
16. Red Crown gasoline pump – The only pump in town.
17. Codell State Bank (S. R. Tucker, President) – destroyed.
18. Mack Welling store and lumberyard
19. Two lumber storage sheds
20. Cement storage shed for Mack Welling store

21. Home for Mack Welling manager

22. Pipe for hitching teams, buggies and wagons

23. Hotel - The hotel just south of the depot was a complete wreck. All that remained was the foundation. The hotel had no insurance. It was owned by Mr. Overholser and occupied by Mrs. Haynes, who had moved from Stockton to Codell the previous fall. She literally had nothing left of her furniture or equipment. One source said she and her children were blown out of the building by the storm, and they were very bruised, but not seriously, hurt around about the heads and feet. Another source said it remained a mystery how Mrs. Haynes and her three small children escaped the Codell hotel. Later, Mrs. Haynes and her children stayed with Rev. Miller and T. W. Lamb families since the hotel was blown to pieces.

J. Glassman, a traveling salesman, had a room at the hotel, and escaped with an arm badly sprained and bruised. He did not remember how. He first hit the ground about 300 yards away next to a gate. A second source said Mr. Glassman had come to town with a stock of good which he was going to open for a sale the next day. The same source said Mr. Glassman's arm was bandaged from wrist to elbow. He told the correspondent when the building was struck, he was lifted up in the air and carried to a gate some 300 feet away and dropped to the ground. He felt as though "he was falling 10 stories." (Note: There was also a mention of "five inmates of the hotel" not hurt. I was unable to determine if this was just a term given the five residents in the hotel that evening, or reference to others. The reference being "The five inmates of the hotel, Mrs. Haynes and three children and one commercial man were carried in the air for quite a trip...")

24. Dr. Lillyjohn's (doctor's office) as shown on the map – Lesta Glendening gave the doctor's name as Dr. Wm. Littlejohn, M.A., Ph.D., M.D. She said he spent three days in his office in Plainville then three days in Codell.

25. Rural and local telephone office - The family who operated the telephone office lived in the front part of the house. Walter Murphy, the telephone manager, (also the harness maker) had his arm badly broken in two places while trying to hold the office door from being blown in. The whole side of the office was blown out. He was taken to the Hays hospital on Tuesday. Mr. Murphy stayed at his post while his family ran to the Odd Fellow building. The house went to pieces. Later, Mr. Murphy leased the Chas. Darland farm just west of town and planned to move in it as soon as Rev. Chas. Hall., pastor of the M.E. Church, had moved into the Davenport property in the northeast part of town.

26. Doake's Grocery Store (Building resembled the hotel.) - The Doake family lived upstairs. (W.A. Doake mercantile?)

27. Splitter's store, Wm. Splitter – Sheds where he had goods stored were all tore up, and his main store building badly wrecked. His loss was about \$2,500. No insurance.
28. Grandma Darland's home
29. West grain elevator
30. Load platform for depot
31. Union Pacific depot
32. Wooden tower well also with hand pumps – Provided water for steam trains and public use.
33. East grain elevator - Also would get a carload of coal during the winter and people would come with wagons to haul to homes.
34. Stockyard - Where cattle were put when driven to town on Saturday nights to be loaded out on Sunday morning headed for market in Kansas City.
35. Main railway track and side track for Union Pacific trains
36. Town's public drinking well
37. Town's only crosswalk of concrete
38. Path from Barry's store to our house (Mrs. Florence Barry Macy)

Additional Information on homes and businesses (not specifically referenced on Mrs. Macy's map):

1. A. Stackhouse home – Just north of the M.E. parsonage demolished. The family was in the cellar under the building when the walls fell, but no injuries as they had “a place built for protection.” Large cement block house destroyed. Later moved into Mrs. Asa Lynch's house in the north part of town.
2. Mrs. Printz – Hardly anything left. She was out to one of her farms at the time. A piano lay near where the house had stood.
3. Grandma Wickham – The house she had recently moved to was destroyed. She was in the cave and escaped injury.

4. Mr. and Mrs. Fred Hensey – Just married the week before. House badly damaged and clothing all destroyed.
5. Albert Bucheister – House damaged, several hundred dollars worth.
6. W.S. Baldwin – House adjoining the Bucheister house, sustained about \$150 damage.
7. Carl H. Bradford – Dealer in harness and saddler, (mentioned but status after tornado not known).
8. Comrade Barber Shop – Owned by A. E. Auld, everyone called him “Jum,” (mentioned but status after tornado not known).
9. Lasher and Tucker – Dealers in farm implements, buggies and machinery, (mentioned but status after tornado not known).
10. Carley Darland – Dealer in gasoline and coal oil, (mentioned but status after tornado not known).
11. The Comrade Garage, Studebaker dealer – C. F. Johnson and Elmer Bice, agents, (mentioned but status after tornado not known).
12. A restaurant, name not given (mentioned but status after tornado not known).

“... while a great many other buildings were badly injured and scarcely a building in town that were not damaged.” – W. A. Barry, Plainville Times

Buildings reported not damaged: Gilpin store, the hardware store, Doake store, Baptist Church, former John McReynolds’ residences, comparatively uninjured.

Additional Information:

“All the doctors from Plainville were called to Codell and vicinity Monday night to assist the injured. As soon as Plainville central heard of the tragedy, it kept busy during the night arousing people who had autos and getting men to fill them to go to work of assistance and rescue.” – Plainville Times

One report said 11 people killed, hundreds wounded.

Some early estimates of damage: Ellis, over \$125,000; Codell, \$50,000; Deane Ranch, \$17,000 – Plainville Times

H. O. Darland and family moved into the T.W. Lamb's house.

“Tongue cannot tell or pen describe the fearfulness of the tragedy. About 11 people were killed and hundreds wounded. Thousands of stock were killed or crippled. Poultry is lying dead everywhere and little left in the path of the storm.” – Plainville Times

There seemed to be two storms at Codell. One from the southwest and one from the northwest. The latter doing the damage. – W. R. Powell

After offering to assist adjust wind storm insurance claims and finding practically none except for bank windows and a few minor claims, Colonel Sweet remarked, “It is the same here as in Stockton. 95% of the people who insurance their buildings against fire do not against windstorms.”

“Tuesday night some rain fell and today more rain is falling, making it bad for people living in the devastated territory as there are few houses but have roofs injured.” – Plainville Times

Earlier, in the day on May 20, 1918, several area people were joking and saying, “Well this is Codell's day for storm.”

W. A. Barry, Codell storekeeper, wrote that the wind, rain and hail suddenly stopped about 10:15 p.m., and for a few minutes silence settled onto the valley. Because it was so dark, no one actually saw the tornado – but they could hear it.

Nine patients are now in Hays hospital as result of storm. Two members of the Geist family and one man from WaKeeney are included. – Plainville Times

“Well, here we are yet alive and glad of it of course, but busier than a cranberry merchant. However, we must lose some sleep in order to give a small detail of the cyclone which swept through Codell...” Taken from the “Codell Account of Tornado” by W.A. Barry, Plainville Times, May 30, 1918

By May 30, 1918, the Plainville Times reported about all damaged roofs and chimneys had been repaired.

Other news tidbits: “Ed. Bates and family of near Downs, came over Wednesday of last week to see the cyclone wreck and call upon W. A. Barry and family. Mrs. Reppert, who was visiting her daughter, Mrs. Will Reynolds and family at the time of our cyclone, cut her visit short and came home at once.”

The Plainville Times reported, in the days following the storm,” a great number of people from all surrounding towns and country visited to see the situation and even a week later, automobiles from Plainville, Stockton and Natoma came pouring into town loaded down with good people with tools of every description necessary to clear up the debris caused by the cyclone and by noon over 250 men were running hither and thither clearing up streets and alleys, working practically at wrecked structures, clearing foundations and all needed work. They also went each

way from town some distance in the country on the same mission. I am sure I speak the sentiment of every citizen of Codell and vicinity, when I say that printers ink cannot begin to tell, neither can tongue speak in praise and appreciation enough of this kind favor from our neighbor towns and country, our heartfelt thanks and good wishes reaches out to everyone who so faithfully labored this day. While we do not hope for an opportunity to repay this kindness, but should a similar disaster fall upon our neighbors, we will do our best to repay.” - W. A. Barry, Plainville Times

“All thru the storm swept district cattle, horses and poultry were to be seen lying dead where they had been when the storm struck or were blown by the storm. Wire fences all thru the district were completely torn down and mile after mile many strands of wire was laying across the roads while there wasn’t a telephone phone line all thru that part of the country left standing.”

One newspaper speculated that “the storm passing through Rooks County for a short distance seemed to raise or possibly there might have been another one started in the Mt. Ayr community where probably more, if possible, damage was done than in Rooks County.”

The Red Cross gave \$200 to every family in Rooks County who had lost their home.

Ethel Nelson recalled 80 years after the 1918 tornado that her sister, Lottie, worked all day taking things to the cellar that day, including a bed and lantern, preparing for the storm she believed would hit.

Eula Lamb was quoted in the same newspaper article of saying, “we went to the cellar every time. I can remember it got as still as could be, and all the horses were whinnying. They were really upset.”

The Idaho Daily Stateman, Boise, ID 22 May 1918, reported all the churches in town were demolished. (Personal Note: This is in error since the Baptist Church was left standing at the west edge of town, and still is there today. The Methodist and the Pentecostal Church in Codell were destroyed and never rebuilt. The Shiloh Presbyterian church located just west of the cemetery northeast of Codell was also destroyed and not rebuilt.)

“Folks around Codell were undoubtedly nervous when May 20 dawned in 1918. And before the day was out, they must have wondered what they had done to anger the weather gods.” – Taken from the article, Unlucky Streak, Monday, May 19, 2003

One paper reported “Hardly a building in Codell but what was damaged to some extent.”

An article, Cyclone Time found in the Plainville Times: It started out: “We are nearing the time for our annual cyclone.” A few sentences quickly then summed up the 1916 and 1917 tornadoes. Here is what was written in part about the 1918 one: “... then as it had become a habit on May 20, 1918, a real honest-to-goodness twister came at the dead of night and simply piled up things in Codell.. Believe me this is a storm to scar the bravest and from now on, people around Codell have their caves open on and about May 20th and our Plainville caves are now in good working order.”

Ethel Nelson recalled, having seen the Codell tornadoes of 1916 and 1917, that she slept through the worst one of all. She awoke the next morning and came out of the cellar to discover that the school up the hill, and most of the rest of Codell, had been destroyed. She also recalled that on Cyclone Day (May 20) in 1919, “there was a cloud come up and everyone went to the cellar again”. It became a ritual. She said “they all got ready for it every year. They’d take stuff down in the cellar, go down in there and stay. They’d go back and forth ‘between the house and cellar). They were cloud watchers.” Others, including her daughter, Genevieve Zeigler, said her family “went to the cellar on many of May 20” because of what happened on Cyclone Day. June Hachmeister, daughter of George and Celesta Glendening, said locals headed for cover “every time a cloud came up.” It was common, she said, to be “pulled out of bed at night and taken to the cave” by her mother, who carried a large scar on her leg from the 1918 tornado for the rest of her life.

“What is probably the most violent tornado that ever visited this section of the country struck Natoma between ten and eleven o’clock Monday night. The damage to Natoma City was slight when compared to the heavy losses by our sister town Codell and the farming community north and west of us.” – Natoma Independent, May 23, 1918

Natoma Independent reported under the heading, “Pioneer Spirit Still Exists: “ ... Truly there is no greater heroism than those men and women are displaying, not a whine, not a complaint, only expressions of thankfulness that things are no worse. The spirit of the pioneer lives still in the hearts of their children, whose indomitable will and sturdy courage refuse to permit – even a Kansas cyclone to get the best of them...”

“Every time there’s a tornado, something comes up about Codell. That used to be quite a little town.” - John Glendening, whose parents survived the Codell tornadoes.

Codell never fully recovered physically or psychologically from the May 20 tornadoes. Many businesses, churches and homes were not rebuilt. Several people moved away. Even as late 1995, nearly 80 years later, concrete foundations jutting up from empty lots, scars from the last, worst tornado in 1918, could still be seen around the town site. Ruth Rolfe said, “They just didn’t have the heart because so much was taken away.”

“Most of the destroyed buildings were never rebuilt, leaving parts of their foundations as grim reminders to those who still remember.”

The legacy of Cyclone Days has passed on through the generations. Jill Russell, daughter of Lawrence and June Hachmeister, said “I spent half of my growing-up years in a storm cellar.” (Personal Note: I can testify to the same happening in my childhood growing up on a farm about eight miles north of Codell. Any time strong winds and/or threatening clouds appeared, we headed to the cellar.)

One paper reported “Aside from the loss of life the loss in property will be great but little insurance was carried by the owners. It is estimated that the loss will reach upward of \$200,000 with many families made homeless and destitute of furniture and clothing, many of them getting

out with only their night clothes on. It is hoped that Rooks County will never be called upon to witness such a scene of destruction again.”

One source said there were several storms over the next few nights after May 20, 1918. And it was said that “as the storm clouds gathered, Codell literally went underground. Several new cyclone caves were built.”

“Codell never fully recovered from mother nature’s fury, but it is still a great place to live with its active community and church events.” – The Codell Cougar

The May 20, 1918 Tornado
Not Just Codell – Rural Natoma, Mt. Ayr, Alton, Kill Creek to Portis

The following is a collection of reports of the tornado destruction between 10 PM and 12 AM from Natoma to Portis taken from local newspapers and first hand accounts:

“What is probably the most violent tornado that ever visited this section of the country struck Natoma between ten and eleven o’clock Monday night. The damage to Natoma City was slight when compared to the heavy losses sustained by our sister town Codell and the farming community north and west of us. In Natoma considerable damage was done to the less substantial buildings...The storm did great damage north and east of Natoma, buildings being demolished as far at least as Bloomington. By some strange coincidence this is the third tornado to strike Codell on May 20 in three successive years. Many of the main buildings are complete wrecks, but as Natoma, property loss was all the damage sustained... language of a report fails to give even a faint idea of the real situation...” Natoma Independent, May 23, 1918

1. George Pruter (North of Natoma) – Damage estimated at \$6000. “\$2000 insurance was carried. The big barn, which cost \$1500 when erected a few years ago, is a total ruin. The big two-story house was pulled off its foundation, and is warped in very bad shape. The garage, hen house, and other outbuildings are ruined. The Pruter family is moving to the residence they own in town.”
2. Old Lou Pruter place (then owned by Rev. Hoyes, occupied by Mr. Doehrman) – Northeast of the George Pruter farm. “The road there was totally obstructed. Big trees were blown down and uprooted, telephone poles and wires, entangled with other wreckage making a terrible spectacle. Here all buildings were demolished except the house which remains although very badly damaged. Much of the roof was torn off, and the windows were blown in.”
3. Will Pruter place - “a little out of the path of the storm”. No damage reported.
4. Henry Schloh – “One of the large barns wrecked. A number of sheep were housed in the building and the men of the town were summoned by phone to assist in taking the animals from under the debris. It took several hours of hard work but every man did his part well and not a sheep was lost. “
5. Fred Koelling – “The only thing left undamaged was a Ford car, although the garage which housed it was carried away. Mr. and Mrs. J. Lundy spent three days going ‘over the stricken district’ when they learned that the home of Fred Koelling had been swept away, as Mrs. Lundy’s oldest child lives at that place. The Koelling had a fine, well furnished country home. Altho the family were together at the time the storm struck, they were divided and carried in opposite directions. Mr. Koelling and two children, were carried thru into the kitchen, where the father told them to hold on to the steel range, this

affording protection for the prostrate forms beneath. Mrs. Koelling and daughter were swept from the home in an opposite direction. Mrs. K. was struck on the head and crazed by the blow, was running, she knew not where, when rescued by her husband.” Another source said the Koellings “...are among the heavy losers. All their buildings, including houses, were destroyed.” (Another source described as of Mrs. E. L. Hackerott’s property “..was right in the path of the worst of the storm, and is destroyed in worse shape than the majority.”)

6. Henry Koelling (brother of Fred Koelling) – new home was in ruins, “..and at his place, the storm left striking proof of its madness. In the oak panel of a closet door was found a hen, her head on one side and body on the other. A mattress was carried thru several rooms and wedged between the floor and wall. A board seven inches wide was driven thru a calf just below the back bone, so that it protruded at both ends. The calf was still alive when found. The Koelling families were all more or less injured.” Another source said the Koellings “...are among the heavy losers. All their buildings, including houses, were destroyed.”
7. Gertie Johns. Another source stated, “Gertie John” (on the old Pruter place) – Lost everything. “Farm buildings were literally wiped off the face of the earth. The house was part frame and part stone. At the outset of the storm the family gathered in the stone part, and it was well they did so, for the remainder of the house, which was a two-story affair, was carried off as though it were a feather. Destruction could hardly have been more complete. The furniture was destroyed, as well as all the clothing and other household goods. The big granary in which was stored seed for the remainder of the spring planting, auto, etc., and the cow barns had chicken house were all destroyed. The Maxwell car is almost a total wreck. One calf was killed, and over two hundred chickens. There was no insurance.”
8. German church property (Round Mound Township) – The storm swept the south edge of the property. The vacant house, formerly occupied by the teacher, was picked up bodily, carried 50-75 yards, and smashed to the ground. All that remained of it was splinters.
9. Round Mound Lutheran Church (Immanuel Lutheran Church in Round Mound Township) – A few parties were sitting in their cars, but none were injured. The Lutheran church and large residence were uninjured. (Note: The Immanuel Lutheran Church located north of Natoma later burned to the ground in the fall of 1932.)
10. Otto Pfortmiller (east of the Lutheran church) – The place was struck, the house remaining, but the barn and other outbuildings were taken.

11. The Lucht place (farther east) – The property was hit, the house badly damaged and other outbuildings taken. A reporter said “but the damage we cannot give in detail.”
12. John Schneider – Hit hard. “This was one of the best improved places in the country. All buildings were comparatively new, and well kept. All are now a total ruin except the house, which was taken off its foundation, rucked, and well nigh ruined. The damage here must surely run near \$10,000. Two horses and two calves were killed in the storm.”
13. Mat Finnesy farm (south of the Schneider place) – “ The buildings were all destroyed except the house. Woven wire fences lay across the road for a long distance. And telegraph poles and wires, as well as barb wire fences, were strewn everywhere all over the storm swept district.”
14. The Ora Dawe family (north of Schneider’s) – “The storm carried the small residence occupied by the family from the top of the hill down into a draw where it was lit down, right side up, with little damage however.”
15. Ed Hackerott (further north) – “The splendid improvements on the Ed Hackerott farm were visited by the tornado. This was another of the best equipped farms of the neighborhood. There were a large number of fine large buildings, including barn, granary, cow barns etc. They were badly damaged, only some walls remaining. The two residences, one occupied by Mr. Hackerott and family, and one by his son and family, were not badly injured. Both remaining on their foundations.”
16. The McEwen farm – Buildings, just across the road east, showed no signs of the storm, except a few trees blown down.
17. Irvin Smith – Lost his barn.
18. Albert Lucky – Lost some horses.
19. The Lamm boys – Lost all, but their house.
20. E. L. Curl (house on his east place) – Moved off its foundation, a steel granary lost and a windmill torn down. On his home place, his silo was wrecked and his cow shed unroofed.
21. The Alphonse Stanfield family - Members of the family were injured, “but none of them fatally.”

22. It was reported that “about 50 people were attending a Red Cross meeting in a schoolhouse six miles north of Natoma, listening to an address by parties from Osborne, when the big wind carried the building 75 feet from its foundation, without hurting anybody. We won’t vouch for the truth of this rumor.” Another source said the school building, where Red Cross meeting was being held when the storm broke, was moved off its foundation. There were 40 or 50 persons in the building, and it was thought their weight, combined with efforts in keeping the doors from blowing open, saved the building from destruction. The meeting was about to close when the tornado arrived. Yet another source stated “Hattie Putnum, one of the members of the Girls Sexette, is suffering a nervous collapse, having been in the Round Mound school house when it was struck by the storm.”
23. Earl McEwen - “Mr. McEwen and family drove into the shed near the school house, the shed was blown away, but Earl kept the car from going by gripping a post. He stated that the school house was lifted fully six feet from the ground.”
24. George Eickhoff – Sustained damage. No details given.
25. Martin Grasch home – Was in the path of the storm. No specific details given other than “damage to the barn, but little to the house.”
26. C. E. (Charley) Williams – Absolutely nothing left. “Mr. and Mrs. Williams and his large family were in the house and their escape from instant death was miraculous. Two boys, Chester and Ernest, were badly hurt and all the members of the family were bruised. His horses and mules were killed outright or so badly injured they had to be shot. Fences disappeared and telephone wires are beyond repair but this is the story all over this township.” (Chester would later tell neighbors he was thrown out a two story window of the house.) Another source stated, “...who was wiped out of house and buildings, and left destitute of clothing for his family, tells a peculiar episode of the storm. Among all the buildings on his place and the others close by, that were demolished, not a shingle can be found around the place. Every horse Mr. Williams had was either killed then or so badly injured that it was later killed except two, one of which is unfit for work under ordinary circumstances.” Another source reported, “The escape of C. E. Williams and wife and their nine children was a miracle. Seven of the children were asleep upstairs. There was a good cyclone cave on the place. Mr. and Mrs. Williams heard the roar of the storm and had time to get to the cave, but they thought the noise was caused by the hail. The house was literally ground to pieces around them and they all landed near together not far from the house. Mrs. Williams held a two-year-old baby in her arms all the time and it wasn’t scratched. One of the boys had his wrist broken and also his collar bone. Another was

quite badly hurt, but all are getting along quite nicely now. Mr. Williams gathered them all together and put them into the cave.”

“His Red Cross money, reported lost last week, was all found and his accounts tallied to a penny. His receipt book was on a shelf. After the storm it was found in the yard in the mud under a book, with wreckage on the book. He was in town Saturday and the book, somewhat soiled, is now at the war council headquarters. He had \$500 insurance, which does not start to cover his loss. He lost two horses and two mules and two more valuable animals will likely have to be killed. About 100 hens and the same number of little chicks were lost. Nothing could be found of the chicks. All he had left was one old rooster. He also lost a yearling heifer. The blow is primarily hard on Mr. Williams, as he lost all his crops by the dry weather. But he is an optimist and says he considers himself lucky, as none of the family was killed. They lost everything down to their clothing.”

Another source said, “C. E. Williams in the Mt. Ayr country carried \$500 insurance, which is a very small portion of his loss. He informs us that he was likely the only one in his immediate section who carried insurance.” Another source reported, “One of the heaviest hit in the Mt. Ayr Township is Charley Williams who is well known to Natoma people.” Another source stated, “The Charles Williams house was moved about 50 yards with the family of 12 inside. Several children were injured, but the injuries were not life threatening. The family car was located a quarter mile away after the storm.” Williams stated, “It took everything off the farm except the mortgage.” Please note: C. E. Williams wrote “The Storm of 1918” that appeared in the Osborne County Farmer, August 9, 1934. A copy can be found at the following: <https://sites.google.com/view/codell-kansas-tornadoes/1918-tornado/the-storm-of-1918>.

27. Al Gregory – Suffered the loss of his house, silo, large barns and every building on his place. “When the storm came up all the members of the large family hurried to the cyclone cellar near the house and all escaped uninjured.”
28. W. R. Gregory (west of his son, Al Gregory), near the Mt. Ayr Church – “..was a heavy loser. The loss of each of these places will run well up into the thousands.” “The W. R. Gregory fine modern country residence was demolished and both of Mr. Gregory’s legs were broken.” Another source said, “...among the most cruelly injured, is improving in a satisfactory manner, and the others of the injured are recovering to the entire satisfaction of the attending physicians. Mr. Gregory’s age was against him somewhat....”
29. “W. R. Gregory, who suffered both legs broken, is getting along as well as could be expected and will recover. Some fears are expressed that one foot, badly mashed, may have to be amputated. Mr. Gregory is 66 years of age, and has been in very poor health for some time prior to his accident. He can not tell just exactly how he was hurt.”

Another source stated, "One of the Gregory boys in Osborne county, south of Alton, it is reported was caught in the storm while going to his cellar and both legs were broken."

30. A. R. Gregory – A colt in the barn the night of the storm could not be found the next morning. "It was later discovered in the cellar at the W. R. Gregory home, a considerable distance to the west. The door of the cellar was closed but the colt was alive and unhurt."
31. Saul Stanfield – "Lost everything. Two horses were killed." Another source said, "Had three yearlings, a cow and two head of horses killed by the storm. He is one of the big losers, as his improvements were all carried away. He had no insurance."
32. C. L. Tucker – Lost everything except part of his house. Another source stated, "A bureau drawer was opened in the C. L. Tucker home, a suit of clothes removed therefrom and nothing else in the drawer disturbed. No trace of the suit has been found."
33. Dan Stull – Lost everything on his home place. "His fine improvements were all ground to kindling wood and his auto turned into a junk heap. The escape of his family was marvelous. Mr. Stull was blown out of the house and into a field north, but suffered no serious injuries. Not a thing is left on the place and the damage will likely reach \$10,000." Another source said, "..Dan Stull's at which latter place several were injured, including Dan himself and two daughters..." Another source said "...the family was carried fully a half mile from where the house stood. One of the girls had a collar bone broken while Mr. Stull himself, it is feared, suffered internal injuries." Another source reported, "Entire set of buildings were torn to pieces and scattered for several miles and a large range in the kitchen was blown nearly a quarter of a mile. The family were all in the house at the time and were blown into a plowed field almost a half mile from where the house stood. One of the girls suffered a broken collar bone while all were badly bruised and cut. He had a new Ford car in a garage not far from the house and the garage was all gone while the car was left near the place where it was, but a complete wreck, every wheel together with the body, being smashed up." "...the entire grove were a complete wreck hardly a tree in the grove but what had been torn out by its roots or twisted entirely off." Another source stated, "Daniel Stull, a fairly large man, was blown from his home landing in a nearby field while his house was destroyed. He was unhurt, but several of his children who remained in the house suffered injuries."
34. Wm. Bales – "Lost everything, all his property being reduced to kindling wood. The old people got to the cellar and under a table. Rock and wreckage piled onto the table but they were uninjured."

35. Mrs. W. H. Bales – "... wears an artificial eye. She had two of them and they were in the dresser, as she always took out the eyes before retiring. Both of them were found in a field after the storm. Mrs. Bales laughs when telling that she had 'both her eyes blown.'"
36. Clint Bales (over northeast of his father) – "... was a heavy loser. His fine house was picked from its foundation and skidded north 75 to 100 feet. The house and contents were wrecked, the shingles skinned from the roof, and it was a hard job to repair it. His barn, outbuildings, and machinery were torn in pieces." Another source reported, "home and the barn were destroyed, windows and doors from the house were torn off and the roof carried away, while a bed in one of the rooms up stairs was picked up and set over in another room and left with the bedding but little disturbed."
37. S. L. Palmer – Lost everything and Mrs. Palmer was badly cut by flying glass or wreckage. Another source stated "Work was begun Tuesday on a new house on the Mrs. S. L. Palmer farm north-east of town. This place was occupied by Wilber Palmer and not a building of any kind was left."
38. Roe Miller – Lost his house and all his buildings.
39. Roy Neuschwanger (on one of Dan Stull's places) – Lost "his stone house, buildings, etc. and was a big sufferer."
40. Charley Stull – "Place all was lost except the house." The big barn was destroyed, only the basement walls remaining. Mr. Stull had died a few days previously, and his body lay in the house at the time. The funeral was held the following day. Watchers Monday night did not realize that the storm was a destructive one until after it had passed.
41. Mrs. E. L. Hackerott – All the buildings were blown down except the house, which was damaged. "Those destroyed included a big barn, garage, granary, chicken house, cow sheds, milk house, etc. Two head of horses which were tied in the barn, and which were buried under its ruin, were rescued without serious injury – a remarkable thing. The mill and tower, as well as trees, fences, etc. were obliterated."
42. Ed Gregory – Barn was wrecked.
43. Jesse C. W. Howe (brother of Ed Gregory) - "Lost his barn and had other losses."
44. Ed Hackerott – Lost barn, windmill, etc. Another source said, "Ed.. thinks there were two cyclones at his place. The first one did not destroy the barn and they put a mare and a colt in it to protect them from the hail. They saw the second one coming and hiked to

the cave. When they came out the barn was entirely destroyed. Looking about they discovered the colt in the pasture unhurt and quietly sucking as though nothing had happened.”

45. Mrs. James McEwen – Lost a barn, windmill, etc.

46. Dan Crutchfield – Lost all his buildings and his house was damaged.

47. Link Stanfield – Lost all but his home.

48. Bert Cooley – Lost his “big barn and other stuff.”

49. Irwin Smith – Lost his barn.

50. The Friends Church – Had the doors and windows blown in and the inside damaged.

51. School house (south of the church) – New schoolhouse was damaged. “The chimney was blown down and other damages inflicted, but all can be soon repaired.”

52. Ira Snyder – “Is ahead a new shirt. The storm opened a door in the house, blew in a new shirt, and then closed the door.”

“Mt. Ayr was practically devastated by the cyclone which struck the community the night of Monday, May 20, 1918. Almost every place in Mt. Ayr suffered a loss, some were simply wiped out of existence. To add to the miseries of the cyclone there was heavy rain and hail.” – Osborne County Farmer, May 23, 1918

53. R. A. Patterson farm – ten miles north of town, “a cancelled note was picked up the last of the week. The note was untorn but showed it had been misused by the dirt that had clung to it. The face of the note was for \$21.35 signed by A. F. Miller, and dated Sept. 1, 1901. The instrument was made out to the First National Bank of Hays and the bank’s stamped ‘paid’ was plainly read. The Patterson farm is not less than 15 miles from the path of the tornado.” – The Alton Empire

54. Sam Anderson – “living northwest of town several miles and directly away from the path of the twister, tells us that a piece of siding 14 feet long was blown from some place to his farm. The board was lammed up against the house with great force and Mr. Anderson’s pasture is covered with sticks and splinters unquestionably from the destroyed buildings.”

55. Mr. Storer, Tilden Township – Mr. Storer remembered “the giant old cottonwoods on the south side of the road when they were set. He was but a boy about 40 years ago, and helped place them in the ground. The destruction to his property is not so keenly felt by Mr. Storer as is the devastation of his cherished trees.”
56. Winslow grove – “... presents a sorry spectacle today, but in spite of the wreck and ruin to the famous campgrounds, it has been decided to go ahead with the annual camp meeting of the Mt. Ayr Holiness association, which lasts for ten days beginning next Monday, June 6th. Fortunately it is that the meeting was not in progress and the mammoth tent filled with people during the night of the storm.”
57. John. Mischler – “Had \$4,000 insurance, but his loss will reach at least \$10,000.” No description of damage given. Another source reported, “John Mischler, nothing dismayed, is already planning to replace his destroyed improvements with others equally as good, if not better. He plans to erect a fine house on the site of the one destroyed. Others will do the same. A few months will likely show little traces of the terrible storm.” Another source stated, “Sam Woolley went out Saturday and brought in the automobile wrecked at the John Mischler place and belonging to the later. It was a brand new Ford and is practically worthless. The engine is about all that can be used. The machine is wrecked so badly as to be beyond all hopes of repair. There were probably a dozen automobiles wrecked just as badly as the Mischler car. All of which goes to show that there are some things which even a Ford will not stand – a cyclone.” Another source said, “The iron safe lost at John Mischler’s has been found. It was discovered under some rubbish near the house. All the papers in it were intact. Mrs. Mischler’s diamond ring was also found in the rubbish.”
58. Jesse Clark – “Mr. Clark found a relic of a cyclone in his pasture Friday in the shape of a postal card. It was dated at Ellis, Kan., Jan 17, 1918. It as the notification of draft classification to John J. Sanders. The card was undoubtedly blown from Ellis County, as the cyclone did lots of damage over there. The date of the card showed conclusively that it had been delivered to the person to whom it was addressed.”
59. John Conrad – “The entire house roof had to be replaced, ten thousand shingles being nailed down during the few hours the voluntary helpers were busy at that place. John and his wife did not get any sleep Tuesday night or Wednesday night, as the rain coming through the shattered roof had to be kept from penetrating the ceiling and they mopped water both nights.”
60. Otis Simpson – Barn destroyed, windmills put out of commission, all outbuildings wiped out.

61. H. R. Hurlburt – Barn destroyed, windmills put out of commission, all outbuildings wiped out.
62. George Williams – Barn destroyed, windmills put out of commission, all outbuildings wiped out.
63. Robert Boyce home – “Great trees that had been planted by the owner and his wife 40 years ago, were uprooted and scattered around the place.”
64. James Johnson – “..Stone garage, in which his auto stood when the tornado struck it, was totally demolished, the rock walls being blown out from under the roof, and the roof itself let down over the auto without in the least injuring the machine.”
65. Fair West school house in Mt. Ayr Township – “School house was blown to splinters. It was one of the old houses of the township and while still serviceable the district would soon have had to build a new one, so its sudden removal only hurries the district a little in the matter of getting a more up to date building.” Another source reported, “...was blown to splinters.”
66. Commissioner Jim Davis – “Suffered a loss of five or six hundred dollars. His barn was blown down, his wind mill wrecked and other property destroyed. Mr. Davis was in Osborne when the storm occurred, but hustled out home the next morning, returning to complete his work on the county board the balance of the week.”
67. W. L. Smith farm (Mr. Rippen, resident), on Kill Creek – “..the house and outbuildings were wrecked and trees measuring from 2 to 3 feet in diameter were up-rooted, and trees along the creek were broken and twisted into all kinds of shapes.”

“The country north of Bloomington in the path of the storm shows the effects of the tornado but one especially singular thing is noticed, namely, that while barns and other outbuildings were completely wrecked, windmills blown down or bent in such shapes that they are practically useless, and trees uprooted or shorn of their branches, the dwellings escaped with little if any damage. Some were partially unroofed and others had the studding strained but none we have heard of in this vicinity were totally wrecked.” –
The Osborne County Farmer

68. Albert William farm (north of Bloomington) – the “only damage done was wrecking his wind mill, the top being blown off, leaving the tower intact.”

“There was a lot of wind in the northeast part of Osborne County. There was considerable damage to barns and smaller buildings, and some stock was injured. Many telephone poles were blown down.”

69. Biddleman Farm (occupied by Arthur Blunt) – “A granary and chicken house were demolished and many of his chickens killed.”

70. John Reddick – “A silo was demolished, a chicken house swept away and other small damage was done.”

71. John Selichnow – “Suffered the loss of his granary. His car, which was kept in the granary, was blown out in the wheat field some distance and badly damaged.”

72. Ben Gillen’s place (west of Downs) – “It completely stripped the farm of all buildings except the house.”

73. Sid Miller’s – “a hen house was torn away and other minor damage done.”

Additional Information:

“The farms of E. J. Taylor, John Summelink and F. S. Addison were in the path of the storm and granaries and sheds were demolished and many chickens killed.” – The Osborne County Farmer

A number of autos were slightly damaged in the storm. – Natoma Independent

“Dozens of other places were ruined. Damage is reported at Henry Koelling’s, Nagel’s, Cap Neuman’s, Wineland’s, and further north in Mt. Ayr at Saul Stanfield’s, Dan Crutchfield’s, Gregory’s, Dan Stull’s... then further damage at the Harry Galbreath place, at Mischler’s, and many more. The general direction of the storm was north-east, but at the various places where it struck the buildings were blown in different directions, varying according to what part of the circle of the tornado hit them. Three separate and distinct winds are reported at some places, blowing from different directions.” – Natoma Independent

“ S. E. White estimates Tuesday afternoon in his own immediate territory the damage was fully \$100,000. This damage at fifteen places visited by this reporter Tuesday we estimated at an average of at least \$3,000 each.” – Natoma Independent

“The storm extended, we learn by phone from Osborne, clear to the county line, ten big barns being destroyed over near Portis, and may have extended even a little farther. It is the biggest single catastrophe of this kind that Osborne County has ever had. It is marvelous, in view of the damage done, that more lives were not lost. Among those injured are Tom Casey, broken shoulder and badly crushed foot, W. Murphy, Codell telephone operator, arm cut; Mrs. Lou

Dougherty, face badly bruised. Heavy property loss from the tornado is reported by D. Knevels, Tim Howe, J. L. Hoskins, Carl Miller, W. F. Miller, Wilbur Palmer. These parties were not interviewed by a reporter for this paper.” – Natoma Independent

The busiest people in Natoma the last few days are the insurance agents. – Natoma Independent

Excerpts from the Pioneer Spirit Still Exists article, Natoma Independent, May 30, 1918 –
“Reports concerning the effects of the tornado continue to reach the Independent office, but it is doubtful if we can ever compute an accurate account of the damage done in this section of the country. The various exchanges from over the devastated country are full of splendidly written accounts of the disaster and speak well for the reportorial ability of the newspaper men of the surround towns. So far the death list has not been augmented and the injured are recovering as rapidly as might be expected under the circumstances. The property loss is enormous and especially hard after the crop losses of the proceeding years and the rather dull outlook for the future. The victims are to be complimented on the sturdy spirit they are displaying and the promptness with which they are getting to work at the problem of rebuilding their homes and replanting their devastated fields.... The storm seems to have been especially severe just north west of Natoma. Here is where the farms of Frank Jones, J. I. Hoskins, W. Newlin, and Mr. Glendenning are located. These people were all heavy losers in the storms of 1916-17 and this the third disaster has nearly over whelmed some of them... Every effort is being made by the losers to re-establish their homes and to make good their title of real Kansans.”

“A yearling calf of one farmer living on Kill Creek was found the next morning with a 2x4 driven clear thru it, but was still living.”

“Passing out of Rooks County for a short distance the storm seemed to raise or possible there might have been another one started in the Mt. Ayr community where probably more, if possible, damage was done than in Rooks County.”

“Among other fine homes in the Mt. Ayr district which were destroyed or practically so were Sol Stanfield’s, Charles Williams, John Mitchler, Jim Davis, Harry Galbreath, Herman Hackett, the two Keollings, Charles Stull and many others whose names we did not learn. Hardly a house for a strip three miles wide and several miles long was left standing. At one place where there was formerly a school building all that was left on the ground where it stood was a part of the foundation and a short distance from that the school bell.”

Pickup-Ups After the Tornado article – “The ordinary conversation still swings around to the tornado of last week, and there are a few incidents that will be interesting even at this late date. One noticeable characteristic deserves mention, and that is the spirit in which many of the heaviest losers are facing their misfortune. It is a great thing to have the accumulation of years of work suddenly taken away, but it is an equally great thing to be able to meet the catastrophe with a smiling face and cheerful heart. Thanks are given up that the loss did not include some person.”
– The Alton Empire, May 30, 1918

“Many have not yet grasped the terrible velocity and persistency of the tornado.” – The Alton Empire

“A small picture was picked up by Melvin Mayfield in his pasture just east of town soon after the storm had subsided. The picture was evidently carried all the way from Ellis a distance around 50 miles from here. Upon the back of the picture appeared the following address, “Katie Riedel, Ellis, Kansas.”

“The extent of the great storm grows all the time. Over in Smith county it did damage to the extent of \$100,000 so dispatchs to the daily papers say. Some say the full damage of the storm all over Osborne county will reach a half million dollars.” – Osborne County Farmer

“The Osborne men were unable to go out and help the cyclone sufferers Thursday with their work on account of the rain, but Friday noon a large number of autos carrying some nine workers went out. They worked all that afternoon picking up stuff, straightening out and fixing fences and doing everything else that was to be done. The coming of the Osborne men was much appreciated by the people out that way, as they had simply more to do than they could handle. The Osborne men started in at John Mischler’s and their efforts extended forth. They did not get as far as at Mt. Ayr. There was too much to do nearer home. The places visited were as follows: John Mischler, A. E. Talcott, John Conrad, Myles Byrd, M. T. Orr, Oliver Stafford, F. G. Shaw, Wid Storer, Simon Smith, Otis Simpson, Chas. Wiggins, Wilson Knoll. The fields of Pete Neuschwanger and John Heiser were also cleared of a lot of rubbish blown over them. The idea that town men are no good on a farm was dispelled and it is likely the coming harvest will see the farmers up that way coming to town to draft them for work. The town men carried out saws, hammers, etc.” – The Osborne County Farmer

“A wind that is strong enough to destroy cement silos has some power. You can readily understand why the destruction was so great to buildings. All the injured in Osborne county are getting along nicely and no fatalities will occur. – The Osborne County Farmer

“Cyclone insurance has taken on a boom as a result of the storm. Cyclone insurance is cheap, too.” The Osborne County Farmer

“The Alton State Guards showed their usefulness by getting out as an organization right away after the storm and helping with the injured stock, etc. Word of the storm was in Alton in a few hours after it happened. Telephone connection was all shut off, but a messenger brought the word, reaching Alton at 3:30 Tuesday morning.” The Osborne County Farmer

“Quite a bunch of people from the storm district were in town Saturday trying to get repairs for their destroyed wind mills, which was almost impossible, they tell us. The fans and other portions that can be straightened out are more easily fixed up than the cog wheels, and other castings which were broken. In some cases the cog wheels can be brazed together and will serve the purpose for some time, but there are other parts that cannot be handled that way and new

parts must be obtained. That is very difficult at present as the great demand for metal the war has occasioned has practically shut off the manufacture of wind mill parts.” – The Osborne County Farmer

“The Woodston Argus considered the storm and all of its attending details worth a “two-inch writeup.” – The Osborne County Farmer

“Downs suffered some damage last week during cyclone night. Barns were unroofed, small buildings and chicken houses destroyed and window lights broken in.” – The Osborne County Farmer

“Dozens of other places were ruined.” – Natoma Independent

“People were awakened by the storm, but many didn’t have time to get to their caves. Several families were trapped in the wreckage of their homes.”

Resources: Alton Empire, Natoma Independent, Osborne County Farmer, Plainville Times, Rooks County Record, Stockton Review, Rooks county.net website, Ottawa Review website, Jackie Slimmer Langholz’ website (www.jlangholz.com), Rooks County Historical Museum, Stockton Public Library (microfilm), Osborne Library website, Plainville Library website, The Cougar, www.findagrave.com, <http://sites.google.com/view/Codell-Kansas-Tornadoes>, The Rooks County historical books, Lest We Forget, the Osborne County historical books, comments from descendants and neighbors as well as Codell, Natoma and Alton Facebook group members.

Personal Note by the author: During the mid-1960’s, I attended school six years at the Codell Grade School. And on May 20, the school recognized “Cyclone Day.” And I must admit that on those May 20’s, I remember apprehensively looking up in the sky over the red schoolhouse. I grew up hearing about the tornadoes from my grandparents.

My grandmother, Mary Netherland Zeigler, who at the time was living with her step-grandfather, Willis H. Johnson, was in the 1916 tornado.

And I knew the story of George and Lesta Glendening’s experiences in the 1918 tornado, an account my grandparents, Arthur and Lola Brown, shared numerous times. However, it was not until about five years ago, while doing research for a Rooks County history presentation on the Codell tornadoes, did I realize that the 1916, 1917 and 1918 tornadoes did not actually all hit the town of Codell each year. Also, in my research, I found, not just one account, but multiple accounts of what happened to Max Glendening on May 20, 1918, and the story my family told, was not what Max’s mother, Celesta, wrote down for her family many years later. I also realized

I knew several of the people involved in this tornadoes, not just my grandmother and the Glendening family.

Further, as I read the devastation and the various harrowing accounts, I had a better appreciation why my family went the “cave” anytime the wind picked up, and the clouds overhead looked threatening.

Codell Cyclone Day – May 20th

Have you heard the story of Cyclone Day
What happened in the community of Codell?
When three years in a row on May 20th
Tornadoes around them fell?

The 1916 F2 went just one mile to the east
While the 1917 F3 traveled three miles to the west.
But the 1918 F4 went straight through town,
The worst of them all; it was the final test.

So the next time storm clouds ‘round you swirl,
And you hear the tornado siren sound,
Please remember what happened at Codell,
And you better seek shelter underground!

- Nila LaRea Denton

Max’s 1918 Codell Tornado Tall Tales

Come gather ‘round and I will tell you
What happened just north of Codell to a boy named Max.
When the May 20, 1918 tornado hit his family’s farm,
But I warn you, it may be up to you to figure out the real facts.

That night they didn’t have time to get to the cave,
The house around them was coming apart, exposing beams.
Nails popping everywhere, dishes flying,
As the new wallpaper was ripped down at the seams.

For according to Max, it was the night he took his first flying lesson,
A fact of which he was most proud.
Because for years, Max would share his story,
Full of details, to one and all, in a voice both clear and loud.

To hear Max tell it, the cyclone whipped him out of his daddy’s arms,
Who barely caught him by the heel.
But this was just the very beginning,
Of Max’s incredibly exciting flying ordeal.

For the next gust of wind sent hi flying in the air,
So Max used his quilt for a wing,
What fun he said he had a-flying,
As that twister around and round did him fling.

Next Max landed in a clothes basket,
Used a floorboard underneath to surf right down the draw;
Where he ended up by a woodpile,
Without the quilt and not a stitch of clothes on him at all!

His family found Max there patiently waiting,
Then they all crawled on to the cave.
Max was just so excited about his flying adventure;
He thought of himself already an expert pilot, strong and brave.

So the moral of this story is to be most careful
In what you say and what you tell
To a child of what happened to him when he was only 18 months old,
Who later told tall tales of his experience in the 1918 tornado near Codell!

- Nila LaRea Denton

The last poem was inspired by the seven different accounts I found regarding what happened to Max Glendening the night of May 20, 1918. It was the most discrepancies I found from any of the events of that night, my information gleaned from articles in local newspapers, two neighbors' stories, but I believe what his mother wrote several years later. Here are my findings:

1. Whipped out of his mother's arms. Found minutes later nearly, wrapped in his quilt, unharmed. (True, what his mother Lesta wrote down.)
2. Flying in the sky with his quilt wrapped around him.
3. Found in a basket nearby.
4. Found near a wood pile, without the quilt and no nightclothes on.
5. Found in a draw naked.
6. Found in a nearby field with minor scratches.
7. Whipped out of his father's arms, who caught Max by his heel and pulled him back into his arms. (This story my family told for many years. My family lived about four miles north of the farmstead where this happened.)

This is just another reason I believe we should document historical events so that future generations will know what really happened.