

Freezing Temperatures Cause Damage to Local Residents

The cold winter weather can cause havoc in many ways as we found out immediately before Christmas last month. It might have been worse more than a century ago as we will see today and again next week. Alcohol entered into some of the situations described. The incidents described here are pitiful and may be difficult to read, so don't read this if it will cause you any distress.

On Friday night January 3, 1879 a group of young people were going to Walter S. Wescott's home for a party. They came across a man lying in the snow in the northwest part of Monroe township "who proved to be dead drunk and two-thirds frozen." They picked him up, put him in the sleigh, and hauled him into town and put him "where he would thaw out." At one point the motion of the sleigh aroused him and "he deliriously inquired 'why the d---l they didn't keep up better fires.'" The editor added, "Whisky [sic] won't keep a man warm when Jack Frost is about no more than it will cool a man when old Sol is booming. The best time to drink whiskey is no time at all, especially, in the present time."

A short article on January 24, 1883 simply said, "Gottlieb Wittwer severely froze the fingers of both hands in riding from New Glarus to Monroe on Monday last."

On Saturday, January 26, 1895, Dr. R. B. Clark made a professional visit to Oakley from Monroe. While returning home in his cutter, it was tipped over "several times by the drifts through which it ploughed its devious way, facing a bitterly cold wind." The doctor was nearly frozen by the time he reached the public square. He wasn't even able to stop his horse; the city marshal and other men assisted him out of the cutter. He wasn't even able to walk. "Restoratives and brisk rubbing with alcohol, etc., finally restored him to active physical life. But it was a close call all the same."

August Kruegger was taken to jail on Friday night, December 16, 1901, while drunk. His feet were badly frozen and it was thought then that he might lose his toes. Application was made to have him committed to the county farm, but his condition did not allow it at the time.



This photo is from the collection of Lorraine Herbert McMurray and shows these unidentified men with a load of ice that was harvested at Clarno. Freezing temperatures used to be necessary for those who harvested ice to help residents keep their foods safe. However, those freezing temperatures could also cause injury, or even death, if people weren't careful.

Christ Weiss pleaded guilty in police court on January 31, 1906 to a charge of drunkenness. He was fined \$2.00 and costs, which amounted to \$6.45. He had lost his way while returning to his home the previous evening and was almost frozen "when the red light police got him."

From the March 5, 1907 Monroe Evening Times: "A man named Krieger, said to be a son of Mrs. Ernestina Krieger, of Browntown, Wis., is lying in a hospital at Owatonna, Iowa suffering intensely as a result of having been frozen. He says he started from Waterloo with a carload of emigrant stuff, including some stock for some point in Dakota or Canada. In some way he was thrown from his car, as he claims, or at least was exposed and became badly frosted before he came to himself."

The Times printed an article on February 2, 1918 that had been copied from the New Glarus Post. It stated that Mrs. Math. Haldimann had a "close call from death by exposure." She was returning from a visit to see her son, Robert, in Madison, and returned on the Wednesday evening Central. She exited the train in Exeter carrying two suitcases, and commenced walking home. She felt numb from the cold when she was near the S. H. Luchsinger house and started shouting. Fortunately, Mrs. Luchsinger heard her cries and called to town for assistance. A guest in the Luchsinger home then found Mrs. Haldimann in an unconscious state. People from the village brought a bob sleigh to get her and brought her to the home of her daughter, Mrs. John C. Luchsinger. The editor added, "There is no doubt that if her cries had not been heard that she would have died from exposure."

As terrible as these incidents were, not everyone was as fortunate as these people. I shall share information about more unfortunate incidents next week. We have to be thankful that our clothing and modes of transportation today help to make incidents like those described here less likely. When I include names as we've seen in this column, I always hope that someone may learn something about a family member that they didn't know before.