CHAPTER XI.
The Cyclone.

On May 23d, 1878, shortly before five o'clock in the afternoon Perry and vicinity was visited by a terrible hurricane that left death and destruction in its path. Its strength was so great that no tree, building, or other object could stop its fury—even 100 foot iron pumps were "sucked" out of their places in the deep wells, and cast and twisted around like toys.

Its appearance from a distance could be compared to a powerful smoke pouring out from a locomotive on a moving train, only in volume and roaring noise it would be hundreds of times more intense.

It gathered from the west and traveled east off northeast, accompanied with torrents of rain.

The first victim in our vicinity was a school teacher, Miss Campbell, who was killed while returning home from her work.

On the Swenson farm both the parents of Mr. and Mrs. Ole Swenson* were instantly killed, a son George had a thigh bone broken, and a daughter Julia had a deep gash cut in her forehead. All the buildings were demolished.

The following lost either all or part of their buildings: Peder Bratbakken, Anne P. Levang, George Paulson, Edward Peterson, Lars O. Haaverud, Halvor Hoiby, Mary J. Dalby, August Goebel, Lewis Lewis, and two sets of buildings on the Dalby and Huser farms.

* This is somewhat confusing as written. Ole and Astrid (Hoverud) Swenson were killed. They were the parents of Ole Swenson Jr. Their son George had his thigh broken and their daughter Julia sustained a deep gash in her forehead. Ole Jr. and his wife Lisa (Paulson) were unhurt. David Battey
Mrs. Lewis had her arm broken, and east of the church a young man by the name of Jylland was killed, having been carried bodily thru the air—no one knows how far or how long.

Rev. Jacobson was just packing his goods preparatory to moving when the storm reached the parsonage, destroying the barn and granary, tearing the roof off the dwelling, breaking every window, demolishing the lean-to and the kitchen, and hurling Rev. Jacobson some distance thru space, giving him numerous cuts and bruises. Mrs. Evenson, who was helping there, was also injured. The other members of the family were unhurt, even the little baby in the cradle who was lying among broken glass and debris—smiled up to the open Heaven.

Mr. Anderson, an inmate of the County Farm, whom Rev. Jacobson had befriended and let stay at the parsonage some time for a visit, was fearfully mangled by the storm. As soon as help could be gathered he was carried on a mattress to a neighbor’s house, the broken bones in his body protruding out thru the remnants of the clothing that still covered him. He suffered untold of agony until relieved by death six hours later.

Four of those who were killed were buried the following day in our cemetery, while Miss Campbell’s funeral was held the following Sunday at Middleburg.

Our first stone church had most of the roof torn off, and its interior was considerably damaged, so it was not used again after the storm. Gulbran Jensvold, who was teaching school some miles away, saw the storm in the distance but did not realize the great danger his family went thru. He lost all his farm buildings, some live stock, the roof of the dwelling was entirely gone, and a large part of the stone structure was demolished. Mrs. Jensvold

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tells:

“I was alone with our small children and a young niece, when that awful moment of the storm’s furious approach swept upon us. The last look out of the window saw a giant oak lying flat to the ground, then all was complete darkness. I had gathered the children around me—thinking only of that final Judgment when “Heaven and earth shall perish,” and tried to pray, while my little girl began “Fader vor Du som er i Himmelen.” We were hurled around like feathers among splintered glass and crashing stone. When daylight again appeared one of my children was removed uninjured from underneath the rocks which I had been unable to lift after the storm. My niece was carried out unconscious but came to again when the rain beat down upon her. Some of my children carry marks yet from the bruises received, but no bones were broken. When the one was carried out who had started “Fader vor,” she clasped her tiny arms around my neck and finished her prayer from where she had left off, “Den Gud vil bevare er udenfor al fare.”

CHAPTER XII.
The Second Stone Church.

After the first shock of this terrible storm had subsided, the congregation met and decided to rebuild the church with all possible haste. The plans and specifications to be placed in the hands of a competent architect, the material and size to be of the same kind as was contained in the first church. A building committee was elected composed of O. B. Daley, John O. Dalby, Knudt O. Hastvedt, Kittil Paulson, Valquar Jenson, Ole