

Our America MAGAZINE

Winter Issue 2021 Vol. 1 No. 6

Quarterly Publication of the Missouri Cherry Blossom Festival



*Featured
Article:
Jimmy Carter*

FEATURES

4. **From The Editor's Desk**
5. **Dedication**
6. **Former Norwood Student Excels In Art Industry**
By Paul Cecchini
8. **Andrew Och: The First Ladies Man**
By Paul Cecchini
11. **Ella Dickey Award-Winner Geraldine Hawkins**
By Julie Hedgepeth Williams
15. **Eric Ronningen: From the Inside-Out**
By Paul Cecchini
18. **A Bullet to the Heart**
By Michael T. Naya, Jr.
21. **Donna Roberts**
By Natasha Dunagan
24. **Sister Festival Photo Collage**
25. **Jimmy Carter: Influences, Experiences, and Faith**
By Dr. Laurence Cook
31. **David Osborne: Pianist to the Presidents**
By Paul Cecchini
34. **Fair Grove's Mill**
By Marilyn Smith
38. **Dr. William Piston - Civil War Historian**
By Paul Cecchini
41. **Mama Allie, A Gracious and Kind Lady**
By LeAnne Smith
44. **Bill Gower: What Was He Like?**
By Darleen Anderson
50. **Cherry Blossom Festival Auxiliary Trip Photo Collage**
51. **John Pletkovich - Part 4**
By Tim Pletkovich
55. **The History Behind Laura Ingalls Wilder's The Long Winter**
By Cindy Wilson
61. **Nick & Sarah's Travels**



ON THE COVER

This cover is a tribute to Jimmy Carter, 39th President of the United States for his 97th birthday. Jimmy Carter has committed his life to humanitarian efforts throughout the world and his work with The Carter Center has been unparalleled in his post Presidential years. This cover is the first cover to feature original artwork and was created by Chuck Todd who was recently honored for his work with illustrations with the prestigious, Laura Ingalls Wilder Children's Literature Award. With this artwork, President Carter is depicted as an elder statesman whose years of experience are a reflection of wisdom, commitment and dedicated public service.

ADVERTISING RATES PER ISSUE

Inside Cover Full Page Color - \$175, Back Cover Full Page Color - \$185, 1/2 Page B & W- \$70, 1/2 Page Color- \$85, 1/4 Page B & W- \$50, 1/4 Page Color- \$60, 1/8 Business Card B & W- \$40. Other rates are available upon request, call (808) 345-4975.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

\$25 for one year, \$50 for two years. Subscription requests can be mailed to: Our America Magazine, P.O. Box 212, Marshfield, MO 65706

PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

Summer Issue
Fall Issue
Winter Issue
Spring Issue

FOLLOW THE ASSOCIATION ON FACEBOOK

Please become a fan to stay up to date on activities, announcements and events about the Missouri Cherry Blossom Festival in Marshfield, MO. www.facebook.com/MOCherryBlossomFest

MAGAZINE POLICY

Our America Magazine is the official publication of The Missouri Cherry Blossom Festival Auxiliary. Our American Magazine is published quarterly. Additional copies may be purchased for the cost in advance of \$10 USD each, including postage. Request for additional copies may be made direct to Our America Magazine, P.O. Box 212, Marshfield, Missouri 65706. Manuscripts and photographs submitted for publication are welcome and should be sent electronically to Nicholas Inman, Magazine Editor, Our America Magazine at ouramericamag@gmail.com. Reproduction of this magazine in part or in whole, is prohibited without written permission from the Editor of Our America Magazine. Our America Magazine and the production staff are not responsible for errors or omissions contained herein. Our America Magazine and the production staff retain the right to edit any submitted materials and to not publish an article of questionable content or that goes against the purpose of Our America Magazine or The Missouri Cherry Blossom Festival Auxiliary or the Missouri Cherry Blossom Festival. The Missouri Cherry Blossom Festival is a non-profit organization established to preserve and promote history.

Printed by

Webster County Printing
Robert Gordon, Owner

103 E. Jackson St. • Marshfield, MO 65706

Designed by

Hannah Gordon

Proofread by

Kim Ward

Cherry Blossom Festival photo archive by Jill Phillips -
His Fingerprint Photography
www.cherryblossomfest.com

The History Behind Laura Ingalls Wilder's The Long Winter

by Cindy Wilson

In *The Long Winter* by Laura Ingalls Wilder (based on her memories of the Hard Winter of 1880-81), the new town of De Smet Dakota Territory was lashed with blizzard after blizzard, starting in mid-October. The snow piled up and trains became infrequent. By mid-January the trains stopped altogether. Food and fuel became dangerously low. It was a cold, hungry, isolated, mind-numbing battle to stay alive until the trains returned in early May. It is a gripping story, masterfully told.

I wondered how closely Wilder's portrayal of the Hard Winter matched the historical record. That curiosity took me on an odyssey to see what the newspaper record would reveal. Using the newspaper record was an intentional choice; while not perfect, it is as close as we can come to seeing life as the winter unfolded, week by week, without the mythologizing that appeared in regional and family histories in the years following the winter.

The original goal had been to explore the reality of the Hard Winter for my own curiosity. Then, as I tell audiences when speaking about the resulting book *The Beautiful Snow*, "things got rather out of hand from there!"

It didn't take long to recognize the topics of weather, railroad efforts, food and fuel, travel, social activities, and boosterism (a term similar to marketing, where various parties "boosted" the qualities of a town or region) recurring over and over in newspapers across the larger region. The newspapers were an absolute treasure trove! A few thousand articles were collected (from Fort Pierre on the Missouri river to Winona on the Mississippi), organized, then further researched and analyzed.

What was found were many similarities between the newspaper record and Wilder's novel. However, there were also some surprising differences. As someone who very much loves the novel, the similarities were reassuring. Conversely, some of the differences could be described as shocking. This article covers two of those topics, the weather and the railroad efforts.

An Overview of the Novel

For those unfamiliar with Wilder's *The Long Winter*, it is set in the new railroad town of De Smet, Dakota Territory, where the Ingalls family were among the first settlers. The novel begins with Laura and her Pa, Charles Ingalls, harvesting hay. It was uncomfortably hot and sticky work, marking a contrast to the winter weather that approaches. Ma and the girls worked to preserve their small first-year garden harvest. They were not concerned, however, as they were near town and were confident that local grocers would have food to supplement their own preserves.

A surprise early blizzard struck in mid-October. By late November there were near constant blizzards, with rarely more than one or two days between storms. The trains were affected by snow blockades (areas along the tracks where snow built up

and blocked the trains), which hindered their ability to keep a regular schedule.

As the storms continued, trains arrived less and less frequently, stopping altogether in January. Merchants had not yet laid in a heavy stock of goods, assuming trains would be running and able to resupply as needed.

A pivotal scene occurred when a railroad superintendent "from the east" came out to the Tracy Cut to clear a blockade. After an unsuccessful effort to clear the snow and an overnight storm that undid all their work, the superintendent declared that all track-clearing work would stop until spring, leaving all towns west of the blockade abandoned to the storms until spring. The railroad company was painted as the enemy for giving up the effort to keep the tracks clear of snow.

Without trains, food and fuel became scarce, and people became cold and increasingly hungry. Hay was twisted into sticks to burn for heat, and seed wheat was ground into flour using a hand-cranked coffee-mill. This was the situation for months. The terrible winds shrieked. Snow drifted to the second floor one day, then was scoured away by a howling gale the next. Storms continued into April, and the first train didn't chug into town until early May.

So how did that compare to the historical record as found in the newspapers?

Overview of the Historic Weather During the Hard Winter

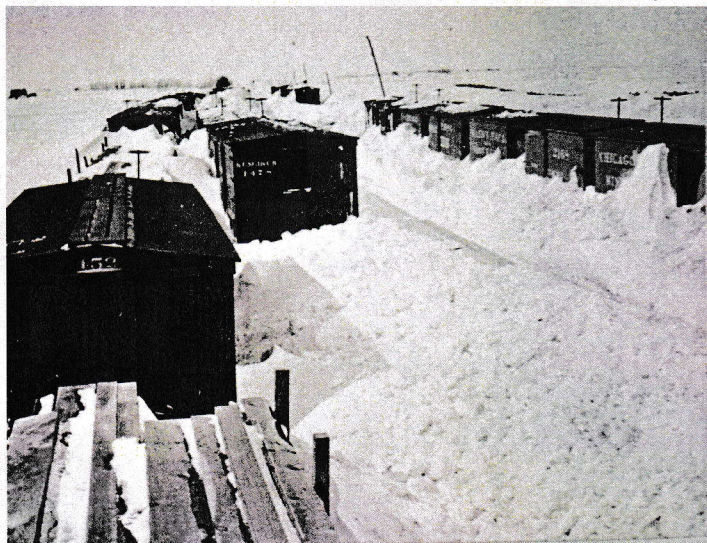
*Note before we begin: today, a blizzard refers to an event of at least three hours duration with "sustained wind or frequent gusts to 35 miles an hour or greater" along with "considerable falling and/or blowing snow."¹ In 1880, the term was much more loosely applied, and generally referred to a bad snowstorm. An individual storm could be called a snowstorm, or it could be called a blizzard, or both, interchangeably. People still often refer to the winter of 1880-81 as "the blizzard," as if the entire winter was a single storm. It was not a single storm/blizzard, but rather a winter composed of numerous individual storms/blizzards. Many people also combine the January 1888 Children's (or Schoolhouse) Blizzard with the Hard Winter of 1880-81, possibly because of the chapter in *The Long Winter* when the students are caught at school when a blizzard struck. However, the events were several years apart.*

The weather, of course, is a major part of what made those months such a hard, long winter. In her autobiography *Pioneer Girl*, Wilder wrote that the weather that winter "gave the impression of a malignant power of destruction wreaking havoc as long as possible, then pausing for breath to go on with its work."²

Historically, it was indeed an unusually cold and snowy winter. The first blizzard struck in mid-October, and the last

¹ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service website, <https://w1.weather.gov/glossary/index.php?word=blizzard>

one subsided in mid-April. That early storm caught everyone off guard and put an end to most gardens (helping to set the stage for later hunger), though some root crops such as potatoes survived. This photo, taken in St. James Minnesota just after the October storm, shows the depth of the snows and the drifting. Looking closely, you can see the main track and multiple sidetracks. Look at the drifts between the cars on the left and the car beside them. Then look at how high the snow drifted onto the car on the right with its door open. These cars needed to be shoveled out, and the snow cleared from the railyard,



Railyard in St. James, Minnesota, following the October 1880 storm.
Photo courtesy of the Chicago & North Western Historical Society

before the trains could move.

Of that October storm, Currie's Murray County Pioneer (just south of Tracy, Minnesota) wrote,

"The storm continu[ed] to increase throughout Friday night, [and] by daylight immense mountains of snow was heaped about all buildings ... and by Saturday night locomotion of all kinds was impossible."³

According to the newspapers, November was relatively warm, and there were only a few scattered snow events. In fact, it became dry enough that prairie fires became a problem. Then, the day after Christmas (both in the novel and the historical record), one of the worst storms of the winter hit, setting off the beginning of the end for the trains.

Of that storm, the Brookings County Press (Brookings, Dakota Territory) wrote,

"Sunday was a terror. It snowed, and it blowed, and it drifted, until it seems as though the whole country was to be inundated."⁴

A few weeks later, the Pipestone Star (Pipestone, Minnesota) reported that a storm on January 21 and 22 had been "two of the most trying days we have had this winter," and a week later another storm brought "a delightful breeze" and "only about three feet more snow."⁵

In early February, the New Ulm Weekly Review (New Ulm, Minnesota) observed

"The worst snowstorm in the recollection of the oldest settlers struck this city and vicinity about 11 o'clock last Friday morning and it raged with almost unabated fury ... The storm let up for three or four hours. ... [then] again commenced and continued until late Sunday night."⁶

Storms continued in a similar manner until the final one in mid-April. Even before its snowfall had been added to the tally, the New Ulm Weekly Review reported that

"According to records kept at Ft. Snelling, the snowfall this winter has been four times as great as for the previous nine years, and nine times the average of nineteen years."⁷

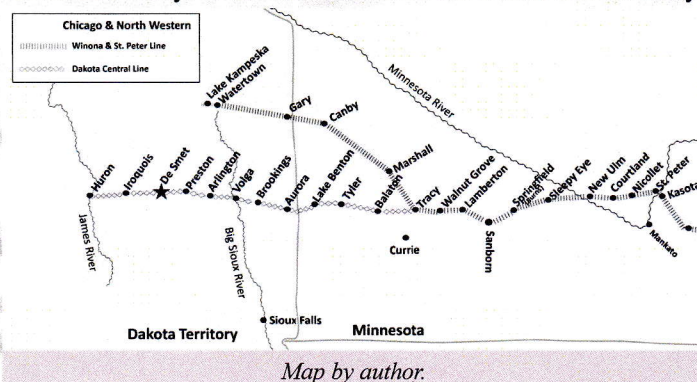
The newspaper record and the novel *The Long Winter* line up nicely where the weather is concerned. It had been six months of intense cold, heavy snowfall, and gale-like winds. These adversarial elements combined to make a terrible situation for the railroad companies to contend with.

The Railroads and Their Efforts to Clear the Tracks

First, a bit of context about the railroads. There were two railroad lines that impacted De Smet. The first was the more established (as of 1873) Winona & St. Peter, which began at Winona Minnesota on the Mississippi river and went west to Tracy Minnesota before veering northwest to Watertown Dakota Territory. The second was the Dakota Central, which began construction in May 1879 and ran west from Tracy. The segment from Tracy to Volga Dakota Territory was completed during the 1879 construction season, and during 1880 the tracks were completed from Volga to the Missouri river well to the west.

This means that along the Dakota Central, many of the towns were less than a year old, and several were less than six months old, when that first October storm hit. Homes and businesses were still being constructed, residents were still getting to know each other, and their sense of community was still developing.

Because the Dakota Central extended off of the Winona & St. Peter, the Dakota Central was dependent on trains running on the Winona & St. Peter to bring goods and passengers from the east to Tracy. When snow blocked the tracks east of Tracy,



2 Wilder, Laura Ingalls, *Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography*, Pamela Smith Hill, editor; South Dakota History Press, Pierre, South Dakota, pg 217
3 Murray County Pioneer, Currie, Minnesota, October 21, 1880
4 Brookings County Press, Brookings, Dakota Territory, December 30, 1880
5 Pipestone Star, Pipestone, Minnesota, January 27 and February 3, 1881
6 New Ulm Weekly Review, New Ulm, Minnesota, February 9, 1881
7 New Ulm Weekly Review, New Ulm, Minnesota, April 13, 1881

the Dakota Central fell victim as well.

The other reason the Hard Winter was so hard, of course, was because the trains couldn't get through, and therefore were unable to resupply the new towns that had sprung up along the tracks as they pushed west.

A history of the Chicago & North Western, written by a long-term employee, included this about the sense of responsibility felt by company officers towards the new settlers during the Hard Winter:

"Thousands of settlers had, in the summer and fall of 1880, flocked to Minnesota and Dakota and settled along the lines of this road; and every one of them was dependent on the trains of this company for fuel and food and light, as all were pioneers and had no accumulated stores to draw from. Hence it seemed absolutely incumbent on the company to open its lines and keep them open. Its snowplows were kept moving day and night and thousands of men were hired to shovel snow."⁸

In fact, the railroad companies scrambled to erect additional lengths of snow fences along areas of track which had drifted shut during that first October storm, and stationed plows at strategic locations along the lines. With these efforts, regional newspaper editors reassured their readers that the railroad



An unusual plow, built of wood, and significantly larger than the usual wedge plow. Note that this special implement sits in front of at least three locomotives. This photo was taken in Waseca, Minnesota, in 1880. Photo courtesy of the Chicago & North Western Historical Society.

companies were ready for whatever winter would bring.

Before we look further at what the railroads were contending with, let's understand the problem. The problem were the railroad cuts. But what was a cut? Simply, a cut is where a hill existed, but the railroad wanted their tracks to go through the hill, not up and over. So, the hill would be "cut out" to make a path for the tracks.

During construction, these cuts were often made as quickly as possible, meaning they were narrow, sometimes only wide enough for the trains to pass. Unfortunately, this led to unintended consequences. Those narrow cuts captured snow and held it tight. Blowing, swirling snow became trapped in the cuts, unable to escape the steep sides. The snow would settle, compact, and turn to ice. By late winter, that ice had to be removed with pick axes. But that gets a bit ahead of our story.

⁸ *Yesterday and Today: A History*, William Stennett, Chicago, 1905, pg 65

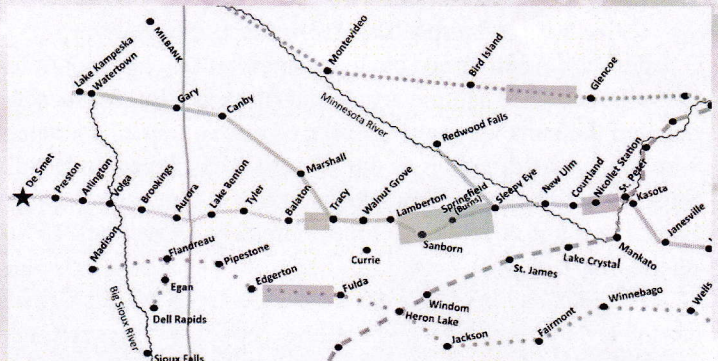


This modern photo of a railroad cut was taken about two miles to the east of the Tracy Cut, which was a protagonist in *The Long Winter*. During the Hard Winter, the cuts were much narrower, which is what caused snow to become trapped. In the years after the winter, cuts were widened to prevent that problem. Photo by author.

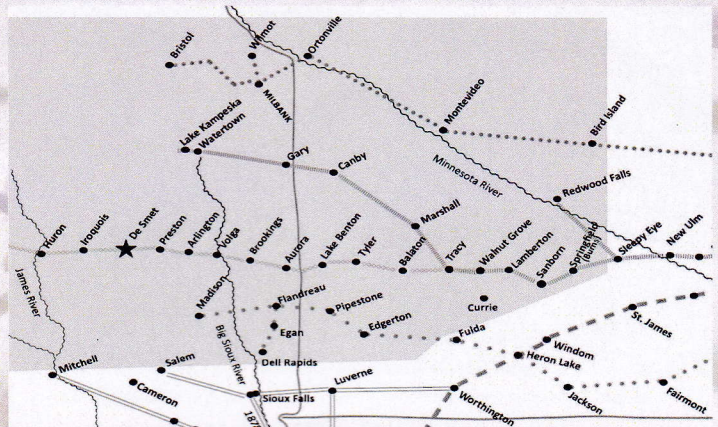
Each time a storm hit, snow piled up and drifted across the tracks. Tracks in the wide open were easier to clear. But within the cuts, it could take days or even a week or more of hard work to get trains through, if possible, before the next blizzard.

Residents of the western towns were growing nervous. After each storm and resulting blockade, people calculated how much time and effort -- and expense -- it took to clear a blockade. They knew it was hard work and very expensive, and they worried the railroads would give up. Those worries grew with each storm, and rumors of abandonment appeared more frequently in print.

Also with each storm, certain locations became more and more problematic. By mid-January, all of the towns west of those blockades were impacted.



The grey areas show the areas along each railroad line across the region where blockades effectively stopped the trains from getting any farther west during the Hard Winter of 1880-81. Map by author.



By mid-January, the areas impacted by the blocked locations on the first map looked like this. Map by author.

Snow Bucking - How to Unblock a Blockade

The normal procedure to keep the tracks clear was to simply run trains, with or without a plow, frequently enough to keep snow from piling up. This wasn't always practical, however. When snow did drift over the tracks, the engineers resorted to snow bucking. This meant running a locomotive or two or three (sometimes with a plow, sometimes without), into the snow drift with enough speed and power to burst through the snow.

If the drift was big enough, they would uncouple the cars, and run the locomotives into the drift, to minimize problems if the engine derailed, which was not at all uncommon. The story from *The Long Winter* about the superintendent from the east is essentially a story about snow bucking.



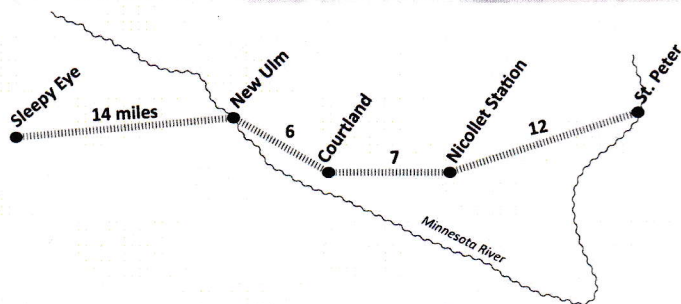
A 1917 photo from southern Minnesota showing a drift as it was hit by a locomotive during a snow bucking run. Photo courtesy Chicago & North Western Historical Society

A Sample Tale from the Cuts

February 1880 turned out to be a particularly bad month for the railroads. One sample article out of New Ulm, Minnesota, detailed the harrowing experiences of a crew of 125 shovelers who, under the direction of the Winona & St. Peter Railroad's Superintendent Sanborn, worked to clear a blockade between Saint Peter and Sleepy Eye (approximately where the "12" is on the map).

The men had been at work clearing a series of cuts when a storm blew up and forced them off the job. The workers returned to the cuts the next day, along with a work train pushing a plow. Things deteriorated from there.

"On the first run the snow plow struck a broken rail and was completely demolished. One of the engines was also thrown from the track, but luckily none of the train men was injured by the accident."⁹



Map by author.

Without the plow, the crew was completely dependent upon the shovelers, so progress was slow. Stormy weather returned the next day, further delaying the work. When the storm cleared at sunset, Sanborn's crew went out and worked until three in the morning.

After a brief rest, they resumed work in the morning and were bolstered by word that three locomotives and a plow from Sleepy Eye were being sent to assist them. Those hopes were dashed, however, when the rescue plow "jumped the track" just two miles out of Sleepy Eye. It required the rest of the day to get the locomotive and plow back on the tracks, so the men in the cuts between Saint Peter and Nicollet continued shoveling on their own.

The next morning, the plow that derailed just east of Sleepy Eye finally passed through New Ulm, about halfway to the work crew. Along with the plow the train brought more shovelers. With the force of the plow and a now-combined crew of 500 men, the tracks were finally cleared all the way to Saint Peter. With this success, the crew boarded the work train, returned to Sleepy Eye, and were taken to a cut west of town. There was no time for rest, no matter how long the men had been shoveling.

The situation was similar along a railroad line to the north, where "two of the snow plows, with the engines, were ditched, and the probability is that we won't have any mails ... for another week."¹⁰ These types of stories, involving derailed plows and snow-interrupted shoveling, was typical of the entire winter.

Shovelers

As the above stories showed, while snowplows and locomotives were the big equipment, the most common tool was the man with a shovel. They were not as powerful, but they tended to be more reliable overall. They were engaged, both paid and volunteer, by the thousands throughout the winter.



Elmer & Tenney photo taken late in the winter, this one showing the tiers so that the snow could be tossed away from the tracks. Photo courtesy Chicago & North Western Historical Society

⁹ *New Ulm Weekly Review*, New Ulm, Minnesota, February 16, 1881
¹⁰ *Pipestone Star*, Pipestone, Minnesota, February 17, 1881

As the snow piled up, the shovelers had to create tiers to get the snow away from the tracks. The men at the bottom would shovel the snow up as high as they could reach, then another group of men would then shovel it up to the next level, until the snow could finally be tossed away from the tracks.

End-of-Winter Blockade Clearing

We are fortunate that as spring approached, photographers went out to capture the scenes as workers toiled to clear the cuts.

To extricate the compressed snow, workers first created channels either side of the tracks, so that men could further segment the snow into large blocks, eventually creating walking space on all four sides of each block (see the next photo).

Next, cables were wrapped around the snow block, with pieces of wood propped against the snow itself to prevent the cables from slicing through the block when pulled. Next the cable would be hooked to the front of a locomotive, which would back the block of snow out of the cut. Once away from the cut, the block of snow would then be pushed off to the side by a crew of men, and left to melt on the prairie.

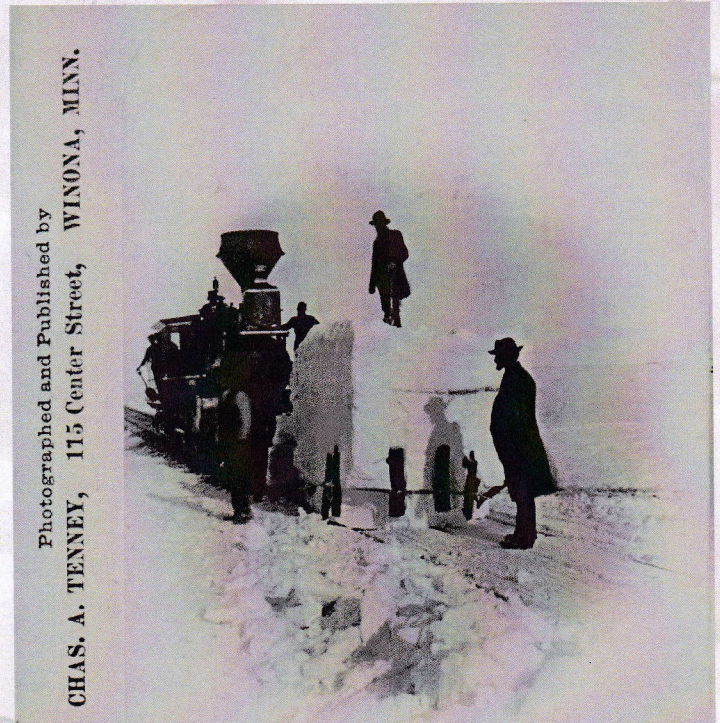
It was not uncommon to find, hidden beneath the snow and firmly attached to the rails, ice a few feet in thickness. This ice had to be either chopped away using pick axes, or left to melt in the warm spring sun. This process escalated in late March and into April, as spring approached and the situation with diminished supplies beyond the blockades became more desperate.

After the final April snowstorm subsided, the Janesville Argus wrote,

“Eight hundred men are now engaged in opening the Winona & St. Peter railroad west of Sleepy Eye. Ice two feet in thickness on top of the rails is found in places. No snow plow could ‘buck’ such a drift. ... Warm weather alone is likely to take out such ice banks.”¹¹



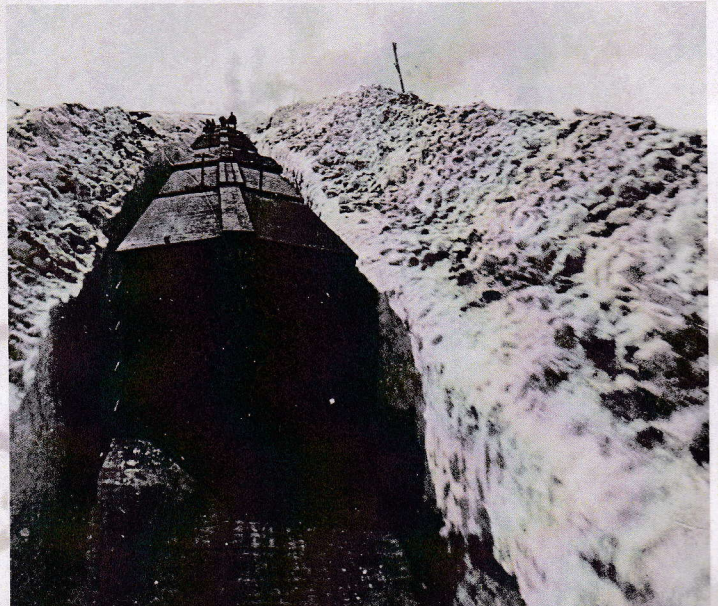
1194



Photographed and Published by
CHAS. A. TENNEY, 115 Center Street, WINONA, MINN.

These two Elmer & Tenney photographs show the process of clearing snow from a blockade. The photo on the left, taken on April 15, 1881 near Lambertton Minnesota, shows men carving the snow into blocks (including removing extra weight from the top), so that cables could be wrapped around the snow before hooking the block to a locomotive. Above (from a nearby location along a different railroad line) shows a block of snow after it had been backed out of a cut. Both photos courtesy of the Chicago & North Western Historical Society

Once a blockade was cleared, a work train would inch its way west, bringing shovelers and a plow as it went. The Elmer & Tenney photo below, taken on March 29, 1881, does an excellent job of illustrating what the railroad companies were fighting against that unprecedented winter.



Elmer & Tenney, March 29, 1881, west of Sleepy Eye. Courtesy Chicago & North Western Historical Society.

¹¹ Janesville Argus, Janesville, Minnesota, April 12, 1881

A cut immediately to the west of Sleepy Eye on the Winona & St. Peter was the true culprit of the deprivations suffered in towns to the west along the Winona & St. Peter and Dakota Central lines, including De Smet. While the novel used the Tracy Cut as a protagonist, the trains were, in reality, blockaded nearly fifty miles to the east.

Snow removal was not the only concern. The melting snow caused historic flooding, which washed out mile upon mile of tracks and bridges. Additionally, throughout the winter, residents had pulled up railroad ties, cut up bridges and trestles, and took down snow fences to burn the wood for heat, and those repairs had to be made before the trains could safely run on the tracks.

Trains made it to the isolated towns in late April and early May, depending on location. But their return did not automatically mean the arrival of supplies. Over the course of the winter, trains that could get no farther west would leave their loaded cars on the sidetracks and sidings along the way, so that as spring came, there was an astounding number of cars parked along hundreds of miles of track. The complexity of unraveling the intended destinations of all those cars full of goods was very complicated all on its own, especially in an era before computerization.

At the end of The Long Winter, people of De Smet were shocked that the first train into De Smet brought farm machinery instead of desperately needed food. This is another item that lines up with the newspaper record. There was an article out of Lake Benton Minnesota that complained of the exact same thing, wondering why food had not been sent ahead of the uneatable machinery.

“It was generally supposed that the first freight shipments would be provisions. Yesterday we saw a railroader uncarring a lot of forks, rakes, etc and remarking to himself, ‘This is a dashed blanked pretty looking lot of stuff to eat!’”¹²

Unfortunately, the fastest way to get food through was likely to get hundreds of other cars hauled farther west, so that empty cars could return east, be filled with necessities, then transported back west. This process took months in some cases.

The winter-long efforts by the railroad companies were the most surprising discoveries during research. Wilder’s novel had heightened the family’s isolation by portraying

the railroad company as having given up the fight against the blizzards, adding to the perfect trajectory of the plot line. In contrast, the newspaper record shows a very different reality. Contrary to the concerns and worries of residents, the railroad companies never did give up the fight, but kept working at great expense and no real income.

The Beautiful Snow

So for all of the difficulties of the Hard Winter, why is my book titled The Beautiful Snow? Throughout the winter, frequent mentions of “the beautiful snow” appeared in various newspapers across the region. A little digging unearthed a book of poetry from 1871¹³ that included a poem called The Beautiful Snow, which was commonly known, and the phrase had found its way into the vernacular. The first verse of the poem reads,

Oh! the snow, the beautiful snow,
Filling the sky and the earth below;
Over the house-tops, over the street,
Over the heads of the people you meet;

The Murray County Pioneer printed its own variation on a verse of the poem, which in turn led to the title of my book:

Oh the snow!
the beautiful snow,
Filling the cuts,
So the trains can’t go! ¹⁴

I hope that you’ve enjoyed this brief overview of the weather and railroad efforts during the Hard Winter of 1880-81. It did not even touch on many other topics, so if you are interested in learning more, The Beautiful Snow is available for purchase through the Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Home and Museum in Mansfield. Their website is lauraingallswilderhome.com

Cindy Wilson is passionate about history and loves sharing that joy with others. She lives in southern Minnesota, where she enjoys hiking, biking, gardening, art quilting, and travel.

¹² *New Ulm Weekly Review*, New Ulm, Minnesota, May 18, 1881, reprinting from the *Lake Benton News*

¹³ *Beautiful Snow and Other Poems*, by J. W. Watson, Philadelphia: T.B Peterson & Brothers, 1871

¹⁴ *Murray County Pioneer*, Currie, Minnesota, January 20, 1881