



Sightseers in the picture stand on what is left of Brigham's house; Hull's repositioned home can be seen in the background.

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Kirksville 1899 Cyclone April 27, 1899



1



The tornado first touched down in the city proper on East Patterson and demolished the three homes on the south side of the street between Florence and Thomas. On the west, Mrs Nannie Bailey's boarding house at 516 is shown as it appeared before (above) and after (right) the storm. The rubble in the foreground, which may be a little difficult to make out, is what was left of her organ and a chair.



Adair County Historical Society
211 South Elson St.
Kirksville, Missouri 63501
660-665-6502

Hours: 1:00-4:00 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
<http://www.adairchs.org>

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Adair Historical Markers

The Adair County Historical Society has placed four historical markers on the courthouse square. The first one describes the Battle of Kirksville and is placed on the southeast side of the courthouse. The second marker, Cyclone of April 27, 1899, was erected on the southwest side of the courthouse. The third and fourth markers were erected on the north side of the courthouse. One is a history of Adair County and the other about the three Adair County Courthouses.

The ACHS board believes that these markers add significantly to the downtown area by making the area historical appealing to both residents and visitors. The board envisions as many as fifteen markers could be placed around Adair County. Each one of these historic markers cost approximately \$2,000. ACHS is accepting donations from members, non-members, service organizations and businesses. Any non-member who makes a \$15 donation or more will receive a membership to the historical society. Any individual or organization who makes a donation of \$1,000 or more will have the name inscribed on a plaque at the historical society. All donations are fully tax deductible within the limits of the law.

Please make your check out to The Adair County Historical Society.

Thank you for your support!

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211 South Elson St.
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The Kirksville Cyclone - April 27, 1899

On April 27, 1899, at 6:20 p.m. a monstrous killer cyclone approached Kirksville from the south west taking dead aim on the new Adair County Courthouse. Suddenly, the cyclone veered more to the northeast, making a clear path of destruction from the southwest corner of the Normal School campus to the Holy Cross Church at the eastern end of Washington Street.

The Old Baldwin Hall tower received damage and the brick side wall to the Catholic Church exploded scattering interior furnishings but the crucifix and altar showed no ill effects.

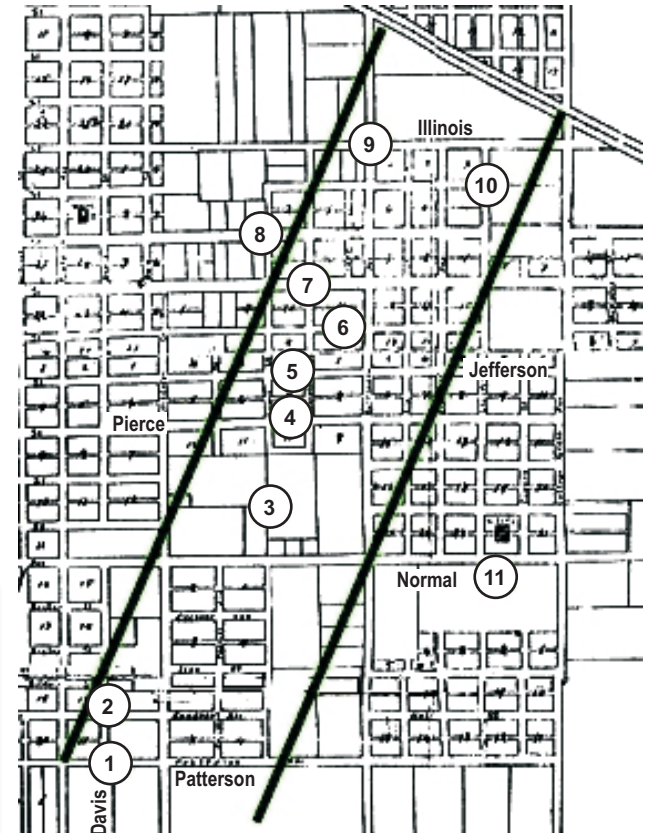
The cyclone crossed the five hundred block of North Baltimore and continued its deadly way to the northeast. For much of the night heavy rains and fires came, but relief effort went on from local doctors, nurses and osteopathic students. Mayor Noonan and city officials were hard at work, citizens were eager to help: at least 150 houses were destroyed, 28 persons loaded, 13 fatally injured, 91 injured, 1000 homeless and \$250,000 of property damage. A newsman found an unharmed piano and beat out the strains of Home Sweet Home amid the scene of desolation and the stillness of the spring night. Trains brought doctors, nurses and volunteers from Quincy and Moberly. The Commercial Club helped organize the out-of-town workers. Mayors of St. Louis, Kansas City, Quincy, St. Joseph, Sedalia, Moberly, Macon, and as far away as New York offered help. The cyclone spawned many stories. Edward Kellogg was picked up and carried about 300 feet, landing in a pond; the water was sucked out of the pond, leaving him standing in mud. A cooing baby was picked up in a field 400 feet from home; another baby was found crushed. Miss Whaley was found pinned to the ground with a scantling driven through her back and abdomen. Surgeons sawed off both ends, fearing to remove it. She died two hours later. Senator A. N. Seaber's barn went up in the clouds. The family horse was found tied to a post, the only visible remains of the barn. Miss Moorehouse, was picked up and carried beyond the Catholic Church, and let down so gently that she was not seriously harmed. She spoke of being conscious, flying much higher than church steeples and seeing a white horse rotating around her.

The white horse, owned by a teamster named Cheney was carried uninjured for a mile; its mate had been killed in a wrecked barn. A piano made by W. W. Kimble Co. of Chicago was hurled 1,000 feet through the roof of a house and found in playable condition. The "Cyclone Piano" was later taken back to Chicago by the company to use as an example of excellent construction. A poem was written about little "Molly," living in that house and wishing for a piano, and how on April 27 her prayers were answered. The popular song *Just as the Clouds Passed O'er* was based on the disaster. By April 29, most of the bodies had been buried. For days the city was crowded with sightseers. Kirksville was determined to rebuild, in spite of grievous losses.



after

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Path of the Storm & Major Area of Damage
Locators: Numbers Correspond Sites & Photographs
on the Truman State University web site:
<http://library.truman.edu/gallery/Tornado/tornado.htm>

2



Mrs Mary Hensley lost her beautiful home on Randolph between Davis and Halliburton but her family thankfully made it to the storm cellar and were not injured. The next day she and her daughter stood on the wreckage of her house with sightseers and a visiting photographer.

Adair County Historical Society web site:
Anniversary Date of Kirksville's 1899 Cyclone
1899 news paper, donated by Pam Sylvara.
<http://www.adairchs.org/page-1.pdf>
The Quincy Journal April 28, 1899, donated by Pam Sylvara
<http://www.adairchs.org/Cyclone/cyclone-1A.pdf>