

SESSION 2.2: COMPARISON TEXTS

Arthur Heywood: A Pioneer Teacher

Just a little about the blizzard of 1888. On January 12, my brother Arthur P. Heywood, now a lawyer at Helena Montana, and 69 years of age, was then teaching school in Dixon county Nebraska, near Emerson. He had a large school in a Swedish neighborhood. One boy going to school was nearly 21, several ranged from 16 to 20, besides all the smaller boys and girls.

The day of the blizzard my brother saw we were going to have a storm so he sent the older boys to prepare for it by getting in coal and kindling. When the storm got bad two of the girls wanted to go home.

Brother Arthur said to the older boys, "You keep the children all in. I will take these two girls around the corner of the schoolhouse and run into the largest drifts I can find. They will be glad to get back into shelter."

He did so and the girls were glad to return, as it was difficult to even get back to the schoolhouse. They stayed in the building all night, making beds for the smaller ones on the seats, using their wraps. Nearly all had something left in their dinner buckets from the noon lunch, which they gave to the smaller ones. As soon as the storm was over in the morning the parents came to get the children. Of course, Arthur was a wonderful teacher in all their eyes, as, if he had let any of them start home, they would have perished in the storm.

Mrs. Sterling Epler (niece of Arthur P. Heywood)

Source: Nebraska State Historical Society, #921/R99 Ep5h J. Sterling Epler, Tecumseh, Nebraska (Letter sent to Historical Society on September 5, 1938)

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The Blizzard of 1888

Minnie Freeman: A Reluctant Folk Hero

Minnie Freeman was a reluctant folk hero. Freeman's actions quickly symbolized the countless acts of bravery that surfaced in the wake of the Blizzard of 1888, despite her attempts to dismiss national acclaim for leading her pupils to safety when the storm struck central Nebraska. A musician composed "*Thirteen Were Saved*," a song honoring "Nebraska's Fearless Maid." She received more than 80 marriage proposals. The State Education Board gave her a gold medal. A wax bust of Freeman was exhibited across the nation.

Accounts vary of how many children were in Freeman's sod schoolhouse at Mira Valley near Ord. Some say 13, others 17. A few say 16. Newspaper accounts detailed Freeman's matter-of-fact explanation of what happened during the storm:

"I took a ball of stout twine I had in my desk and tied the children together, fastened one end to my arm and waited for an opportunity. Then the roof blew off. We started. It was about three-quarters of a mile to the nearest house, and the wind blew in our face ... but we finally got through. I really do not think I am deserving of so much credit."

The youngest student was 5. Freeman described the journey: "I told them we would all have to stick together. If anyone was to stop to rub cold hands, all would stop. We went two by two, with strict orders to keep hold of the one just ahead."

Freeman said that walking into the wind toward the farmhouse where she boarded kept her from wandering off course. Visibility was four or five feet. "Somehow or other we managed to struggle to that house, where hay was put on the floors, covers brought out and all the children taken care of for the night. Parents were desperate. They thought all had perished. When they found all were saved, they called it providential. It must have been because not far away a farmer froze to death trying to get to his house from the barn only 150 feet away."

Three years later, Freeman married farmer Edgar Penney. They had two sons, and she was politically and socially active. According to obituaries, she was Nebraska's first Republican national committeewoman, first president of the Nebraska American Legion Auxiliary, an officer of the Nebraska League of Women Voters, president of the Nebraska Federation of Women's Clubs and a member of the committee that selected a new state seal. The Penneys kept their legal residence in Fullerton, Neb., after moving to Chicago around 1923. Mr. Penney was president of a chemical company.

Source: "125 years ago today, Blizzard of 1888 ravaged the Plains", Omaha World- Herald, January 12, 2013.

http://www.omaha.com/news/years-ago-today-blizzard-of-ravaged-the-plains/article_687162f2-ff65-5b26-93a4-10202c338a82.html