Laura Ingalls Wilder’s Story

- On a hot, humid, and gusty summer day shortly before their wedding (in August 1885), Laura Ingalls and Almanzo Wilder take a buggy ride south of De Smet.
- Laura and Almanzo “sense” storminess in the air and watch towering clouds develop. They turn back toward home.
- While the storm moves from the northwest, they drive the horses toward the northeast and away from the path.
- Returning later that night, Almanzo and Pa report that a homestead was struck. Two boys on mules were hit, and one of the boys died. The homestead was destroyed, but the front door was left intact. The house site shortly after the tornado had passed.

Wilder Weather: Laura Ingalls Wilder and Her Famous Tornado

August 28, 1884 Tornado Outbreak

5 significant tornadoes (Grazulis 1993)

- 1: Miner County, from near Carthage to 3 miles west of Howard. Death of a boy unconfirmed. F2
- 2: Beadle-Sanford Counties, 3 miles north of Huron southeastward. 1 killed on a farm. F3
- 3: Sanford-Miner-Hanson, from 5 miles north-west of Forestburg to Long Lake. 2 brothers caught in open, one killed. May have been 2 separate tornadoes. F4
- 4: Hanson/Hutchinson Counties, from near Alexandria southeastward. 4 killed on a farm, 3 died in the open. F4
- 5: Minnehaha County, from 6 miles northwest of Sioux Falls. One man killed in the open. F2

Truth Vs. Storytelling

- Laura and Almanzo almost certainly saw the tornado near Howard, roughly 10 miles from their buggy ride path.
- Why are there differences between Laura’s description and other evidence?
- What did Laura get “right”?

Laura and Almanzo Wilder, 1886.

References


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