

The Destructive Power Of Prairie Fires

Fire!
On the prairie, it was a monster of destruction without pity, consuming everything before it.

"Every spear of hay which the farmers had gathered for winter feed is gone, the corn fields are all practically ruined and it is probable that the cattle which were saved will now have to be sold, as it will be impossible for the farmers to buy all their feed," stated an article in the *Aberdeen Weekly* about a prairie fire that swept through western Brown County on Nov. 15, 1905, laying ruin to an area about 20 miles long and five miles wide.

The front of a fire was called a "headfire," according to "Sheldon's History and Stories of Nebraska." It ran with the wind across miles of prairie, jumping fireguards and even rivers. Behind it the prairie roared and crackled, resembling a lake of fire with a cloud of smoke rising above it. A high wind usually accompanied the fire, causing the flames to spread rapidly. The heat created a powerful current of air that rushed toward the blaze and sucked everything with it.

Abbie Jarvis, her husband Matthew and their two sons came to Redfield, Dakota Territory, in 1880. They later homesteaded near Redfield and Faulkton. One hot summer day, the winds came out of the west and nearly blew over their shanty. Right behind the wind came the flames of a prairie fire. Jarvis's father had given her a sewing machine, and she was determined to save it. She dragged the sewing machine to plowed ground and covered it with a piece of old carpet soaked in water. The sewing machine was saved.

Settlers often built what was called a fireguard around their buildings by breaking a narrow strip of sod, and at some distance inside of that, breaking another narrow strip and then burning the grass between the strips. This would stop most common fires and keep the settler's home and barn safe.

Fire fighting fire was another common way to stop a prairie fire. A counter-fire or back-fire was lit. When the prairie fire reached the burnt area, it ran out of fuel and grew less until it finally died away, or skirted the two ends of the backfire and continued its destruction.

Ike Blasingame recalled how cowboys working for large cattle companies in western South Dakota in the early 1900s combated prairie fires in "Dakota Cowboy." The chuck wagon was sent to the nearest stream so the water barrels hanging on each side could be filled, then the chuck wagon rushed to the men beating at the burning grass with saddle blankets, coats or anything else that was available. Cowboys used horses to pull fire drags made of steel chains and 12-foot asbestos sheets. "It took the combined efforts of six saddle horses to move them. So great was the strain, and so foamy-hot would our horses get that we had to change these heaving-flank mounts for fresh ones every two hours," Blasingame wrote.

In "Land of the Burnt Thigh," Edith Eudora Kohl wrote how she and her sister, Ida Mary, were homesteading near the Lower Brule Reservation in 1909, when prairie fires began to break out all around the area.

"The homesteaders began to be afraid to leave their shacks for fear they would find them gone on their return. Ammunition for the fight was pitifully meager. They fought with plows that turned firebreaks, back-fired to stop the progress of the fire, beat it out with their wet sacks," Kohl wrote.

One afternoon she and Ida Mary smelled smoke. Their claim shack was burning to the ground.

"We clung to each other wordlessly. There was nothing to say. Everything that made up our daily life and our plans for the future had been wiped out in thirty minutes," Kohl wrote.

A prairie fire held no respect for crops, livestock, buildings or people.

On April 17, 1886, Betsy Dalagher and her mother saw a prairie fire coming toward their homestead north of Webster. A neighbor had set fire to his slough and strong winds caused the fire to burn out of control. The women left the house to release the livestock from the barn, but became trapped in the flaming barn. Betsy survived by running out of the barn and jumping into a well. Her mother, though, perished in the fire, possibly the first person to die in a prairie fire in Dakota Territory, according to "Roadside History of South Dakota" by Linda Hasselstrom.

Despite the ever-present threat of danger and disappointment, many homesteaders seemed to maintain a sense of hope.

On March 24, 1910, Mrs. Clifford Jencks of Brushie, S.D., located in eastern Meade County, wrote a letter describing how a fire estimated at least 25 miles wide and 100 miles long had swept over the area, destroying their hay and barn. "Now don't worry over our little loss for if it rains and sunshines, grass will grow again and make more hay and we will fix up another barn. As long as we keep well we can get along all right."

This moment in South Dakota history is provided by the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation, the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. Find us on the web at www.sdhsf.org. Contact us at info@sdhsf.org to submit a story idea.

Gavins Point Dam Road Closed

Crest Road, the road that crosses the Gavins Point Dam will be closed from 8 a.m. Monday, June 1, through 5 p.m. Thursday, June 4. This closure will include nighttime hours. The public is asked to plan on an alternate route of travel during this time.

The closure is a result of the inspection, repair and painting of the spillway gates. There will be periodic closures throughout duration of the construction, which will continue into the fall.

People can stay informed about upcoming road closures by checking www.nwo.usace.army.mil/gavinspoint or by calling (402) 667-2546.

Retired School Personnel Group To Meet

The Yankton Area Retired Teachers Association formally changed their name at the May 7 meeting. The group will now be known as the Yankton Area Retired School Personnel Association. This change allows the membership to be more inclusive and follows the recent change made at the yearly convention by the South Dakota state organization.

The final meeting of the 2014-2015 year for the Yankton Area Retired School Personnel Association will take place on Thursday, June 4, at 11:30 a.m. at Jo Deans Restaurant. All newly retired school personnel are invited as special guests.

Following lunch, Kathleen West and members of the Art Adventure Team will present a program focusing on art in the elementary schools. A brief business meeting will follow the program.

All retired school employees living in the Yankton and surrounding areas are welcome and invited to attend. If you have questions, call Joyce at 665-7977.

50th Anniversary Celebration



Mr. and Mrs. Homan
Bob and Joyce Homan of Davis, SD, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on June 7, 2015 with an open house at the Davis Legion Hall from 2-5 p.m.

The couple has two children: Robin (Jerry) Wirth and Jodi (Lynn) Jorgensen. They have four grandchildren: Rebecca, Jessica, Derek, and Tyler.

Car Talk

A Look At A Sketchy Temp Dial

BY RAY MAGLIOZZI
King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Dear Car Talk:

I have a 2000 Mercedes E320 with 144,000 miles. The temperature and clock dials on the dashboard stopped working after the warranty expired. I went to the Mercedes dealer, and he said it was very costly to fix it. So for the past nine or 10 years, I had no temperature or clock dials. But when I shipped my car from Florida to New York and loaded my car with clothes and stuff, I noticed that the temperature dial started to work after I picked up the car, and there was some indication of time. But when I unloaded the car, the temperature dial worked for a few days, then stopped. Then when I shipped the car back to Florida three months later, the temperature dial again worked when the car was loaded, but when unloaded it stopped. Please give me some reasoning for why these things would work only when the car is loaded. What do you think is causing this? Many thanks for any help.

—Patricia

Ge, I don't remember exactly what your instrument cluster looks like. I know it has an engine temperature gauge, but I can't remember the clock. Maybe the clock is a digital readout?

In any case, I think what's happening is that when you put a lot of weight in the car, it's changing the geometry and



Ray
MAGLIOZZI

reconnecting a wire that's broken. Most likely, it's a tiny broken connection in the circuit board on the back of the instrument cluster.

And your dealer was right. The instrument cluster would be expensive to replace. Unfortunately, if your engine temperature gauge isn't working,

you won't know if your car is overheating, and if you continue to drive it when it's overheating, you could turn a \$20 hose-clamp problem into a \$6,000 melted engine.

So, while you've been fortunate for many years now, your luck might not hold out. Here are some options:

You can look for a place that repairs these instrument clusters. There are people who know how to re-solder the connections that tend to break on these clusters. You can find them online. The cost is somewhere between \$100 and \$200, plus shipping and labor to remove and reinstall the cluster.

And since you'll need to send out your instrument cluster, you'll need a repair shop that can help you. The dealer won't want to be bothered with this, so you'll have to look for an independent shop that specializes in Mercedes

or German cars (try searching at www.mechanicsfiles.com).

Alternatively, you can ask your independent mechanic to help you find a used instrument cluster. The price will be about the same, but your car won't have to sit for a week without an instrument cluster. Of course, a used one could have the same problem yours does, so you'll need your mechanic's guidance. And some luck.

Then there's the cheapskate solution — the one I'm sure my brother would have opted for: Just drive around with your clothes and stuff in your car all the time. The upside is, if you spill some pasta sauce on your shirt during lunch, you can just run out to the car to get a new one.

Come to think of it, I'm going to start doing this.

If you buy a used car, will you just be inheriting the previous owner's problem? Click and Clack dispel this and other myths about used cars in the pamphlet "How to Buy a Great Used Car: Secrets Only Your Mechanic Knows." Send \$4.75 (check or money order) to Used Car, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475.

Got a question about cars? Write to Car Talk in care of this newspaper, or email by visiting the Car Talk website at www.cartalk.com.

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This year's Mount Marty College nursing graduates at their Pinning Ceremony.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Mount Marty Pinning Ceremony Held

The Mount Marty College nursing program held a Pinning Ceremony for May graduating nursing students on Friday, May 8, at the College's Marian Auditorium.

Established in 1986, Mount Marty College's Pinning Ceremony acknowledges the achievement of the graduating seniors and their transition from student role to a professional role. The nurse's pin represents the philosophy of the school and of the nursing program, and its presentation signifies a sending forth or commissioning of the students to begin their nursing careers as graduates of MMC.

Tradition defines that the nursing pin is unique to the nursing program from which the student graduates. In the past, a nurse's cap and pin represented the school from which he or she attended. Today, Mount Marty's

pin remains as the lone symbol of their education.

Each element of the MMC nursing pin represents an aspect of the nurse's dedication. Mount Marty's pin is a black shield on gold with a white cross embedded on the shield. The modified Benedictine cross represents a crossroads of ideas and also depicts the ultimate aim of the college: to form persons in the Spirit of Christ with apostolic zeal for the world-wide work of restoring all things for Christ.

Mount Marty College Nursing Program is proud to acknowledge this year's May nursing graduates: Zachary Bauman, Sioux Falls; Alexander Bayse, Polk City, Iowa; Tiffany Bergeson, Springfield; Amanda Bernard, Madison; Brittini Boes, Fort Pierre; Kristen Boyle, Norfolk, Nebraska; Christin Broscha, Yankton; Bryton Carlson, St. Michael,

MN; April Cordell, Gettysburg; Jillian Crisman, Yankton; Sarah Donovan, Gretna, Nebraska; Paul Foss, Yankton; Brittany Healy, Harrisburg; Samantha Huber, Sioux Falls; Angel Johnston, Wakonda; Sarah Kokesh, Wagner; Nick Kummer, Parkston; Ashle Lais, Yankton; Raegan Layher, Douglas, Wyoming; Megan Leader, Crofton, Nebraska; Gina Ludens, Springfield; Sara Means, Granville, Iowa; Courtney Miller, Mitchell; Lauren Orwig, Norfolk, Nebraska; Ashley Riibe, Yankton; Carissa Scherschligt, Mitchell; Kaitlyn Smelker, Stratton, Colorado; Kristie Tessmer, St. Michael, Minnesota; Megan Turner, Sioux City, Iowa; Heather Weber, Watertown; Rebecca Zimmerman, Utica, Nebraska.

For more information on the Mount Marty College nursing program please visit www.mtmc.edu/nursing.

National Music Museum Wins Certificate Of Excellence

VERMILLION — For the second year in a row, the National Music Museum (NMM), in Vermillion, South Dakota, has been named one of "the best properties in the world" by TripAdvisor.com, the world's largest internet travel site. The TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence is "a prestigious award that can only be earned through consistently great reviews." The honor signifies that the NMM is "one of the very best in the business."

NMM spokesperson Patricia Bornhofen says that "this stamp of approval is compelling because it represents the freely-offered opinions of all kinds of travelers. In effect, it's a people's choice award."

TripAdvisor.com also ranks the NMM as Vermillion's #1 attraction. Says Bornhofen, "Siouxland people should exercise their bragging rights. They have one of the world's

finest music museums right in their region."

The Museum is also in the middle of a capital campaign, working to raise funds for the redesign and physical expansion of the Museum. "With 15,000 artifacts in our holdings — 1,200 on public display — we need a far more space," says Bornhofen. "We'd love to see every business and family in the area join and support us as Museum members."

A special draw at the NMM this summer is the limited-time exhibit "Banding Together — The American Soldier's Music Arsenal," which showcases rare historic instruments issued to or used by U.S. soldiers throughout American military history. It also features rare wartime photos, posters, sheet music, uniforms, and other fascinating artifacts.

The National Music Museum's summer hours through

Labor Day are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday; Sunday, 1-5 p.m. The National Music Museum is located in the middle of Vermillion, on

the corner of East Clark and Yale streets, on the campus of the University of South Dakota. More information at nmmusd.org.

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Moses-Lazur

Kay Lynn Moses and Michael Louis Lazur were married on July 12, 2014, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Yankton, SD with Fr. Mark Litcher officiating.

Parents of the couple are JoAnn Moses and the late James Moses of Yankton, SD, Bill and Helen Rath and the late Louis Lazur of Grand Forks, ND.

Matron of honor was Debra Schlieff and best man was Nathan Schlieff. Bridesmaids were Rebecca Plautz, Jill Lazur and Molly Hanson, and groomsmen were Mike Sandberg, Greg Seabloom and Nicholas Schlieff. Ushers were Larry Breidenbach, Christopher Buschelman, Alec Lazur and Carl Stoll. Music for the ceremony was provided by soloist Brittany Lazur.

The bride is a graduate of Yankton High School and Dakota State University. She is currently employed at Martz & Associates in Grand Forks, ND.

The groom is a graduate of Red River High School and North Dakota State University and currently farms near Reynolds, ND. The couple resides near Reynolds, ND.

80th

Birthday

for

Lyle Malone

Open House

Saturday

May 30, 2015

1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

JoDean's

2809 N Broadway, Yankton

Send greetings to

2603 Ella Lane • Yankton, SD 57078