

*Letter from
Uriah W. Oblinger
to Mattie V. Oblinger
& Ella Oblinger
April 18, 1873*

April 18, 1873 Actual 4-page letter in Uriah's handwriting

2

Transcript

6

Courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society, RG1346-S01-L104

April 18, 1873

Page 1

Friday Apr. 18th
Dear Wife & Baby
I thought my letter finished
Sunday evening. I spoke about looking
for rain in that & raining a little,
but now I can tell you of one of the
most terrible storms I ever witnessed
Language fails to describe so that one
may know just how it seemed to one
in the storm. It struck us at sunset
Sunday evening with wind & rain &
rained nearly all night. The wind incre-
asing all the time Monday morning
it turned to snow (very fine article) &
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all though it seemed as though the wind
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sunset Sunday evening till near mid-
night Wednesday night making near
80 hours storm. when we would go out
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April 18, 1873

Page 2

the voice on account of the wind blowing as a gale. one could hardly keep his feet at all and had to dig snow about $\frac{1}{2}$ hr whenever we went to feed anything in order to get to the stable door. the snow streamed through every crevice & streamed through for it just almost blinded one to get to the corn pile we had to shovel in short it was shoveled to utmost of ones strength to do anything or get anything. Mr Wards was at Mr. Elliotts waiting and did not get home & I was going to ride home with them so him & Sales were caught there too but about 9 o'clock Sunday night & Sam & Mr Ward came up here to stay all night on Monday morning Mr. Elliotts stove smoked them out on account of the stove pipe being defective and we had to bring them all up here. I women 4 children & 5 men all here. Mr. DeWolfs being gone to his wifes sisters 18 miles southeast of here, & left all of his things for us to tend, 2 cows 3 calves hogs & yoke of oxen and chickens. by hard work we saved every thing for him but 4 pigs 1 chicken & 2 calves the third calf probably will die, the calves were in a small stable open where for us to have tried any more them we would have perished us, one of his cows had a young calf right in the midst of the storm in the stable half full of snow where there were a yoke of oxen and another cow I gathered it up & carried that in the cellar and saved it. Mr. Elliotts fed their horses & Mr Wards Monday morning and the storm was so fearful that we could not even go to his stable to see after them till Tuesday evening although not more than 80 rd Tuesday evening. I had concluded to venture, and when we got there we found the entrance to the house door blocked full to the top and his stable door being in the north and considerably open we found 2 calves 1 cow & six head of horses all snowed in as the storm came from a little way of North the stable full from one end to the other only by to the roof except right at the door where there was just room for 2 horses to stand by being literally crammed to the rest all down, well the next thing was to get them two of the men Mr Ward & Elliott commenced digging to get the house door open while the rest of us men to getting horses out I took an open knife and went in to 2 of the horses and cut halter, & came near getting under as they were nearly or

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April 18, 1873

Page 3

to get out we got them in the house carpet & all on the floor, then commenced digging to get the rest out we saved all but one of Mrs. Starks & she died in 2 hours after we got her out we dug through the roof and found her packed in snow laying on her side with the snow so tight around her she could only move her head a little we dug the side of the stable down about half way and dragged the mare over the side as there was 20 feet of snow between her & the door, the next morning (Wednesday) we dug Mrs. Elliott's cow out she will probably live but is not able to get up yet but 2 calves that were in the stable perished, making 4 calves & 5 year old mare & 4 pigs that perished right here at 2 stables with us. The loss of stock has been fearful & I am afraid human life, as there were numbers of emigrants on the road though I have heard of none yet. There was a woman about a mile from here with 4 children whose husband was away from home and I knew she had but little wood if any so Wednesday afternoon I concluded to make the effort to reach her and see how they were getting along & I had to go right against the storm, just as I was starting Sam hollowed at me to come back that I would get lost and perish but I did not come back nor perish either, I would proceed about 500 then turn and get a little breath then try it again in this way, I succeeded in reaching the house & she was mighty glad to see me as they were out of wood and the ax buried under the snow, they had been in bed for 2 days only as she would break up something in the house to burn & cook something for the children to eat the oldest was only 7 years old, I dug the ax from under the snow hunted my way to a pig pen got a couple of poles and cut wood enough to do till next day then started home again but the storm had commenced abating so that I could by spells see nearly 2 miles on the way back I got a prairie chicken his feathers were so icy he could not go very fast & threw the shovel after him (I had taken one with me) and knocked it over yesterday was beautiful & today also the snow by night will be all gone except in the ravines and the snow banks. over the prairie is bare already and good walking. Sam lost his hat Monday morning so I willed him my old one, his started near cut over the prairie for Kansas. Sam seems some little discouraged since witnessing the storm but there is no use of that for it is the most terrible storm ever witnessed here and may never occur again.

Courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society, RG1346-S01-L104

April 18, 1873

Page 4

what made the storm so destructive to the life of stock was the time of year that it occurred the stables or a great many of them have nothing but hay for roof with poles thrown on to hold them down and they had considerably blown to pieces and people thought there was no use to fix them as summer was just here I heard of one man had 30 head and another 60 head of cattle go off in the storm and has not found but few yet and they were dead. another had 15 head perish in one pile when stock was turned loose to shift for themselves they would just go with the storm

Now Ma dont get discouraged discouraged because we have had a terrible storm here for I am not one thing about the storm it was not cold at any time only just enough to snow and very damp at that and fine ~~was~~ only one on Tuesday a little while that it was cold enough to freeze between here & Giles stable there is 3 snow pen bombs caused by the wood piles and pig pen and it is only some 5 or 6 rd distant I had got the wall all up on my house and the rafters on and there is some snow in it but not near as bad as I expected as the door was open & window it had a draft clear through and consequently kept nearly clear the whirl around the house kept about 15 ft space all round entirely clear of snow but outside of that and about my wood pile it is from 3 to 5 ft deep but is solid and can be run over anywhere. one would be wet in a little in the storm (Oh yes the

Sheriff has just served notice on Giles to appear the 14th of next moth as a jurymen this all about the storm till I see you, which I hope will not be long. this is poor writing for me but I guess you can read it I am considerably used & up fighting the storm to save stock so that I can hardly write! I wrote a letter to mule wheelers Sunday evening and one to you both are by one now I will not write them anything about the storm but you can send this sheet to them if you wish for the benefit of him & I guess you can tell the folks they never seen a storm in Ind only play things

Love to all Uriah H. Blinger

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Letter from Uriah Oblinger to Mattie V. Oblinger & Ella Oblinger, April 18, 1873
(Edited slightly for grammar & sense)

Bachelors Hall Neb Fillmore Co
Friday Apr' 18th
Dear Wife & Baby

I thought my letter finished Sunday evening. I spoke about looking for rain in that & raining a little, but now I can tell you of one of the most terrible storms I ever witnessed. Language fails to describe so that one may know just how it seemed to one in the storm.

It struck us at sunset Sunday evening with wind & rain & rained nearly all night, the wind increasing all the time. Monday morning it turned to snow (very fine article) & snow & wind increasing all the time all though it seemed as though the wind was doing it best. The storm lasted from sunset Sunday evening till near midnight Wednesday night making near 80 hours storm. When we would go out to try to do anything for the stock we could not see other more than from 5 to 10 ft & to be heard we had to shout at the top of the voice on account of the wind blowing such a gale. One could hardly keep his feet at all. We had to dig snow about 1/2 hour whenever we undertook to feed anything in order to get to the stable door.

The snow streamed through every crevice. I say streamed through, for it just almost blinded one to get to the corn pile. We had to shovel in short it was shovel to utmost of ones strength to do anything or get anything. Mr. Wards were at Mr. Elliot's visiting and did not get home. & Sam was going to ride home with them. So him & Giles were caught there to but about 9 o'clock Sunday night. Giles & Sam & Mr. Ward came up here to stay all night on Monday morning Mr Elliotts stove smoked them out on account of the stove pipe being defective. And we had to bring them all up here, 2 women 4 children & 5 men all here. Mr DeWolfs being gone to his wives sisters 18 miles southeast of here, & left all of his things for us to tend, 2 cows 5 calves hogs & yoke of oxen and chickens. By hard work we saved every thing for him but 4 pigs 1 chicken & 2 calves the third calf probably will die. The calves were in a small stable very open where for us to have tried any more, than we would have perished us. One of his cows had a young calf right in the midst of the storm in the stable half full of snow where there were 2 yoke of oxen and another cow & I gathered it up & carried that in the cellar and saved it.

Mr Elliotts fed their horses & Mr. Ward's Monday morn and the storm was so fearful that we could not venture down to his stable to see after them till Tuesday evening although not more than 80 rd Tuesday evening we concluded to venture. And when we got there we found the entrance to the house door banked full to the top. And his stable door being in the north and considerably open we found 2 calves 1 cow & six head of horses all snowed in as the storm came from a little west of North. the stable full from one end to the other entirely to the roof except right at the door where there was just room for 2 horses to stand by being literally crammed together the rest all down, Well the next thing was to get them out. Two of the men, Mr. Ward & Elliott, commenced digging to get the house door open while the rest of us went to getting horses out. I took an open knife and went in to 2 of the horses and cut the halters & came near getting under as they were nearly crazy to get out. We got them in the house carpet & all on the floor. then commenced digging to get the rest out. We saved all but one of Mr. Wards & she died in 1/2 hour after we got her out. We dug through the roof and found her packed in snow laying on her side with the snow so tight around her she could only move her head a little. We dug the side of the stable down about half way and dragged the mare over the side as there was 20 feet of snow between her & the door.

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mare & 4 pigs that perished right here at 2 stables with us. The loss of stock has been fearful and, I am afraid, human life, as there were numbers of emigrants on the road though I have heard of none yet. There was a woman about a mile from here with 4 children whose husband was away from home and I knew she had but little wood, if any. So Wednesday afternoon I concluded to make the effort to reach her and see how they were getting along & I had to go right against the storm. Just as I was starting Sam hollowed at me to come back that I would get lost and perish, but I did not come back nor perish either. I would proceed about 5 rods, then turn and get a little breath, then try it again. In this way I succeeded in reaching the house & she was mighty glad to see me as they were out of wood and the ax buried under the snow. They had been in bed for 2 days only as she would break up something in the house to burn & cook something for the children to eat. The oldest was only 7 years old. I dug the ax from under the snow, hunted my way to a pig pen, got a couple of poles and cut wood enough to do till next day. Then I started home again, but the storm had commenced abating so that I could, by spells, see nearly 1/2 mile. On the way back I got a prairie chicken. His feathers were so icy he could not go very fast & I threw the shovel after him (I had taken one with me) and knocked it over.

Yesterday was beautiful & today also. The snow by night will be all gone except in the ravines and the snow banks. Over 1/2 the prairie is bare already and good walking. Sam lost his hat Monday morning so I willed him my old one. His started near cut over the prairies for Kansas. Sam seems some little discouraged since witnessing the storm but there is no use of that for it is the most terrible storm ever witnessed here and may never occur again.

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Now Ma don't get discouraged because we have had a terrible storm here, for I am not. One thing about the storm, it was not cold at any time only just enough to snow and very damp at that and fine. Only one on Tuesday a little while that it was cold enough to freeze. Between here & Giles stable there is 3 snow banks caused by the wood piles and pig pen and it is only some 5 or 6 rd distant. I had got the wall all up on my house and the rafters on and there is some snow in it but not near as bad as I expected as the door was open & window it had a draft clear through and consequently kept nearly clear. The whirl around the house kept about 15 ft space all round entirely clear of snow. But outside of that and about my wood pile it is from 3 to 5 ft deep but is solid and can be run over anywhere. One would be wet in a little in the storm. (Oh yes the Sheriff has just served notice on Giles to appear the 14th of Next moth as a jurymen. This all about the storm till I see you, which I hope will not be long. This is poor writing for me, but I guess you can read it. I am considerably used up fighting the storm to save stock, so that I can hardly write. I wrote a letter to Uncle Wheelers Sunday evening and one to you. Both are by me now. I will not write them anything about the storm but you can send this sheet to them if you wish for the benefit of him & George. You can tell the folks they never seen a storm in Indiana, only playthings.

Love to all Uriah W Oblinger

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