

Helen Sturges Writes About the Blizzard of 1888 in Weston - Part 1

Helen Mason sent the following:

“My grandmother, Helen Elizabeth Fitch Sturges kept a journal from the time she was married in 1870 until her five children were grown up and until she had a couple of grandchildren — James Coley, my brother Ed, and me. The following excerpts are from her journal. March 11, 1888 — a very unpleasant day, snowing a little and a very high, cold wind blowing . . . raining and snowing in the evening.

March 12, 1888 — Monday — snowing and blowing, and the snow beginning to fill up east of the house. At noon, it was impossible to reach the woodpile, so we had to go into the cellar and get old pieces of a bin to burn. At 2 o'clock John and Sammie started for the red barn, to tend the oxen and calves, but the storm was raging so they had to come back. They managed to reach the cow barn by going around the wash house. All night the wind and storm kept up a continuous howl, and it was very cold.

March 13, 1888 — Tuesday — This morning the thermometer stood at 12 above at 10 a.m. We did not get

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up early as we were so short of wood. John and Sammie, by going around the east lot reached the red barn, found the calves standing by the oxen and the four looking as if they were forsaken. They managed to put the oxen in the horse stables and dug a path to the cow barn for the calves. Now all are under cover except three turkeys. It did not storm again till 3 o'clock in the afternoon but the wind did not stop until 8 in the evening. The windows in the one room where we had a fire were so covered with ice and snow we could not see out, and one south door was the only door we could get out and the snow in front of that is five ft. high — something of a step.

March 14, Wednesday. Rose at 8. Wind quiet and not very cold. At nine it commenced snowing and kept it up till 2 in the afternoon, when the sun shone forth in all its glory, but what did we see but heaps of snow piled everywhere it could find someplace to lean against. The roads will have to be dug out. Up until now we have plenty to eat, but will be short of provisions in a few days unless we can get to the station (Cannon). Wednesday night — weather mild.

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March 15. Thursday — Sun very bright and warm, but the wind cold. John and Sammie went to the station (C.T. Gregory store and P.O.) No trains running until Monday morning. Snow melting fast, but the chicken yard is full and the banks are so high that if you go up on a snow bank you can easily reach the tops of the highest pear trees. The children think it is great sport.

April 1, Sunday — Easter Sunday. No one to church but Mable (her daughter) from this house. It is a fine day and we would be glad to go but can't walk and I doubt if we could ride if we had a horse — over the banks of snow. Yesterday, Mr. Sterling drove by, the first team that has passed here since March 12. We have a horse in New York that Uncle Fred (Dr. Frederick Dennis Sturges, Helen Mason's great uncle) has bought for us and hope to get him (or it) here this week. How fine to have a horse again.

Yesterday Mr. Sterling got for me from Mr. J. Templeton, South Wilton, a rag carpet that he has been weaving for me. I sewed 51 lbs. rags in two months; it made 27½ yds of carpet. Cost of weaving — \$6.32.

Helen Mason, who sent these excerpts to us, also said 'my father, then 19, remembered that it was extremely cold, the country roads were filled in with snow from fence top to fence top, and a tunnel was shoveled from the house to the barn to feed the cattle and horses, and to the woodshed for firewood'.