

Determining the Location of the 22 May 1855 Chicago Area Tornado

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ABSTRACT: The number and location of tornadoes in the greater Chicago area is a topic of frequent interest among the media, public, and local government agencies served by the National Weather Service (NWS) Chicago Forecast Office. While accounts of tornadoes over the last several decades are generally clear, tornadoes occurring prior to 1950—especially those considered to be weak—are often more difficult to discern owing to limited corresponding detailed reports. As part of an effort to review and update all tornadoes known to have occurred within the modern-day boundaries of Chicago, NWS Chicago staff reviewed the 22 May 1855 tornado, which is regarded as the first to impact the city of Chicago. Multiple sources reported that the tornado occurred near the town of Jefferson, which eventually became the Jefferson Park neighborhood of Chicago. However, after reviewing multiple historical records, newspaper articles, property maps, and genealogical information, the actual location of the tornado was determined to have been in present-day Des Plaines. Confusion over the name “Jefferson” likely led to the misunderstanding that, until now, has been perpetuated through numerous reports and media accounts.

KEYWORDS: Tornadoes; Geographic information systems (GIS); History

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On 22 May 1855, a tornado developed in northeastern Illinois, killed at least four people and several farm animals, and damaged at least one home and barn. According to one of the most frequently referenced sources detailing the event, the 24 May 1855 edition of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, a warm and humid day culminated in a funnel-shaped cloud that approached from the northwest and turned into a “terrific tornado,” lifting a home off its granite foundation and killing three of nine occupants “in the town of Jefferson [...] near Jefferson Mills, 16 miles distant” between 1600 and 1700 CT (Fig. 1; *Chicago Daily Tribune* 1855b). The report also noted that the tornado tore away a side of a barn, causing it to collapse and kill a horse and three calves. Per eyewitness accounts, the storm also produced hail with a circumference as large as 22.9 cm (9 in.; approximately 7.4 cm, or 2.9 in., in diameter) prior to the tornado and may have eventually reached Chicago, Illinois, where hail was also reported on that day.

The Chicago Daily Tribune

VOLUME

THURSDAY, MAY 24, 1855.

PRICE

TERRIFIC TORNADO.

THREE PERSONS KILLED.

A HOUSE CARRIED UP INTO THE AIR.

Terrible effects of the Whirlwind.

Never before has it been our duty to record so awful a calamity as that to which we now sit down to write. The scene of the tragedy is still before our mind's eye: the wrecks of the tempest are still lying scattered about: but were it not for the unimpeachable character of our informants, eye-witnesses for the dreadful calamity, we should be inclined to believe that they had been laboring under some mental hallucination, and that what we are about to relate was but a dream of the imagination. The reality, however, is too true. The bodies of the three victims and the wounds of the other persons constitute evidence too palpable to be set aside.

Our readers will remember the violent hail storm that took place in this city yesterday afternoon between four and five o'clock, and the oppressive heat of the rest of the afternoon. At the same hour, the events to which we allude took place in the town of Jefferson, near Jefferson Mills, 16 miles distant.

A cloud of a peculiar shape was first observed approaching from the North-west, and terminating in a funnel-shaped point, the apex towards and nearly reaching the earth. As it came nearer, it was discovered to be whirlwind, rapidly revolving, and whirling up various objects, in which were plainly see large sticks of wood, boards, small trees, and chairs. It was coming towards our informant, but did not reach them, but turned to their right, described a semi-circle, and fell upon a large frame house.

In an instant, and with a crash, the roof was torn off, and immediately the whole house was lifted from the foundation, literally torn to pieces, and the pieces carried up in the horrid vortex. The furniture in the house, all of it, shared the same fate, the weight of the articles appearing no obstacle to their ascent whatever.

And now we come to the part of the narrative sad indeed to relate. In the house were nine persons. They were all drawn up into the air, and fell, at different distances, and with great violence to the ground. The wife of one of the eye witnesses, Mrs. Page, and two of her children, were instantly killed. All the other persons in the house were greatly injured. The injuries with two exceptions, consist of singular and heavy bruises all over the body. One man had his arm broken, and another his wrist badly sprained. Mr. Page only saved himself from being drawn up into the air, by holding on to a large rock. The house stood upon four large granite boulders. Those were all moved several feet from their places.

The whirlwind went on and passed diagonally across a post and rail fence. Of this it tore up twenty rods so effectually, that there is not the slightest vestige of a fence remaining. From this it passed to the barn, tore away one side of it and threw it against a horse, causing his death. The side of the barn then fell down on three calves and injured them so badly that they died during the night.

The whirlwind seemed to pass off in a southward direction.

Many of the fragments of the buildings, etc., fell to the ground from a great height. In coming down they fell nearly perpendicularly, and entered the ground like stakes. Hundreds of these were counted by the informant.

The force of the storm was tremendous. Not only were the boards torn off from the beams to which they were nailed, but the beams themselves were wrenched asunder.

The whirlwind was accompanied by a storm of hail, many of the hailstones being the size of walnuts. Some of them were nine inches in circumference.

We have neither space nor inclination for comment on this sad affair today. Nothing like it has ever occurred before, and we hope never will again. It realizes the utmost horrors of a South American tornado. Had it spent its force in the city, hundred of deaths might have marked its progress.

Fig. 1. Recreation of the 24 May 1855 *Chicago Daily Tribune* account of the 22 May 1855 tornado (*Chicago Daily Tribune* 1855b).

Chicago was first organized as a town in 1833 near the Chicago River outlet into Lake Michigan. By 1855, the city had grown to cover just a few square miles (several square kilometers). In the following decades, multiple areas were annexed by the city, greatly expanding its boundaries. Because the boundaries of the town of Jefferson are now within the modern-day limits of the Jefferson Park neighborhood of Chicago (Fig. 2), the 22 May 1855 tornado has long been thought to be the first-known tornado to ever impact the modern city limits of Chicago. The U.S. Signal Corps, part of the U.S. War Department and predecessor to the modern-day National Weather Service, reported a tornado in “Jefferson, Cook County,” the same county in which Chicago resides, on 22 May 1855 (Finley 1882, p. 4). When the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* wrote an article documenting the history of tornadoes in the United States

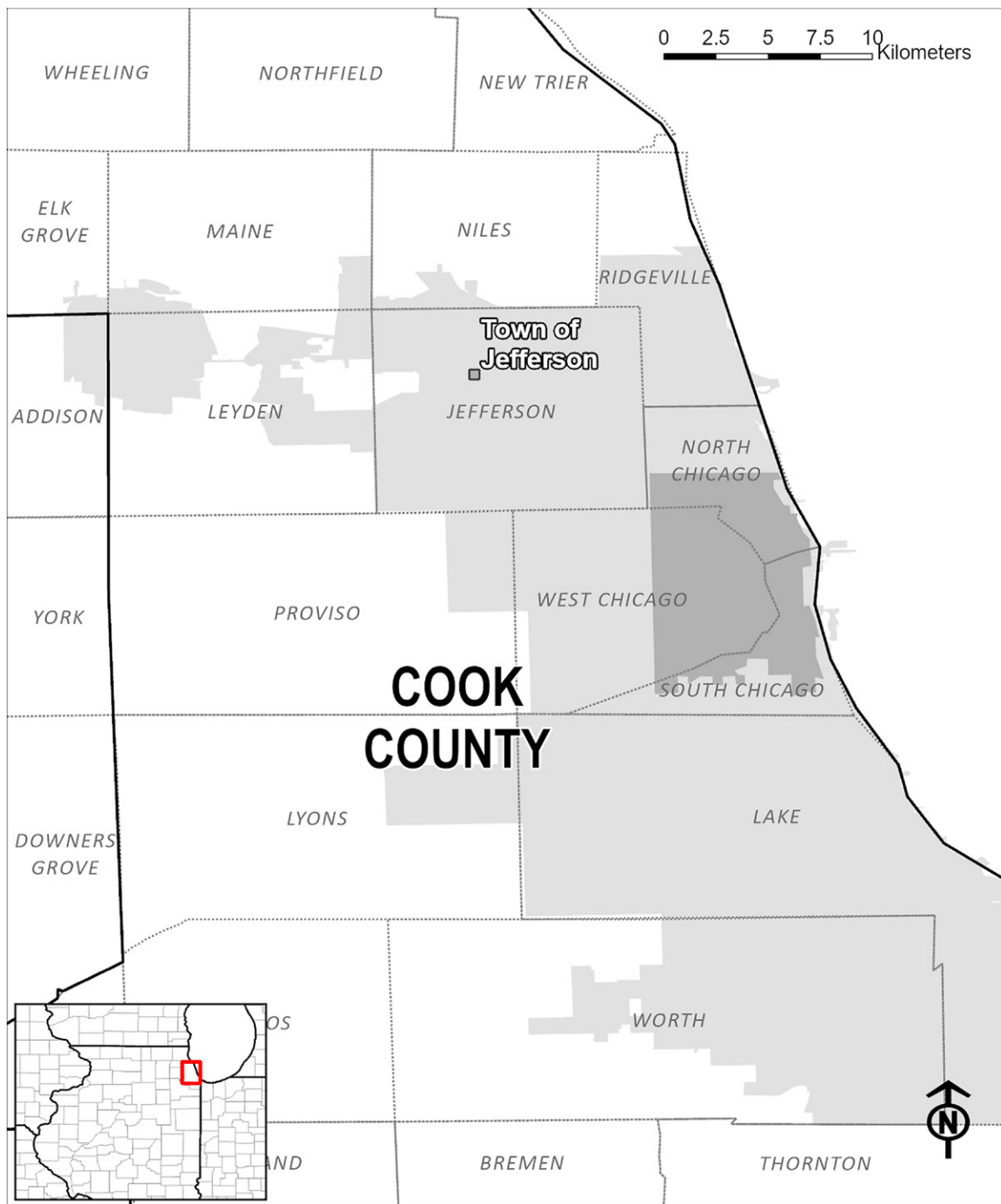


Fig. 2. Map of township boundaries in portions of Cook and DuPage Counties in northeastern Illinois as of 1851, digitized from a map by Rees (1851). The modern-day city limits of Chicago are shown by light gray shading with the 1855 city limits in dark gray.

several days after a significant tornado in 1896, it mentioned the “earliest recorded tornado in Illinois” having occurred in “Jefferson and Cook Counties” on 22 May 1855 (St. Louis Post Dispatch 1896). More recent summaries of Chicago area tornadoes compiled by the National Weather Service and local media continue to list the 1855 tornado as the first to hit Chicago.

Little is known about the general weather conditions leading up to, or the path of, the 1855 tornado.¹ In addition, confirming genealogical and death records prior to 1871 is difficult because records were destroyed when the Cook County courthouse burned down during the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Recent digitization of historic newspaper articles, availability of genealogical information, and discovery of historic property maps provided an opportunity to fill in some of the missing details of this historic tornado. Ensuring the account of the 1855 tornado is correct was a goal of the staff at NWS Chicago not only to ensure storm data records are accurate, but also because information about tornadoes in the Chicago area is often sought out by the public, local media, and government officials (see “A modern approach to historical damage surveys” sidebar).

¹ The U.S. Signal Service started making official weather maps in January 1871, over 15 years after the storm (NOAA Central Library 2021).

Review of known weather data

Although official weather maps for the United States were not prepared by the U.S. Signal Office of the War Department until January 1871, limited weather records do exist from army forts and public citizens dating back to the mid-1800s. Such data exist as part of the “19th Century Forts and Voluntary Observers Database,” or FORTS archive, which were digitized by the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) as part of the Climate Database Modernization Program (Dupigny-Giroux et al. 2007; NCEI 2021). To provide a basic picture of the meteorological conditions leading to the 22 May 1855 tornado, weather records from the FORTS archive from numerous locations across the Midwest were downloaded and analyzed. Approximate weather maps were created that show temperature (reported in degrees Fahrenheit), wind direction, “force of the wind” (which appears similar to, but with different wind speeds than, the Beaufort scale; see Table 1), cloud cover, and in a few instances, dewpoint temperature (reported in degrees Fahrenheit).

At 0700 CT 22 May 1855, air temperatures were generally in the 70s Fahrenheit (21°–26°C) across northern Illinois with southerly or southwesterly winds ahead of a likely cold front stretching from central Wisconsin to central Iowa (Fig. 3). As evidenced by a change in temperature near a cyclonic change in wind direction, an area of low pressure likely existed along the front in eastern Iowa. By 1400 CT, weather observers across Illinois reported temperatures warming into the 80s and 90s Fahrenheit (27°–34°C) along with dewpoints increasing into

A modern approach to historical damage surveys

After an impactful hydrometeorological event such as a tornado, flood, or hurricane, NWS staff often collect information about the storm and related damage to determine exactly what occurred in an effort to better understand, predict, and ultimately warn for future hazards. Such reviews can span from hours to months depending on the complexity and scale of the event and include a number of data sources. For example, forecasters often review radar data from a storm that produced a swath of damaging winds to determine the hardest-hit areas, and analyze high-resolution satellite data taken before and after a storm in rural and sometimes difficult-to-access areas to identify areas where brief tornadoes may have occurred. NWS staff also often look at damage in person, talking with survivors and estimating wind speeds or water levels based on the damage that recently occurred. Reviewing historical weather events requires a different approach as normally used data sources may not be readily available. The process discussed in this article—examining historical news articles, unique sources of historical weather information, and creatively analyzing genealogical records—can provide the means to provide a more accurate record of other historical events, including those that are not explicitly meteorological in origin.

the lower 70s Fahrenheit (21°–24°C) as the cold front and area of low pressure shifted eastward (Fig. 4). A newspaper account from Ottawa, Illinois, indicated temperatures starting at near 80°F (27°C) at 0700 CT and rising to 96°F (36°C) by 1200 CT (Ottawa Free Trader 1855b). Newspaper accounts from Kenosha, Wisconsin, indicated temperatures well into the 90s Fahrenheit (32°–37°C) for several hours (Kenosha Tribune and Telegraph 1855c,d), and later climatological data for Dubuque, Iowa, indicated a high temperature of 100°F (38°C), which became the warmest May temperature on record in Dubuque until it was broken in 1934 (Reed 1934, p. 34). Meanwhile, a temperature of only 69°F (21°C) was recorded along the Lake Michigan shore in Milwaukee with east winds, suggesting a lake breeze may have developed and was moving inland at the

time of the report. Because a lake breeze may have been in close proximity to the tornado in question, it is possible that this boundary played a role in the development of the thunderstorm responsible for the severe weather in Cook County, though this is impossible to confirm given the data available. Cooler temperatures and a change in wind direction across northeast Iowa by 2100 CT suggested that the cold front had moved east toward the Mississippi River, by which time most observers had also noted a significant increase in cloud cover (Fig. 5).

Review of historical newspaper articles

To gain a better understanding of the facts surrounding the 1855 tornado, newspaper articles digitized by the Library of Congress were examined for consistencies in witness accounts. Three articles in particular provided informative details about the tornado, including names of impacted families and structures that were damaged as well as general information about the damage caused by the storm. For example, in the 25 May edition of the *New York Daily Tribune*, the tornado was reported to have moved southeastward, briefly dissipated, and then reformed before damaging a barn and killing four people in a house “one mile [1.6 km] from the Illinois and Wisconsin Railroad” (New York Daily Tribune 1855). The four killed were listed as a wife, son, and two grandchildren of “Mr. Page.” Meanwhile, the 29 May edition of the *New York Herald* reported that the tornado moved slowly—about the speed of a person running—and that a “Mrs. Gillett” was injured in the house that was damaged by the tornado (New York Herald 1855). Additionally, the 26 May edition of the *Ottawa Free Trader* listed the names “H. Page” and “R.L. Wheeler” as being impacted by the storm but in the town of “Maine,” not Jefferson (Ottawa Free Trader 1855a). Additional articles discussing the 1855 tornado, as well as the full text of the mentioned articles, are provided in the appendix.

While several consistencies were reported among the three articles, differences in the location suggested that the widely presented account of the tornado may not have been correct. Where was Maine, and how many people actually died during the storm? Who were Mr. Page and R. L. Wheeler? And would the Illinois and Wisconsin Railroad provide clues as to where the tornado occurred?

Table 1. Descriptions and velocities indicated for a given “force of the wind” (sometimes also referred to as “scale of wind”) on the Smithsonian Institution weather observer forms. Values in the source material were indicated in units of mi h^{-1} . Values converted to m s^{-1} have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Force of the wind	Description	Velocity (mi h^{-1})	Velocity (m s^{-1})
0	Calm	0	0
1	Very light breeze	2	1
2	Gentle breeze	4	2
3	Fresh breeze	12	5
4	Strong wind	25	11
5	High wind	35	16
6	Gale	45	20
7	Strong gale	60	27
8	Violent gale	75	34
9	Hurricane	90	40
10	Most violent hurricane	100	45

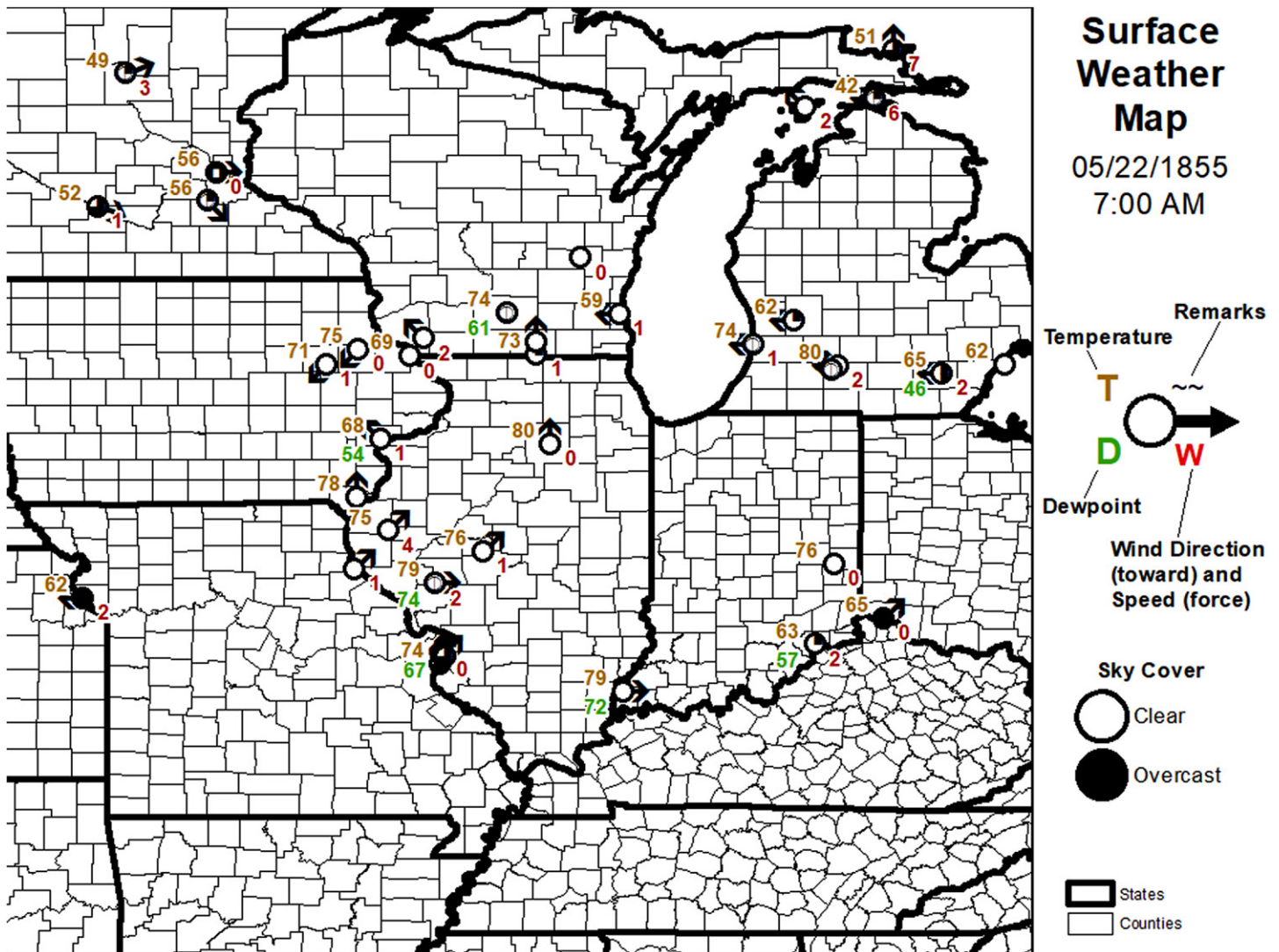


Fig. 3. Map of weather conditions reported at U.S. Army fort locations and by volunteer observers for the Smithsonian Institution valid at 0700 CT 22 May 1855. Meteorological records were collected from NCEI (2021). Temperatures and dewpoints were recorded in degrees Fahrenheit and winds were recorded as “force” value.

Review of geographic data

In the accepted early accounts of the 1855 tornado, a single house was damaged in or near the town of Jefferson, “near Jefferson Mills [sic],” about 16 miles (25.7 km) from Chicago in Cook County, Illinois (Chicago Daily Tribune 1855b; New York Daily Tribune 1855; Finley 1882, p. 4). The town of Jefferson was assumed to refer to Jefferson Township—a subdivision of Cook County encompassing about 79 km² (29 mi²)—or a small town bearing the same name within. A review of Cook County maps from 1851 to 1861 did not indicate a “Jefferson Mill” near Jefferson or within Jefferson Township (Rees 1851; Flower and Mendel 1861). Further, the names “Page” or “Wheeler” were not listed on property maps in Jefferson Township.

Using the information and clues from the newspaper articles, property maps were reviewed northwest of Jefferson Township, in and near Maine Township. Because reporters covering the aftermath of the tornado may have used the Illinois and Wisconsin Railroad² to reach and interview survivors, the map search was focused on properties within 1–2 mi (1.6–3.2 km) of the railroad corridor.

² Just a few years later, this railroad became known as the Chicago, St. Paul, and Fond du Lac Railroad, was known as Chicago and North Western Railroad from 1859 to 1995, and is today known as the Metra Union Pacific Northwest Railroad.

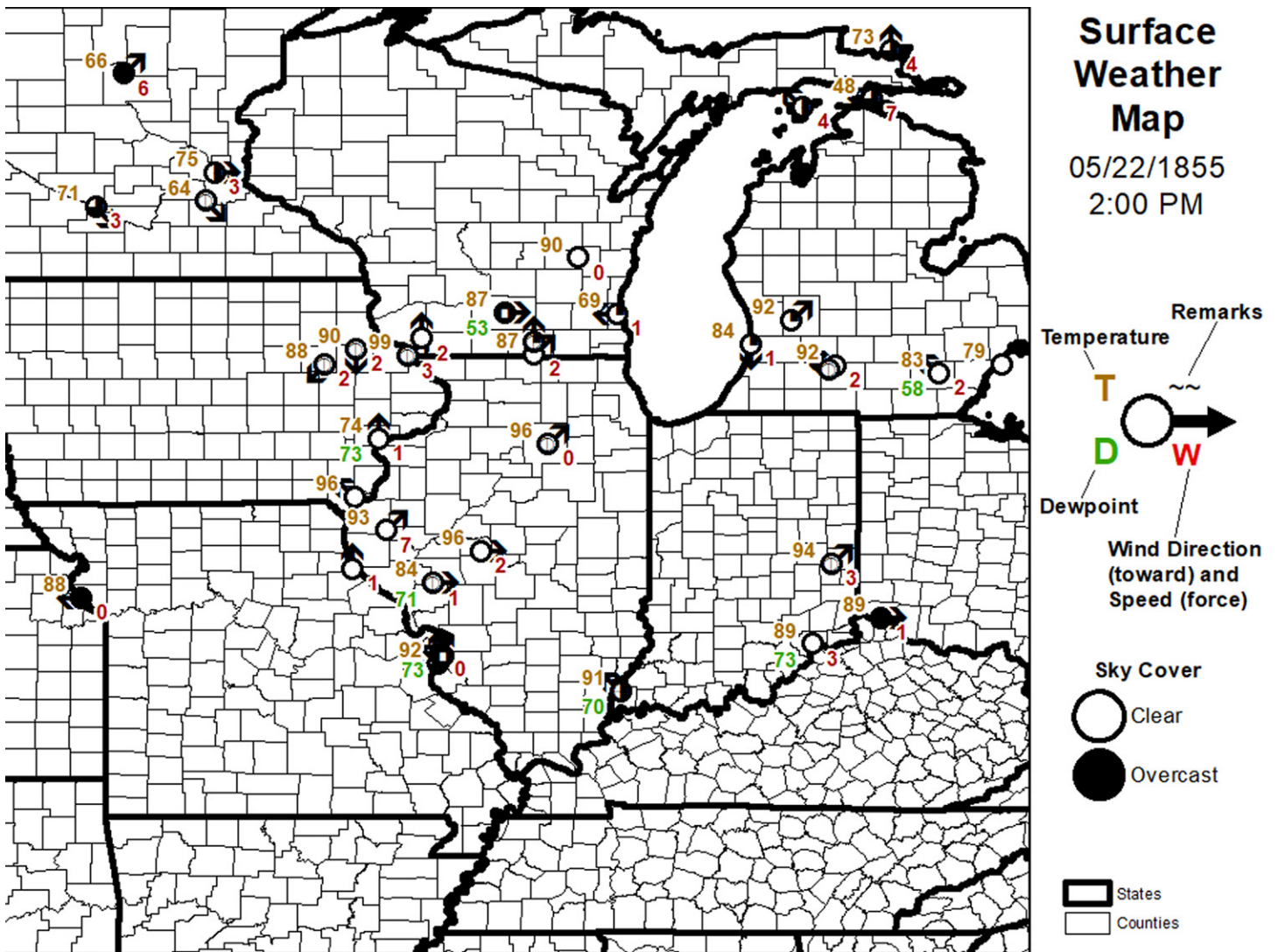


Fig. 4. Map of weather conditions reported at U.S. Army fort locations and by volunteer observers for the Smithsonian Institution valid at 1400 CT 22 May 1855. Meteorological records were collected from NCEI (2021). Temperatures and dewpoints were recorded in degrees Fahrenheit and winds were recorded as “force” value.

Curiously, the name “RL Wheeler” was noted in Maine Township west of the Des Plaines River and the railroad. Immediately east of the Wheeler property, numerous plots were marked with “Jefferson” including a marker indicating “mill,” almost exactly 16 mi (25.7 km) to the northwest of Chicago (Fig. 6). The property and mill owned by the Jefferson family was distinct from Jefferson Township to the southeast. Des Plaines History Center research indicated that the Jeffersons were a prominent family in the area with a prosperous farm and mill, and their property may have been used as a local landmark. One of the early structures on Jefferson family property still exists today (Wolf 2012). Because both the Jefferson and Wheeler properties were located within the modern-day city limits of Des Plaines and not Chicago, the accepted location of the 1855 tornado was becoming tenuous.

Review of genealogical data

To gain a better understanding of the families impacted by the tornado, searches of genealogical records were conducted on several websites. While searching records for “H. Page” on FamilySearch.com did not lead to any obvious results, seeking information for “R.L. Wheeler” uncovered information on Ransom Lee Wheeler who lived in Maine Township, Cook County, Illinois, at the time of the 1860 census (Fig. 7). In addition, Ransom was listed as residing

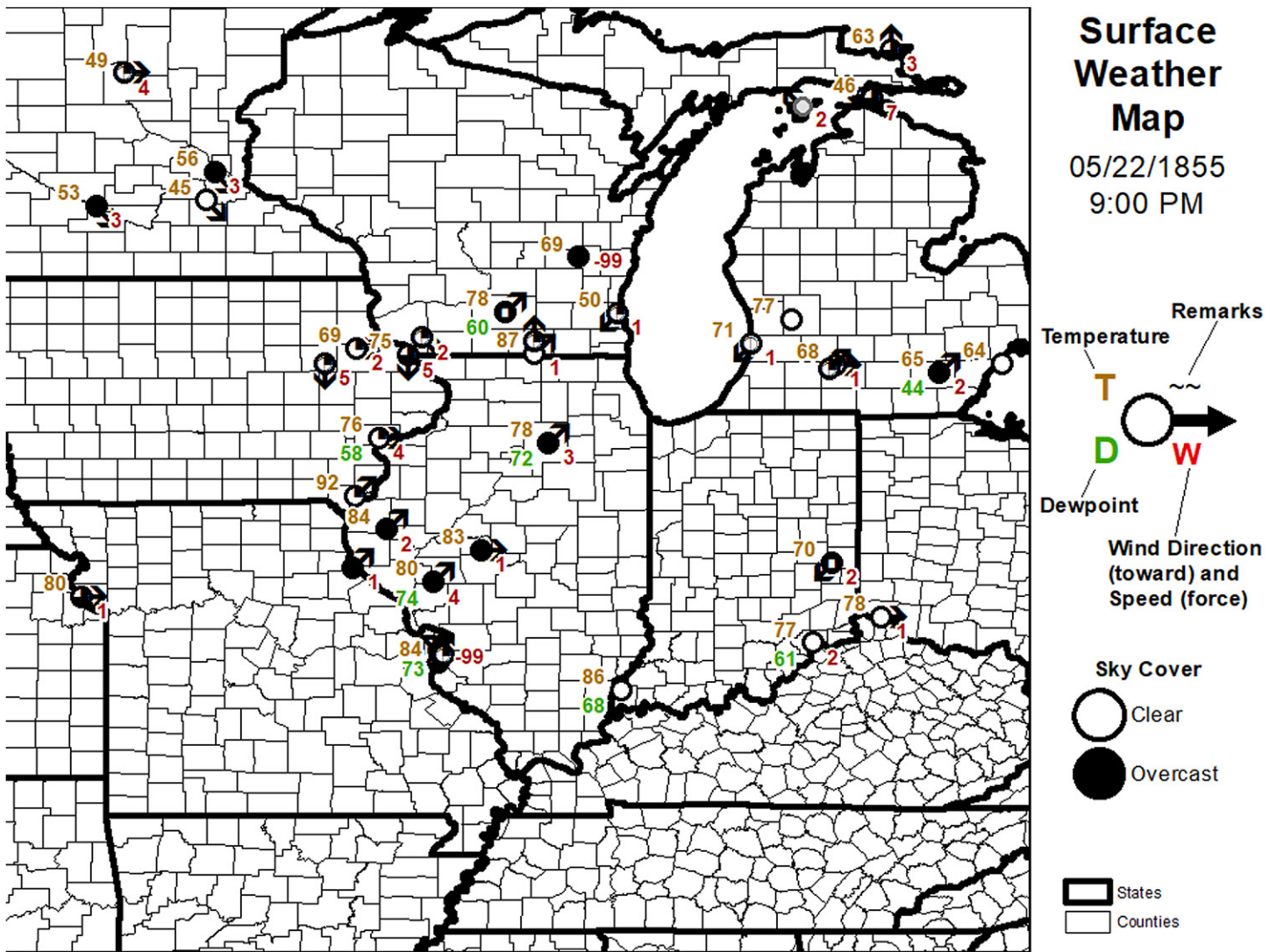


Fig. 5. Map of weather conditions reported at U.S. Army fort locations and by volunteer observers for the Smithsonian Institution valid at 2100 CT 22 May 1855. Meteorological records were collected from NCEI (2021). Temperatures and dewpoints were recorded in degrees Fahrenheit and winds were recorded as “force” value.

with multiple individuals having the last name of Page (U.S. Census 1860). Reviewing the family tree of Ransom Lee Wheeler indicated that he was married to Sara Maria Page, who was the daughter of Hubert Joseph Page and Samantha Finch Page. The date of death of Samantha was listed as 22 May 1855—the date of the tornado. The family tree indicated that Ransom and Sara Wheeler had numerous children, each born about 2 years apart, except for a gap from 1851 to 1855. If this family tree was constructed based on census records, there would be the possibility that children born after the 1850 census, but who died before the 1860 census, may not be listed.

In addition to the single, consensus family tree that is constructed by users, FamilySearch.com also contains a pedigree resource file full of numerous small family tree snippets, submitted by anonymous users, which provides a means of digitizing genealogical data from a person’s records, such as family history books, written notes, and oral histories. User-submitted family trees can, however, have duplication of names found in separate family trees submitted by other users, and may include other errors. The pedigree resource file is one source of information used to help construct the main consensus family tree on FamilySearch.com.

Searching the user-submitted genealogies yielded anecdotal information about the Page/Wheeler family. In one genealogy submitted by an anonymous user to the pedigree

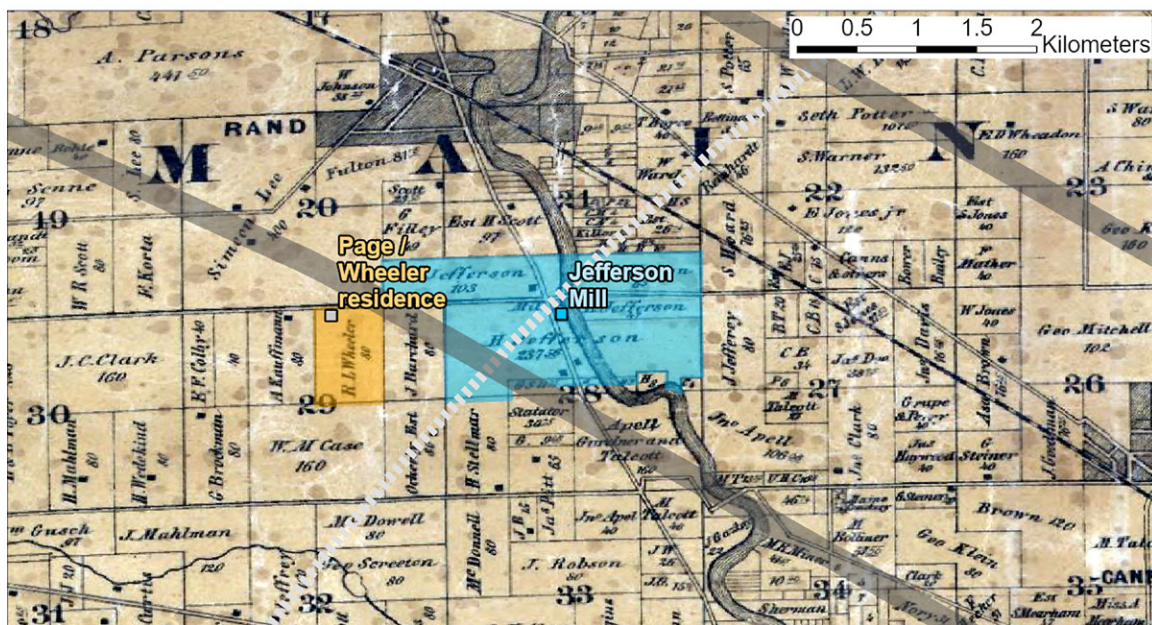
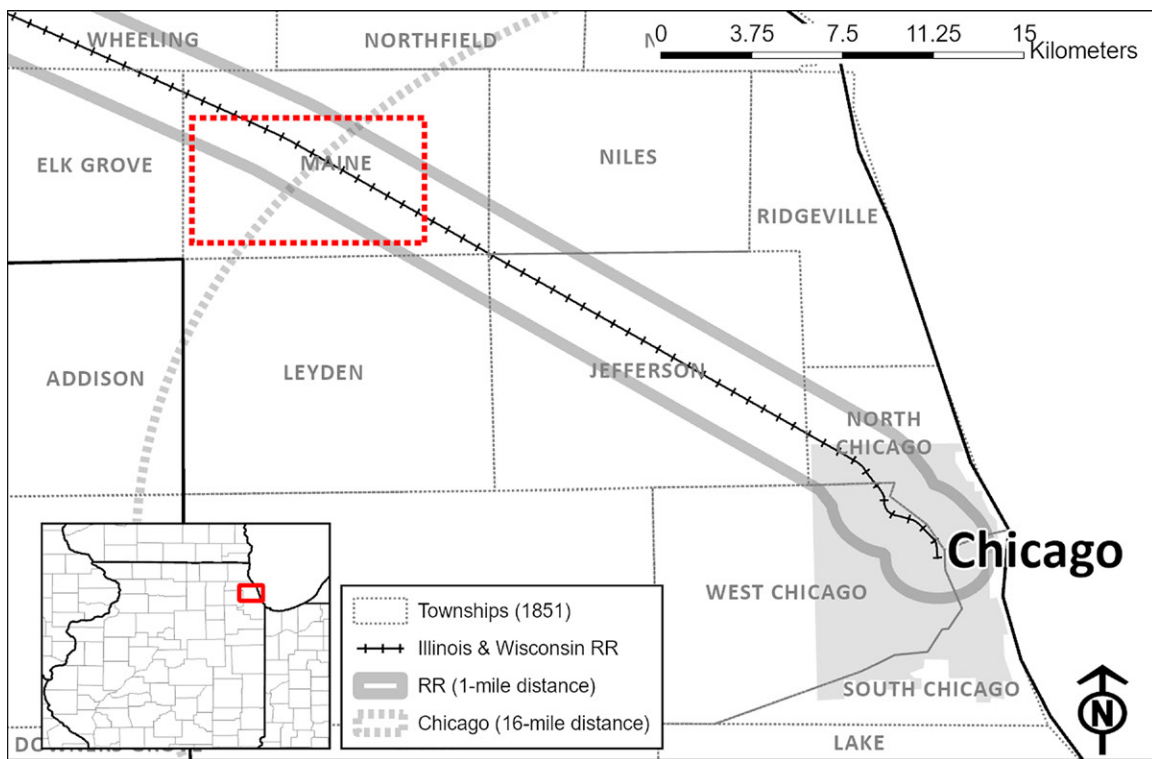


Fig. 6. (a) Map of Cook County township boundaries in 1851; the Illinois and Wisconsin Railroad as of 1855 (cross line) and 1-mi (1.6-km) buffer (gray line); and 16-mi (25.7-km) radius (gray dashed line) from the 1855 city limits of Chicago (gray shading); and (b) 1861 map of central and southwest Maine Township in Cook County, Illinois, by Flower and Mendel (1861). The R. L. Wheeler property is shaded in orange and the Jefferson properties are shaded in blue.

resource file, a Samantha Page was indicated as “killed by a cyclone ... in Des Plaines” on 22 May 1855, along with a Harriet Page Gillett (FamilySearch 2011a). Samantha’s daughter Sara Maria Wheeler, married to a Ransom Lee Wheeler, had a note indicating that “two of her tiny daughters died in the tornado that took others of the Page family” (FamilySearch 2011b). Three additional children were shown in this family tree: Lillian Livonia Wheeler, Eveline Louise Wheeler, and Charles Napier Wheeler. Lillian was born in 1852, Eveline was born in 1855, and both died on 22 May 1855. A note for Ransom Lee Wheeler indicates that their family moved from New York to Maine Township, Des Plaines, Illinois, in 1855, to a

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SCHEDULE 1—Free Inhabitants in Township of *Maine* in the County of *Cook* State of *Illinois* enumerated by me, on the *26* day of *June* 1860. *J. H. ...* Ass't Marshal

Post Office *Canfield*

		VALUE OF ESTATE OWNED			
15	<i>Frank Langford</i>	<i>30 m</i>	<i>2 m</i>		<i>New York</i>
16	<i>R. L. Wheeler</i>	<i>30 m</i>	<i>2 m</i>		<i>"</i>
17	<i>Ellen "</i>	<i>30 m</i>	<i>2 m</i>		<i>"</i>
18	<i>Mary "</i>	<i>10 m</i>	<i>1 m</i>		<i>Illinois</i>
19	<i>Sarah "</i>	<i>5 m</i>	<i>0 m</i>		<i>"</i>
20	<i>John "</i>	<i>2 m</i>	<i>0 m</i>		<i>New York</i>
21	<i>John Page</i>	<i>14 m</i>	<i>1 m</i>		<i>"</i>
22	<i>Ada "</i>	<i>16 m</i>	<i>1 m</i>		<i>"</i>
23	<i>Nancy Mills</i>	<i>30 m</i>	<i>2 m</i>	<i>F. Laburg</i>	<i>"</i>
24	<i>John Page</i>	<i>10 m</i>	<i>1 m</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>

Fig. 7. Clippings from the 1860 U.S. Census showing "R. L. Wheeler" residing with family members named "Page" in Maine Township, Cook County, Illinois (U.S. Census 1860).

property in the "NE quarter of Section 29" (FamilySearch 2011c). Another child of Ransom and Sara, Mary Isabelle Wheeler, had a note that indicated that she was "lifted up into the air ... during the tornado that killed several family members in 1855" (FamilySearch 2011d). From this information, an approximate family tree was reconstructed (Fig. 8). Although Des Plaines History Center records did not specifically mention a tornado, they were able to corroborate much of the historical and genealogical data found elsewhere. Unfortunately, no records were found indicating where victims of this tornado were buried (see "Farm burials" sidebar).

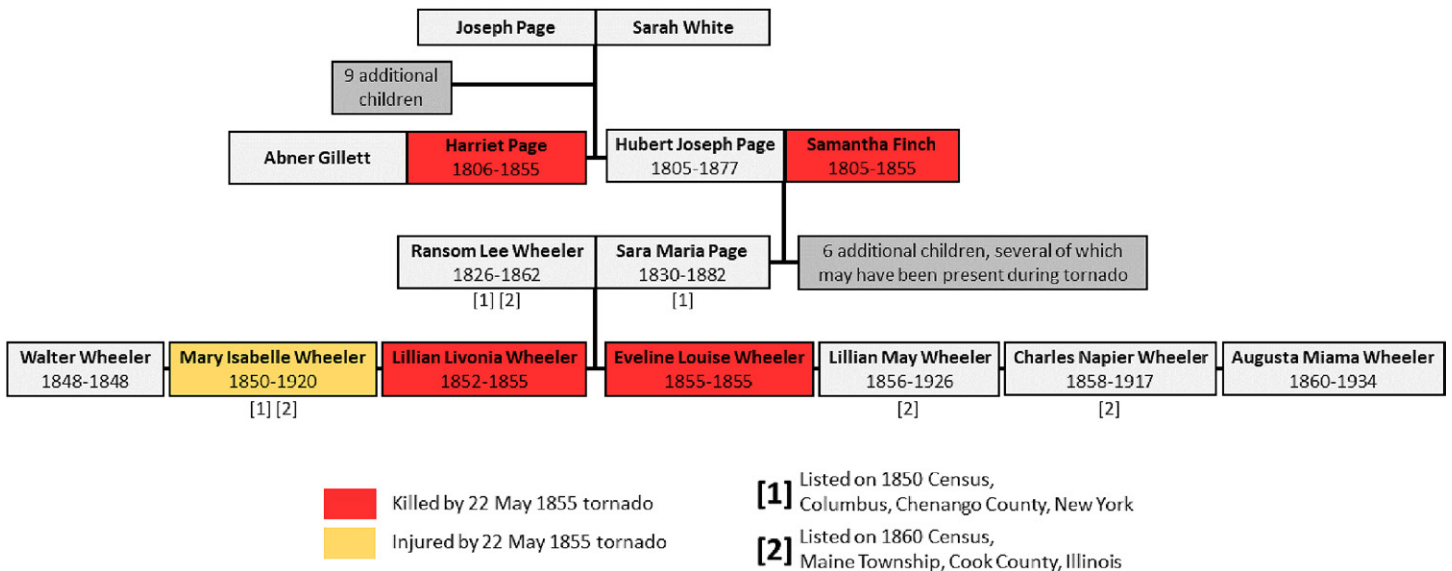


Fig. 8. Approximate reconstructed family tree of the Page and Wheeler families based on newspaper accounts and genealogical research.

Farm burials

It is not known where the Wheelers and Pages buried their family members who died in the tornado. Town of Maine Cemetery in neighboring Park Ridge was not chartered until 1858, 3 years after the tornado occurred. In nineteenth-century rural America, it was common to bury deceased family members on the family's own land in the absence of a nearby, organized cemetery. Given the rural character of Maine Township in the 1850s, it is likely that the Wheelers and Pages followed this practice after the tornado.

Just to the east of the Wheeler farm, the Hiram Jefferson farm included a family burial ground. When the Jeffersons arrived in Maine Township around 1840, Hiram's father purchased a land claim along the Des Plaines River, south of Oakton Street, from a man named Dougherty. The Dougherty family burial ground stood on the land purchased by the Jeffersons and included the graves of Mrs. Dougherty and several Dougherty children. In 1910, local historian Clarence A. Earle and archaeologist and cartographer Albert F. Scharf surveyed the Dougherty burial ground and located six graves that they described as "hillocks" (Scharf 1915).

The Jeffersons initially buried several members of their family on the farm as well. According to Luther Jefferson's daughter Betsy Irvin, the Jeffersons chose to move their family graves from the farm to Town of Maine Cemetery after it opened in 1858 (Des Plaines Journal 1956).

Discussion

How was the location of the 1855 tornado incorrectly listed in accepted and modern-day accounts of the storm? It appears that the property owned by the Jefferson family—which included a mill and general store—was confused for the town of Jefferson in Jefferson Township. The Jefferson family's property was shown as adjacent to and east of the Page/Wheeler property in Maine Township on historical maps. Considering the consistencies in accounts in historical newspaper articles, genealogical records, and historical property maps, it seems exceptionally unlikely that there were two tornadoes that separately impacted the Wheeler property in Maine Township and Jefferson Township farther to the southeast. Moreover, initial newspaper articles indicated that the tornado occurred 16 mi (25.7 km) from Chicago. The town of Jefferson—modern-day Jefferson Park in Chicago—sits just 9 mi (14.5 km) away from the 1855 center of Chicago. This discrepancy was apparently missed in multiple newspaper articles and discussions in the decades that followed.

Additional research was conducted at Chicago's Harold Washington Library by reviewing microfilm records of all Chicago newspapers published at the time of the 1855 tornado, which includes not only the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, but also the *Chicago Weekly Times* and the *Daily Democratic Press*. Although records indicate that the *Chicago Journal* was also published at the time, no microfilm records were available. In the *Daily Democratic Press*, the first article about the tornado was on 24 May 1855, which mentioned "a whirlwind passed over the town of Maine ... taking in its course the house of Mr. H. Page" (Daily Democratic Press 1855a). An article written the following day, 25 May, provided significantly more detail, including that it was raining at the time of the tornado, with hail just prior, and that the "force of the whirlwind was lost soon after passing Mr. Page's house" (Daily Democratic Press 1855b). It also indicated that debris found along the track of the tornado suggested that additional buildings may have been impacted. A follow up article published on 29 May indicated that Harriett Gillett died from her injuries on the evening of 25 May, 3 days after the tornado (Daily Democratic Press 1855c). In the *Chicago Weekly Times*, the first mention of the tornado was in the following week's edition, on 31 May, where eyewitness accounts of the tornado's movement were provided. An eyewitness "at O'Plain ... about four o'clock" described the tornado "a few miles to the west" and indicated that it moved to the southeast (Chicago Weekly Times 1855a). Lightning was noted in the vicinity of the tornado as it moved "in a circular direction ... through a segment of about forty-five degrees," after which it briefly dissipated before reforming a few minutes later and moving back to the northwest

“over almost precisely the same path as before” and making it almost halfway back to the starting point. It was also noted that the house of Mr. Page was “about a mile [1.6 km] south of O’Plain Station,” likely referring to the Illinois and Wisconsin Railroad stop at the Des Plaines River (present-day Des Plaines; see “Des Plaines in the 1850s” sidebar). The article also described the hail that occurred with the storm, indicating that a conductor of a passenger train on the Illinois and Wisconsin Railroad “picked up a hail stone at O’Plain Station and carried it in the cars to the Fox River” about 20 mi (32 km) away, at which point the hail was “still larger than a hen’s egg” (approximately 5 cm, or 2 in., in diameter). A follow-up article published on 7 June 1855 discussed storm damage in Waupun, Wisconsin, which also occurred sometime on 22 May 1855, as well as damage to Juneau, Wisconsin, about 24 km (15 mi) south of Waupun, which supposedly occurred on 21 May. A review of Wisconsin newspapers available from the Library of Congress digital collection (the *Kenosha Tribune and Telegraph* and the *Mineral Point Tribune*) have no mention of rain in Mineral Point or in the Kenosha area on 22 May, but do mention that rain and nondamaging hail occurred in the Kenosha area early on 23 May. The *Ottawa Free Trader* did not report any rainfall occurring between 22 and 24 May 1855, but did mention the very hot conditions of 22 May and the cooling trend through 24 May (Ottawa Free Trader 1855b). Owing to the possible uncertainty in published dates, it appears possible that either a single storm or storm cluster moved to the south and southeast along the lake breeze throughout the early morning and daytime hours of 22 May, or instead that a few separate storms may have formed along this boundary. In general, the other Chicago newspapers published on 22 May 1855 confirmed most of the important details already determined about the tornado, including the locations impacted and movement direction. New information included the eyewitness accounts suggesting that the tornado was moving slowly enough to change direction and move back across its original path.

Although there is high confidence in the location of the Wheeler property in 1855, it remains difficult to determine the start and end point of the tornado considering a lack of reported damage beyond that to a home and barn and a slow southeasterly motion to the storm. Considering that hail was reported at the site of the tornado, in the city of Chicago, and separately in Northfield Township all on the same day (e.g., Chicago Daily Tribune 1855a,c; New York Daily Tribune 1855; New York Herald 1855), it is possible that the storm that produced the tornado in Maine Township was the same storm that produced hail to the east and southeast. Accordingly, connecting a line from the Wheeler property to Chicago bounded by a 1-mi (1.6-km) buffer could suggest an approximate corridor along which a single storm tracked. Based on an assumed storm speed of about 16 km h⁻¹ (10 mi h⁻¹; about the speed that a man

Des Plaines in the 1850s

Des Plaines was not incorporated until 1869, but the area of Maine Township that would become Des Plaines was first settled in the 1830s. From the 1830s to the 1850s, Maine Township was very rural in character, with farm homesteads scattered across the landscape. Research indicates that the general area went by multiple names around the time of the tornado, including Des Plaines, Des Plaines River, Aux Plaines, and O’Plaines.

In May 1855, Des Plaines was on the cusp of change. The pivotal event in the area’s development occurred only 7 months earlier when the Illinois and Wisconsin Railroad began service from Chicago on a line that passed through Des Plaines. The railroad brought economic and population growth to the area, and a business and residential district soon developed around the rail depot. Local farmers, like the Wheelers and Pages, benefitted from the railroad’s arrival and the new markets that it opened for their goods. Des Plaines incorporated in 1869, a reflection of the growth that occurred in the decade after the railroad arrived in Maine Township.

can run; New York Herald 1855), multiple sources suggesting that the tornado path covered an arc, or even reversed course, and the limited information stating that the tornado did not extend beyond structures to the northwest and southeast of the Wheeler property, a crude estimated tornado track was constructed and is shown in Fig. 9.

By digitizing and georeferencing old maps of the area, the location of the 22 May 1855 tornado can be overlaid upon maps displaying modern-day locations of roads and

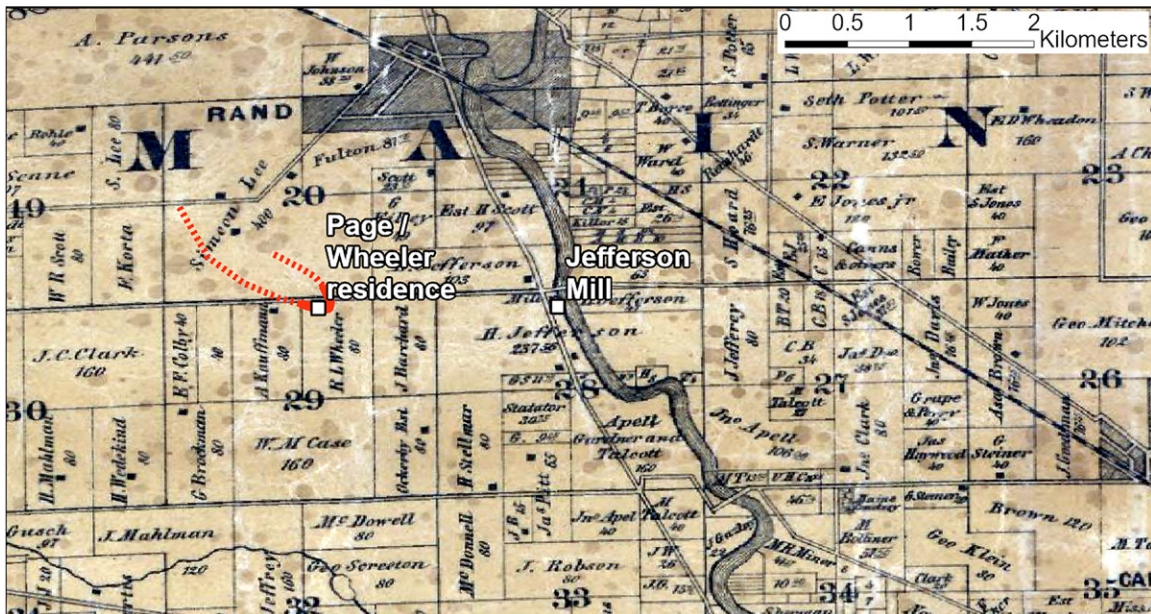


Fig. 9. (a) Map of Cook County townships in 1855 with the approximate hail corridor from the storm that spawned the 1855 tornado (green shading) and locations of reported hail (green dots) and (b) map of central and southwest Maine Township in Cook County, Illinois, showing the estimated path of the tornado reconstructed from newspaper accounts. Background image of the Maine Township map is the 1861 map of Cook and DuPage Counties by Flower and Mendel (1861). The highest confidence portions of the tornado track are shown in solid red, with more uncertain portions of the track shown with a dashed red line.

administrative boundaries. If the tornado occurred today, it would have impacted a populated area near the intersection of Lee Street and Oakton Street in Des Plaines (Fig. 10) and not the city of Chicago (Fig. 11).

The question remains, When was the first-recorded tornado to impact the modern-day city limits of Chicago? Records at the NWS Chicago Weather Forecast Office indicate that the next candidate tornado occurred on 6 May 1876 and impacted an area near the modern-day “Loop” of Chicago. Twenty years later, in 1896, a tornado on 25 May—part of the May 1896 tornado outbreak sequence that included a significant tornado in Saint Louis, Missouri—cut a path through portions of northern Cook County, including the communities of Edison Park and Norwood Park, which are now within today’s city limits of Chicago. Another candidate tornado occurred in 1781, when a traveler documented significant damage to trees in the Chicago Portage and Mud Lake areas in the modern-day southwestern sections of the city (Chicago Daily Tribune 2006). The 1876 event remains the subject of some discussion, and the 1781 tornado is not currently recognized by National Weather Service records.

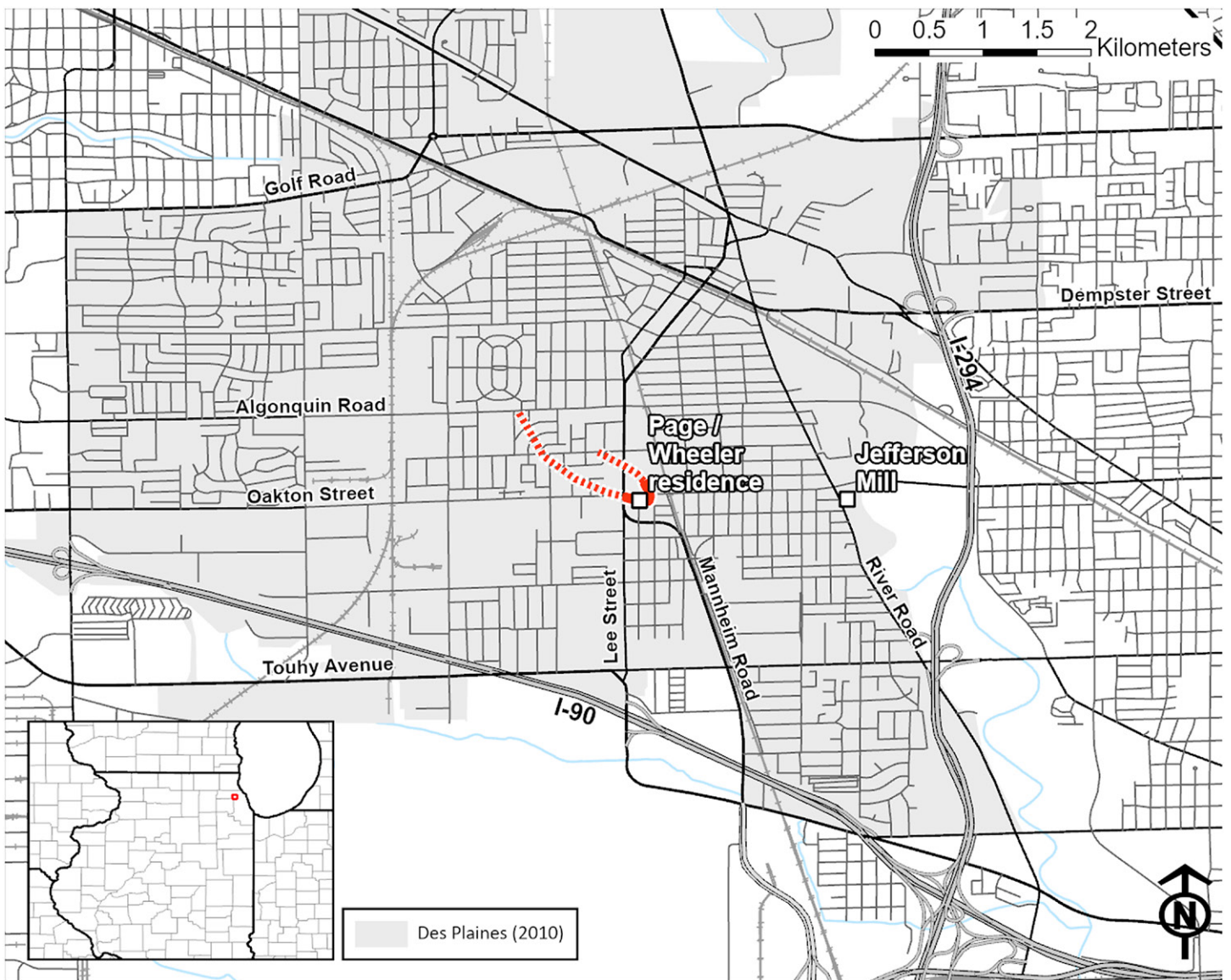


Fig. 10. The estimated path of the 22 May 1855 tornado shown on a modern-day map of Des Plaines. The highest confidence portions of the tornado track are shown in solid red, with more uncertain portions of the track shown with a dashed red line. Background image is from OpenStreetMap.

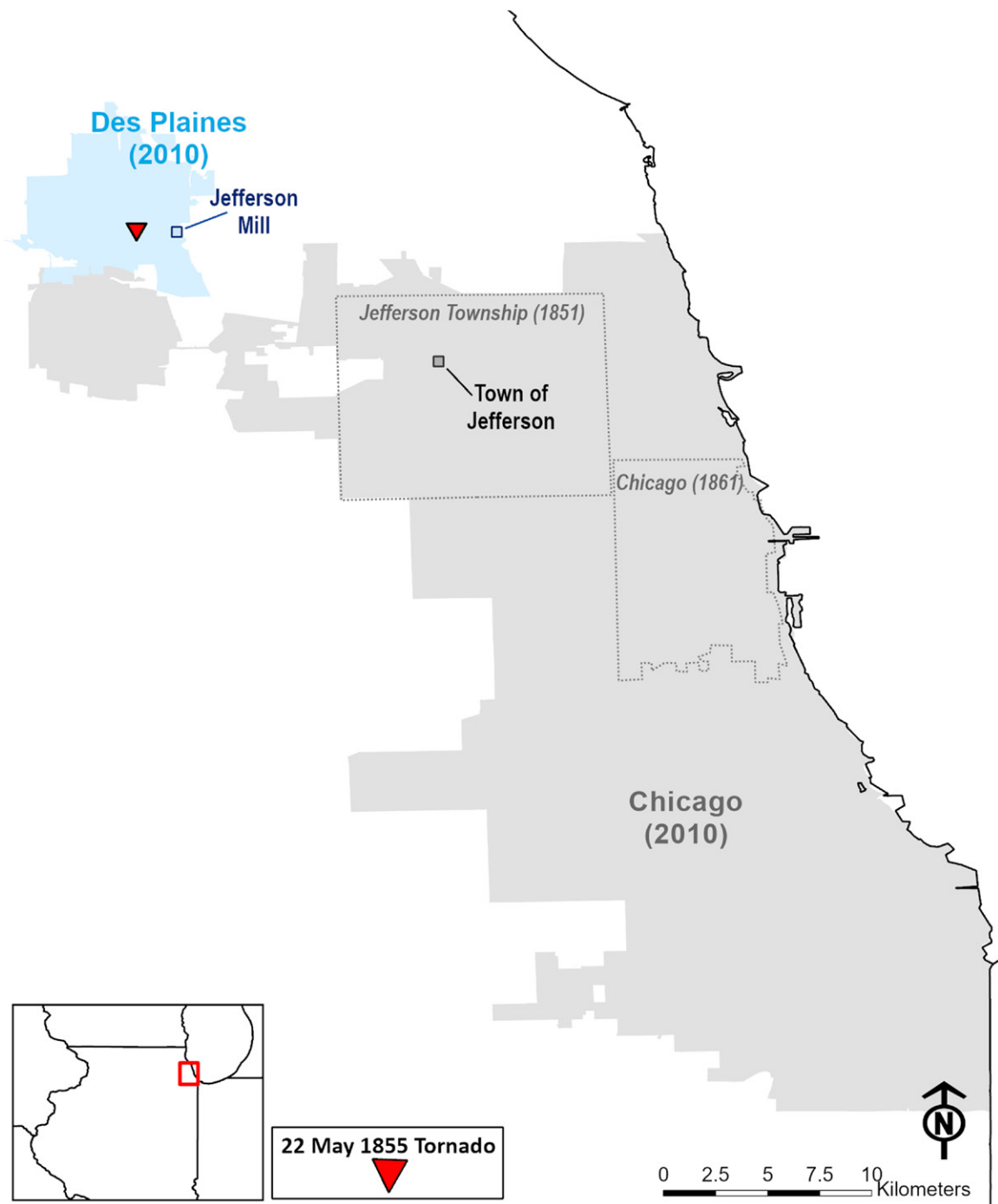


Fig. 11. The best-guess 22 May 1855 tornado location (red triangle) compared to the modern-day city limits of Chicago (gray), 1861 city limits of Chicago (dark gray dashed contour), and Jefferson Township (gray dashed contour).

A revised account of the 22 May 1855 tornado

In 1855, the Jefferson family owned property on which they operated a mill in Maine Township, northwest of Chicago in Cook County, Illinois. Ransom Lee Wheeler and Sara Maria Page, daughter of Hubert Joseph Page and Samantha Finch Page, lived on a property adjacent to the property owned by the Jefferson family. On 22 May 1855, members of the Page and Wheeler families were on their property as a thunderstorm spawned a tornado to their northwest. The tornado struck their home and barn on their property, killing Samantha Finch Page, two of her young grandchildren, her sister-in-law Harriet (Page) Gillett, and several farm animals. The Wheeler residence was completely destroyed in the tornado, and others who were not killed were seriously injured (see “The Jeffersons and Wheelers” sidebar). This brief tornado

The Jeffersons and Wheelers

The Jeffersons

A prominent local family, the Jeffersons were early settlers who had arrived in Des Plaines by 1840. At the time of the 1855 tornado, brothers Hiram and Luther Jefferson owned property along the Des Plaines River, near Oakton Street. In 1846, Hiram Jefferson inherited their father's land along the river, south of Oakton Street, and over the course of his life developed the farm into one of the most prosperous in Maine Township. Today, Hiram's 1850s farmhouse serves as the headquarters of the Des Plaines chapter of the Izaak Walton League, a national conservation organization.

Luther Jefferson's land also stood along the Des Plaines River near Oakton Street, just north of his brother Hiram's. Luther built a windmill on his property, which powered a grist and lumber mill. Luther Jefferson's windmill served as a local landmark and stood near the southeast corner of the modern-day intersection of Oakton Avenue and River Road.

The Wheelers

Though little is known of the Page family following the 1855 tornado, the Wheeler family remained in Des Plaines for many years. In the late 1850s, Ransom and Sarah Wheeler had three more children, one of whom was born in May 1856 and named Lillian after one of their daughters who had died in the tornado the previous year. Unfortunately, Ransom Wheeler died in the early 1860s, just a few years after the tornado.

Mary Isabelle Wheeler, the only child of Ransom and Sarah to survive the tornado, married William Stockwell in 1866. Like the Wheelers, the Stockwells were originally from New York and arrived in Maine Township in the mid-1850s. During their early marriage, the couple made their home in Des Plaines and Mary's widowed mother and three younger siblings lived with them. By 1880, Mary and William Stockwell moved to Jefferson Township, today Chicago's Jefferson Park neighborhood, and lived there for many years. After William died in 1909, Mary moved in with her daughter in Wisconsin and remained there until her own death in 1920. Mary Isabelle Stockwell was buried in Town of Maine Cemetery in Park Ridge, Illinois.

occurred within the boundaries of modern-day Des Plaines, Illinois, near the intersection of Oakton Street and Lee Street and not within the modern-day city limits of Chicago, as was previously reported. Because reporters covering the aftermath of the tornado may have used the nearby Illinois and Wisconsin Railroad to reach the area or as a nearby landmark when interviewing survivors, the name "Jefferson" may have been incorrectly assumed to reference the town of Jefferson in Jefferson Township instead of the mill and farm along the Des Plaines River, as the town of Jefferson also was located on the same rail line.

Acknowledgments. This report would not have been possible without the help of genealogical records stored and provided for free by FamilySearch. Also helpful were the digitized maps of the Cook County area stored by the U.S. Library of Congress. The authors thank the newspapers and periodicals staff at the Harold Washington Library in Chicago for their guidance when reviewing old microfilm records. The authors are also appreciative of the contributions made by descendants of Des Plaines pioneer families to the collections of the Des Plaines History Center. The authors thank the anonymous peer reviewers who provided numerous helpful comments.

Data availability statement. Data analyzed in this study were a reanalysis of existing data, which are openly available at locations cited in the reference section.

Appendix: Historic newspaper recreations

Figures A1–A5 present recreations of articles from the *Daily Democratic Press* (Fig. A1), *Chicago Weekly Times* (Fig. A2), *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Figs. A3 and A4), and *Kenosha Tribune and Telegraph* and *Mineral Point Tribune* (Fig. A5), which were used to update the story of the 22 May 1855 tornado.

DAILY DEMOCRATIC PRESS

CHICAGO, THURSDAY MORNING, MAY 24, 1855.

Whirlwind --- Three Persons Killed.

We learn that last Thursday afternoon a whirlwind passed over the town of Maine, in this county, taking in its course the house of Mr. H. Page, a frame dwelling, which contained at the time his family and that of his son-in-law, R. L. Wheeler. The house was rendered a complete wreck by the force of the whirlwind, and in its ruin involved the lives of three of the inmates, Mrs. Page and two children.

DAILY DEMOCRATIC PRESS

CHICAGO, FRIDAY MORNING, MAY 25, 1855.

LOCAL MATTERS

FURTHER PARTICULARS OF THE WHIRLWIND

Having conversed with an eye witness of the terrific scene of which we gave a brief account yesterday morning, we are able to add some particulars. The whirlwind was rendered visible some distance by the dust, grass, paper, pieces of cloth and various articles which it took up in its path. It appeared in shape of a funnel, small near the earth and expanding as it extended upward to the rain cloud above. The column indicating the whirlwind swayed to and fro, and the observer thinks it did not move over the earth very rapidly, not more so than a man could run.

When it approached the house of Mr. Page, and was about one hundred feet distant, the house moved toward it thirty or forty feet, when the whirlwind came directly upon it. First the roof of the house went up, and broke into fragments, then the walls writhed and separated, and were carried up and also torn in a thousand pieces, filling the air with timbers and pieces of boards. The pieces of the house now lie in the field, indicating by the manner in which they are strewn, the circular motion of the devastating force. Many of the scantling and boards are sticking upright in the ground as if fallen from a great height. The family of Mr. Page numbered eleven persons. They saw the whirlwind coming, and some of them had rushed out of the house. Those outside were also carried up into the air, but how far they cannot say. They are all bruised, by striking the fragments of the house or by concussion with the ground. The body of one of the dead children was picked up forty rods from where the house stood. Another had one arm broken, another had a hand crushed and her shoulder terribly bruised. These two will recover. Mrs. Gillett had her jaw broken and is so bruised upon her body that the physicians think she cannot survive. A young man of the family had his scalp torn open, one rib broken, besides other severe bruises.

The house was a substantial frame house, resting upon boulders. Some of these weigh three or four hundred pounds, and lay upon the top of the ground. They were all rolled from their places by the force of the wind. A board fence in the track of the whirlwind was swept away for several rods, the posts being drawn from the ground and carried some distance. A small barn was thrown down, killing a horse and some calves inside of it.

At the time of this whirlwind it was raining, and just before, a fall of hail had taken place. Some of the stones measuring nine inches in circumference. The force of the whirlwind was lost soon after passing Mr. Page's house, and the column disappeared. In going back over the track by which it approached the house, our informant found the ground was strewn with debris of articles which it caught up and let fall again, among which were fragments of clothing, bedding and wall paper, which leads to the belief that some other house had been demolished in its course. The consequences of this remarkable atmospheric phenomenon are terrible to the family of Page. Beside the death of three, and perhaps more of their number, and the injuries to the living, they have lost their home with all its contents -- everything in the house is utterly destroyed. Even the clothing they had on was torn from them. "I have nothing in the world to pay you with, gentleman," said Mr. Page to Dr. Brainard and Freer, who went out to attend to the afflicted family; "my money, as well as everything else in the house, was the prey of the elements." "Give yourself no trouble on that account," replied they, and went on with their professional services.

DAILY DEMOCRATIC PRESS

CHICAGO, TUESDAY MORNING, MAY 29, 1855.

ANOTHER VICTIM --- We learn from a gentleman returned from the scene of the late whirlwind, in the town of Maine, that Mrs. Gillett died from her injuries last Friday evening, making the fourth victim to the fury of the elements. The other injured persons are likely to recover, although Mrs. Wheeler and one of her children still suffer greatly.

Mrs. Gillett was a sister of Mr. Page. The rumor that Mr. Page had relatives in this city proves to be incorrect. The family came West not long ago from Western New York.

Much sympathy exists in the vicinity where the terrible catastrophe occurred for the afflicted family, who have lost almost all they were worth. Subscriptions are being made in the neighborhood for their relief. At a Methodist meeting on Sunday afternoon, the preacher related the facts of the case, and \$116 was raised for their benefit by a small congregation.

Fig. A1. Re-creation of newspaper articles in the *Daily Democratic Press*, published out of Chicago, covering the tornado of 22 May 1855 and associated weather. Adapted from articles published on 24 May (Daily Democratic Press 1855a), 25 May (Daily Democratic Press 1855b), and 29 May (Daily Democratic Press 1855c).

Chicago Weekly Times

CHICAGO, THURSDAY, MAY 31, 1855.

Awful Whirlwind --- Life and Property destroyed.

We learn from a gentleman who resides in the vicinity of O'Plain Station, on the Illinois and Wisconsin Railroad, that an awful whirlwind swept over that neighborhood on Tuesday afternoon last. Persons at O'Plain witnessed about four o'clock, a spectacle like dense smoke rising in a huge column from the earth, at a distance a few miles to the west. The column extended upwards to the clouds, when it became violently agitated with a whirling motion, and commenced moving over the country towards the southeast. It bore some resemblance to a "water-spout," but was more terrible in its appearance and movements. Lightning flashed from the heavens and descended through the column, contrasting streaks of flame with its dark outlines, and lending to the whole an aspect truly fearful.

The column continued moving in a circular direction toward the south-east, through a segment of about forty-five degrees, when it suddenly broke in two and disappeared. In a few minutes, at the point where the column went down, it was observed to rise again, this time apparently but a few feet in diameter. It expanded as it went whirling upward, until nearly as large as before, and on reaching the clouds (to appearance) moved back again toward the northwest over almost precisely the same path as before. When about half way back to the first starting point, the column disappeared and was no more seen.

This strange looking phenomena was a whirlwind. On hearing from the neighborhood where it was observed to rise, (about twenty miles from this city) it was found to have been of the most terrible character --- uprooting and destroying everything which happened to be in its path. The house of Mr. Page, about a mile south of O'Plain Station, was totally demolished, and four of the inmates were killed. Three others --- the son and daughter-in-law of Mr. Page, and one of their children --- were badly, and our informant tells us, dangerously injured. The persons killed were the wife of Mr. Page senior, and three of his grand children. Two other children were hurt, making nine altogether who were either killed or injured by the calamity. One of the children was found twenty rods from where the house stood, its body mutilated in a most shocking manner, and stripped of every particle of clothing. The house was a frame, and stood upon a solid stone foundation, from which it was lifted bodily with the wind, and dashed to fragments.

Farther west, the whirlwind demolished a large barn, and instantly killed a fine horse and number of calves which were inside. Fences were leveled, trees uprooted and twisted from their trunks by the awful power of the wind. The destruction along the path which it traveled must have been very great. We fear that more human lives have been lost. The wind, it is said, was the most terrific which has ever been known in this region of country, where whirlwinds have not been an uncommon occurrence.

The wind was accompanied by a heavy fall of rain and hail. The accounts given of the size of hail-stones which fell in the vicinity of O'Plain are almost incredible.

The conductor of the passenger train, which left here on Tuesday afternoon, assures us that he picked up a hail-stone at O'Plain Station and carried it in the cars to Fox River, where it was still larger than a hen's egg. Similar facts are vouched for by other witnesses. In this city, hail fell plentifully, many of the stones being the size of hickory nuts.

Later --- We learn by a gentleman who was at O'Plain yesterday, that Mr. Page, junior, and wife are lying in a dangerous situation on account of injuries received in the demolition of their house. The scene of the terrible disaster is described as one of universal ruin and destruction.

In one place, some twenty rods of "post and rail" fence --- the posts firmly driven into the ground --- was torn up and carried, no one knows where. Not a rail or post of it could be any where found.

A number of pigs found their sty demolished about their ears, and the ground swept of the fragments. In its fury, the wind also lifted the pigs bodily, and whirled them in its girations to a spot many rods distant.

Chicago Weekly Times

CHICAGO, THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 1855.

HURRICANE IN WISCONSIN --- Last week appears to have been prolific of hurricanes and whirlwinds. On the same day (Tuesday, May 22d) on which the dreadful whirlwind swept over a portion of this county, a furious storm passed over Waupun, Wisconsin, doing considerable damage to the exposed glass-ware in that vicinity. Some hail stones were picked up which weighed four ounces!

A correspondent writing from Juneau, Dodge county, Wisconsin, gives an account of the tempest which passed across that section on the evening of the 21st:

Last evening, this village was visited by one of the most destructive tornadoes it has ever been our lot to witness. About half past six, a heavy cloud appeared in the north-west, with vivid lightning. An hour after, the hail began to pour down in great fury. It seemed as though all the demons of heaven and earth had been there loose. In all the town every window on the north and west sides was smashed. The Juneau House lost about 200 panes of glass; the American as many. Not a building escaped.

The building erected last season for fireproof county offices was unroofed. We doubt if the like has ever been witnessed in Wisconsin.

Fig. A2. Re-creation of newspaper articles in the *Chicago Weekly Times*, published out of Chicago, covering the tornado of 22 May 1855 and associated weather. Adapted from articles published on 31 May (Chicago Weekly Times 1855a) and 7 June (Chicago Weekly Times 1855b).

A Hail Storm.

Yesterday afternoon, at 4 o'clock, we were visited by very severe hail storm, which continued for some ten minutes, and then wound up with a glorious shower of rain. The hail stones fell thick and fast; many of them were as large as hickory nuts and as hard as pebbles.

TERRIFIC TORNADO.

THREE PERSONS KILLED.

A HOUSE CARRIED UP INTO THE AIR.

Terrible effects of the Whirlwind.

Never before has it been our duty to record so awful a calamity as that to which we now sit down to write. The scene of the tragedy is still before our mind's eye: the wrecks of the tempest are still lying scattered about: but were it not for the unimpeachable character of our informants, eye-witnesses for the dreadful calamity, we should be inclined to believe that they had been laboring under some mental hallucination, and that what we are about to relate was but a dream of the imagination. The reality, however, is too true. The bodies of the three victims and the wounds of the other persons constitute evidence too palpable to be set aside.

Our readers will remember the violent hail storm that took place in this city yesterday afternoon between four and five o'clock, and the oppressive heat of the rest of the afternoon. At the same hour, the events to which we allude took place in the town of Jefferson, near Jefferson Mills, 16 miles distant.

A cloud of a peculiar shape was first observed approaching from the North-west, and terminating in a funnel-shaped point, the apex towards and nearly reaching the earth. As it came nearer, it was discovered to be whirlwind, rapidly revolving, and whirling up various objects, in which were plainly seen large sticks of wood, boards, small trees, and chairs. It was coming towards our informant, but did not reach them, but turned to their right, described a semi-circle, and fell upon a large frame house.

In an instant, and with a crash, the roof was torn off, and immediately the whole house was lifted from the foundation, literally torn to pieces, and the pieces carried up in the horrid vortex. The furniture in the house, all of it, shared the same fate, the weight of the articles appearing no obstacle to their ascent whatever.

And now we come to the part of the narrative sad indeed to relate. In the house were nine persons. They were all drawn up into the air, and fell, at different distances, and with great violence to the ground. The wife of one of the eye witnesses, Mrs. Page, and two of her children, were instantly killed. All the other persons in the house were greatly injured. The injuries with two exceptions, consist of singular and heavy bruises all over the body. One man had his arm broken, and another his wrist badly sprained. Mr. Page only saved himself from being drawn up into the air, by holding on to a large rock. The house stood upon four large granite boulders. Those were all moved several feet from their places.

The whirlwind went on and passed diagonally across a post and rail fence. Of this it tore up twenty rods so effectually, that there is not the slightest vestige of a fence remaining. From this it passed to the barn, tore away one side of it and threw it against a horse, causing his death. The side of the barn then fell down on three calves and injured them so badly that they died during the night.

The whirlwind seemed to pass off in a southward direction.

Many of the fragments of the buildings, etc., fell to the ground from a great height. In coming down they fell nearly perpendicularly, and entered the ground like stakes. Hundreds of these were counted by the informant.

The force of the storm was tremendous. Not only were the boards torn off from the beams to which they were nailed, but the beams themselves were wrenched asunder.

The whirlwind was accompanied by a storm of hail, many of the hailstones being the size of walnuts. Some of them were nine inches in circumference.

We have neither space nor inclination for comment on this sad affair today. Nothing like it has ever occurred before, and we hope never will again. It realizes the utmost horrors of a South American tornado. Had it spent its force in the city, hundred of deaths might have marked its progress.

Fig. A3. Re-creation of a newspaper article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, published out of Chicago, covering the tornado of 22 May 1855 and associated weather. Adapted from article published on 23 May (Chicago Daily Tribune 1855a).

The Chicago Daily Tribune

FRIDAY, MAY 25, 1855.

The Storm of Tuesday.

The following is an extract from a private letter, received from Dr. Kennicott, of Northfield, Cook Co.:

“Did you catch any *ice bullets* yesterday? --- We did, a few good fat ones, measuring from 7 to 7 ¾ inches around, the large way, lens form in shape (plane convex) --- very solid in substance --- sometimes regular, but generally jagged, or convoluted, on the convex side. One fell with a crash just at my feet and broke into fragments. It was judged that this hail stone was over three inches in diameter! Pretty good hail, that --- The mercury was at 90 deg. in the shade just before the hail came, and only fell to 80 deg. during the storm. I have not observed much damage, though wherever the chunks of ice struck a tree or plant it made its mark, and such a scampering of men and teams from the fields, I have seldom seen.

J.A.K.”

The Chicago Daily Tribune

SATURDAY, MAY 26, 1855.

Further Particulars of the Whirlwind of Tuesday

We have learned the following additional particulars of the terrible tornado of Tuesday last, and place them on record as matters of fact for the future historian or meteorologist.

When the whirlwind or funnel shaped current of wind was approaching the house of Mr. Page, the house was drawn towards and moved to meet the column of air thirty or forty feet. Having come into contact, the house was drawn up into the vortex and demolished, as we have described.

The scantlings, beams and boards, which we described as falling to the ground and sticking up perpendicularly, are found in the shape of circles, showing the rotary motion of the current of wind.

The persons wounded by the tornado were treated with every possible attention by Drs. Brainard and Freer, of this city, who went out for that purpose.

Fig. A4. Re-creation of newspaper articles in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, published out of Chicago, covering the tornado of 22 May 1855 and associated weather. Adapted from articles published on 25 May (Chicago Daily Tribune 1855c) and 26 May (Chicago Daily Tribune 1855d).

KENOSHA TRIBUNE AND TELEGRAPH.

KENOSHA, WIS., THURSDAY, MAY 24, 1855.

This section of country was visited on Wednesday morning last by a very plentiful shower of rain, mixed up, we judged from the sound, with some hail. It was much needed (the rain, not the hail) and while we write, the earth has put on a new freshness, and all vegetation seems starting into more vigorous and active life. We hope that chilliness which has infected the air more or less thus far, has gone with the hail which probably had something to do with causing it.

KENOSHA TRIBUNE AND TELEGRAPH.

KENOSHA, WIS., THURSDAY, MAY 31, 1855.

HURRICANE AT JUNEAU --- A destructive tornado passed over Juneau, Dodge co. on the 22d inst., smashing in nearly every pane of glass on the north and west side of houses and unroofing the new fire-proof county buildings erected last season. --- *Madison State Journal*.

A HOT DAY --- Last Tuesday was a remarkable day for the 22d of May. The thermometer stood at 96 for eight successive hours. --- *Ibid*.

HOT. --- The mercury went as high as 98 degrees in the shade in this place on Tuesday afternoon, the 22d. -- *Ibid*.

MINERAL POINT TRIBUNE

MINERAL POINT, WIS., WEDNESDAY, MAY 23, 1855

Hail Storm at Waupun --- A furious hail storm passed over the village of Waupun on the evening of the 22d. Some of the hail stones were of unusual size. One was picked up which weighed four ounces. A good deal of damages was done to windows. --*Mad. Jour.*

Fig. A5. Re-creation of newspaper articles in the *Kenosha Tribune and Telegraph*, published out of Kenosha and the *Mineral Point Tribune*, published out of Mineral Point, Wisconsin, covering the weather of 22 May 1855. Adapted from articles published on 23 May (Mineral Point Tribune 1855), 24 May (Kenosha Tribune and Telegraph 1855a), and 31 May (Kenosha Tribune and Telegraph 1855b,c,d).

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