

Before the Weather Channel

What's the weather going to be tomorrow? A question we take for granted today, and often have predicted for us, either accurately or on occasion not so accurately, by various means from the weather channel to computerized reports from around the globe.

Recording the weather in the early days of Martin County was one Captain Frederick Wherland, an English sea captain who was born in Ireland and eventually settled in a rural home on Pierce Lake, Rolling Green Township, in 1878. He selected this area, near a Martin County lake, because of his love of water. The Wherland home was like a typical English Colony rural mansion of that time period.

As the master of his ship, Captain Wherland had varied experiences not only as the ship's commander, but also as its surgeon and chaplain. In fact, several of his large family was born at sea. His experiences on the high seas carried him to such places as the Cape of Good Hope, and the ports of India, Australia, the Orient, and the American Pacific Coast.

The retired sea captain became Martin County's first volunteer weather observer. He brought with him an expensive barometer of the time, which in fact he had used previously in sailing the seas, a rain gauge, and a thermometer. Captain Wherland took daily readings of temperature, morning, noon, and night; also recording barometric pressure and measuring precipitation. He then sent all original records to the weather bureau in Washington, D.C. Copies were also kept for local records. The colorful, retired sea captain diligently kept these weather records until his death in 1910.

Following Captain Wherland's death, James Lamperd, also of English ancestry, took over his work as a volunteer weather observer. Lamperd and his wife set up a weather station on their farm in Rolling Green Township, very near the Wherland Estate. The Lamperd's telephone number, 1871, was well known to county residents and could be called anytime day or night to get the official temperature as well as precipitation amounts. The Lamperds continued their weather observances, without pay and with little public recognition, until the death of Mr. Lamperd. Eventually, age and

failing health forced Mrs. Lamperd to give up her work to the Water & Light Department of Fairmont.

Two of Captain Wherland's daughters married and lived in Fairmont until their death. They were Sally, who at the age of 16 eloped with Lenny Burton, and Susan, who married Otto Gimm. Another of his children, Frank, was at one time a postmaster in Welcome.

On display in the Pioneer Museum is an ancient grandfather clock that was built about 1780 by Captain Wherland's grandfather for his estate in Cork, Ireland. The 12 foot tall clock was originally willed to Captain Wherland by a relative and shipped to America in 1900. It stood at Belvidere, the Wherland's home on Pierce Lake, until it was sold in 1912. The clock was then passed on to a number of heirs until it reached its final stop being placed on display at the Pioneer Museum in 1939. A fire in the 1890's destroyed much of the Wherland's furnishings and likely damaged the clock, which was later restored by J. A. Nightingale in 1957.

Additional items displayed from the Wherland collection at the Pioneer Museum include the Tudor Ship's Log of Liverpool, England. Also on display is Captain Wherland's hat, his portable writing desk, his barometer used for weather recordings, a picture of the ship Galatea in dry dock in London, and pictures of himself, his wife, and his two daughters.

Weather prediction, weather observation, recording of weather data, and other meteorological techniques have advanced greatly from Captain Wherland's time. However, the retired English sea captain will be remembered as a pioneer in the field and a significant part of Martin County history.