

By Mae

My grandparents, **Arthur Monroe Davenport (1886-1946)** and **Mary May Upchurch (1892-1975)** were married in 1909. They were dirt-farmers/sharecroppers and lived in an array of houses in the Box, Corbett, Trousdale, and Noble areas of Cleveland County. This story was compiled after visiting with four aunts, two of whom were actually there that fateful day.

Tornado Blows Away House and Everything They Owned

In 1925, Arthur and May, along with their first five children were living in a two-room farmhouse northeast of Noble. One spring afternoon Arthur and two of his sons, Charlie and Carl, were working in the fields when they realized there was a *mean-looking storm* coming their way.

Arthur sent Carl to tell his mom to gather the kids and get to the cellar at the Golden's farm just a little bit down the road from their place.

Meanwhile, May already was preparing, as she too had noticed the dark menacing clouds gathering. As the wind got stronger and stronger, she rounded up her favorite setting hen with all the baby chicks and secured them in the coop — “Her skirrtail flapping like mad,” remembered one aunt.

Gathering her children, she took off for the cellar, Carl with five-year-old Ann perched on his shoulders so they could go faster. Meanwhile Arthur and Charlie were having a tough time getting the mules back to the barn. When they realized they couldn't make it, they unhitched the mules, set them free, then ran for the cellar. They'd barely made it inside when the ferocious twister hit.

Arthur and Mr. Golden grabbed and held the cellar door as violent winds whipped it up and down straining to wrench it off the hinges. So great was its pull and

thrust that their hands were battered against the doorfacing. When it was all over their hands were bruised and bleeding.

The tornado raged and whipped. From his position, peeking through slits in the door, Arthur reported the neighbor's house “just blew away.” Their rock fireplace was tossed on top of the door they were holding. When the winds died down and they could get past the toppled fireplace, they looked across the road.

Their house was gone. The only thing left was the old iron bedframe standing where the house had been. Upon closer surveillance, they noticed that an old glass cakeplate stand that May cherished was sitting, unharmed, under that bedframe.

The barn was gone too, but standing where it had once been was the little calf they'd left penned in the barn. Miraculously the little critter had been spared when the tornado hit, and stood there shaking and scared half to death.

Everything else was blown away. Everything. Their beds, kitchen utensils, and even their mom's old trunk were gone. All their memorabilia, furnishings, and photos. Gone. Absolutely nothing left.

They scavenged through the fields and found a few items the storm had tossed aside.



Wedding Photo 1909,
Arthur and May Davenport

With their place gone, they went to stay with Uncle Will and Aunt Nancy Upchurch until they could get moved back to the little two-room shack down on Buckhead Creek where they had previously lived.

The folks in Noble heard about their loss and began gathering donations. One afternoon, here they came down the road with a whole wagonload of household items to help Arthur and May get back on their feet.

Several months later, May's brother, Bowman Upchurch, who lived just a mile or so north of them, came running up to their house all excited. He had been working in his fields and found May's old trunk. It was empty but unharmed. Grandmother was so happy to have that trunk back. And so with the old trunk, May's treasured cakestand, the iron bedstead, and one calf, they moved to the one-room shack and went on with their lives sharecropping and raising babies.