

William A. O'Donnel, (10 Jun 1889 - 10 July 1907), July 1907 Newspaper Clipping, The Perry Historians

Killed By Lightning

New Germantown, July 12. – On Wednesday afternoon of this week when **James Johnston** and son **Frank** were cutting wheat with a binder in a field near the woods, while **Johnson Weibley**, **Jacob O'Donel** and son, **William O'Donel**, a young man of 18 years and one month old, were cradling rye in another part of the same field, a heavy thunder gust came up. **Mr. Johnston** called to the men who were cutting the rye to start home and hurriedly unhitched the horses out of the binder not even taking the canvas off the binder, for the lightning was flashing over the chains and binder, the thunder crashing all around them, and they expected every moment to be killed.

They then started for the barn a half mile away before the other men had started, and did not learn of the awful tragedy in the field until they had put the horses away and gone to the house when **Mr. Weibley** came down from the field and told them that the young man was dead and perhaps his father also.

Mr. Weibley, who did the cradling while **Mr. O'Donel** and his son did the binding, had just laid his cradle down and started for the barn when the flash came. When he regained consciousness he arose to his feet, not knowing at the time what had happened and why he was lying in the rye, for the last he remembered he was walking away from it. But upon looking around and seeing the elder **O'Donel** not far away lying on his back in the rye and the son just beyond his father also lying on his back just where he had a band which he still held in one hand, ready to tie a sheaf which lay at his feet, and at the same time feeling a peculiar beating in the top of his head, he realized that they had been struck by lightning.

Mr. Weibley went to **Mr. O'Donel** and shook him and called him, but at first there was no movement whatever, and not until he had shaken four times and turned him over were there the least signs of life, when he moaned and commenced to breathe. No doubt he would have died in a short time had it not been for the shaking which **Mr. Weibley** gave him and turning him over, for his eyes were set and turned back in his head. He then went to the young man and did the same with him, but there was no response whatever. A straw hat which he wore was cut across the crown as with a knife, his shoes were torn, the soles bursting from the uppers, and the laces in them cut to pieces, and a mark on his head just back of the forehead, were convincing proofs that life had fled. Just as the heels of both shoes were holes in the ground, showing that the deadly fluid had run down both legs and into the ground. **Mr. Weibley** then carried the father to a shock to protect him from the raging storm, and then went for assistance. Dr. Lakin being absent, a message was sent to Blain and Drs. Woods and Kistler came up and worked with the now semi-conscious man, and he is now out of danger, although yet partly paralyzed, and it may be months before he will be able to do any work, which will be a serious matter with him as he has nothing but his labor to depend on for support for him and his wife, the boy that was killed being his only child.

The funeral will be held today at **Mr. Johnston's** and interment at the Eby graveyard, near Fairview, J. C. Martin, undertaker.

The storm of Wednesday afternoon, during which young **O'Donel** was struck by lightning, was the severest known here for years. The clouds floated close to the earth and were heavily charged with electricity, the heavens being continually lit up with flashes of lightning and the roar of the thunder was loud and continuous, as though all the artillery of the heavens were bombarding the earth. During the storm some hail fell, and even after the sun shone out, hail continued to fall and the thunders crashed in the north and south where two heavy showers were passing along the mountains.

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