

***Thunder in the Heartland:  
A Chronicle of Outstanding Weather Events in Ohio***

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*Thunder in the Heartland* chronicles more than 200 severe and outstanding weather events in Ohio from European settlement in the 1790's to the most recent events of the 1990's. We present the facts and figures, maps and data, on the storms, but our focus is on the impacts of severe weather on our society. Pioneers on the Western Reserve were strongly impacted by extreme weather through their exposure in housing, work, and transportation. Improved housing and a shift to an industrial work force by the early twentieth century reduced the impacts of storms on individuals, but severe weather continued to have great impacts on transportation.

Early nineteenth century Ohioans had a relatively small sphere of travel. Deep snow, cold, wind, or heavy rain were generally managed by horse-drawn transportation and delays of a day or so were accepted. Canals were affected little by severe weather during the ice-free season, except for the rare flood. The advent of rail transportation and electrified power transport brought new hazards in snow and cold, especially in maintaining traction, operating switches, and preventing wire failure. The twentieth century brought a rapid increase in amount of daily travel, a sense of urgency in travel, dependence on electricity, and the automobile with its well-known vulnerabilities in extreme weather.