

from Anna (Thiessen) Bergmann

There was no difference in the children in the family - no mention of half brothers. All the children grew up as one family. They were all papa's children.

Anna, born in 1893 in Minnesota, remembers that John had a hard time getting around and probably had arthritis. The decision was made to move south to get away from the cold Minnesota winters. The family arrived in Richmond, Texas in April of 1900 - Anna was six years old and had her seventh birthday in June. She remembers their house which was built on log pilings to get away from dampness and was high enough above the ground that she could play beneath it.

The Galveston Hurricane hit in September of 1900. When the hurricane came it rained two days and two nights; then the winds began to blow. Their large three story house started rocking from side to side, rolling the furniture around with; the pilings were driven up through the floor. John, Helena and the children got out of the house and went across the road to a calf barn where they were on higher ground and should be safer. Here they stayed until the storm ended.

After the storm had rendered its vengeance, they looked out and saw water knee deep and deeper over all the countryside. They made their way to the neighbors who had a corn crib with about 300 bushels of corn ears in the crib. The family climbed onto the corn to stay out of the water.

There were many lives lost in that storm including eight from the Richmond area. Four from the Mennonite families who were killed during the storm were buried in a common grave after the waters receded - Mrs. Barney Kroeker, Mrs. Jacob Klassen, Aganetha Wiens the daughter of D. P. Wiens, and Maria Rempel, an eight year old girl who was crushed between two walls.

The John P. Thiessen family were thankful that God had spared their lives. Their house twisted and crushed in the storm was rebuilt though not as large as the first house they had built when they first moved to Texas.

John P. Thiessen was paying the Negroes who were pulling cotton. The cotton pullers were paid in cash and John had his pouch in his hand when one of them came by and hit his arm, scattering the coins in every direction. John P. told them they had been paid and to get their pay from each other. That was the last time that they tried that stunt.

from Henry Thiessen as told to Evelyn Wiens Thiessen.

David Thiessen, a brother to John P. Thiessen, decided to go back to Prussia and took his horse for the long ride. He stopped at a place (probably a farm) to eat and rest. The man at the place admired David's horse and wanted to have it. David got suspicious and left as soon as possible. It didn't take long until he noticed the man following him. David rode hard and fast and got away. David had been a very good rider and this time it may have saved his life.