

**Legends of Freeborn County  
Reminiscences of Minnesota Winters**

Tenth in a monthly series of Freeborn County Legends - January, 2001

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"I heard someone remark that they had seen it so cold...that if you threw out the dishwater it would freeze before it reached the ground. Some later residents took it as a joke, but I haven't a doubt about it..." said Kerry E. Sperry, Martin County resident.

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This quotation was taken from "Some Blizzard Reminiscences" in the Fairmont Sentinel, Feb. 10, 1905. It is a reminder of our Minnesota Winters, how much fun they are and how we deal with them.

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Another quotation, this one from Dr. Nathan S. Jarvis, a U.S. Army Surgeon stationed at Fort Snelling from 1833 to 1836, states, "We have at last winter in earnest, the thermometer is only 27 degrees below zero at 7 o'clock this morning and a prospect of its being colder tomorrow!... The highest the thermometer has been the whole day was 12 below zero. Out at the Fort the thermometer sunk as low as 32 degrees below zero!! at 7 p.m. Everything cracks in the cold."

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Minnesotan's have the kind of humor that says, "It must be spring, Ma. The snow's down below the top of this window!" and "Get out those gardening tools, Pa. Summer's gonna be here in a flash!" (Minneapolis Star and Tribune, February 7, 1983)

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We complain about the cold and brag about our ability to survive. We set the thermostat higher and then go cross country skiing. We grumble about shoveling the driveway and then build a snowman in the yard. We moan about putting the boat away for the winter and then dig out the auger so we can cut a hole in the ice for fishing. (Did you know that in 1984, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources issued about 94,000 ice house licenses?)

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Why do we live here? Maybe because Minnesotan's have a strange sense of humor. Maybe because we really do like "the change of the seasons." Maybe because we enjoy proving to the rest of the nation "how really tough we are." We may grumble our way through the winter months, but we do stay.

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