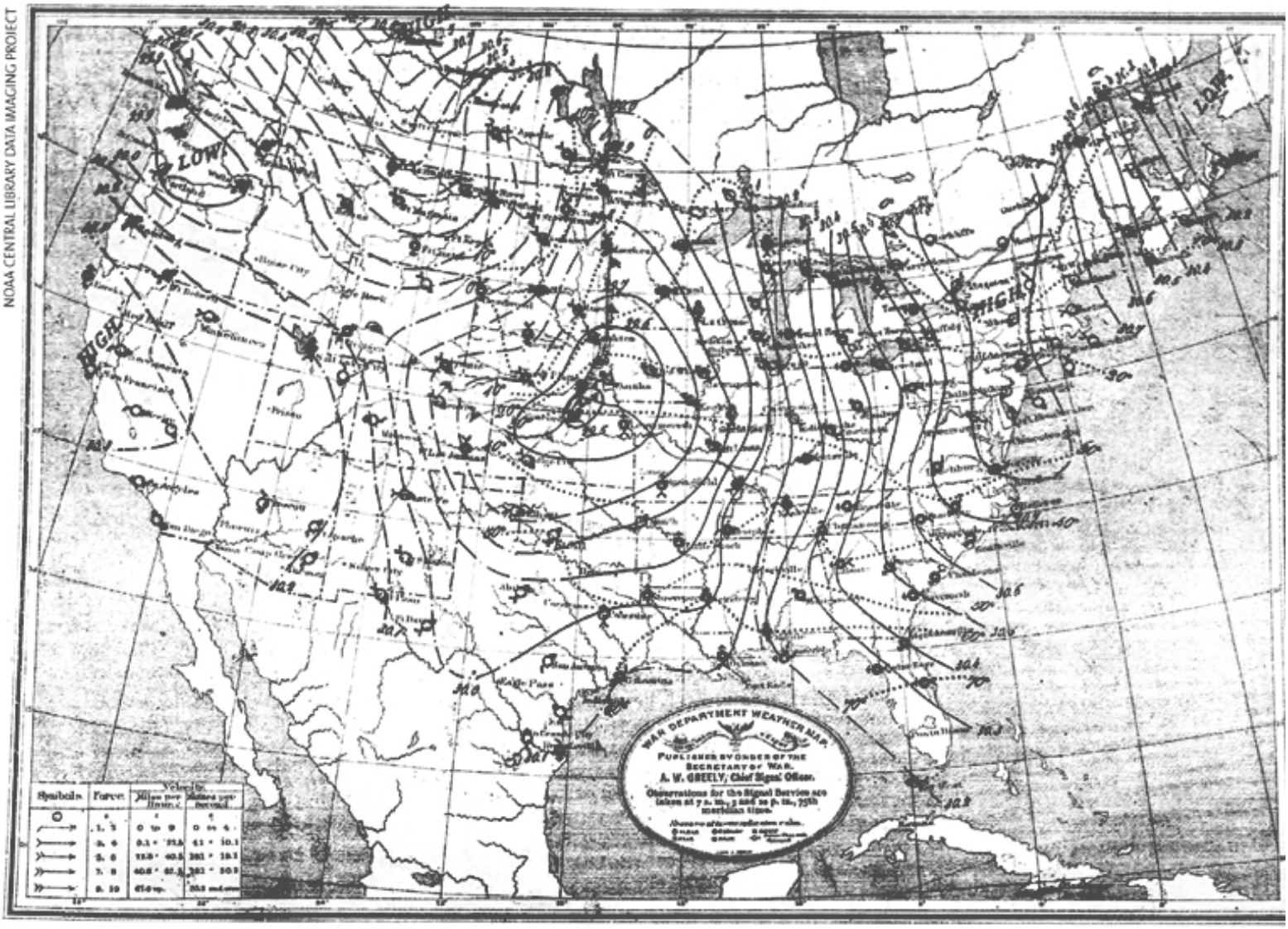
by Sean Potter

January 12, 1888: The Children's Blizzard

NOAA CENTRAL LIBRARY DATA IMAGING PROJECT



U.S. Signal Service Daily Weather Map for 3:00 p.m. (Washington Time), January 12, 1888. A large area of low pressure stretches across the Great Plains, from the Canadian border to Texas. Near the center of this low, blizzard conditions raged across the Dakota Territory and the neighboring states of Nebraska, Kansa Iowa, and Minnesota, catching many off guard and claiming some 235 lives.

On January 12, 1888, one of the worst blizzards to strike the Great Plains hit the sparsely populated states of Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Iowa, as well as the Dakota Territory. The mark it left on the people of the prairie and in history was carved as much from of the sheer surprise by which it took the pioneer settlers as from the severity of the storm itself.

"Even in a region known for abrupt and radical meteorological change, the blizzard of 1888 was unprecedented in its violence and suddenness," wrote author David Laskin in his award-winning book *The Children's Blizzard*. "There was no atmospheric herald. No eerie green tinge to the sky or fleecy cirrus forerunner. One moment it was mild, the sun was shining, a damp wind