

Primary Source: The 1900 Galveston Hurricane

from "The Evening Star" (Washington, D.C.) September 10, 1900

The 1900 Great Galveston Hurricane made landfall on September 8, 1900. At that time, Galveston was the third largest city in Texas with an estimated population of 40,000 people. It was an important city on the Gulf of Mexico. By the time the storm passed, the hurricane and the resulting storm surge would kill between 6,000 to 12,000 people. This storm is still the deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history.

The first news reports could only estimate the damage, as Galveston is on an island and at that time, only about 8 feet above sea level. After the storm surge of 15 feet hit, the island was completely submerged by the ocean water. Reporters and officials had difficulty reaching the island, so information was slow to reach the rest of the country.

Below is part of a newspaper article from The Evening Star, a Washington D.C. newspaper, published on September 10, 1900, barely two days after the storm hit. For perspective, \$1 in 1900 is roughly equivalent to \$26 today, and Houston is about 50 miles away from Galveston.

DEATH AND RUIN

Texas Visited by Terrible Storm

1,500 TO 5,000 LIVES LOST

Property Loss Will Reach into the Millions.

GALVESTON THE WORST SUFFERER

Scarcely Whole Building Left Standing in the City.

SWEPT BY GULF WATERS

HOUSTON, Tex. September 10.— A scene of desolation and death, not only at Galveston, but at many inland points in Texas, is the condition presented today as a result of Saturday's storm.

Estimates of the number of dead are placed between 1,500 and 2,000. The property loss will aggregate many millions of dollars, although no accurate figures can be given at present. The streets of Galveston are mostly under water; wires are in a hopeless tangle and dead bodies are thickly strewn among floating debris. No complete list of the dead is obtainable until the water

recedes.

Harrowing tales of the loss of whole families, and many miraculous escapes are told by the few survivors who have thus far reached the city. The relief trains which arrived here early this morning have been the only means of communication with the storm swept Galveston and definite information as to the present situation is scarce.

The cotton and rice crop throughout the district devastated by the storm are badly damaged in many places, and in others totally destroyed.

Reports from Richmond, Texas, Letitia, and Eagle Lake bring additional lists of dead and property losses and many places cut off from all communication are yet to heard from.

LOSS OF LIFE MAY BE

10,000.

Latest reports from Galveston Are Simply Appalling.
DALLAS, Tex., September 10.— Houston and Texas Central railroad officials at noon received bulletins from their general officer in Houston that the loss of life will reach 3,000 in Galveston. The Missouri, Kansas and Texas relief forces near Galveston and along the coast telegraphed at noon that the loss of life will not be less than 6,000, and may reach 10,000.

PLACES LOSS OF LIFE AT

1,500.

Correspondent Estimates the Pecuniary Loss at \$10,000,000.
NEW ORLEANS, September 10.— The following message was received from Mr. Hayes, a newspaper correspondent, well known throughout the south:
“HOUSTON, Texas, September 10,— I have just arrived from Galveston by boat. Storm destroyed \$10,000,000 of property and 1,500 lives lost. National aid asked for.”

HOUSTON SENDS RELIEF TRAIN.

Supplies and Surgeons Start for Virginia Point.
HOUSTON, Texas, September 10.— At an informal meeting held at the police headquarters late last night and presided over by Mayor Brashear, it was decided to dispatch a train over the International and Great Northern to Virginia Point at the earliest hour with such supplies and volunteers as could be provided and secured. It was to be composed as follows: One company of firemen, one company of policemen and volunteers, on yawl from the city park. A lot of smaller craft belonging to the citizens of Houston will also be sent.

Groceries will be sent from a number of wholesale and retail houses of the city. The matter of surgeons and medicines was left to the selection of Dr. J.B. Massie, city health officer, who also accompanies the party as chief surgeon.

Undertaking supplies are also to be furnished.

In connection with the above the mayor has sent out the following circular:

“The damage from the storm along the coast is reported as almost beyond description. Hundreds of lives are said to have been lost and many are destitute. A relief train is now being made up. Impelled by these conditions to ask the merchants of the city to contribute supplies for temporary relief until organization can be effected. I will furnish transportations from stores to depots.

(signed) “S. H. BRASHEAR, Mayor.”

Denver Starts Relief Fund.

DENVER, Col., September 10.— The following telegram has been sent to the Dallas, Tex., News by the Denver Republican:

”The Denver Republican has started a relief fund for Galveston with subscription of \$100 and will push movement with all possible vigor. Denver will respond vigorously. W.M. STAPLETON, Editor.”

NOT A BUILDING ESCAPED.

Every House in Galveston More or Less Damaged.

DALLAS, Tex., September 10.— A special to the news from Houston says:

Additional particulars of the storm at Galveston show that about 1,500 persons were drowned and \$10,000,000 worth of property destroyed. There is not a building in the city that was not damaged to some extent. All the bath houses on the beach were destroyed and their attendants drowned. The Sealy Hospital was destroyed and most of the patients were drowned. The grain elevators were destroyed, one of them containing 1,000,000 bushels of wheat. The Ball High School and the Rosenberg school buildings were destroyed and many persons who had taken refuge in them were killed. Eight big steamships in port were wrecked. All three railroad bridges and the county bridge across to the mainland at Virginia Point were swept away, and the bridge tenders and their families drowned.

The entire island was submerged and water was eight feet deep on Tremont avenue, probably the highest point in the city.

Questions

1. Briefly describe the status of Galveston at the time of this article.
2. What did the city of Houston arrange to send to Galveston?
3. How did the newspaper in Denver, Colorado respond to the disaster?
4. There are many conflicting reports in this article, such as the number of casualties. Why?