

"Great Storm in Carroll"

Carroll County Times Article for 6 October 1996

By Jay A. Graybeal

One the most severe storms ever experienced in our county struck on September 29, 1896. The storm was so large and violent that properties were damaged throughout the county. The October 3rd issue of the Democratic Advocate newspaper carried reports of the storm damage from nearly every community:

"GREAT STORM IN CARROLL
SCHOOL HOUSES, CHURCHES, DWELLINGS, BARNS
AND OUTBUILDINGS WRECKED AND DAMAGED
ALL PROPERTY MORE OR LESS INJURED.
HORSES AND CATTLE KILLED
LOSS WILL REACH A LARGE SUM

Carroll county has experienced three very severe storms in the last few years, the first one occurring in February, 1893 when houses were unroofed in this city and the steeple of the Reformed Church was blown down.

The first two storms were cyclonic in their nature, and the track of destruction was narrow. The storm of Tuesday night, however, was general and the violence of the wind was terrific. Havoc was wrought everywhere, and nearly every piece of property in the county was more or less damaged. In this city and in other towns, where buildings were protected by each other, no one's loss was very considerable, but almost every house was injured to some extent.

Barns and houses were unroofed all over the county. Outhouses were wrecked and the material scattered. Fences were carried away and cornshocks were scattered, and occasionally carried to neighboring property. Carriages and machinery were damaged by falling sheds. Horses and cows were killed by falling barns and stables. Great damage was done to timber, and magnificent shade trees were uprooted or shorn of their branches, while many orchards were nearly wiped out of existence.

The damage done will foot up many thousands of dollars, perhaps run into the hundred of thousands, and it will require a score of years to replace the beautiful shade trees that decorated the homes of many, sheltering the family from the warm rays of the sun in the summer and protecting the homes against the high winds of the winter.

A considerable number of persons had storm insurance policies, and all these were wise. Many more are now obtaining storm policies, the insurance agents all being busy issuing them.

Some Incidents

Some amusing incidents occurred in Westminster Wednesday morning. The roofs were torn from one house and carried to the property of another. The roof from one dwelling was laid beside the second house away. The owner of this house imagined the roof came from his house and sent tinnern down to have it put back, when the mistake was discovered.

At Gassaway Gosnell's, near Winfield, a cow shed was lifted up and carried away, and the cow was left standing unharmed.

At Washington Baumgartner's, near Taneytown, the gable of the dwelling was blown in, and the outbuildings were so piled about that house that it was difficult for the family to get out.

A brick house on the farm of Attorney General Clabaugh had a gable blown in.

The barn, wagon-shed and corn crib of J. W. Weant, at Double Pipe Creek, were wrecked. Part of the single roof of the residence of I. F. Miller was carried away.

Some of the buildings at Walden's training farm of Middleburg were damaged and wrecked.

The flour mill, near York Road, owned by Dr. Milton Hammond, of Baltimore, was unroofed. The damage will amount to thousands of dollars. At the house of Mr. David Prugh several large trees were blown upon the house but the occupants escaped injury. His straw stack was swept away, and fences and corn in the shocks were scattered about. The barn of Columbus Nugeon was also swept away. The roof of the M. E. Church, South, was partially torn off. The lumber shed of Wade H. D. Warfield at Sykesville was demolished and his lumber carried away. The front of John McDonald store was blown in; the residence of Dr. J. W. Steele was badly damaged, and Wm. H. Bennett's roof was carried away. The roads were blocked and fences are lying in every direction. At the residence of Mrs. Little several trees were torn up, and other damage done. At Warfield College many fine oaks were prostrated and one was hurled against the east end of the college. Two trees were uprooted from the grounds of the Protestant Episcopal rectory and hurled against the building. Considerable property of Springfield Insane Asylum was damaged.

Near Sykesville barn of Charles E. Harman was blown down and seven horses caught in the ruins, and the horses of E. A. Merceron were caught in the ruins of his barn. All the horses were injured to some extent.

In Uniontown

The Bethel Church of God, steeple and bell, are in Mr. G. W. Seilhamers yard. Part of the roof of the Methodist Protestant church is scattered around the front of the building. The south gable wall fell in on the ceiling crashing through, on to the pulpit and altar furniture, crushing it. The organ was also severely damaged, &c. Quite a number of shade trees uprooted, fences blown down. Some small buildings also suffering damage.

In Freedom District

A terrific tornado passed over Freedom district on Tuesday night, which did thousands of dollars worth of damage to property, but no loss of life is reported.

The storm continued so terrific that persons were afraid to retire and sat up all night and breathed with joy when daylight came. At the residence of Mrs. J. B. George 10 or 15 large trees were uprooted and the lawn presented a sight no peer can describe. At Never Die Park thousands of large trees were blown down, and it is almost impossible to walk through what was once a beautiful grove. The damage will amount to thousands of dollars. At the house of Mr. David Prugh several large trees were blown upon the house but the occupants escaped injury. His straw stack was swept away, and fences and corn in the shocks were scattered about. The barn of Columbus Nugeon was also swept away. The roof of the M. E. Church, South, was partially torn off. The lumber shed of Wade H. D. Warfield at Sykesville was demolished and his lumber carried away. The front of John McDonald store was blown in; the residence

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At Taneytown

The new Lutheran tower was damaged causing a heavy loss. Catholic tower was twisted out of its place. Americus Shoemaker's stable was unroofed. H. M. Clabaugh's buildings were very much damaged. The house occupied by Jack Ohler, was entirely unroofed, several small buildings surrounding Clabaugh's mansion were entirely destroyed. Dr. Birnie's slate roof was badly broken by heavy debris falling on it. T. H. Eckenrode's large chimney on his house was thrown down, breaking rafters and slate roof. Samuel Reindollar's new wagon shed was displaced from foundation, and other outbuildings destroyed. John McKellip had the brick house badly damaged, occupied by Samuel Renner. Samuel Galt, of Copperville, had considerable damage to his two farms, and unroofing his barns and much timber has been blown down. The country between Taneytown and Emmitsburg was more damaged than around here, many houses and barns were either unroofed or demolished. Joshua Shorb, near Taneytown, had about 300 large trees broken down by the storm. Henry Galt had a barn entirely unroofed and wagon shed entirely demolished."

The newspaper also reported on storm damage in Westminster and vicinity, Mt. Airy, Patapsco, Pleasant Valley, Frizzellburg, Clear Ridge, Hampstead, Union Mills, Gamber, Bloom, Haight and Oakland, Shipley, Silver Run, Linwood, Union Bridge and Neighborhood, Finksburg, Harney, Sam's Creek, Manchester and Fountain Valley.

Photo caption: The tower (retouched in this copy of a 1905 image) of Trinity Lutheran Church in Taneytown was heavily damaged in a severe storm that struck Carroll County on September 29, 1896. Historical Society of Carroll County Copy Photograph Collection, gift of J. Robert Everhart, 1984.