

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Great Hurricane of 1893

Hurricanes were not named until 1953. During the nineteenth century, tropical cyclones were classified as major, great or extreme, rather than as category 1, 2, etc., like they are today.

In 1893, North Carolina was impacted by five nameless hurricanes: one in June; two in August; and two in October. Four caused damage to some degree. The two most severe storms occurred on August 27-29 and October 13. Although both were assessed as great, the October 13 hurricane did more widespread damage across the State. Bucklesberry did not escape the terror of this storm.

"Great destruction was reported to forests, crops and property, and to shipping....A total of 22 lives were lost in North Carolina from this storm," wrote James E. Hudgins of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Weather Service.

First-hand newspaper reports characterized the hurricane as a "monster storm," a "strange and unaccountable freak of nature," and one of the "fiercest and wildest storms ever known." Despite the superstitious date, this Friday the 13th hurricane was one of the most powerful Atlantic storms ever recorded at the time, earning an Accumulated Cyclone Energy (ACE) rating of 63.5. Comparatively, the highest ACE rating of any storm to date is 82 for Japan's typhoon Ioke in 2006.

Striking the coastline just above Charleston near Myrtle Beach on Thursday, the great hurricane of 1893 arrived in the State on Friday, October 13, packing 94 mph winds and spiking 115 mph at one moment in Southport, NC.

The storm barreled northward, according to Hudgins. By "Friday noon [it] was central in North Carolina between Raleigh and the coast," (*News and Observer*, October 14, 1893), and "the center of the storm was not over 15 miles west of here [Raleigh]" (*The Charlotte Democrat*, October 20, 1893).

No doubt, this hurricane had deleterious effects on Bucklesberry, although no specific published reports are available. We have a sense of just how terrible it was, though, by news items from towns near Bucklesberry, including Goldsboro and Smithfield:

1893, October 14: "Business generally was almost entirely suspended in this city [Goldsboro] yesterday....The storm that visited this city Thursday night and prevailed through the entire day

yesterday was the most severe in constancy and general damage that has ever been known here. Trees and fences went down before it all over town by the scores; the tip roof of the Arlington [Hotel] wing and a portion of that of the Armory was blown off; one of the chimneys of Mrs. Sarah Kornegay's new home was taken off smooth with the roof, and a number of bricks were blown from the tower of St. Paul Church. Altogether, it is the worst storm that has visited this section—and the same is said of it all over the country, as far as we have been able to learn. We are thankful not to have any fatalities to report from its work in this community." (*Goldsboro Daily Argus*)

1893, October 19: "Several large trees were blown down on the streets [Smithfield]. A large elm on the sidewalk at the Gurley Hotel was broken off about eight feet from the ground and just missed the chimney to the Hotel, one was broken off near the jail on the courtyard square. A small tree was blown against the office at the Methodist parsonage but did little damage to the office. Several large oaks were blown down in the cemetery. Six window panes were broken in THE HERALD office. Several signs were blown down and the tin roofs of some of the storehouses were damaged. The damage to crops is considerable. A good deal of cotton was in the fields and was blown out considerably. The damage to cotton is not so bad as supposed, however, as most of our farmers were pretty well up with their picking. The storm seems to have been about the same all through the County [Johnston]. Several small buildings are reported blown down and large quantities of timber. The turpentine trees suffered most. Large numbers of large pines breaking off at the box." (*The Smithfield Herald*)