

THE GALVESTON GALE

Bringing Galveston All That's Current Since 1899

Special Update One Week After the Hurricane

September 15, 1900

CITY FILLED WITH FLOATING CORPSES AND WALKING DEAD

According to *Isaac's Storm*, the book by Erik Larsen, Galveston residents are traumatized by unimaginable damage and lives lost. It was only one week ago, on Saturday, September 8, 1900, that the greatest natural disaster ever to strike the United States occurred on this Texas island community. The early evening hours brought winds exceeding 140 miles per hour as an unexpected hurricane came ashore with such great force that most of the area was destroyed. It is believed that in just a few hours time at least 6,000 people were killed by drowning or being impaled by flying objects. Those that survive remain in shock.

Weather Bureau employee, Isaac Cline, is a scientist who believes he knows all there is to know about the behavior of storms. He never believed that such damage could take place anywhere. Just recently, Cline was quoted as saying that the potential for a storm as deadly as the one Galveston just experienced last week was "an absurd delusion." Even if a storm were to approach, Cline felt confident that his weather bureau would be the first to know. However, questions remain as to whether Cline's hubris and reluctance to call the approaching winds "a disaster in the making," could have contributed to the immense damage and the unimaginable death toll. If he had admitted that there are just some things about nature we can't predict, would Cline's wife and some of the 6,000 others who perished be alive today?

History will show that the people of Galveston's felt reassured by Cline's beliefs. Hundreds gathered at the beach on the days prior to the storm to marvel at the tall waves and pink sky and children played in the rising water even on the morning of the storm itself.

Interestingly, few are blaming Cline. In fact, most are praising him for issuing warnings to merchants in the area to move their products to higher ground on the morning of September 8 and posting storm warning flags at around noon. When he sent a special report to the Washington, DC, Bureau at 3:30, he warned that the worst was yet to come. As a result, thousands of people who lived near the beach or in small houses moved their families into the center of the city and, thus, were saved. Cline himself believes his actions ultimately saved 12,000 lives though this is impossible to confirm. However, the storm was at its deadliest only a few hours later, between 7:30 and 8:30 in the evening; one must wonder if Cline had admitted earlier that he wasn't sure what to make of all the foreboding developments, would lives and property have been saved? In his official report, he claims that "storm warnings were timely and received a wide distribution." Yet many questions remain.

Thankfully the survivors are now turning their thoughts to the future rather than the past. There is much gratitude for Clara Barton's arrival. As the founder of the Red Cross, she is an efficient and helpful presence as our island turns toward recovery. Residents are doing their best to ignore the shabby condition of the clothes donated by those from all over the country. The case of fancy shoes that recently arrived, for instance, included 144 shoes. Too bad they were samples and all made for the left foot. The *Galveston Gale* agrees with Barton that it is "an unfortunate trait in the human character to assail others in the performance of humanitarian acts." We hope the people of our great city can rise above their terrible loss and move toward genuine healing.

ISAAC CLINE IN MOURNING; WIFE CORA CANNOT BE FOUND

This interview was conducted six days after the storm. It has been edited for clarity and brevity.

GG: Mr. Cline, we are so sorry for your loss. Are you certain your wife is dead?

IC: Ever since the morning after the storm, what I will always refer to as "a most beautiful day," I have been searching for my dear wife Cora. During the storm, our house slid loose from its foundation and capsized in the high waters. My brother grabbed the hands of two of my children and slid out a window, but Cora, our six year old Esther and myself were trapped. I was sure I was drowning. Somehow I was able to swim away from the house, as did "my baby." The two of us moved toward floating wreckage. There we met up with my brother and my two other children. The force of the winds and the current knocked us off the "raft" many times and I was struck almost unconscious by flying timber. Unbelievably, my brother's dog swam to us. He looked at each of us, went to the edge of the raft and then entered the sea. He was looking for Cora, I'm sure. He too was gone.

GG: Is it possible that Cora is alive?

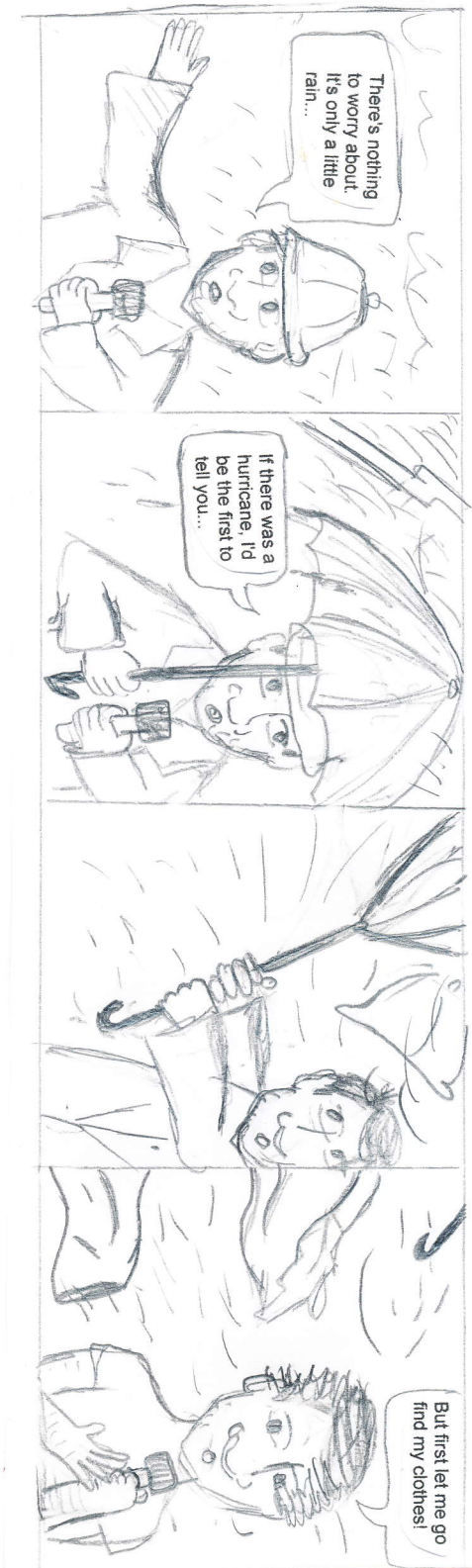
IC: I had hope at first. I turned over hundreds of the dead corpses to look in their faces. The force of the winds and the speed of the currents left many unclothed, many more were battered by debris. It was hard to tell at first whether I had come upon a man or a woman. I checked the hospitals and then being the scientist that I am, I submitted her name to the paper as one of the dead by day's end. I am not one to be given to false hope. I've had a premonition that in two weeks, the demolition crew will come across a dead woman wearing a wedding ring and diamond engagement ring and I will recognize them both. When that happens, I will have the wedding ring enlarged and wear it myself as a

even on the morning of the storm itself.

more toward getting the flooding.

them both. When that happens, I will have the wedding ring enlarged and wear it myself as a constant reminder of my dear Cora.

THE EVIDENCE WAS CLEAR, THE WARNINGS WERE NOT



Cora Cline and her three daughters

ORPHANAGE TRAGEDY

The St. Mary's Orphanage was a well known fortress of brick and stone located near the beach. Witnesses reported that during the storm waves crashed against its second story. The sisters herded all ninety-three children into the chapel where they formed human chains. Six to eight children were roped together using clothesline. Each end was then tied around the waist of one of the nuns. Three older boys remained untied. As everyone moved like miniature climbing parties to the girls' dormitory at the back of the building, the boys' dormitory fell in the gulf, followed by the chapel where they had just gathered. Moments later, the sea and wind burst into the dormitory and the building collapsed. Ninety children and all ten sisters died. The survivors who tell the tale? The three boys who were not tethered to anyone.

Later, a rescuer found one toddler's corpse on the beach. He tried lifting the child. A length of clothesline leaped from the sand, then tightened. He pulled the line and another dead child emerged. The line continued into the sand and eight children and a nun were uncovered. The nuns were desperate to keep the children close and safe. We now know that it was the clothesline that tangled them in

CLASSIFIEDS ADS

HELP WANTED

~Dead Gang workers needed for thirty-minute shifts. In between, whiskey is allowed. Involves strenuous digging through storm debris and ability to load bloated bodies on to wagons. Some burning of corpses may be required. Apply at once.

PERSONALS

~W.M.R. Clay seeks Jetta Clay: I am here, 2002 L. Street. Come at once.

~Harry M. Perry from Houston: My wife was about 5 feet 5 inches tall, wavy, medium length black hair, 30 years old, looking younger, but hair had many gray ones in it. Should any record of such persons have been made I will appreciate all possible information.

PERSONALS cont.

~Charles Kennedy to Fred Heidenreich: If alive, come to 24th and Church. Your brother Ben is here.

AVAILABLE

~Boarding House still standing. Several blocks inland. Fair price to rescue workers and newspaper reporters. Also, welcoming engineers with experience building sea walls. Galveston needs one.

FOUND

~Pet prairie dog. Rescued alive from a dresser drawer. Cute but mischievous. Needs home soon.

ITEMS WANTED

~New or used meteorological devices such as barometers and wind gauges. Will be put to good use to predict future storms.

Be a Part of the Solution...
Join the Galveston Rebuilding Team Today

Plan for a Special "Galveston Flood" Exhibit at the 1904 World's Fair
Lend Engineering Advice for the Seawall
Help Design the New Opera House



THE SUN WILL RISE
ON OUR SHINING NEW GALVESTON

Galveston Pest Control

Specializing in removal of snakes (dead or alive) and those tiny green frogs that showed up during the hurricane



Special rates for those who lost loved ones--
why should you have to suffer twice?

IN "SPORTING" NEWS: IS ANYONE A REAL WINNER?

The bad blood between Cuba and the U.S. reached tragic heights with the recent hurricane. Information has surfaced that officials of the United States Weather Bureau have felt disdain for the Cuban meteorologists for some time. One could suggest that the problem stemmed from U.S. scientists recognizing that Cuba might be better at predicting hurricanes than the bureau. This would not be a surprise to anyone who knows the history of hurricane prediction. The Cubans pioneered the art. Still, tensions remained high and the U.S. Weather Bureau under the leadership of Willis Moore seemed to want hurricanes all to itself.

In Havana, William Stockman spent a good part of the summer of 1900 insisting that the "poor, ignorant natives (of Cuba) were too easily panicked," and suggested that restraint be used when issuing hurricane warnings in order to avoid causing "unnecessary alarm among the natives."

As a result, on August 28, 1900, Stockman's recommendations were put into place; Moore instituted a ban on Cuban weather telegrams and discontinued all transmission of storm reports from Havana. Not surprisingly, the Cubans took offense. How could the U.S. disregard the opinions and observations of the Cuban hurricane experts especially at the peak of hurricane season? It was as if the Cuban and U.S. weather bureaus were in a fierce boxing match that eventually became a stand-off. The U.S. was so opposed to the way Cubans did things that they took special pains to avoid using the word "hurricane," except when absolutely necessary or when stipulating that a particular storm was *not* a hurricane. What nonsense!

So, it's not surprising that the stand-off turned deadly. Between noon and 8:00 pm on Monday, September 3, Cuba received over 10 inches of rain. The rain kept coming and by Friday, the total reached almost 25 inches. There was "energy" in the air, as the Cubans called it. It was this "energy" that ultimately destroyed the lives of so many in Galveston.

If only the U.S. would have been good sports in the meteorology ring and listened to their Cuban colleagues!

ADVICE FROM MISS NICE

Dear Miss Nice,

I am writing you with an urgent concern. My brother, a respected Senior member of the United States Weather Bureau, recently experienced a most devastating loss in the Galveston hurricane. He is now a widower due, in part, to his stubborn insistence that his home just blocks from the beachfront, was the safest place for his family. I, on the other hand, urged him to bring his wife and daughters to the weather station where we both work. It is a well-constructed brick building that I believed was far more likely to withstand the storm. My brother lost his wife when their house collapsed and she and the rest of the family, including myself, were thrown into the raging waters. My brother and three young nieces almost drowned but were able to hold on to debris which served as a make-shift raft. The experience was beyond harrowing for all of us. Now I fear my brother is pained by my presence as I remind him of his tragic decision; the weather station sustained only minimal damage just as I predicted. He has arranged for me to be demoted in my position here at the Weather Bureau which has resulted in a sizable pay cut. He barely speaks to me.

What shall I do?

Signed,

Sad, Distraught and Soon-to-Be Broke Brother



Dear Miss Nice,

I am a respected shop owner here in Galveston. While I was able to move some of my merchandise to safe ground once Isaac Cline issued a formal warning on the afternoon of September 8, the bulk of the items in my store were damaged or swept away by the fierce wind and water. The store, itself, will need extensive repairs. As I have always been one to be concerned about my community, I want to help my fellow Texans by keeping my prices affordable, especially on staples such as flour. However, I am worried that I will not be able to support my family if I don't raise my prices some. I have already lost so much! But, then again, everyone in my immediate family survived so I have much to be grateful for. The future of my position in Galveston depends on me making the right decision at this trying time.

What shall I do?

Signed,

Concerned and Confused

the submerged wreckage and led to their tragic deaths.

MISS NICE RESPONDS

Dear Sad, Distraught and Soon-to-Be Broke,

Your tragic tale is one of many that I have heard since that fateful September day one week ago. It is true that all of us in Galveston are plagued by doubts and misgivings. What could we have done differently to have averted the death of destruction that is now our legacy? Give your brother time. Not only must he feel responsible for the death of his wife, but also the tragic loss of so many lives. The hurricane of 1900 will go down in history as a warning for all time. It shows us what can happen when human arrogance meets nature's last great uncontrollable force.

Signed,

Miss Nice



Dear Concerned and Confused, I forwarded your letter to Clara Barton, leader of the Red Cross disaster relief effort. Although there has never been a hurricane as deadly as the one that all of Galveston just experienced, she feels that the concern and confusion you express are normal and represent the thoughts of so many who have suffered over this past week. Her recommendation is to not raise your prices. You will earn your reward from your loyal customers and the wider community. Donations are coming in from all parts of the country in amounts big and small: Millionaire William Randolph Hearst gave \$50,000, while the Kansas State Insane Asylum sent \$12.25. Clara assures Miss Nice that you benefit directly from the generosity of others by being generous yourself.

Signed,

Miss Nice

H. MOSLE AND COMPANY OFFERS

TIDAL WAVE FLOUR



JUST \$1 A SACK

NO MARK-UPS IN PRICE