

Carol

Hurricane Carol, New England's third devastating tropical storm in 16 years, slashed through the area on Tuesday, Aug. 31, 1954, at the tail-end of one of the wettest, coldest summers in years.

It took four lives, injured nearly 50 persons and caused more than \$2 million in property damage in the Greater Fall River area.

Coast dwellers and vacationers were prepared for a "blow," but their fears were lulled by reports that Carol would strike considerably to the west of this area.

The only trouble was that Carol not only changed her route, she concealed her full force on her way up the coast from the Carolinas, only to release her Sunday punch in southern New England.

At about midnight on Monday, Aug. 30, barometers in Fall River began to fall and continued to drop until 11:15 Tuesday morning.

It was in those last two hours that Carol passed through here. During the morning the normal winds veered from the northeast to south-southeast, bringing Carol in on the area at high tide.

She swept up Narragansett Bay to the Taunton River, then on to this city and the outer suburbs. From the city, observers watched breakers crashing over homes on Brayton Point.

Large dwellings were sucked into the river in Swansea and Touisset. Up the river, the hurricane sped, destroying wide areas of Somerset and Dighton.

As usual, Fall River itself, except at the shore level, was spared flooding by its location on a hill.

Even without a flood, however, the city was hit hard. Trees were uprooted, many of them almost immemorial elms, roofs fell in, the spire of the First Baptist Church plummeted into the church proper, damaging

the First Baptist Church plummeted into the church proper, damaging the structure. Store windows were smashed and electric power failed.

Meanwhile, East Beach at Horseneck was swept clean of its summer homes for the third time, and West Beach was also wrecked.

Westport Harbor was inundated. Business places floated off, along with bathhouses and dwellings.

No community was bypassed by the tempest. It cut a wide swath of destruction. Debris was scattered over the main and secondary roads by the high winds.

Scenes of utter desolation were evident wherever the eye would turn.

At Westport Harbor fishing boats were piled up on the pier. Several buildings were swept from their foundations.

As details of the storm's devastating effects trickled in to police, fire and Civil Defense headquarters the grim picture took on major proportions.

Downtown Fall River was said to resemble a "bombed city" with tons of debris and fallen trees blocking roads and sidewalks, shattered windows, twisted and broken church steeples, wrenched-off roofs, crushed or underwater automobiles, crippled power and telephone lines.

The Taunton River waterfront was a shambles.

Davol Street was inundated by tides that lashed to such heights that abandoned automobiles were completely submerged.

Slades Ferry Bridge was closed after being assailed by timber and marine debris. There was flooding at Firestone, Davol Street lumber companies, the State Pier, the New Haven freight depot and a million dollar property loss at Gulf Oil Co., just over the Tiverton line, was reported.

And at Montaup Electric Co., in Somerset,

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a power failure was caused by waters that penetrated the plant despite all precautions.

At Westport Point, a Herald News photographer, George W. Potts, pictorially-recorded the rescue of a trio of workers from a restaurant swept from its foundation into Westport River waters, which ultimately frothed to a point 20 yards north of the old Westport Point Bridge.

At Horseneck, 85 percent of the homes and cottages had vanished or been left a shapeless jumble of splintered wood and shattered stone. "Rock, sand and ruins" was the description. The 1954 destruction heralded the start of a state beach at Horseneck.

East Beach was barren, impassable and covered with cement and stone chunks. Whole sections of Gooseberry Island causeway had collapsed under the sea's onslaught. The surf was reported to be "beyond words."

Rescuers in bobbing skiffs defied the storm to save three lives at Westport Point.

Two men and a woman, employed at Laura's Restaurant, were saved in daring operations.

The restaurant split in two and floated into Westport River. One section drifted northward and was beached. The other section floated in a northeasterly direction and became snagged on a shoal.

Two residents of Main Road, Westport Point, removed an elderly man trapped in his quarters above the south side of the building.

The rescuers first chopped a hole in the roof above the room in which the man was barely able to keep his head above water for nearly five hours.

The rescue was finally effected by smashing a window, which had ironically stayed intact despite the severe buffeting that sheared the building from its foundation and sliced it in two.

A first mate on a fishing boat teamed up with another man to rescue a North Dartmouth woman and a Westport man from the other side of the restaurant.

The woman, a waitress, had reported for work at 9:30 and the man, who lived across the street from the building, worked in the kitchen.

Water began pouring into the restaurant about 10:30 a.m., and the woman and man were trapped in the kitchen.

Their cries for help could not be heard in the howling wind. The building was swept away within a half-hour.

The elderly man trapped upstairs was rescued at about 2 p.m., about the same time that the two other Westport men got to the woman and man trapped in the kitchen.

Elsewhere, the storm picture took on grim proportions. A four-foot wall of water slammed across Sakonnet Point, isolated by a sea-cut roadway gap. Fogland was destroyed and homes at Compton Cliffs lost.

Tiverton was also battered by Hurricane Carol, Riverside Drive was under four feet of water and Nanaquaket Bridge was washed away from its foundation. Stone Bridge was reported in a

"cement and rock-strewn shape."

Brayton Point, under the barrage of Mount Hope Bay's giant surf, succumbed to heavy property loss as did other areas on the Somerset and Dighton side of Taunton River, where wind-lashed tides and waters were impartial in destroying and damaging homes, yachts, clubs and boatyards.

Riverside Avenue and County Street were lost beneath the seething flood.

The storm raged for two hours at Island Park, the same as it did elsewhere.

Except that there it left no home untouched, "and those that were not washed away, were heavily damaged by wind or waves."

Swansea bent beneath the storm's savage intensity and lost shoreline homes from Gardner's Neck Road to Touisset. Lees River Bridge was damaged, and Coles River Bridge was subjected to a severe pounding.

Bristol County and Newport County were among 25 counties in five New England states

Worst Storms

declared disaster areas.

One survey showed that in Greater Fall River 220 homes were destroyed; 300 damaged; 200 structures, not homes, destroyed or damaged, such was the fury of Hurricane Carol.

In terms of human beings, estimates placed 576 families in the classification of being directly affected by the devastation.

Before the week was out, a total of five persons were reported dead or drowned also as a result of the storm.

As always, perhaps, the sea rescues of those plucky enough to "hang on" when they became trapped made the most dramatic headlines.

The most widely-reported was the combined Navy-Coast Guard recovery of three members of the family of Dr. William H. Boudreau from the storm-tossed waters of Mount Hope and Narragansett bays.

Cast adrift on the rooftop of their Common Fence Point summer home were Mrs. Laurence Boudreau and her son, Robert and daughter, Claire.

Their roof-raft was a chip in the power of the buffeting 20-foot waves, but they managed to cling to it until an alerted Navy destroyer, the Blair, and a Coast Guard cutter from Bristol came to their rescue.

Five sailors leaped from the Blair to assist the family and the son and daughter were taken aboard the destroyer.

Mrs. Boudreau, however, sank under the

Blair's bow. When she emerged on the other side, she was hauled aboard the Coast Guard cutter. The three were saved but by different ships.

The Tiverton shore was

a maze of cast-up boats and wrecked homes.

And four persons had died before Carol moved on to New Bedford and Cape Cod, wreaking havoc and killing as she went.

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Local Council Information:

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**The Camp Fire Girls
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A rescue team saves two from Laura's Restaurant at Westport Point during Hurricane Carol.