NEWALBANY CYCLONE OF 1917

MARCH 23, 1917

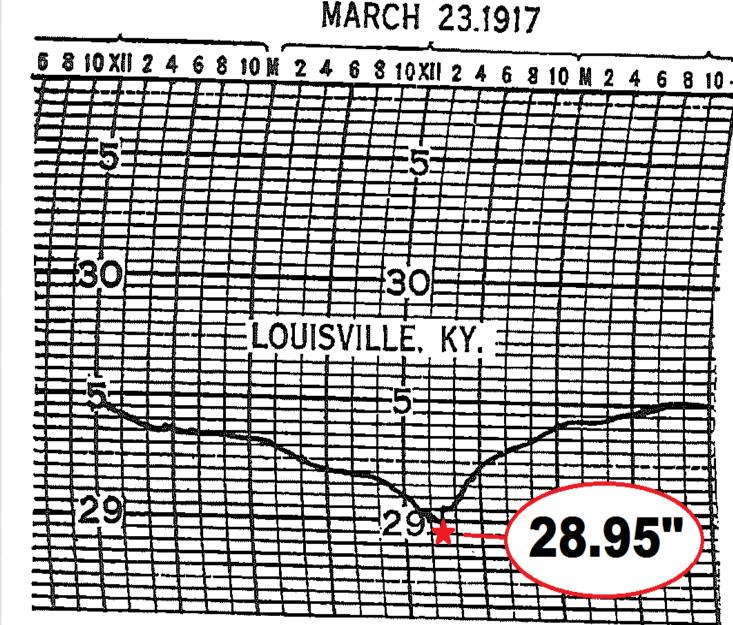
Overview

The infamous myth that the Knobs to the west of New Albany, Indiana would protect the city from natural disasters was proven fatally wrong on the afternoon of March 23, 1917. This was one of the most disastrous days in history for the small town as a powerful F4 tornado caused unimaginable loss of life and destruction. Much of the town was forced to rebuild as homes and buildings were wiped off their foundations.

about the tornado spread fast. Within an hour of the storm hitting, help from Louisville and surrounding towns arrived in New Albany. The Red Cross and National Guard worked around the clock helping those affected by the storm.

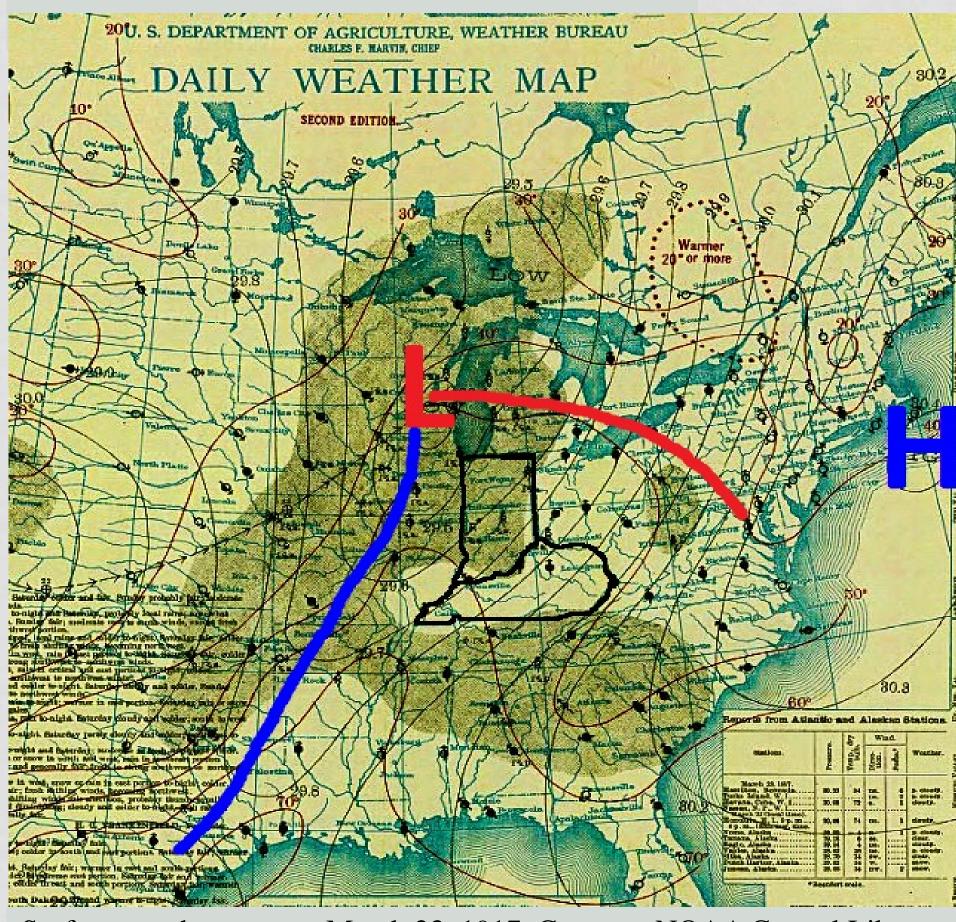
The Conrier-Tournal. CYCLONE HITS NEW ALBANY; KNOWN DEAD 46; 200 INJURED STRENGTH OF SCENES OF DEVASTATION IN WAKE OF TWISTER LARGE RESIDENCE PUT IN WAR BY FURIOUS GALE fundreds of Houses Destroyed and Property Loss Estimated At Hundreds of Thousands of Bollars-Tragedy, Heroism and Destitution In Wake of the Storm. WHOLE FAMILIES ARE WIPED OUT Allies Considered. ity's whole north end was leveled to the ground by the cyclone Death, agony and the destruction of homes, factories and irches and public buildings to the extent of more than \$1,000,000 in the wake of whirlwind that took less than five minutes in When the ruins have been made to yield their victims with the aking of daylight it is expected that forty more will be added the list of dead. The city still was in darkness early this morng, fires were breaking out in every section of the devastated area. Edward's Hospital and Louisville hospitals are crowded with dying and the injured, while scores of others mainted and ngled in the hurricane are being nursed in the homes of citizens Fully 300 homes have been destroyed; between 500 and 1,000 ms would be homeless were it not for the all-pervading charity layor Marris Organizes Relief Work Within Few Hours After Cyclone Hit List of Dead and Injured In Cyclone At North Side City tornado had done its murderous work. Three hundred and fifty ROAR WELCOME | Order Hospital | HELP EXTENDED TO GUARDSMEN Unit and Guards BY LOUISVILLE Two other companies of State troops will arrive early this norming to take charge of the stricken district and martial law ormally will be declared this morning. The situation last night MRS, MAY LAPP, 26, wife Richard Lapp, Blake avenue, Sil-

"...I never heard such a noise or went through such an experience as I did in the tornado Friday afternoon." James Griswald, yard manager for the New Albany Lumber Company.



Barograph showing surface pressure (inches). Lowest near time of tornado. Courtesy NOAA Monthly Weather Review.

Near record setting low pressure was recorded in Louisville, KY at the time the tornado passed by a couple miles to the north.



Surface weather map on March 23, 1917. Courtesy NOAA Central Library.

Meteorology

Front page of the Courier Journal the day after the tornado.

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Moist, unstable air from the Gulf of Mexico surged northward ahead of a low pressure system near start Lake Michigan. Above 🛠 normal temperatures and strong, changing winds with height in the atmosphere created perfect concerned they Friday morning.

Tornado Path

conditions for tornadoes. There are some discrepancies regarding the Meteorologists all across path of the tornado because of the lack of the Ohio Valley were observations in rural areas in 1917. Despite this issue, it is believed that the tornado looked over the data that started about five miles west of Corydon, IN and continued for about 35 miles until it dissipated near Harrods Creek, KY.



The Kahler Plant was destroyed by the tornado. Six employees were killed and 15 were injured. Courtesy of Gary D. Purlee.

Impacts

- 46 deaths
- 200 people injured
- \$1.5 M (\$28 M in 2017) in damage
- 500 homes and two schools destroyed
- Damage stretched over 75 blocks in New Albany
- Largest greenhouses in Midwest destroyed in New Albany



Ruins of the Olden Street School where at least 5 (possibly 12) students died. Courtesy of Gary D. Purlee.

Cody Moore National Weather Service Louisville