

THE HURRICANE OF 1938

by Paul Infranco, Longwood Community News



The Hampton Chronicle

LOCAL NEWSPAPER FOR THE WESTERN PART OF THE TOWN OF SOUTHAMPTON

Volume 32 WESTHAMPTON BEACH, N. Y., FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1938 Number 33

29 TOLL OF HURRICANE DEAD HERE

23 Bodies Recovered, Six are Still Missing

MAYOR BISHOP PRAISES WORKERS

Death by the hurricane, most graphic of reapers, took a heavy toll in Westhampton Beach when 29 people lost their lives, of which number six are still missing. From early this afternoon Wednesday night until yesterday morning the waters were so high they floated more victims of nature's fury and destroyed the 292 2nd body to be recovered. Mrs. James L. Potts, wife of Mrs. Potts, was the first to be recovered. The bodies were recovered from the wreckage of the destroyed building. The bodies were recovered from the wreckage of the destroyed building. The bodies were recovered from the wreckage of the destroyed building.

HURRICANE DAMAGE HERE TWO AND A HALF MILLION

VILLAGE BOARD ACTS PROMPTLY

The Village Board held a special emergency meeting Friday afternoon and passed a number of resolutions for the protection of the devastated areas in the village. The board also passed resolutions for appropriate emergency funds and requests for Federal aid. The board also passed resolutions for the protection of the devastated areas in the village. The board also passed resolutions for appropriate emergency funds and requests for Federal aid.

LIST KNOWN DEAD

Westhampton Beach
Belle, Rev. B. M. at Surf and Dune Club.
Boggs, Mrs. Katherine, aged 83, of 732 Berkeley Ave., Orange, N. J.
Boggs, Miss Cecelia, aged 18, daughter of the above.
Bown, Mrs. Peggy, aged 21, wife of Peter C. Bown, of 50 Montgomery Place, Brooklyn.
Chiland, Miss Agnes, aged 67, maid in household of Archibald MacFarlane.
Dalin, Carl E., aged 67, of 44 Hawthorne Ave., Williston Park, L. I.
Dalin, Selma M., aged 64, wife of Carl E. Dalin.
Doughan, Payson Stone, aged 53, of Livelyly Park, West Orange, N. J.
Frazier, Mrs. Matiana Bishop, aged 76, of New Rochelle, N. Y.
Foley, Mrs. Leo, aged 85, of 428 Corcoran St., Brooklyn.
Jarvis, Mrs. William, aged 61, of Westhampton Beach.
Jenkins, Lena, colored, aged 44, of Charleston, West Virginia. Employed at 45 Canning Park, Westhampton Beach.
Lau, Mrs. Edward P., aged 52, of South Orange, N. J.
Lewie, Warren G., aged 55, proprietor Surf and Dune Club.
Moffat, Mrs. Frances, aged 51, wife of Warren G. Moffat.
Molloy, Robert, colored, aged 34, bartender at Surf and Dune Club.
O'Brien, Mrs. J. P., aged 53, of 821 Central Park West, New York City.
O'Connell, Mrs. James L., aged 48, of 399 Park Avenue, New York City.
Sakham, Mrs. Charles W., aged 31, of Washington, D. C.
Sawley, Anna, aged 37, colored, of 35 Pierpont St., Brooklyn.
Williams, Mrs. Alverta Rivers, aged 44, of Queens.

RESOLUTION

That the following streets leading into the village of Westhampton Beach be closed and all people therein be evacuated and all people therein be evacuated and all people therein be evacuated.

MASTIC

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SOUTHAMPTON

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Seventy seven years ago today [Monday, Sep 21, 2015] the Hurricane of 1938, later called the “Long Island Express” hit long Island.

That morning started as any other, fishing boats put out to sea, children went to school and people went about their everyday lives; all unaware of the approaching storm. Early reports had the storm staying out in the Atlantic so there was little or no concern.

There was no advanced meteorological technology, such as radar, or satellite imagery, to warn of the hurricane’s approach. By the time the U.S. Weather Bureau learned that the Category 3 storm was on a collision course with Long Island on the afternoon of September 21, it was too late for a warning.

The storm developed in the Atlantic Ocean and made a twelve day journey before hitting Long Island on September 21. The winds were clocked at a sustained level of 121 mph and gusts registered at 186 mph. Long Island was devastated by the storm. The shoreline tide was estimated to be at 15 feet. Over 1000 homes/bungalows were destroyed on Fire Island, many being washed out to sea. 50 people on Long Island were killed, the majority of them in Westhampton. In all almost 600 people in the Northeast died as a result of this storm, making it the deadliest in our history.

Middle Island resident Rudy Carrabus remembers standing by the window of the East Middle Island School (now the Administration Building West) and watching the approaching storm. His farm was directly south of the school house, and as the storm grew in ferocity, he observed the outhouse on his farm being launched like a missile into the sky.

Mrs. Josephine Lundy taught at the Ridge schoolhouse and remembered that “I didn't know what was happening at first. All I knew was that all of a sudden I was unable to hold the children's attention. When I realized what was happening, I knew I would be no competition for the falling trees and high winds. I asked the children to put away their work and we all watched what was going on outside. Finally, the parents began to arrive to fetch their sons and daughters. All came except Mr. Hollowell. He was the caretaker at the Smith estate, now a town park known as Longwood. The road was impassable, so I took Beatrice home with me to Patchogue. Once home. I tried to call her parents, but all the telephone lines were down.”

Eastern Long Island experienced the worst of the storm. The Dune Road area of Westhampton Beach was destroyed, resulting in 29 deaths. There were 21 other deaths through the rest of the East End of Long Island.

It was reported that the bodies of the dead in Westhampton, were laid out on the lawn of the Westhampton Beach Club, which served as a temporary morgue.

The storm continued on and hit New England, and by the time it was over nearly 600 people had lost their lives to this storm.

Middle Island resident Albert Bayles wrote in his diary that "Electric current went off at 1:41PM and telephone failed. Tidal wave hit eastern shore of L.I..... Hundreds of lives lost and thousands of trees down." Four days later Albert toured the Longwood area and made it as far as Westhampton, where he photographed the damage done by the storm. Many of the pictures of the storm damage in this thread were taken by Albert as he toured the affected areas.



Canal Road in Coram *Albert Bayles photo*



Main Street in Yaphank *Albert Bayles photo*



Presbyterian Church, Middle Country Road, Middle Island *Albert Bayles photo*



Phillips House, Middle Island-Yaphank Road, Middle Island *Albert Bayles photo*



Former Martha Edwards House in Swezeytown (Middle Island) *Albert Bayles photo*



Mastic, Long Island *Albert Bayles photo*



Westhampton, Long Island *Albert Bayles photo*



Bridges linking Westhampton's Dune Road to the mainland were completely demolished *Google Images*



Dune Road, Westhampton Beach *Google Images*



Winds up to 186 mph hit the south shore of Long Island

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“REMEMBERING THE HURRICANE OF 1938” - The CBS Evening News with Scott Pelley - [VIDEO](#)
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From the Suffolk County Historical Society by Wendy Polhemus-Annibell, Librarian

Aftermath of the 1938 Hurricane, Westhampton, Long Island, NY



COLLECTION OF THE SUFFOLK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Submerged in tidal surge waters is a "Davis & Bradford Lumber Co." billboard.

“Eastern Long Island experienced some of the worst of the storm. The Dune Road area of Westhampton Beach was obliterated, resulting in 29 deaths. A cinema in Westhampton was swept two miles out to sea, and people at the matinee and the theater's projectionist drowned. The storm surge temporarily turned Montauk into an island as it flooded across the South Fork at Napeague and obliterated the LIRR tracks. The surging water created the present-day Shinnecock Inlet by carving out a large section of barrier island separating the bay from the ocean.”
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