

Today in Columbus History:

On March 24, 1875, a story appeared in the *Columbus Daily Times* with the headline "Recent Tornado. Help for the Suffers." It told of the efforts to aid the victims of a terrible storm that killed several people in the area. On the same day, the *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun* ran the story "The Great Storm," describing the devastation left in its wake. It attempts to reconcile all the reports of destruction and concludes that it might have been two or three tornados that crossed the state from east of the city, past Augusta and into the Carolinas

The tornado of March 20, 1875 was part of a tornado outbreak across the southeast U.S., that spawned at least nineteen tornados that hammered Georgia and neighboring states. The Wikipedia page for the "March 1875 Southeast tornado outbreak" shows three tornados passing through the area. One impacting Harris and Talbot counties that killed more than eleven people. Another that that passed through Muscogee, Harris and Talbot counties that killed 9 people. The third passed through Lee and Chambers counties in Alabama and Harris County Georgia that killed seven. The storms were all assigned a Fujita rating of F4 and left many more residents of these counties injured and homeless. In all, the outbreak impacted Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina between March 19 and March 20, 1875.

The relief efforts started almost immediately. They raised about \$2,600 between the city council, the Eagle and Phenix Mill and other private donations. One room in the mill collected \$26 from workers making only 50 cents a day. They also collected donations of food and clothing as well as hammers and nails to aid in the rebuilding. Neighbors provided shelter and provisions and volunteered labor to rebuild their communities.

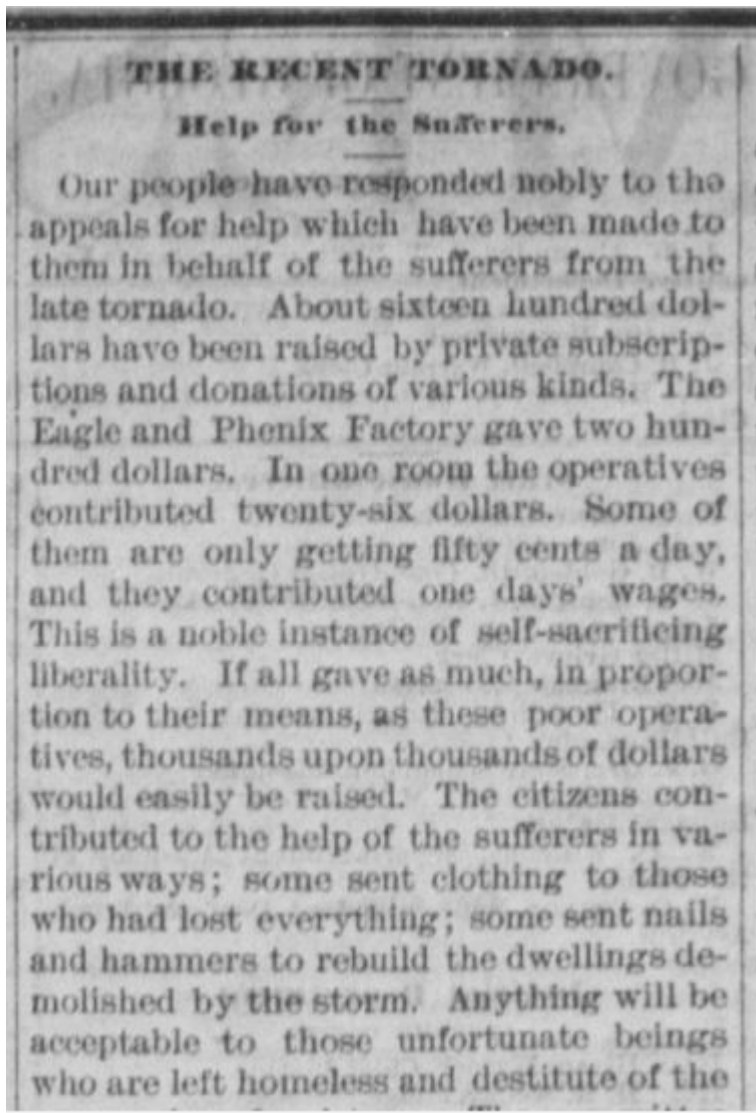
The victims' stories of loss and suffering in the previous days' papers aided the fundraising. The March 23, 1875, the *Columbus Daily Times* ran the story "Terrible Tornado. Death and Destruction! Great Desolation in Harris and Talbot Counties" providing some of the grimmest details. The storm destroyed five churches and two schoolhouses. Numerous houses, barns and outbuildings in the storm's path were levelled. The entire settlement of Baughville in Talbot County including three or four stores and other buildings was wiped off the map.

Memorials to some of the victims mentioned in that story can be found on FindAGrave.com. The Kennon family lost six members during the storm. John Kennon returned to his home from a nearby store and found his wife Sarah, and their children Glenara Hines, Martha Elizabeth, John Elias, Sarah Bell, and Ada Gertha dead. The tornado threw their bodies around the property, a hundred and fifty yards from the remains of their house. The stone monument for the Kennon family at Waverly Hall Cemetery mentions seven family members, so another may have died of their injuries, later. In Harris County, Hilliard W. Pitts and his wife Sara Kimbrough Pitts lost two daughters Fannie and Alice in the storm. Another daughter, Mary died of her injuries a few days later. Although not well known today, it would have taken a quite a while for that level of devastation to fade from local memory.

Compiled by Daniel A. Bellware, Muscogee Genealogical Society

Clipping from Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO).

Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.



Portion of the article "Recent Tornado. Help for the Sufferers" from the *Columbus Daily Times*, March 24, 1875, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.



The Kennon family monument at Waverly Hall Cemetery from <http://FindAGrave.com>



Hilliard W. & Sara Kimbrough Pitts who lost three daughters in the storm from <http://FindAGrave.com>

TERRIBLE TORNADO.
Death and Destruction!
Great Desolation in Harris and Talbot Counties.

On Saturday night we heard that a terrible storm had devastated part of Talbot county, and immediately sent a messenger to the scene of the calamity. We were, therefore, able to give a short account of the destructive effects of the tornado in Sunday's *TIMES*. On Sunday and yesterday we received from our agents, messengers and others the full particulars of what is perhaps the

MOST DREADFUL STORM
ever known in this State. The details of ruin, devastation and destruction of life and property are such as may well appeal to the stoutest heart.

Portion of the article "Terrible Tornado. Death and Destruction! Great Desolation in Harris and Talbot Counties" from the *Columbus Daily Times*, March 23, 1875, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

THE GREAT STORM.

Details of the extensive cyclone of Saturday still come in, and are already sufficient to show that it was the most destructive that we have had for many years. It is too soon, with the data now before us, to trace the entire track of this storm and compare the hours at which it struck particular localities, thus noting its velocity, progress and deflections (if it had any.) What we already know about it suggests the probability that it was a cyclone, or vast whirlwind, revolving with almost incredible force, and at the same

A portion of a story that attempts to reconcile all the information and concludes that it might have been two or three tornados that crossed the state from east of the city, past Augusta and into the Carolinas, from the Daily Enquirer-Sun, March 24, 1875, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.