

Horrific hurricanes have hammered county in past

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — While Cape May County dodged a bullet when Hurricane Joaquin tracked eastward, such has not always been the case, even prior to Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

No one is alive today to recall it, but Cape May experienced a Category 4 hurricane in 1821. Old newspapers, as well as military logs, have accounts of the event.

Hurricanes were not named in the 1800s, but the 1821 storm is referenced as the Norfolk and Long Island hurricane or the Great September Gale. Prior to Superstorm Sandy, the 1821 hurricane was the last major hurricane to make a direct hit on New Jersey. The storm hit Sept. 3, 1821, with winds of 135 mph.

According to Hurricaneville.com, hurricane winds extended as far as Philadelphia, with some wind gusts reaching 200 mph. The storm followed a path similar to a driver going north on the Garden State Parkway, hugging the coast to New York City. The storm had its origins off the African coast.

The Hurricane of 1821 struck Guadeloupe on Sept. 1. It then turned north, passing the Bahamas. At that point, the hurricane was believed to be as intense as a Category 5. In their logs, ships near Grand Turk Island in the Turks and Caicos made mention

of the hurricane. Moving at great speed, by dawn Sept. 3, 1821, the hurricane was off Cape Haterras, N.C.

Remarkably, the hurricane reached Delaware Bay by midafternoon the same day and New York City by 7:30 p.m. The storm's forward motion was estimated at 50 mph. It was likely the eye passed directly over Cape May, since calm winds were reported for a period of 15 to 30 minutes during its passage over Cape Island.

The worst-case scenario occurred when water from the ocean crossed land and flowed into the bay. There were few residents here to report the damage from the storm. One newspaper account said Cape May was physically cut off from the rest of the county by storm surge of over 10 feet.

Writer Robert Roy Britt for LiveScience.com stated that storm surge pushed the tide up 13 feet in one hour in New York City and inundated wharves, causing the East River and the Hudson River to merge across lower Manhattan as far north as Canal Street.

In a Washington Post story, Weather Editor Jason Samenow quoted re-insurer Swiss Re, which analyzed the 1821 storm and estimated such a storm today would cause more than \$100 billion in damages and prove 50 percent more costly than Superstorm Sandy.

A New York newspaper account reported roofs flying off buildings,



MUSEUM OF CAPE MAY COUNTY
The 1944 hurricane, known as the 'Great Atlantic Hurricane,' was responsible for the final destruction of South Cape May, the stretch of beach and nature preserve between the Third Avenue jetty in Cape May and Cape May Point State Park.

chimneys collapsing, trees falling, wharves breaking from their foundations, with the worst of the storm raging for four hours. A number of boats and ships were badly damaged or sunk. One account speaks of ships swept onto the streets.

Trees from the hurricane were discovered buried in marshes along the construction route of the Garden State Parkway in the early 1950s.

A number of county residents remember the 1944 storm known as the Great Atlantic Hurricane, which

arrived with 96 mph winds. A story has been retold countless times of a grand piano washing out to sea from Cape May Convention Hall. According to Margaret Buchholz and Larry Savadore in their book "Great Storms of the Jersey Shore," the 1944 hurricane had winds of 96 mph along the New Jersey coast.

The storm is credited with the final destruction of the town of South Cape May, the current stretch of beach and nature preserve between the Third Avenue Jetty in Cape May and Cape May Point State Park.

In Cape May, portions of the boardwalk were destroyed and in its aftermath, Beach Avenue was filled with sand. In his book, "Historic Cape May, New Jersey: The Summer City by the Sea," Emil Salvini states more than 200 houses in Cape May sustained roof or chimney damage and 200 trees were felled by the storm.

According to Hurricanescience.org, the hurricane cost more than \$100 million in damages and killed 390 people. Cape May County residents received minimal warning of the approaching hurricane due to World War II being in progress and minimal radio communication.

In 1960, Hurricane Donna remained offshore but caused substantial damage to coastal areas in the county. The hurricane was reported to have produced 100 mph winds in Wildwood.

Christie

Continued from Page A1

to severe" flooding in Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland and Salem counties.

Christie said if Hurricane Joaquin continued to track eastward, it would not pose any major hazards for New Jersey.

High tides had been forecast for Friday and the weekend, with 6- to 10-foot waves, sometimes as high as 16 feet.

He said officials in Atlantic and Cape May counties were prepared for major flooding conditions, including sheltering if necessary.

"Be ready and be prepared to respond to flooding," Christie said, adding residents needed a plan to deal with inclement conditions.

The governor evoked the importance of preparedness in

the post-Hurricane Sandy reality. Sandy struck New Jersey in October 2012, and caused \$30 billion in economic losses to businesses and impacted 346,000 homes.

Christie said funding has been provided to a majority of properties for rebuilding in Sandy's aftermath, with "a few thousand" properties still awaiting rebuilding funds.

"I will never be completely satisfied until everybody who wants to be back in their home is back in their home," Christie said. "To say that in less than three years we have an overwhelming majority of the people back in their homes ... Now we're talking about a few thousand left. I think it's a pretty good record.

The governor criticized the media for only reporting on

homeowners awaiting rebuilding funds instead of reporting on the thousands of homes rebuilt with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds.

"Of course what folks in the media will always emphasize is the people who are not back in their homes," Christie said. "I would love to see a story one time about the 300,000 or so who are back in their homes, but we never see those."

Christie said he's "continually frustrated" with certain elected officials and coastal municipalities battling the state of New Jersey's plans to install protective dune systems.

"We're wasting time and taxpayer money in court cases that we will ultimately win on eminent domain to build these

'To the towns like Margate (that fight the state about construction of a dune system), you are amongst the most selfish people in the state of New Jersey. If this hurricane had come to shore, the damage that would be done to lives and property in Margate ... I hope it's worth the vanity act you're all engaged in there.'

- Gov. Chris Christie

dunes to protect the people and the property of the people in the state of New Jersey," Christie said.

The Atlantic County city of Margate hired a Philadelphia-based law firm to represent the city in fighting the dune system's construction. The city is fighting the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers over easements the state seeks for a protective dune system. In Margate, the city owns most of the easements, with nine private property owners own-

ing the rest.

Margate voters approved two referendums in 2014 supporting the city's stance against the dune and approving as much as \$200,000 for legal costs to fight the state and federal governments.

"To the towns like Margate, you are amongst the most selfish people in the state of New Jersey," Christie said. "If this hurricane had come to shore, the damage that would be done to lives and property in Margate ... I hope it's worth the vanity act you're all engaged in there. ... I don't understand how people can be that selfish."

Christie said an "overwhelming" number of residents and municipalities cooperated with the state regarding easements and allowed the construction of protective dunes.

He said U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-2nd) would work to draw attention to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' beach replenishment projects.

The governor said the state hasn't issued any evacuations, but added the counties would monitor the high tides and flooding effects. He said the county and state emergency management offices and the New Jersey State Police Regional Operations Intelligence Center (ROIC) are ready to respond to evacuation requests.

On Oct. 1, Christie issued a declaration of emergency, which he said permits the state to access critical resources in case they're needed.

"All the emergency declaration does is to make sure that we have the ability to move assets around and make them available to folks at the local and county level so that we don't have to have a waiting period for that," Christie said.

For Oct. 2, The National Weather Service forecast heavy rains and northeast winds up to 32 to 34 mph, with gusts as high as 55 mph in Cape May County, with flooding during high tides. Heavy rain was also forecast for Oct. 3, with 33 mph northeast winds and gusts as high as 45 mph.

A coastal flood warning was issued until Oct. 4 for southern New Jersey, with "widespread tidal flooding occurring through multiple successive high tide cycles" throughout the weekend.

Residents of these areas were advised to follow recommendations by local emergency management officials.

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8	5:41	5:55	11:25	
9	6:26	6:38	12:03	12:13
10	7:06	7:18	12:43	12:56
11	7:43	7:55	1:19	1:36
12	8:18	8:31	1:54	2:15
13	8:53	9:06	2:26	2:52
14	9:27	9:41	2:58	3:29

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