



The Easter Tornadoes at Bermuda

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THE central part of Bermuda was visited by at least four tornadoes between 1800 and 1830 on Easter Sunday, 5 April 1953. Moving from south to north across the narrow island, the twisters did considerable damage to property, killed one woman, and caused many injuries ranging from minor bruises to broken limbs.

The two most westerly tracks shown on the accompanying map were reasonably well defined, but there is some doubt about the others. It appears that the westernmost tornado came in from the sea about 1806, the middle two about 1815, and the easternmost about 1820. All observers state that they looked like a heavy rain squall and did not have the sharply defined boundaries of typical waterspouts. Several people reported that they could see the cloud rotating, and many felt a sudden pressure change in their ears. Heavy continuous lightning occurred in the central two but not in the others.

The westernmost whirl passed very close to the meteorological office where the anemometer recorded two gusts to 89 and 85 mph at about 1812. At this time the barograph trace fell about eight millibars and rose again immediately to a higher value than before. The record shows that the wind veered from northeast to west at the moment of the two extreme gusts.

On the weather map, a depression was located about 150 miles west of Bermuda at

1400 with a warm front approaching the island group from the southwest. Weather had been overcast with low clouds during the day, and intermittent rain fell during the afternoon. The wind from the south-southeast increased to 28 mph by 1700, and a very heavy rain fell in most parts of Bermuda about 1800, with one inch in 15 minutes being recorded at Hamilton. The surface warm front passed at this time, and apparently the tornadoes were associated with the passage.

About 90 properties were damaged, but only a few buildings were so demolished that they became uninhabitable. In most cases the damage consisted of sucking or blowing from the roofs the slates of Bermuda stone, with which all island structures are traditionally covered, leaving the supporting wooden rafters intact.

The most spectacular damage was on the south side of Harrington Sound where the tornado came down from the higher land and picked up several poultry coops containing hundreds of chickens which vanished entirely, apparently into the water. At the same time the twister lifted one parked car and another that was moving on the road, depositing them in the sea right side up about 100 feet away. Fortunately, the occupied car stayed afloat long enough for the driver to escape.

There were many instances of adjacent

The damage caused by the sucking aloft of the roof stones of a Bermuda house is illustrated in this scene of destruction.



objects being carried in opposite directions and of articles of clothing being sucked through the ceiling of unroofed houses. In Hamilton a gentleman standing on his verandah saw a large beach umbrella fly past from the east. Then, perhaps 15 seconds later, the wind blew straight in from the south piling debris on his verandah, and, a few seconds later, the umbrella flew past again coming from the west.

Heavy objects were blown considerable distances, and there would probably have been a much heavier toll of life but for the facts that the day was a Sunday and that the heavy rain beforehand had driven people to take shelter indoors. The one casualty resulted when a woman left a damaged house to carry her small sister to safety and was struck by flying debris while the baby was unharmed.

The microbarograph trace shows an immediate drop and rise of approximately eight millibars as the tornadoes passed near the meteorological office.

