

- 0. RISING WATER - Story Preface
- 1. CAPE VERDE HURRICANES
- 2. WEATHER PREDICTIONS IN 1900
- 3. STORM WARNINGS
- 4. RISING WATER**
- 5. SHOCK
- 6. WORST U.S. DISASTER
- 7. THE VICTIMS
- 8. THE SURVIVORS
- 9. THE HARBOR
- 10. DESTRUCTION EVERYWHERE
- 11. CLARA BARTON HELPS
- 12. A NEW SEA WALL
- 13. MEMORY OF THE DISASTER
- 14. A STORY OF TRAGEDY



This lithograph, maintained at the Library of Congress, depicts an artist's impression of the moment when the hurricane about to strike Galveston—in September of 1900—joined forces with a mass of backed-up sea water. The result was a massive storm surge which exploded across the barrier island. Illustration, "Galveston's awful calamity - Gulf tidal wave, September 8th 1900," published by Kurz & Allison, circa 1900.

Isaac Cline, in charge of the U.S. Weather Bureau's Galveston station, watched the Gulf's swells that Saturday morning. They seemed strange to him. In his report, he states:

A heavy swell from the southeast made its appearance in the Gulf of Mexico during the afternoon of the 7th. The swell continued during the night without diminishing and the tide rose to an unusual height when it is considered that the wind was from the north.

After the tropical storm left Cuba, it pushed the warm waters of the Gulf toward Galveston in a deep, undulating swell (a vast, crestless wave). Moving at around 50 miles per hour, the swell's leading edge struck the rim of Galveston Island, effectively causing the mass of moving water to back up.

When the hurricane caught up with the swells, a massive storm surge exploded over the island which was barely 8½ feet above sea level. With no effective barrier between them and the sea, the people of Galveston were doomed.

Later, Issac would second-guess himself. If only he had known the meaning of the strange swell. Had he been able to interpret what he saw, he could have warned more people sooner. But Galveston's weather man did not realize the fascinating spectacle that attracted people to the shore that Saturday morning spelled disaster for him and his town.

During the morning of the 8th of September, he sent a telegram to Washington:

Unusually heavy swells from southwest, intervals one to five minutes overflowing low places south portion city three to four blocks from beach. Such high water with opposing winds never observed previously.

By 3:30 in the afternoon, storm flags had been flying for some time, and Isaac warned people to seek safe shelter away from the water's edge. He also sent a special report to Washington:

Gulf rising, water cover streets of about half city.

It was the last message Isaac sent to Washington before the telegraph lines blew away.

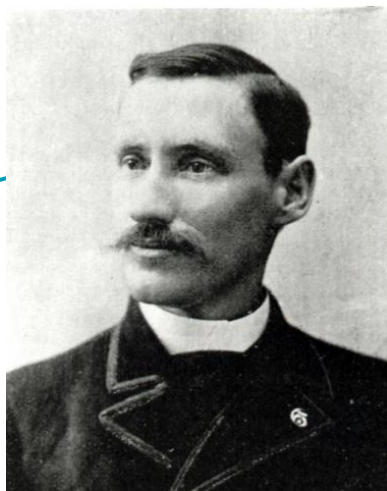
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/RISING-WATER-Galveston-and-the-Great-Storm-of-1900>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/RISING-WATER-Galveston-and-the-Great-Storm-of-1900>

Media Stream



Isaac Cline

Image of Isaac Cline, online courtesy U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Isaac-Cline>



Galveston - No Barrier or Seawall Protection

Galveston, before the "Great Storm of 1900." Online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Galveston-No-Barrier-or-Seawall-Protection>