

0. WORST U.S. DISASTER - Story Preface

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Lacking a seawall, in 1900, Galveston has nothing to stop (or slow down) a raging storm surge when a hurricane arrives at the barrier island on September 8th of that year. Houses are ripped apart, and their former wooden frames are tossed-around as though they were light-weight matchsticks. The Library of Congress maintains this [Underwood & Underwood image](#). It depicts Galveston wreckage, floating along the coast, nearing Texas City (about 14 miles away).

By the time City Hall's clock stopped at 7:12, Galveston's residents had less than ten hours to prepare for the deadliest storm in U.S. recorded history.

No one knew how bad it would be. And with no seawall to protect them against a 15-foot [storm surge](#), the people and their [city](#) were totally [defenseless](#) against the frenzied sea. The storm even [pulled out](#) embedded railroad tracks and threw railroad [box cars](#) around as though they were toys.

In 1858, *Braman's Information About Texas* included some incredibly prophetic [comments](#) (see page 46) about Galveston Island:

And Galveston Island, with all its boasted accumulation of people, habitations, wealth, trade, and commerce, is but a waif of the ocean...liable, at any moment, and certain, at no distant day, of being engulfed and submerged by the self-same power that gave it form. Neither is it possible for all the skillful devices of mortal man to protect this DOOMED place against the impending danger; the terrible power of a hurricane cannot be calculated, much less resisted; its strength is the awful power of combined elements, and the waters of the mighty deep are made a fearful and sudden engine of destruction...

Four years before [the monster storm](#) "engulfed and submerged" the city, Galveston citizens hired an engineer to make [recommendations](#) regarding a sea wall. They knew what had happened to their neighbors in Indianola, a great seaport southwest of Galveston Island. After a hurricane and its 10-foot storm surge killed people and destroyed most of the town, Indianola rebuilt only to be destroyed again 11 years later.

The engineer recommended that Galveston at least needed a dike. Nothing was done.

The waters of Galveston Bay (north of Galveston Island) [met](#) the waters of the Gulf of Mexico (south of the island) on September 8, 1900. When that happened, around 8,000 people died (perhaps more), and Galveston was [destroyed](#).

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WORST-U.S.-DISASTER-Galveston-and-the-Great-Storm-of-1900>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

Media Stream



Floating Wreckage from Galveston Nears Texas City

Library of Congress, Underwood & Underwood

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Floating-Wreckage-from-Galveston-Nears-Texas-City>



Galveston's City Hall Clock

Image online, courtesy the Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Galveston-s-City-Hall-Clock>



Galveston After the Storm

Image online, courtesy the Texas State Library.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Galveston-After-the-Storm>



Galveston is Destroyed

Image online, courtesy NOAA.

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View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Galveston-is-Destroyed>

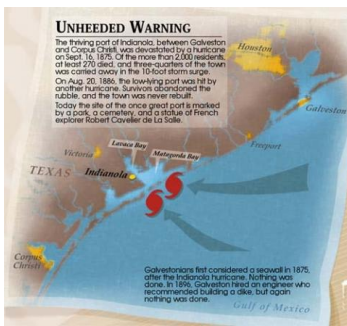


Box Cars Wrecked during Great Storm of 1900

Image online, courtesy the Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas website.

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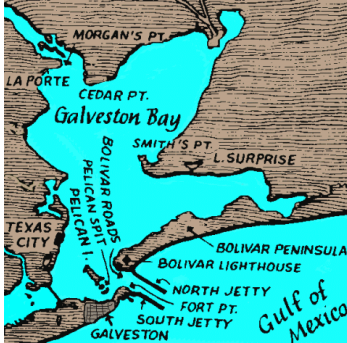
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Box-Cars-Wrecked-during-Great-Storm-of-1900->



Indianola Hurricane of 1875

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Map of Galveston Bay

Image online, courtesy the islandnet.com website.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-of-Galveston-Bay>