

A

## TORNADO PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET

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1.	DATE AND TIME	MAY 1829	APPROX LATE MORNING
2.	LOCATION OR PATH (attach map)	QUELPH	
3.	PATH LENGTH	<input type="checkbox"/> NOT KNOWN <input type="checkbox"/> <1mi; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1-4mi; <input type="checkbox"/> 5-10mi; <input type="checkbox"/> 11-50mi; <input type="checkbox"/> LENGTH IF >50mi	
4.	PATH WIDTH	100 YARDS	5. TORNADO PART OF SMALL LINE? <input type="checkbox"/> YES; <input type="checkbox"/> NO; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNKNOWN:
6.	ANY UNUSUAL COLORATION?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES; <input type="checkbox"/> NO; <input type="checkbox"/> UNKNOWN	
7.	ANY UNUSUAL SOUND?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES; <input type="checkbox"/> NO; <input type="checkbox"/> UNKNOWN	
8.	IF ANSWER TO 6 OR 7 YES, ELABORATE;		
9.	LIST ANY ASSOCIATED PHENOMENA (Such as hail, vivid lightning, heavy rain, no rain, etc.)		
10.	TOTAL DAMAGE ESTIMATE	\$UNKNOWN	11. TOTAL DEATHS NONE
12.	TOTAL INJURED	NONE	13. TOTAL HOMELESS UNKNOWN
14.	LIST ALL REFERENCES <p>"27 YEARS IN CANADA WEST OF THE EXPERIENCE OF AN EARLY SETTLER" MAJOR SAMUEL STRICKLAND C.M. EDITED BY AGNES STRICKLAND. 1ST HURTIQ EDITION 1970 PUBLISHED BY CHARLES TUTTLE CO. INC, PP. 240-244</p>		
15.	SUMMARIZE REMARKS PERTAINING TO (a) FUNNEL; (b) INTERESTING OR CAPRICIOUS EVENTS. <p>(a) "A BLACK COLUMN IN THE SHAPE OF A CONE . . . . GYRATING WITH FEARFUL VELOCITY."          "I WITNESSED THE MOST APALLING LAND TORNADO"</p> <p>(b) TREES FELL LIKE A PACK OF CARDS BEFORE ITS IRRESISTIBLE CURRENT, . . . TWISTED IN EVERY DIRECTION. ERAMOSA ROAD COMPLETELY BLOCKED BY FALLEN TREES. IN QUELPH SEVERAL HOUSES UNROOFED, FENCES LEVELLED, FRAME BARN DEMOLISHED AND THE FLOOR OF A LOG-HOUSE CARRIED UP THROUGH THE ROOF.</p>		

NOTE REMARKS CONCERNING TORNADO IN DOURO TOWNSHIP ALSO - THE 'INTELLIGENT SETTLER'S' ACCOUNT OF THE MARMORA - MADOC TORNADO.



For city street map of TORONTO, including area maps of HAMILTON and OTTAWA, ask any Shell Dealer in that area. — Pour le plan de TORONTO, où figurent aussi

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

always have accustomed myself to look upon the bright side of everything, leaving to the grumblers the reverse of the picture, upon which I fear they are only too fond of dwelling. But I am sure a cheerful spirit is the best assistant in carrying a settler through every difficulty.

Early in the spring of 1829, I made a tour of the Newcastle district, selling land and receiving payments for the Company. Whilst so employed, I received a letter from the superintendent, informing me of his resignation, and appointing me to meet him in Toronto with what money I had collected.

I was very sorry to hear of Mr. Galt's retirement. He had always acted in a kind and liberal manner towards me; and, indeed, when he left the Company, I considered that I had lost a true and affectionate friend. I could not help, therefore, noticing with regret that, although most of the clerks belonging to the office were at that time in Toronto, only Dr. Dunlop, Mr. Reid \* and myself accompanied Mr. Galt to the landing-place to see him depart and cry "God speed!" But this is the way of the world. Those who should be most grateful when

\* Mr. Galt's friend and private secretary.

ORDERED TO GODERICH.

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the hour of adversity dawns on their benefactor, are often the first to desert him.

On the same day the Doctor introduced me to one of our new Commissioners, Thomas Mercer Jones, Esq., a fine gentlemanly-looking person. The other Commissioner was the Hon. William Allen. These gentlemen were appointed by the directors to supersede Mr. Galt in the direction of the Company's affairs in Canada. On my return to Guelph, I received an intimation that I must prepare to take up my residence in Goderich, as my services in future would be required in the Huron tract.

A few days before my departure, I witnessed the most appalling land tornado (if so I may term it), I ever saw in my life. As this is a phenomenon seldom if ever witnessed in England, I think a particular description may possibly interest those readers who are unaccustomed to such eccentricities of Nature.

In my hunting excursions and rambles through the Upper Canadian forests, I had frequently met with extensive windfalls; and observed with some surprise that the fallen trees appeared to have been twisted off at the stumps, for they lay strewn in a succession of circles. I also remarked, that these windfalls were generally

narrow, and had the appearance of a wide road slashed through the forest.

From observations made at the time, and since confirmed, I have no doubt Colonel Reid's theory of storms is a correct one, viz. :—"That all wind-storms move in a circular direction, and the nearer the centre, the more violent the wind." Having seen the effects of several similar hurricanes since my residence in Canada West, I shall describe one which happened in the township of Guelph, during the early part of the summer of 1829.

The weather, for the season of the year (May) had been hot and sultry, with scarcely a breath of wind stirring. I had heard distant thunder from an early hour of the morning, which from the eastward is rather an unusual occurrence. About ten A.M. the sky had a most singular, I may say, a most awful appearance; presenting to the view a vast arch of rolling blackness, which seemed to gather strength and density as it approached the zenith. All at once the clouds began to work round in circles, as if chasing one another through the air. Suddenly, the dark arch of clouds appeared to break up into detached masses, whirling and eddying through each other in dreadful commotion. The forked lightning was incessant,

APPALLING WHIRLWIND.

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accompanied by heavy thunder. In a short space the clouds seemed to converge to a point, which approached very near the earth, still whirling with great rapidity directly under this point; and apparently from the midst of the woods arose a black column in the shape of a cone, which instantly joined itself to the depending cloud: the sight was now grand and awful in the extreme.

Let any one picture to the imagination a vast column of smoke of inky blackness reaching from earth to heaven, gyrating with fearful velocity; bright lightnings issuing from the vortex—the roar of the thunder—the rushing of the blast—the crashing of timber—the limbs of trees, leaves and rubbish, mingled with clouds of dust, whirling through the air—a faint idea is then given of the scene.

"Through all the sky arise outrageous storms,  
And death stands threatening in a thousand forms;  
Clouds charged with loud destruction drown the day,  
And airy demons in wild whirlwinds play;  
Thick thunder-claps, and lightnings' vivid glare  
Disturb the sky, and trouble all the air."

I had ample time for observation as the hurricane commenced its desolating course about two miles from the town, through the centre of which it took its way, passing within fifty yards of the spot where a number of persons and

(2)

myself were standing watching its fearful progress. As the tornado approached, the trees seemed to fall like a pack of cards before its irresistible current. After passing through the clearing made around the town, the force of the wind gradually abated, and in a few minutes died away entirely.

As soon as the storm was over I went to see what damage it had done. I went to the place where I first observed the storm, and from the woods and join the trees, the trees were twisted in every direction. A belt of timber had been levelled to the ground about two miles in length, and about one hundred yards in breadth: at the entrance of the town it crossed the river Speed, and up-rooted about six acres of wood which had been thinned out and left by Mr. Galt as an ornament to his house.

The Eremosa road was completely blocked up for nearly half a mile, in the wildest confusion possible. In its progress through the town, it unroofed several houses, levelled the fences to the ground, and entirely demolished a frame-barn: windows were dashed in, and in one instance the floor of a log-house was carried up through the roof. Some hair-breadth escapes occurred, but, luckily, no lives were lost.

About twelve years since, a storm of this kind occurred in the north part of the township of Douro, though of less magnitude. I heard an intelligent settler who resided some years in the township of Madoc state that, during his residence there, a similar hurricane to the one I have described, but of a more awful character, passed through a part of Marmora and Madoc, which had been traced in a north-easterly direction upwards of forty miles into the unsurveyed lands, the uniform width of which appeared to be upwards of three quarters of a mile.

It appears very evident that storms of this description have not been unfrequent in the wooded regions of Canada; and it becomes a matter of interesting consideration, whether the clearing of our immense forests will, in a great measure, remove the cause of these phenomena.

Dark, heavy clouds were gathering in the west,  
Wrapping the forest in funereal gloom;  
Onward they roll'd and rear'd each livid crest,  
Like death's lurk shadows frowning o'er earth's tomb:  
From out the inky womb of that deep night  
Burst livid flashes of electric flame:  
Whirling and circling with terrific might,  
In wild confusion on the tempest came.  
Nature, awakening from her still repose,  
Shudders responsive to the whirlwind's shock  
Feels at her mighty heart convulsive throes;  
Her groaning forests to earth's bosom rock.

But, hark! what means that hollow rushing sound,  
That breaks the sudden stillness of the morn?  
Red forked lightnings fiercely glare around:  
What crashing thunders on the winds are borne!  
And see yon spiral column, black as night,  
Rearing triumphantly its wreathing form;  
Ruin's abroad, and through the murky light,  
Drear desolation marks the spirit of the storm.

How changed the scene; the awful tempest's o'er;  
From dread array and elemental war  
The lightning's flash hath ceased, the thunder's roar—  
The glorious sun resumes his golden car.\*

\* My description of this whirlwind, and the accompanying lines, have already appeared in the "Victoria Magazine," published in Canada West, under the signature of "Pioneer."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HURON TRACT.—JOURNAL OF DR. DUNLOP.—HIS HARDSHIPS.—I LEAVE GUELPH FOR GODERICH.—WANT OF ACCOMMODATION.—CURIOUS SUPPER.—REMARKABLE TREES.—THE BEVERLY OAK.—NOBLE BUTTER-WOOD TREES.—GODERICH.—FINE WHEAT CROP.—PURCHASE A LOG-HOUSE.—CONSTRUCTION OF A RAFT.

I HAD always wished to go to the Huron tract, whose fine lake, noble forests, and productive soil, have made it a source of wealth to many a settler. The climate too, was mild, and I had heard a great deal about it from my gifted and facetious friend Dr. Dunlop, whose services in exploring that part of their possessions were not only useful but inestimable to the Company, and, in fact, to emigration in general.

"Dr. Dunlop, the Warden of the Company's Woods and Forests, surveyed the great Huron tract in the summer of 1827, assisted by the Chief of the Mohawk nation, and Messrs. Sproat and MacDonald. They penetrated the huge untravelled wilderness in all directions, until they came out on the shores of the Huron, having

2 VOLUMES IN ONE  
"27 YEARS IN CANADA WEST"  
OR THE EXPERIENCE OF AN EARLY  
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OF RUTLAND, VERMONT AND TOKYO, JAPAN.

(BOOK IN CHINGUACOUSY LIBRARY)

pastime and prepare for a move. Before doing so, however, the squire again came forward, and after thanking us for our attendance, loyalty, &c., he proposed "we should give three cheers more for the King, and three for Queen Adelaide," which were given with all the power of our lungs, not a little aided by sundry potations imbibed by the loyal in drinking their Majesties' healths during the day's proceeding.

Three cheers were then given for the Canada Company, three for the Commissioners, and three for the old Doctor. Thus terminated the proclamation of our sovereign in the Bush.

Mr. Prior had kindly issued invitations to the *élite* to a ball and supper at Reid's Hotel, which was well attended. The refreshments were excellent, the supper capital; and the dancing was kept up with great spirit till day-light warned us to depart.

The next day, I started for Guelph with the Yankee mill-wright, whom I found a clever, shrewd man. He told me he had travelled over a great part of the Western States and Canada; but in all his wanderings he had never seen a section of country, of the same size, that pleased him equal to the Huron tract.

"I guess, when this country of your'n is once

## AWFUL STORM.

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cleared up, and good roads made, and the creeks bridged, there won't be such another place in all creation."

"What makes you think so?" I enquired.

"Wal, just look what a fine frontage you have on that 'ere big pond (he meant Lake Huron) and good harbours and land that can't be beat not no how. All you want is 'to go a-head,' and you may take my word for it that this will be the garden of Canada yet."

We had only one horse between us, which belonged to the Doctor, so that we were obliged to ride turn about. In this manner we got on pretty well, so that by four o'clock we were within two miles of old Sebach's. The day had been excessively hot, and for the last hour we had heard distant thunder. We, therefore, pushed on with redoubled energy, in hopes of escaping the storm.

Ever since I had witnessed the devastating effects of the whirlwind which passed through Guelph, and which I have described in a previous chapter, I had a dread of being exposed in the woods to the fury of such a tempest. In this instance, however, we had the good fortune to reach the shanty just as the rain commenced; and well for us it proved that we had gained a shelter for ourselves and steed; for I seldom

witnessed a more terrific storm. The lightning was awful, accompanied by the loudest thunder I ever heard. The volleys of heavy hail-stones on the shingled roof, together with the rushing sound of the wind, and the crash of falling trees, made it impossible for us to hear a word that was said. Indeed, I did not feel much inclined for conversation; for I could not help meditating on the peril we had escaped. Had the storm commenced an hour or two earlier or later, we should have been exposed to its utmost fury, as there was no place of refuge nearer than twenty miles either way.

To show the terrible danger we had avoided, I counted a hundred and seventy-six large trees that had fallen across the road between Sebach's and Trifogle's—a distance not exceeding twenty miles.


What a contrast this road now presents to what it was when I used to be in the habit of travelling over it! I remember, once having been sent on some important business to the settlement, which admitted of no delay. It was late in November; the snow had fallen unusually early, and there was no horse then to be procured at Goderich; so that I was obliged to walk without even a companion to cheer the solitary way. I found the walking exceedingly laborious: the

snow was fully a foot deep and unbroken, save by the foot-marks of some lonely traveller.

I was very curious to learn who the person could be who had been necessitated to take such a long journey through the wilderness alone. The second day of my journey, my curiosity was gratified by seeing the name of the person written in large characters in the snow. I stopped and read it with much interest: it was that of a Scotchman I knew,—one James Haliday. After reading that name, it appeared as if half the loneliness of the road was gone; for I knew from the freshness of the track, that a human being was travelling on the same path, and that he was, perhaps, not far ahead.

Not many minutes after this occurrence, whilst descending a slight hill, I saw nine fine deer cross the road, within a short gun-shot of the spot where I stood. I had no gun with me; for I thought, if I did kill a deer, I should be obliged to leave it in the woods. Nothing further occurred till within a short distance of Trifogle's, when a large wolf bounded close past me: he seemed, however, the more frightened of the two, which I was not at all sorry to perceive.

When I arrived at the tavern, I told Trifogle what I had seen. He said, it was very lucky I



# THE GUELPH TORNADO OF 1829

KEITH HEIDORN  
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The settlement of a frontier town is often wrought with many hardships, not the least of which is the weather. An untimely occurrence of a storm, flood, or an abnormally dry season has crippled or destroyed many potential settlements. The infant community of Guelph in southern Ontario nearly met with such a fate in 1829 when a tornado raced through the settlement causing extensive damage.

The description of this storm as it moved through Guelph has been chronicled in the writings of Major Samuel Strickland in his memoirs *Twenty Seven Years in Canada West*. Strickland was, at the time, in the employ of the Canada Company, headed by John Galt and Tiger Dunlop, which was developing the Huron tract of southwest Ontario. Just days before his departure from Guelph for Goderich in early June of 1829\*, he "witnessed the most appalling land tornado . . . I ever saw in my life."

Strickland had previously encountered the mark of tornadoes on the Ontario countryside.

"In my hunting excursions and rambles through the Upper Canadian forests, I had frequently met with extensive windfalls; and

observed with some surprise that the fallen trees appeared to have been twisted off at the stumps, for they lay strewn in a succession of circles. I also remarked that these windfalls were generally narrow, and had the appearance of a wide road slashed through the forest."

The *Annals* state: "Those who are old enough to remember when the Upper Province was one wild, almost impenetrable forest . . . will have frequently noticed, in the woods, large gaps or lanes, the ground covered with trunks and branches of trees, twisted and tangled in all manner of inconceivable shapes, through or across which by no possibility could a man proceed. It will also have been noticed that in these gaps, the trees appear to have been twisted off at the stumps, or turned up at the roots, as if some monster of infinite strength had passed that way and torn them up like rushes in his mighty grasp, and thrown them down in anger and scorn."

It was postulated that the scenes caused by tornadoes which occasionally visit thickly wooded districts, "rarely occur after the land becomes cleared, it is supposed on account of some mysterious climatic change which takes place with the disappearance of the forests, somewhat in the same way as the changes in temperature and the quantity of rainfall which follow the clearing of the land." (*Annals*, 1877)

\*The *Annals of the Town of Guelph 1827-1877* erroneously give the year of this storm as 1839. Strickland dates the storm as in early summer of 1829, the chronology of his book agreeing with this year. In the *Annals*, the period discussed during which the storm is reported is 1828-1832, and Strickland is quoted extensively. It is therefore believed the 1839 date is a typographical error.

Strickland described the morning: "The weather, for the season of the year (May) had been hot and sultry, with scarcely a breath of wind stirring. I had heard distant thunder from an early hour of the morning, which from the eastward is rather an unusual occurrence. About ten A.M. the sky had a most singular, I may say, a most awful appearance; presenting to the view a vast arch of rolling blackness, which seemed to gather strength and density as it approached the zenith. All at once the clouds began to work round in circles, as if chasing one another through the air. Suddenly, the dark arch of clouds appeared to break up into detached masses, whirling and eddying through each other in dreadful commotion. The forked lightning was incessant, accompanied by heavy thunder. In a short space the clouds seemed to converge to a point, which approached very near the earth, still whirling with great rapidity directly under this point; and apparently from the midst of the woods arose a black column in the shape of a cone, which instantly joined itself to the depending cloud: the sight was now grand and awful in the extreme.

Let any one picture to the imagination a vast column of smoke of inky blackness reaching from earth to heaven, gyrating with fearful velocity; bright lightnings issued from the vortex—the roar of the thunder—the rushing of the blast—the crashing of the timber—the limbs of trees, leaves and rubbish, mingled with clouds of dust, whirling through the air—a faint idea is then given of the scene.

I had ample time for observation as the hurricane commenced its desolating course about two miles from the town, through the centre of which it took its way, passing within fifty yards of the spot where a number of persons and myself were standing watching its fearful progress. As the tornado approached, the trees seemed to fall like a pack of cards before its irresistible current. After passing through the clearing made around the town, the force of the wind gradually abated, and in a few minutes died away entirely."

From the point at which the black column had arisen, trees were twisted in every direction. The belt of timber leveled had a width of about one hundred yards and length of two miles. At the entrance to Guelph, the tornado had crossed the Speed River and uprooted six acres of the woodlot which John Galt had left as an ornament to his house. To the east, the Eramosa road was strewn with litter, impassible for nearly half a mile.

In Guelph, the tornado "unroofed several houses, leveled the fences to the ground, and entirely demolished a frame barn: windows were dashed in, and in one instance the floor of a log-house was carried up through the roof. Some hair-breadth escapes occurred, but luckily, no lives were lost." (Strickland)

The *Annals* state that from this time very little progress was made in Guelph for the next three years. Business was almost stagnant and few new houses were started. The company commissioners appeared to follow a policy of masterly inactivity, doing nothing which could be postponed. Whether the storm was an influence on this inaction, we do not know. Guelph, however, did recover to grow to a city of 70,000 by its sesquicentennial year.

The experience prompted Strickland to pen the following observation in verse.

*Through all the sky arise outrageous  
storms,  
And death stands threatening in a thousand forms;  
Clouds charged with loud destruction  
drown the day,  
And airy demons in wild whirlwinds  
play;  
Thick thunder-claps, and lightnings'  
vivid glare  
Disturb the sky, and trouble all the air."*

#### REFERENCES

- Annals of the Town of Guelph 1827-1877*, Herald Steam Printing House, 1877, p. 45-46.  
Strickland, Samuel, *Twenty Seven Years in Canada West or The Experience of an Early Settler*, edited by Agnes Strickland. Reprint published by M. G. Hurtig Ltd., Edmonton, Alberta, 1970, p. 241-246.