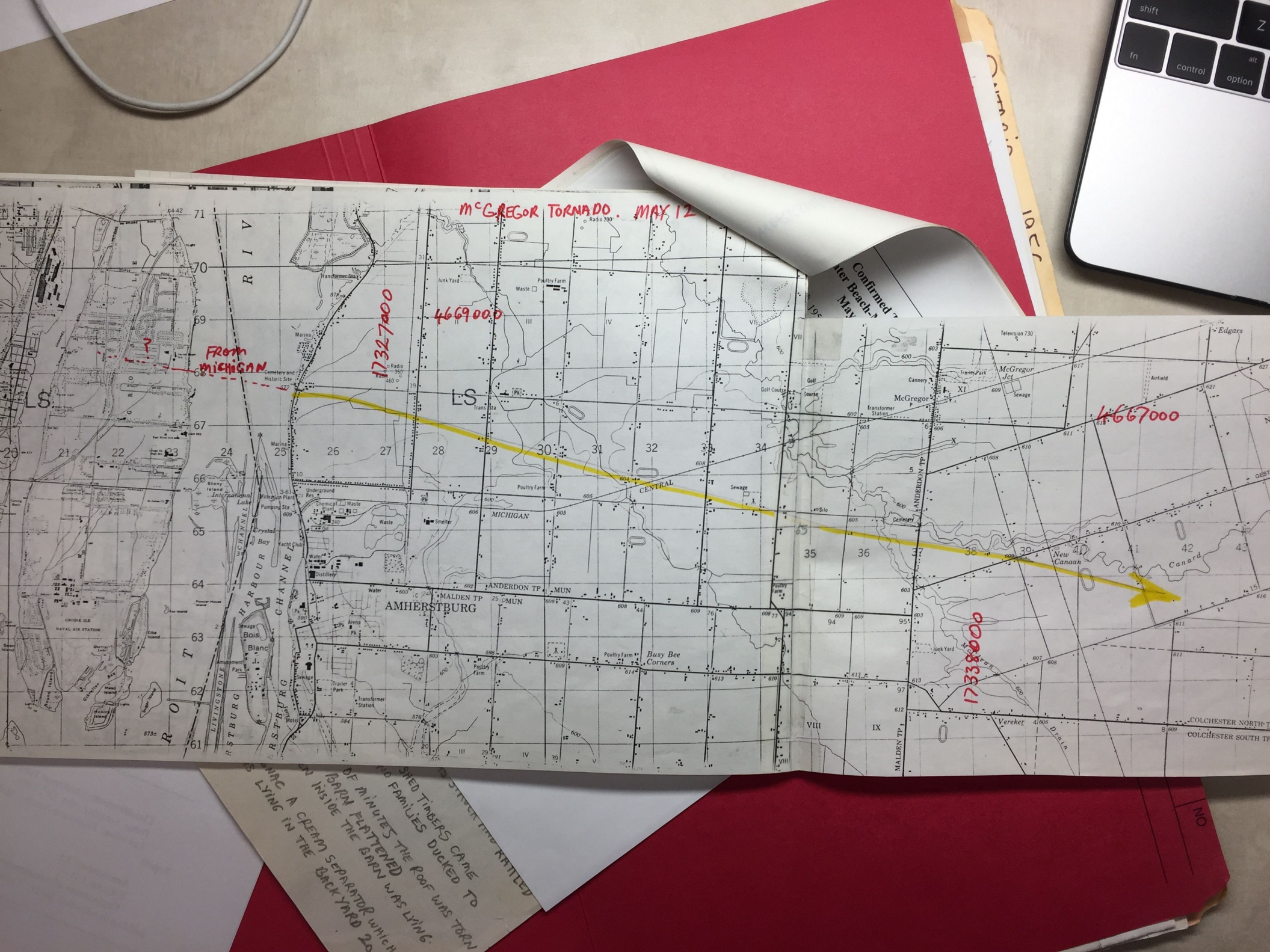
McGREGOR TORNADO. MAY 12
FROM MICHIGAN
17327000
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AMHERSTBURG
MICHIGAN
CENTRAL
ANDERDON TP
MALDEN TP
Busy Bee Corners
New Canaan
Canard
McGregor
Edgars
Vereker
COLCHESTER NORTH TP
COLCHESTER SOUTH TP
Bois Blanc
Crystal Bay
Stony Island
International Lake
Poultry Farm
Junk Yard
Waste
Marina
Cemetery and Historic Site
Transformer Station
Golf Course
Cannery
Trailer Park
Airfield
Sewage
Silo
Cemetery
Distillery
Water
Arena Pk
Trailer Park
Transformer Station
Motel
Amusement Park
Sewage
Underground Res
Chemical Plant
Waste
Smelter
Filtration Plant
Pumping Sta
Yacht Club
Radio 290
Radio 360
Radio 460
Television 730
Trans Sta
Golf Course
Drain
GROSSE ILE NAVAL AIR STATION
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LS
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LIVINGSTONE
RSTBURG
RSTBURG
SHED TIMBERS CAME
FAMILIES DUCKED TO
OF MINUTES THE ROOF WAS TORN
BARN FLATTENED
INSIDE THE BARN WAS LYING.
A CREAM SEPARATOR WHICH
LYING IN THE BACKYARD 20

ISTERS TEAR TREES LIKE MATCHWOOD, LOSS $200,000 IN VILLAGE

STAR MAY 14 1956

By FRED McCLEMENT
Star Staff Correspondent

Windsor, May 14—A vicious tornado, one of 18 that ripped through Michigan and Ontario over the week-end, struck the farming community of McGregor, 20 miles south of here seriously injuring three persons and causing damage estimated at more than $200,000.

Three in Sarnia Area

Three homes were wrecked and their furniture scattered for miles. Six other farm homes were so badly smashed the families moved out of them, and 13 bank barns were levelled—all within a three-mile path.

Injured and in Metropolitan hospital here are Charles Root, Jr., and his two-months-old daughter, Cathy, and Mrs. Fay Wall, a housekeeper who lived in an adjoining house. All told, provincial police rushed 16 persons to hospitals after they pulled them from the twisted wreckage of their homes.

At least three twisters were seen in the Sarnia area—two over Lake Huron, and the other near the city, but the deadly tail of the latter never touched the ground. Violent winds were reported in the La Salle and Tecumseh areas of Essex county and torrential rains flooded farm lands and roads from here to London.

The tornadoes did not come as any mystery from the dark thunderclouds that spawned them. All Saturday afternoon the radio and newspapers were warning of the storm threat and as radar tracked the threads of destruction across the country, residents of Michigan and Ontario were warned.

Mrs. Charles Root, Sr. and her husband were driving through the village of McGregor en route to have supper with Charles Root, Jr., his wife and three children and another family, Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Harvey and their five children. It was a few minutes after 7 p.m. The couple were listening to the tornado news on their car radio. Suddenly the announcer said one of the twisting storms was reported south of Windsor.

Was Panic Stricken

"It looked out of the car window and no more than a mile from us, I saw a huge black funnel," said Mrs. Root. "I was panic-stricken. We raced south along the highway to my son's home and ran into the house. I yelled for everyone to get down on the floor, there was a tornado coming. It was heading right for us with a roar like a thousand express trains. I don't recall much else except the ground floor devoid of [illegible] yards from where I had been a few seconds before. There was nothing but odd pieces of furniture where the house once stood."

Hidden in the rubble, which by now included trees, parts of automobiles and trucks from other farms, were the two Root families of seven persons and the seven members of the Harvey family.

Across the highway and a mile south of the village, Mrs. Fred Cowley was preparing supper for herself and her husband. She glanced out of the west kitchen window and saw the 100 yard-wide black funnel leading across the pastures directly for the home. She screamed to he husband and both of them fell to the floor beside a bathtub. The tornado spared the house from total destruction.

Huge Barn Levelled

But it levelled a huge bank barn, a driving shed, a wood shed and a small barn. It left unscratched a dog that was chained to one building and a pony that was in its stall in another building. It scattered parts of the barn and farm machinery for more than a mile. Trees were snapped like matchsticks. Hydro and telephone lines didn't fall limply to the ground. They were lashed like whips across the fields, tangling with trees and fences thousands of yards from where they were ripped from poles.

Ernie Dorey was in his farm home, half a mile from the Root place. With him were his housekeeper, Fay Wall, 52, and her daughter Elizabeth, eight, and two boys visiting him, Leonard Colombe, 10 and his brother Richard, 12. They saw the funnel before they heard its heart-chilling roar. And that's all they remembered until they regained consciousness on the rubble of the home that was scattered for hundreds of yards all over the farm field. The tornado lifted Dorey's new truck and carried it 100 yards through the air and set it gently down on the site where the farm house once stood.

It carried 104 yellow baby chicks into the air and set them down in a big field. It took the two young brothers almost the entire day Sunday to retrieve the tiny birds — none of them dead or injured. It took the new electric stove and twisted the hot plates and elements into rubble. What was left of the house was [illegible] deposited them all over the countryside. Parts of cars were hangig form trees and houses for some distance. Said one police officer: "It will take a year to clean out one bush lot — it's so full of old cars and metal."

The twister continued working its way eastward, ripping out barns and homes. Nicolas Telek and his wife saw their huge barn levelled to the height of the hay within it and the driving sheds disappear. Their house suffered only shingle and window damage. Twelve cows in their barn crawled out through the matchwood after the storm passed.

The funnel skipped and danced its way across the fields. It took away the barn and farm buildings of Clement Gignac. It levelled the orchard and lawn trees of Don McKinnon. It smashed the barn of Frank Pagliard, leaving half a dozen horses without a roof for the night. Stan Harswell's house was shaken three feet from its foundations and the inside ofthe place looked as if a giant hand had systematically hurled everything into a heap of firewood.

27 Barns Wrecked

OPP Cpl. Ted Craig of Essex who reached the scene to help the victims in the deluge of rain that followed, reported that 27 barns had been wrecked. He said tractors, machinery, trucks and buildings were severely damaged.

Yesterday, the bewildered victims of the storm worried again as tornado warnings were issued from the U.S. weather bureau ofice in Detroit.

At Selfridge field, the weather station watched the little threads of white appear on their radar after 5 p.m. Saturday and within a short space of time many communities were alerted, including their own field installations. A score of twisters were reported coming to earth and causing wdiespread damage and death. The tail of one twister hit sparsely populated Ojibway, just west of here. It moved on toward Amherstburg and disappeared into a cloud after ripping out hydro and telephone lines.

At one section of Tecumseh, nine iles east of here, homes were blanketed with religious laflets which were sucked up from a wreckage of a Detroit suburban church. Clouds of rock wool insulation fell on other Windsor suburbs from wrecked homes in Michigan towns.

One black twister passed over Allen park and Lincoln park, Michigan, without touching the ground. It crossed over the Detroit river and continued in the air without reaching out to strike the ground. Said oner esident of Essex county: "We have no storm cellars here. We just look up at the sky and pray."

WRECK ROAD SIGNS

RURAL MAILBOXES

Windsor, Ont., May 14 — (CP) — Dozens of traffic signs and rural mailboxes were destroyed during the week-end along a two-mile stretch of Highway 39 at nearby Puce. Other mailboxes were wrecked but left standing.

Disruptions Said Worse Than Hazel's

GLOBE MAY 14 1956

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Floods that spilled over hundreds of acres of farm land in Southwestern Ontario.

Hail that destroyed crops and damaged greenhouses in Kent and Essex counties.

A crashing thunderstorm that knocked out power services across Ontario and in many parts of New York State.

The thunderstorm hit Ontario a few minutes after 9 p.m. Sun-

Hydro came close to ending its first five decades as it had begun then — with no power to supply its customers.

Disruptions in light and communication services were even more widespread than those which followed Hurricane Hazel.

A. W. Manby, Hydro general manager, said that no single break could be pinpointed as the major factor in the breakdown of services. There had been many breaks—one for a time knocked out the Adam Beck Niagara No. 2 plant, one of the province's major sources of power. Others occurred at Ottawa River plants.

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Power supervisors worked through the night on this regrouping of Ontario's power network. By 11 p.m., services had been restored to most of the province.

WINDSOR STAR OCT 13 1956

ornado Fund Payment tarts in Area Monday

OCT 13 1956

Claims of Victims Amount to $85,000 While $36,083 Total Set for Relief

6/F/1

Payments from the Essex County Tornado Relief Fund ill begin Monday, it was announced in Amherstburg Friday ight.

Fund committee members said total of $33,775 will be paid t to tornado victims in Anderon, Colchester North and Colester South.

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MAY 29 1956

See Tax Treaty Hit by Action

MAY 29 1956

WINDSOR, May 28 — (CP) — A house-to-house canvass will be conducted this week-end in Southwestern Essex County to raise money for a $40,000 tornado relief fund.

The fund, which already stands at $2,000, is to aid victims of the twister which two weeks ago caused extensive damage to farms in several Essex County townships. Fund Chairman Eugene Whelan, Reeve of Anderson Township, said early results are encouraging.

Boy Scouts have joined squads of local farmers helping clear debris from the twister which injured 16 persons of three county farms. Most of the damage was in Anderdon and Colchester North townships.

GLOBE AND MAIL. MON. MAY 14 1956.

2.

Provincial police posted extra men at all main thoroughfares during and after the storm in the Blenheim area. Nearly every basement in Blenheim was flooded. The town's volunteer fire brigade worked throughout the night clearing the mud.

Hail and high winds smashed windows on the north and northeast sides of scores of homes and barns in the Bothwell area.

The Sydenham River, swollen by intermittent heavy rains during the last three days, burst its banks at many spots. Farmlands were inundated and farmers said more than 80 per cent of the crops now sown would have to be replaced.

The watershed of the Sydenham's north branch drains most of Lambton County and the east branch snakes across all of North Kent to drain northern portions of South Lambton and Middlesex counties.

West of Wallaceburg, pumphouses were working at top speed removing water at the rate of 38,000 gallons a minute.

Dead livestock, caught in fields and farmlands as well as mud and debris, clogged upstream grates and lodged against bridges. Police detoured traffic around Wallaceburg's flooded streets.

Bridgeport, Elmira, Listowel, Brantford, Elora and Fergus.

In the wake of Friday storm, reports of damage, disrupted communications and snarled traffic rolled into police offices.

Kitchener officials reported railways, roads and bridges throughout the area under water.

Lightning struck the homes of brothers, one in Waterloo and one in Kitchener. It did minor house damage in one and blew out a television set in the other. The houses are owned by John and Jerry Lavigne.

In Thurlow Township 18 cows, five calves and 32 pigs died when lightning ignited a barn. Machinery also was lost in the blaze which caused an estimated loss of $15,000.

Hamilton police blamed driving rain for the death of an elderly man struck by a car as he crossed the street.

An Owen Sound farmhouse was struck by lightning and caught fire with resulting damage of $5,000. Jimmy Donaldson, 9, at Owen Sound was struck by a car during the rainstorm but escaped with bruises.

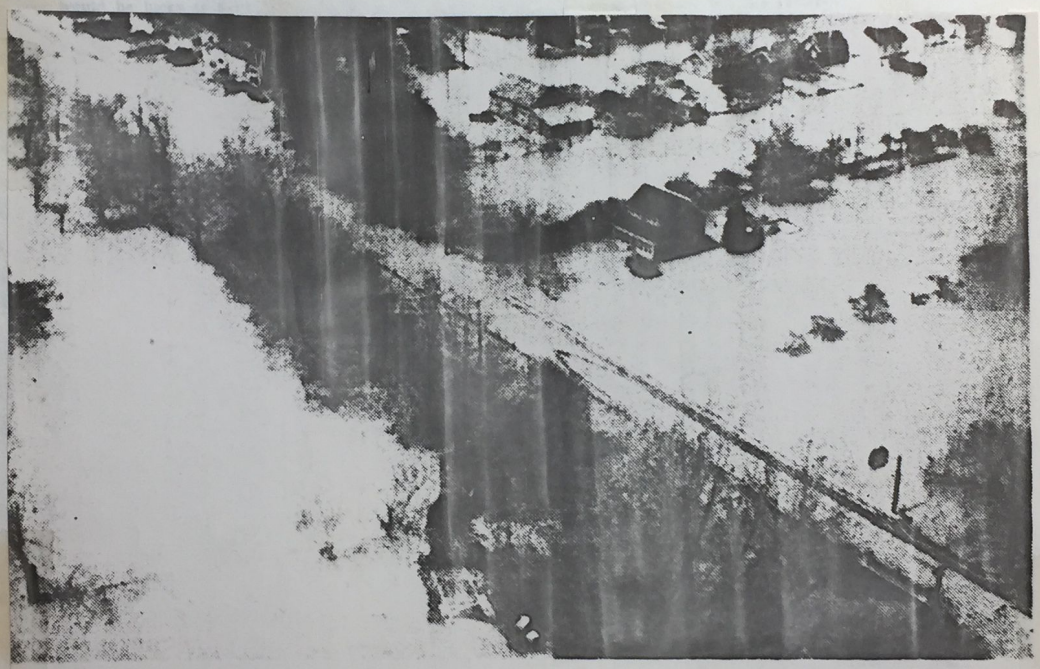
At Stratford, boats rescued a wedding party from an inn where it had been marooned for several hours by the Avon River.

Fog forced a plane to circle Toronto's Malton Airport for one hour after a 90-minute flight from New York. It was then diverted to Buffalo.

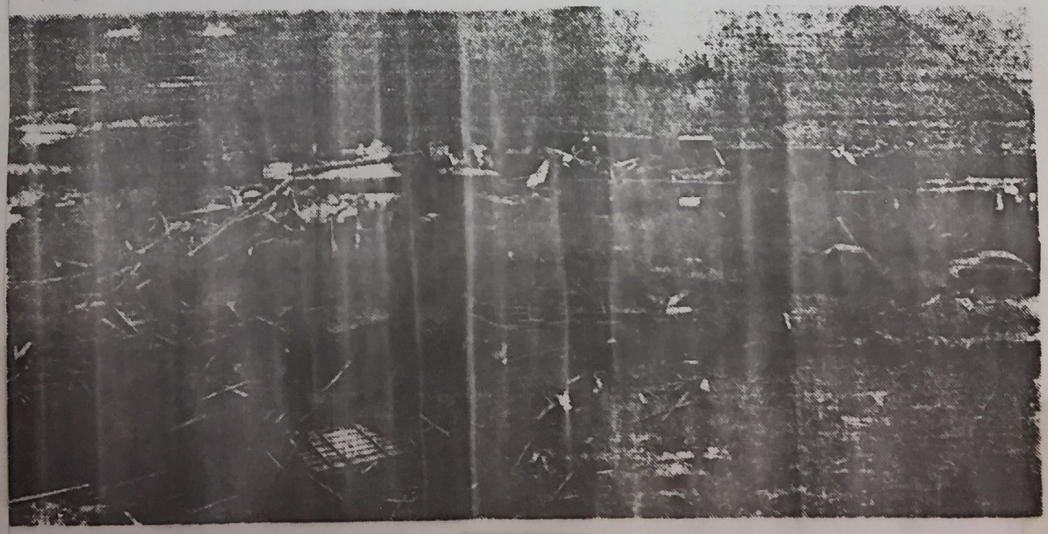
Stories of flooded basements, road washouts, and blackouts caused by fallen hydro wires issued from centres throughout Southwestern Ontario.

Railway beds were washed out on the CNR lines at Owen Sound, where incoming trains were delayed for four hours, and at Marde, Fergus and Milverton.

CPR lines were washed out at two points near Galt. Rail traffic was delayed several hours while line beds were repaired. A bridge also was reported damaged.



Aerial photo of Chatham after two storms in two nights shows water rising over Queen St., at south end of city.



Near village of McGregor, violent winds flattened this barn and scattered debris 500 feet.

...AY 14 1956.

...n Hits Crops; Essex Prepared For New Storm

By ELDON STONEHOUSE

Leamington, May 13 (Staff).—Residents of Essex County pre-parcel for the worst tonight as tornado warnings continued to be broadcast to the extreme southwestern section of Ontario.

Saturday, thunderstorms, hail and high winds swept the area leaving a trail of damage that may be counted in the millions.

Hailstones pelted down on Essex County farms, tearing up crops which had just made a start.

Hardest hit by the hail were asparagus and cauliflower which were literally torn to ribbons.

Heavy rains which accompanied the wind and hail cut deep ruts into the light soil and took a large slice from the potential profits of early potato growers. Seed potatoes were washed to the surface and farmers estimated they would be lucky to have a 50-per-cent crop in July.

Fruit-growing areas were also hit.

But yesterday, with temperatures at mid-summer levels, farmers were chiefly concerned with the threat of more tornadoes.

Essex County has many greenhouses and hotbeds for the vegetable and tobacco crops that are its specialty. Heavy storms can raise havoc with such structures and cause damage that would run into several millions of dollars.

Hail Like Golf Balls

London, Ont., May 13.—Flood and hail have caused heavy damage to crops and property in the Sydenham valley east of Florence. Saturday night hailstones larger than golf balls peppered Aberfeldy area east of Shetland pounding wheat fields and breaking windows.

One of the hardest hit homes was that of Charles Dark who had just returned from the Kincardine Hospital after receiving treatment for severe burns. Hail smashed 17 windows of his home and acres of fall wheat are under water.

The river road between the 3rd and 4th concession of Euphemia Township is covered with water isolating the farm of Rey Debbyn.

The heavy current of the flooded Sydenham is cutting away the westerly approach to the new Florence Bridge.

TUES. MAY 15 1956.

3.

Storm Property Loss Placed at $1,000,000

Tornadoes, torrential rain and thunder and lightning ravaged Southern Ontario during the weekend. In the calm aftermath of yesterday damage to property alone was estimated at $1,000,000.

Scores of persons suffered injuries but only one death was attributed to the storm.

Private pilot Paul Howard Ryan, 29, of Chicago, died in hospital after crashing in a light plane near Dunnville, at the height of the storm.

Sixteen persons were injured by a tornado in Essex County. Fourteen of the injured were in one farmhouse destroyed by the twister. It ripped a two-mile gash through McGregor, 15 miles south of Windsor.

Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener, Buffalo and small Ontario points experienced partial blackouts when a lightning bolt struck a big transformer at the Sir Adam Beck generating station No. 2 at Niagara Falls.

J. Mervyn Hambley, assistant general manager of operations of the Ontario Hydro-Electric Power Commission reported: "A series of severe electrical storms over the weekend caused the system to pretty well fall apart."

In Kitchener a pageant to celebrate Hydro's 50 years of light had just started when the lights went out in Memorial Arena. Hydro power was turned on in Kitchener then named Berlin 50 years ago today.

This springs bad weather climaxed by the weekend's destruction may cost Ontario farmers $40,000,000 in crop losses a former Ontario minister of agriculture said.

T. L. Kennedy said bad weather has delayed farmers planting their grain. Also, he said, with stocks of hay nearing their end, further hardship will have to be faced by farmers as the cold and damp has cut down grass growth.

Tobermory also suffered from a tornado which ripped through the village at midnight Sunday. It smashed a sawmill, a net shed and moved at least two cottages. No one was injured.

The Ontario storms were tail-ends of tornadoes that gouged across the midwestern United States, killing 13 and injuring 300.

Water levels were receding in the Thames River watershed, and there were reports of only isolated flooding conditions in Western Ontario.

Levels of both the north and south branches of the Thames in this area had dropped sharply in the past 24 hours.

One of the major danger points was at Chatham, but late yesterday the Thames River appeared to have stopped rising after reaching within eight inches of flood level.

Workman Injured

A 35-year-old construction worker escaped serious injury yesterday when a brick wall collapsed and fell on him. Paul Rudek of Argyle St. was treated at St. Michael's Hospital for leg bruises.

He was one of a group of workers demolishing a building on Mutual St. to make way for a new CBC TV studio. The building, with gusts of 50 mph, was timed for the collapse.

Rudek heard the wall crack and jumped clear of most of the falling wall but his legs broke through a section of the floor and he was pinned by bricks and glass until rescued by workmen.

Call Emergency Meeting

Parry Sound, May 14 — A midnight cloudburst which dropped five inches of rain on this town of 5,100 did damage estimated at more than $100,000.

Tonight Mayor G. M. Taylor called an emergency meeting of council with the public utilities commission to organize the mopping up. The mayor also contacted Alistair Johnston, MPP (PC Parry Sound) and asked him to have the Provincial Government consider it as a disaster area.

Mrs. Agnes Wing, chairman of the public works committee, today called in a construction firm to fill in a trench running the length of Hillcrest Ave., 10 feet deep and eight feet wide. The raging water cut through to expose a broken watermain and sewer. At the intersections of Hillcrest Ave. and William St there is just a mass of rubble with wide ditches on either side.

CNR service was cut off for almost 12 hours with trains being rerouted over CPR tracks. At the CNR freight yards, three freight cars were left stranded, when rushing water cut away the roadbed.

Residents of Beaver St., at the rear of Victory School were taken from their homes at 3 a.m. when the water backed over the road to a depth of four feet. Two service stations were undermined and a large tank truck was left jack-knifed in a deep hole.

GLOBE AND MAIL, MONDAY MAY 14 1956.
STORM DATE: 8 pm. SAT. MAY 12 1956

1.

Toronto Fog-Shrouded

Storm Batters W. Ontario, Knocks Out Hydro Lines

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Power supervisors worked through the night on this regrouping of Ontario's power network. By 11 p.m., services had been restored to most of the province.

Two-thirds of Hamilton was blacked out for nearly 30 minutes. Most Toronto areas fed by 60-cycle current — and some on 25-cycle lines — were without hydro for 25 minutes. Hospitals in both cities switched to auxiliary power plants.

TTC services in Toronto were generally slowed, a spokesman said. Only in one area, on Queen St. E., were cars forced to stop when the power went dead for five minutes.

Telegraph and newspaper teletype networks were useless for the duration of the power failure. Networks affected were all in Toronto and in Southern Ontario.

Five counties in Western New York and the cities of Buffalo and Niagara Falls were blacked out for nearly 1½ hours.

The storm dumped one-third of an inch of rain on the Toronto area in less than an hour. More thundershowers were foreeast for today along with high temperatures and humidity.

All TCA flights in and out of Toronto were cancelled as the fog moved in just before midnight. Flights scheduled to Toronto were diverted to Buffalo and Montreal.

Tornado Cuts Wide Swath, Injures 17

Special to The Globe and Mail

Windsor, May 13.—Seventeen persons were injured last night as a tornado, gale-force winds, torrential rains, hail and lightning combined to give Southwestern Ontario one of its wildest nights.

The tornado slashed a two-mile path of destruction through the McGregor district, 15 miles southeast of here. Eleven persons were dragged or crawled from the wreckage of one farm home which was flattened by the swirling wind.

Property damage in the McGregor area was estimated at $100,000.

Farmers in Kent and Essex counties counted heavy losses after hail and rain swamped hundreds of acres of rich farmlands. Kent County farmers planned an emergency meeting for today to attempt an estimate of their losses and to make plans to offset them.

Early today the U.S. Weather Bureau at Detroit said the danger of further tornadoes, previously predicted for Southern Michigan and the extreme sections of Southwestern Ontario, had passed. Scattered thundershowers were expected overnight for the areas.

Yesterday's tornado struck Colchester Township at 8 p.m., carving its devastation in a southeasterly direction. It flattened the one-story home of Charles Root, 25-year-old North Colchester Township farmer, who, with 10 others, was spending a quiet evening at home.

Those who could crawled from the wreckage. Others had to be rescued.

"It was just lucky the house was of light construction or we might have had a real disaster," said Cpl. C. F. Elford of the Essex OPP detachment.

Root and his wife, Betty, 31, are in hospital being treated for cuts and shock. Their 10-week-old daughter, Cathy, though not seriously injured, was placed in hospital with her mother. The others were treated and released.

Mrs. Fay Walls, 52, was injured when the roof was blown from the home of Ernie Dorey, 55, where she is employed as housekeeper. Dorey and his three children received minor injuries.

A vacant home in the village was demolished. Two other residences were damaged. The tornado, which struck at 8 p.m., also caused minor damage to six homes and damaged outbuildings on at least 13 farms. Communications were severed and trees were uprooted.

Tornadoes also touched briefly at La Salle, south of Windsor, and at Amherstburg, 10 miles farther south, on the Detroit River. A general store at La Salle was blown into Turkey Creek.

Onion and potato crops in the Tilbury East area were a total loss, Reeve Gordon Coutts said.

Torrential rains accompanied by hailstones as large as golf balls, inundated the county's fall wheat land.

Farmer Calvin Bland of Bothwell said he scooped shovels full of hailstones from his wheat field.

Reeve Coutts said hundreds of acres in Tilbury East were under water. The Town of Tilbury was the county's hardest-hit municipality.

All the town's drains, which run into overflowing Lake St. Clair, backed up during the height of the storm. Work crews pumped out basements, but could do nothing else except wait for the lake to lower.

The town's largest industry, Chatco Steel Products, stood in a small lake.

Tilbury's main street at No. 2 Highway, one of Southern Ontario's busiest traffic arteries, was blocked off by police as water covered sidewalks and surged through store doorways.

In the Blenheim area, 17 miles southwest of Chatham, two cars smashed into six pine trees that fell across No. 3 Highway at Glen Gordon Manor, a district landmark.

McGREGOR SAT MAY 12 1956

5/12/1956 6.55 p.m. Touched down in Allen Park. Moved through Lincoln Park, and Ecorse, and across river into Ontario. 22 injured, $500,000 damage in U. S. Apparently little damage in Canada.

DETROIT W.S.F.O