



Disaster!: Stories of Destruction and Death in Nineteenth-Century New Jersey (Rivergate Regionals Collection)

Alan A. Siegel

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By every measure, Hurricane Sandy was a disaster of epic proportions. The deadliest storm to strike the East Coast since Hurricane Diane in 1955, Sandy killed thirty-seven people and caused more than \$30 billion in damages in 2012 to New Jersey alone. But earlier centuries experienced their own catastrophes.

In *Disaster!*, Alan A. Siegel brings readers face-to-face with twenty-eight of the deadliest natural and human-caused calamities to strike New Jersey between 1821 and 1906, ranging from horrific transportation accidents to uncontrolled fires of a kind rarely seen today. As Siegel writes in his introduction, “None of the stories end well—there are dead and injured by the thousands as well as millions in property lost.” Accounts of these fires, steamboat explosions, shipwrecks, train wrecks, and storms are told in the words of the people who experienced the events firsthand, lending a sense of immediacy to each story.

Disasters bring out the worst as well as the best in people. Siegel focuses on the bravest individuals, including harbor pilot Thomas Freeborn who drowned while attempting to save fifty passengers and crew of a ship foundering on the Jersey Shore, and Warwicke Greene, a fourteen-year-old schoolboy who rescued the injured “like the hero of an epic poem” after a train wreck in the Hackensack Meadows. These and many other stories of forgotten acts of courage in the face of danger will make *Disaster!* an unforgettable read.

Fires

Newark — October 27, 1836

Cape May City — September 5, 1856

Cape May City — August 31, 1869

Cape May City — November 9, 1878

Newton — September 22, 1873

Caven Point, Jersey City Refinery Fire — May 10, 1883

The Standard Oil Fire, Bayonne — July 5, 1900

Steamboat Disasters

New Jersey, Camden — March 15, 1856

Isaac Newton, Fort Lee — December 5, 1863

Train Wrecks

Burlington — August 29, 1855

Hackensack Meadows — January 15, 1894

May's Landing — August 11, 1880

Absecon Island — July 30, 1896

Bordentown — February 21, 1901

The Thoroughfare — October 28, 1906

Shipwrecks

John Minturn, South of Mantoloking — February 15, 1846

Powhattan, Beach Haven — April 15, 1854

New Era, Deal Beach — November 13, 1854

New York, North of Barnegat Inlet — December 20, 1856

Vizcaya and *Cornelius Hargraves*, Off Barnegat Bay — October 30, 1890

Delaware, Barnegat Bay — July 8, 1898

Natural Disasters

Blizzard of '88 — March 11–14, 1888

The Great September Gale — September 3, 1821

Statewide Hurricane — September 10, 1889

New Brunswick Tornado — June 19, 1835

Camden Tornado — July 26, 1860

Camden Tornado — August 3, 1885

Cherry Hill Tornado — July 13, 1895

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From reader reviews:

Stephen Vancleave:

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Melody Grissom:

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