

Trail of Death & Destruction

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Winds of hurricane force brought death and destruction to Albury and surrounding districts in the early afternoon of September 20, 1923. The *Albury Banner* reported “a trail of roofless houses and sheds, levelled fences and fallen trees marks the path of the hurricane from southern Victoria to Goulburn.”

Thick red dust blanketed the area, roofs were destroyed, trees uprooted or snapped off, a number of brick walls and chimneys blown over with power and telegraph lines severely damaged. Many residents sought the dubious safety of the streets rather than facing the prospect of having their homes blown in on them.

At the old biscuit factory, by then used as a furniture warehouse, on the southern corner of Volt Lane and Olive Street, the roof was completely blown off and part of the brickwork demolished. Inside, the proprietor, Mr Graham Brougham, was knocked unconscious but escaped serious injury.

Sheltering against the building outside were two little girls, Elsie Spargo aged 11 and Patsy Treloar aged 10. Both were extricated from the rubble and taken to ‘Chelvey,’ Miss Walsh’s Private Hospital opposite. Elsie died soon afterwards and Patsy was removed to the Public Hospital, suffering compound fractures. The hand of fate dealt a cruel blow, as schools were closed for the afternoon to celebrate Education Day.



Damage to Reis' Model Store – Sodens Hotel far right

Reis' Model Store, operating as The Albury Co-operative Stores (pictured), on the corner of David and Wilson Streets, had its parapet and part of the roof dumped into the millinery and drapery departments. Several young lady assistants had narrow escapes.

Wagga, Culcairn, Lavington, Leneva and Wodonga were among places reporting serious damage. In Wodonga, several shops in Sydney Street (High Street), had verandas torn off,

with others damaged. Part of the State School's roof was destroyed and the Racecourse Grandstand 'relocated.'

The *Albury Banner* reported that the storm "lasted less than a quarter of an hour, but during that brief space more than £10,000 worth of damage was done in Albury alone." The *Border Morning Mail* informed its readers that most insurance policies do not protect property against "an Act of God or the King's Enemies."