

Special Edition

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Trees Of Salem: Gone With The Wind

by April Edmondson

At approximately 8:45 pm strong winds ripped through the core of historic Old Salem. After only a few brief minutes of whirling winds, centuries of memories were left devastated.

Salem square was left in shambles, leaving a path of 100-year-old trees thrown to the ground. The white fence around the square was hardly standing.

Winds between 60-100 miles per hour ripped about one third of the roof off Main Hall, leaving rafters bare. Lehman Hall also lost part of its roof. Many other buildings on campus had several roofing tiles knocked loose. Many windows in Main Hall, South, and Sisters dormitories were blown out.

The storm completely swept away the arbor leading to the Rondthaler-Gramley House.

Fortunately, this building received no damage.

The English wing of Main Hall was "shaken," leaving behind a trail of shattered glass and a forced entrance caused by the strong winds.

God's Acre was also heavily damaged. Many of the cypress and oak trees were uprooted along the walk way. Some of the normally flat gravestones were pitched at awkward angles. The white arch's and brick gateways are laying in many pieces along the path.

The famous tea pot, which has been the symbol of local hospitality since 1858, "popped" its lid.

Around Winston-Salem the storm left power outages, trees down, phones out-of-order, and individuals helpless. Perhaps the hardest hit area, other than Old Salem, was the Ardmore section.



About 100 homes were bombarded with trees and stray branches. Cars were damaged and power was still out as late as Tuesday afternoon.

Both the Forsyth County Sheriff's Department and the Winston-Salem Police Department were busy Friday after the storm moved through the area. The police Department reported that the damage was more extensive than they had believed at first. Additional officers were called in Friday night to assist in handling accidents, direct traffic, and prevent looting.

On Sunday a preliminary count estimated 217 houses with minor damage, 81 with major damage, and seven homes destroyed. Approximately 20 businesses were affected (*Winston-Salem Journal*, May 7, 1989).

Baptist and Forsyth Memorial hospitals were not overwhelmed by medical emergencies. About 40 people were seen in the emergency room shortly after the storm, however none were admitted.

Many of the schools were severely damaged. City and county schools were closed Monday and Tuesday due to structural damage and power outages.

Winston-Salem State University sustained an enormous amount of damage also. Many windows were blown out from various buildings across campus. Even more serious damages include a brick wall being removed from the nurses' building. The cost of repair is estimated at approximately \$2.3 million.

Wake Forest did not report any damage. Although there was little damage to that part of town they did experience a power outage.

The Smith Reynolds Airport sustained a great deal of damage. A dozen planes were destroyed and airplane fuel was dispersed onto the runways. The estimated cost of the damage to planes and buildings is between \$15-\$30 million.

Remarkably no one in Forsyth County was seriously injured.