

Aug. 31, 1886

The Earthquake Edition

THE EARTHQUAKE

CHARLOTTE GETS A SEVERE SHAKING UP.

An Unparalleled Occurrence in This City--Last Night's Scenes of Fright and Excitement--A Veritable Earthquake--Chimneys Shaken Down, Window Glass Shattered, and People Driven into the Streets--Stampeding from Church and Opera House--Scenes and Incidents--Additional Reports Wednesday Morning.

CHARLOTTE, N. C., SEPTEMBER 1st, 1886.

Last night was one that will long be remembered in Charlotte. It was a night of fear and quaking and terror, for our city was shaken by a veritable earthquake. The shock came at 10:10 o'clock, and five minutes thereafter the streets were filled with frightened, trembling people. It was a scene such as was never before known in this city.

The shock was of sufficient force and severity to not only shake the strongest buildings in the city, but to shake down chimneys, shatter window glass, strew floors with plaster, and bring crowds of frightened people from their houses into the open air.

The shock was felt all over the city, and the soundest sleeper was shaken from bed and sent from the house in affright.

Previous to the shake-up, the night had been remarkably still; the skies were clear, but there was a hazy mist suggestive of an evening in early spring. Many of our people had retired for the night while others were at church and at the opera house. In front of the Central Hotel the usual quota of people were sitting idly in the big red chairs under the electric light; a string of hacks was drawn up in front of the hotel, and the hackmen were dozing in their seats; in THE OBSERVER office, the night force were busily clicking the keys into the composing sticks, while the busy editors were engaged in the labors of driving the pencil across the paper, when, with out a moment's warning, there was an ominous shake of the building. The lights flickered, plaster came down in sprinkling sheets, and before one could raise his eyes from the paper, there was another shake, and a single shrill and piercing shriek rang out on the streets from some frightened person:

"The earthquake!"

By this time, a wild scene was being enacted on the streets. From every doorway people rushed out and gathered in the middle of the streets. The dozing hackdrivers alarmed from their sleep, whipped up their horses, and the rattling carriage wheels seemed to add confusion to the scene.

Shock followed shock in quick succession, lasting about 60 seconds, when quiet ensued. The earth became quiet, but the people did not. Mingled with the excited groups on Independence square were half a dozen figures in night attire. People were wringing their hands, and moving about in a wild, excited way, and every face was blanched.

As soon as the shocks ceased, an OBSERVER reporter struck out for a tour of the city, and never one house did he pass but that lights were burning and the residents were grouped in the doorways or out in the yards. It was after ten o'clock at night, yet there was, possibly, not a sleeping soul in Charlotte save babes in the cradles. It was impossible at first, owing to the excitement, to gather any tangible reports as to the result of the earthquake in the city, but after a time, when the people were in a measure calmed, news of its effects in different parts of Charlotte was heard.

The first and most serious damage reported was at the residence of Gen. R. Barringer, on Tryon street, where the tumbling of brick and the crashing of glass created a racket that was heard for blocks around. The chimneys to Gen. Barringer's elegant residence were shaken down, and a large quantity of glass was shattered. The General and his family were asleep and they were fearfully awakened by the suddenness of their awakening. The slate on his roof was also damaged, but to what extent could not be learned, last night. The plaster in Dr. J. H. McAden's

drug store fell to the floor; plastering was also shaken to the floor in the residence of THE OBSERVER's associate editor, on Seventh street and in a number of houses in the neighborhood. In every frame house, the timbers cracked, and in many instances bricks were loosened from chimneys. At the residence of Mr. Frank Snider three lamps were overturned and the plastering cracked. From all sections of the city similar reports were received.

At the opera house, the play "Under the Lash," was in progress, and the second scene was being enacted, when the building began to crack. The people arose in their seats, but all appeared to be calm and collected, and fears that were at first entertained of a stampede were at once allayed. The second shock came, and then there was a hurried, but orderly exit from the building. In two minutes the house was cleared, the lights were out, the play was ended.

The scene where the greatest excitement ensued was at Biddle Institute, where a colored campmeeting was in progress. As the first shock came, the congregation were in the midst of a hymn, and every voice was instantly stilled. Another shock came, and there was a stampede from the building. The shock was sufficient to rock the building with such force that the bell in the tower sounded twice.

At the Tryon street Baptist church, a congregational meeting was in progress, when the building began to rock, and there was a rush for the street. The church was cleared of its occupants almost in a moment, and without accident to any one.

A meeting of colored people was in progress at the city hall and they stampeded in a lively manner.

About ten minutes after the first series of shocks, four in number, were over, still another, but a lighter shock was felt, and this only served to increase the alarm of the people. Many of our citizens, fearing that the danger was not yet over, moved out into their front yards, and as late as 12 o'clock, whole households could be seen camped out in the open air. Especially was this the case in the Smithville section, where the alarm appeared to be greatest, if it were possible for the people of one section of our city to be more seriously frightened than others.

Not a few families, who were asleep when the shake came, dressed and remained up throughout the night, dreading another shock, yet prepared as best they could to receive it. The hotel office was thronged with men recounting their experiences and the incidents of the quake until long after midnight, and even at that hour the streets were alive with people.

From the best indications obtainable, it seems certain that the course of the shock was from South to North. The first jerk came in quick succession and lasted for 60 seconds. After that there was a lull for ten or twelve minutes, when another shock, almost as severe as was the first came.

In the limited time at our disposal it is impossible to present all the scenes and incidents in Charlotte, of this remarkable occurrence; but it was in truth a night of terror, and one that will be remembered for aye, by all who experienced it.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

All Calm and Serene--Additional Reports of Damage Done by the Shake-up.

When THE OBSERVER forms went to press yesterday morning, all was quiet in the city, but in nearly every residence lights blazed forth, showing that the occupants were not inclined to retire to rest.

Just about two o'clock a distinct shock was felt, but it was only momentary, and not as severe as the shocks during the earlier part of the night. This 2 o'clock shake was followed at 4 a. m., by another slight but very distinct disturbance.

Yesterday it was ascertained that the interior of the First Presbyterian church was damaged, the floor at and about the pulpit being strewn with shattered fragments of plaster of Paris moulding. The moulding was shaken from the arch behind the pulpit.

Bricks were shaken from chimneys in all sections of the city. At Dr. George Graham's residence, on the

corner of Seventh and Church streets the chimney tops tumbled off, and plastering was shaken down. In the basement under Fischesser's saloon, the floor was strewn with plastering.

Mr. S. Wittkowsky returned this morning from a trip down the Carolina Central road, and he reports that at Lumberton, Shoe Heel, Wadesboro, Rockingham and all places along the line the shock was felt severely, and great excitement prevailed.

Mr. J. J. Watts, who lives near the city, reports that he was badly shaken up, and felt five distinct shocks at his house. A chimney to a residence near him was thrown down.

Farmers from Harrisburg, who arrived in the city this morning, say that the shock was felt all through that section.

Up to 10 o'clock no train had reached Wilmington from the South, since yesterday afternoon.

The chimney to the residence of Mr. R. A. McNeely, seven miles from the city, on the A. T. & O. Railroad, was shaken down, and some of the brick from the chimney were thrown a distance of 75 feet from the house.

The walls of the cotton seed oil mills, in the northern section of the city, were damaged by being cracked.

The court house walls were strained, and some ugly cracks were yesterday discovered in the building.

The residence of Capt. C. C. Kennedy, train dispatcher, at the Trade street depot, was lifted apparently from its pillars, and suddenly dropped. At any rate, one or two planks were splintered, the chimneys fell down, and a cart load of brick, plaster, soot and dirt, tumbled into his bed room. He said a prayer, but he said it running.

The chimneys to Capt. J. L. Whissett's residence were also shaken down to the shingles, and the plastering was shaken to the floors.

A chimney top to the residence of Mr. J. B. Harrington was thrown down.

One of the chimneys to the OBSERVER building was destroyed, the loosened brick falling upon the tin roofs around with a mighty clattering, serving to accelerate the speed of editors and printers from the building.

The front wall to Farrior's jewelry store, in Granite row, was cracked over the third story windows.

The city water works standpipe swayed mightily, and the water could be heard splashing and churning inside the huge structure. The standpipe, however, was not damaged in the least.

Humors of the Quake.

DIFFERENT IDEAS OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE ABOUT IT--A COOL PREACHER--HUDGINS' CUDGEL.

There was more praying done in Charlotte Tuesday night than possibly ever before known here in any one night. It was a good time to be praying, all will admit. Mighty few people thought there was anything funny about it, yet some amusing incidents occurred. At Biddleville, where the camp meeting was in session, the congregated people all arose to their feet and a stampede was imminent. The presiding elder was equal to the emergency, and shouted at the top of his voice: "All keep quiet--its nothing but an earthquake!"

Strangely enough this assuring announcement had the desired effect, and the people sat down, but almost immediately the second shock came and then, earthquake or no earthquake, they stampeded.

A short while after the shocks had been felt, a colored man crossed Tryon street, in front of Wadsworth's stable. He carried on his back his mattress and bed clothing, and as he moved along under his load, he sang: "Good bye, po' sinners, I'm waitin' on de Lord."

Daniel Hudgins, porter for Brown, Weddington & Co., has for sometime past entertained an idea that certain colored men intended to assassinate him, and when he found the bed waltzing about in the room with him, he hopped out, picked up a club, and hurrying into the yard, circled around the house, expecting to meet and vanquish his enemies.

Last night quiet reigned in our city. The excitement had lulled and many people sought their beds for rest that was sorely needed.

The Railroad Sunk.

A TRESTLE GONE AND A PASSENGER TRAIN IN THE CHASM--THE ENGINEER AND FIREMAN DEAD, AND PROBABLY ONE OR MORE PASSENGERS KILLED.

Along the line of the railroad between Charlotte and Charleston, the shock was particularly severe and destructive. The road is so badly broken up, that there was no train through from Augusta to Charlotte yesterday. The only train that arrived here on the Charlotte, Columbia & Augusta road was a special "make up" train from Columbia. The breaks on the line are located beyond Augusta, on the South Carolina road.

At Langley's station, the track has sunk sheer down to a depth of ten feet below the usual level of the road bed, and this sink extends for a distance of forty yards. This trouble is of such a character as to make transfers impossible.

Near by this sink, at Horse Creek, there is trouble of a more serious character. The large trestle over Horse Creek was shaken down by the earthquake, and a passenger train of the South Carolina road plunged into the chasm. Engineer Reynolds and his fireman, whose name we have been unable to learn, were instantly killed in the wreck. It is reported that a number of the passengers were injured, and several killed, but this report cannot be verified. There is, however, no reason to believe that it is exaggerated in the least.

The passenger train on the Coast Line which left Charleston last night for Wilmington, has never yet been heard from, and its fate is unknown. This state of affairs is due to the total prostration of the telegraph wires along that line.

A Busy Day.

LIVELY TIMES IN AND AROUND THE OBSERVER OFFICE--EIGHT HUNDRED EXTRAS SOLD IN FIFTEEN MINUTES.

Yesterday was a day of great activity and animation in THE OBSERVER office. For the two o'clock morning edition, two hundred extra papers were run through the presses, but that supply was quickly exhausted and the newsboys and the public applied in vain for extra copies. Appreciating the great interest felt in the event by the public, THE OBSERVER at noon published a special edition containing all the news received up to that hour. All copies of this edition were sold from the counters in our office as fast as they came from the press. At five o'clock in the afternoon an evening edition was published, and as it came from the press the scene in and about THE OBSERVER office was unparalleled. Crowds surged about the doorway and three clerks were kept busy selling papers to the eager buyers. Within half an hour eight hundred copies of the evening edition were sold from the office, and by newsboys on the streets.

A Slight Shock Yesterday.

INCREASES APPREHENSION OF ANOTHER QUAKE--FRIGHTENED FACTORY EMPLOYEES--THE EXCITEMENT CALMING DOWN AND PEOPLE GOING TO BED.

All day long yesterday our people were anticipating and dreading another shock, but the day wore on without incident until at 5.15 p. m., when there was a slight recurrence of the well remembered vibrations of the previous night. The shock was perceptible all over the city, but lasted not more than ten seconds. Bottles in the drug stores rattled and the houses trembled, and on Church street a number of people rushed out into the open air. This shock created no little excitement and alarm, but as the hours passed and there was no recurrence of the disturbance, their fears were allayed.

In Concord, the Odell cotton factory was in full operation, but at the first shock, the frightened employees ran screaming from the building, leaving the machinery to take care of itself. Near by a negro camp meeting was in session, and the prayers of the worshippers could be heard from nearly all portions of the town. A number of chimney tops were shattered but no other damage was done in that town.

Reports from Shelby, Lincolnton, Salisbury, Statesville, and in fact all towns, big and little in the State, show that a shock was experienced of about the same severity as that in Charlotte.

POOR CHARLESTON.

THE CITY ALMOST TOTALLY DESTROYED.

St. MICHAEL'S CHURCH, St. PHILLIPS CHURCH, POLICE STATION, HIBERNIAN HALL AND OTHER PUBLIC BUILDINGS IN RUINS--FIRES AND FLOODS--ONLY 100 HOUSES INHABITABLE--THRILLING SCENES AND INCIDENTS--REPORTS BY TELEGRAPH FROM ALL SECTIONS.

About 11 o'clock yesterday telegraphic communication with Charleston was partially restored, and the news that began to come in over the wires was of a frightful character, intimating the almost total destruction of that fair city, together with Summerville, a suburban town. The news from Charleston is briefly that St. Michael's church, St. Phillips church, the Police Station, Hibernian Hall and other public buildings are in ruins. The rising waters partially submerged the city, and to add to the terrors of the scene, fires broke out in the wrecked buildings. Over twenty buildings were burned, but the fires have been extinguished. A private telegram states that there is not more than one hundred houses in the whole city that are considered inhabitable, and that the people are living in the streets, under temporary shelter of canvass. The same dispatch says that the loss of life in Charleston is between 50 and 100 people. No definite news has been received from Summerville.

Below we subjoin the telegraphic dispatches just received in relation to the earthquake:

CHARLESTON, S. C., Aug. 31.--An earthquake, such as has never been known in the history of this city, swept over Charleston last night shortly after ten o'clock, causing more loss and injury to property and far more loss of life than the cyclone of the year before. The city is wrecked, the streets are encumbered with masses of fallen bricks and telegraph and telephone wires, and up to an early hour it was almost impossible to pass from one part of the city to another. The first shock was by far the most severe. Most of the people, with their families, passed the night in the streets, which, even this morning, are crowded with people afraid to re-enter their homes. More than sixty people were killed and wounded, chiefly colored. Among the whites killed and fatally injured are M. J. Lynch, Dr. R. Alexander Hammond and Ainsley Robinson.

Fires broke out in different parts of the city immediately after the earthquake, and some are still burning, but there is no danger of spreading. There is no way of leaving the city at present.

SAVANNAH, 4 A. M.--Three distinct shocks have been felt here since midnight. The last occurred at 3:40 a. m. All the shocks were of short duration and not violent. The people are still greatly excited and are sitting out in the streets and squares, and are crowding around the telegraph and newspaper offices. No word can be obtained from Charleston. The general impression is that the city has suffered seriously. It is supposed that the cable under Ashley River is broken at Tybee Island, at the mouth of the Savannah river. The lenses in the light house were destroyed. The people on the island telephone to this city that they are in a state of terror. There can be no communication with the mainland until day-light, and all the inhabitants are assembled on highland. The island was swept by a tidal wave in August, 1881, and the people fear a similar disaster now.

NEW YORK.--The point from which the railroad leading into Charleston is reported submerged is Ravenel's, a place on the Savannah & Charleston railroad, about 18 miles distant from the city. It is probable that the part of the track under water has been covered by a heavy rise in the river. Telegrams from cities in South Carolina and Georgia say the utmost consternation prevails on account of the non-receipt of news from Charleston, and many fear that a terrible calamity has happened there.

WASHINGTON.--The Western Union manager at Wilmington sends the following: The train dispatcher of the Atlantic Coast Line has just been in, and says their section master, stationed 12 miles from Charleston, reports that the shock wrecked the

bridge near there, and says a negro from four miles north of Charleston reported that the water tank was down and the ground upheaved, displacing the tracks; that in several places the ground was cracked, and boiling water was coming from it. This report, coming from the source it does, must be taken with grains of allowance. A special engine has been started to bring in any reports available.

ASHEVILLE, N. C.--A distinct shock of earthquake was felt last night at 9:45, preceded by a loud, rumbling noise. The direction was from the Southeast. The first shock lasted a minute. Houses were violently shaken, and the inhabitants all left them and went into the streets. Another lighter shock was felt four minutes past ten. It was, however, of short duration. There were two slighter shocks subsequently at intervals of fifteen minutes. Much alarm was caused, but no damage was done.

LYNCHBURG, Va.--Special to the Advance from throughout southwest Virginia and eastern Tennessee report severe shocks of earthquake, lasting from three to five minutes, about 10 p. m. last night.

RAVENEL'S, S. C.--The railroad is under water in some places between here and Charleston twenty five miles north of here, and the earth has caved in in several places.

JACKSONVILLE, Fla.--The earthquake shock last night was quiet severe here and was felt as far south as Bartow. It commenced at 9:27 sun-time and lasted about thirty seconds.

CHARLESTON.--There was a terrible earthquake here last night at 9:50 p. m. The principal business portion of the city was destroyed and hundreds of persons were rendered homeless. Men were frantic, and women were beseeching mercy from the Almighty. The main station house, city hall Hibernian Hall and many other well known public buildings, including St. Michael's church were irreparably damaged. Many people were seriously if not fatally injured. Broad street presented a spectacle of the utmost horror. Even women armed with hatchets fought vainly to rescue the imprisoned unfortunates. Meeting street from Broad to Hazel is a wreck, and is lined with the unfortunates. To add to the horror of the scene many fires broke out and were ineffectually fought by the fire department. The night was hideous with the groans of the dying, the screams of the wounded and the prayers of the uninjured. It is impossible to estimate the loss of lives or property at present. Up to ten this morning there had been ten distinct shocks.

SAVANNAH, GA.--The earthquake is the topic of the hour. Efforts to reach Charleston have been made from all points and have failed. At Tybee the shock was more severely felt than in the city. The people on the island rushed from their houses to the beach. The oscillation lasted for several minutes. The lantern lenses in the light house were broken and the machinery of the lamps were disarranged. The keeper hurried up the tower and as soon as possible arranged a temporary light, which will have to answer until the light house supply ship reaches here. The people on the beach ran hither and thither, not knowing where to go, and fearing that every moment a tidal wave would sweep over them. The water was agitated and waves rose high on the beach. Houses on the beach swayed to and fro and shook as if they would fall to pieces. A telephone message to the News from Tybee station at four o'clock this morning, stated that the people were still gathered on the beach. A relief train has been dispatched to Charleston from this city to render assistance to sufferers, and to repair the railroad.

CHARLESTON, S. C.--At precisely 8:25 this morning another wave swept over the city, coming, as did the other, from the southwest, and going in a northwesterly direction. By that time many of the people who had been out on the public parks and open places all night had ventured into their houses to get clothing and something to eat. The approach of the shock was heralded by the usual rumbling sound, resembling distant thunder. Then, as it gradually approached, the earth quivered and heaved, and in three seconds it had passed, the sound dying out in the