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Latham Wiggins Looks Through Rubble Once His Office At Red Hill Fixtures

Three Firms May Never Recover

The storm that destroyed many homes in Southeastern North Carolina also took away some people's livelihoods.

Red Hill Fixture Co. and Modern Grain Systems near Calypso were smashed and Holt & Whitted Milling Co. Inc. in Mount Olive was tripped.

The three firms may never recover, owners say. Other companies were heavily damaged as were many homes.

Damage in Duplin County was estimated at \$3 million Friday, but the Mount Olive assessment was incomplete.

"We had 28 houses destroyed and damage to about 40," said Hiram Brinson, Duplin County's civil preparedness director. Mount Olive Civil Preparedness Director Bob Kelly said 75 homes were destroyed and another 150 damaged.

When the homeowners dig out from under the rubble, however, some will be without work because their employer is out of business.

Holt & Whitted, which employed nine people, may never recover, according to Leslie Ray Whitted. All five of the company's silos — all partially filled with grain — were ruined. Three silos, including the company's largest, were flattened.

Whitted could not estimate the damage to the livestock feed manufacturing firm. Asked if the company would return to operation, he said, "Hopefully, I don't know. We didn't have enough insurance."

"It just about wiped us out," said Latham Wiggins, owner of Red Hill Fixtures. The 12-employee firm across N.C. 117 from East Pine Forest subdivision, is a pile of rubble.

Wiggins estimated the damage at \$250,000. The firm built desks and similar furniture for schools. It had been in business since 1957.

"The big thing that hurt me was I had some large orders ready to deliver," Wiggins said. "We had the trucks backed up to the loading dock and ready to go with about \$40,000 worth of furniture."

The twister overturned the truck and winds and rain finished off the furniture, he said. He said the company had another \$25,000 worth of materials in the building. He said most were destroyed.

The woodworking machinery and tools were also damaged, but Wiggins could not estimate his loss there, either. He said the items were being taken to a small building "where we can sort through the pieces."

Of insurance, Wiggins said, "It'll cover about 20 percent. Our premiums were high because we had a lot of sawdust and flammable glues and lacquers, so we carried a very modest amount."

Wiggins said he has had to cancel several contracts and refuse a purchase order he received Friday for \$35,000 of goods.

At the Mount Olive FCX, damage is \$300,000 to \$400,000, said assistant manager Darryl Moore.

The company largely depends on manufacturing fertilizer for income. That part of the firm on South Chestnut Street was heavily damaged.

Moore said he hopes the firm can be back in the fertilizer business by this week. The other part of the company is in business and all 18 employees are at work, Moore said.

Tornadoes Hit Area, Many Hurt As Homes Levelled

Tornadoes roared through several central and eastern North Carolina towns Wednesday night, killing at least four people and injuring dozens more while knocking out power and razing buildings, houses and mobile homes, authorities said.

The first tornado in Duplin County was reported at 8:37 p.m., according to the National Weather Service.

"All the ambulances we've got in the county are up there (at the Faison-Calypso area)," said a dispatcher at the Duplin County Sheriff's Department.

"It blew some houses completely away," said the dispatcher. She said Goshen Medical Center at Faison was opened to treat some of the injured while others were taken to Duplin General Hospital and Sampson Memorial Hospital.

The dispatcher said rescue squads from Faison, Kenansville, Mount Olive and several Sampson County towns were ferrying injured people to medical centers.

"All we know is we've got a lot of them," said the dispatcher. "We're trying to get people with chainsaws to cut people out of houses and poles of stuff that fell on them."

An emergency room nurse at Duplin General Hospital in Kenansville said at 10:30 p.m., "They're bringing them in. It's kind of chaos here."

Duplin General Hospital treated 29 county residents injured from the Wednesday night tornadoes. An additional 43 Duplin residents of the tornado-struck area were sent to Wayne Memorial Hospital in Goldsboro. Tornado victims were also sent to Sampson Memorial in Clinton.

The numbers are still being added up. But the toll of Wednesday's killer tornadoes in North Carolina already includes 44 dead, 803 injured, 2,279 homeless and more than 100 million in damage, most of it to farms.

President Reagan on Friday declared a major disaster for the states of North Carolina and South Carolina in the aftermath of the tornadoes. The action will permit federal money to be used in relief and recovery efforts in designated areas of the state.

Federal assistance from the president's Disaster Relief Fund can include temporary housing assistance for eligible disaster victims.

Paul E. Hall will be designated the federal coordinating officer to work with the state of North Carolina in providing federal assistance under the Disaster Relief Act of 1974.

Damage estimates to farm homes, outbuildings, forests, machinery, supplies and livestock and from Wednesday's night's killer tornadoes are approaching \$80 million, state agricultural officials said Friday.

Non-farm damage brought the total damage to an estimated \$101.7 million. Martha Waters of the North Carolina Insurance News Service said 6,600 insurance claims for buildings and personal property amounted to \$30 million and that the figure was expected to double.

The state Division of Emergency Management said 44 people were killed, 803 were injured and 2,279

were homeless along the path the storms took through the state.

South Carolina Governor Dick Riley estimated damage in his state at \$25.7 million. The death toll there was 17.

Gov. Jim Hunt declared 16 counties, including Columbus, Sampson and Duplin disaster areas. The others are Beaufort, Bertie, Chowan, Cumberland, Gates, Greene, Hertford, Lenoir, Perquimans, Pitt, Robeson, Scotland and Wayne.

Reports from county agricultural officials showed that Greene County had perhaps the most agricultural damage, with losses of \$20.5 million. It was followed by \$12.3 million in damage in Sampson County and \$11.5 million in Robeson County.

Timber losses were valued at \$3 million in Greene and Bertie, \$1.3 million in Sampson, \$1 million in Gates and \$20,000 in Hertford County. Scotland County reported a 75 percent loss of timber on up to 2,000 acres.

Other serious losses came when turkey and chicken houses were demolished. Poultry was the hardest hit. Sampson County reported the loss of 160,000 chickens and turkeys, Lenoir 80,000, Wayne 10,000 and Greene County 5,000. About 2,000 hogs were lost in Greene County.

Crops did not suffer an outright loss because they are not planted this time of year.

Destruction of tobacco plant beds, however, is causing concern. Farmers may be forced to bring in plants from other areas and that could hurt leaf quality.

Farmers face hidden costs, said Worsh Gurkin, Sampson County extension chairman. Fields are littered with debris that must be removed before farmers can get on with normal spring field work and planting. Cost of this clean-up in money, time and planting delays is difficult to determine, but a conservative guess is \$300,000, Gurkin said.

The storm did about \$2 million worth of damage in Duplin County, including about \$1 million in a development where 28 homes were destroyed between Calypso and Mount Olive, said county extension Chairman Lois Britt.

One Duplin farmer, Nelson Lane, lost his home, hog houses, bulk tobacco barns, car, truck and some farm equipment, Britt said. Ten farm homes were demolished or damaged, along with 15 other farm buildings, she said.

Mount Olive's FCX Farm & Garden Supplies should be manufacturing fertilizer again this week, according to assistant manager Darryl Moore.

On Friday, insurance adjusters estimated damage to the firm on South Chestnut Street at \$300,000 to \$400,000.

The loading elevators at the fertilizer blend plant were twisted, industrial scales were blown down, the doors were blown off the fertilizer ingredient bins and the contents damaged, a 2,000-square-foot shop building and a 20,000-square-foot warehouse were blown down and two 72,000-bushel grain bins were flattened.

Duplin Man Sentenced

A Duplin County man who pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter last week was given a six-month active prison term in Onslow Superior Court last Thursday.

Judge Bradford Tillery sentenced Richard Earl Raynor, 19, of Beulaville, to serve six months of a three-year sentence in prison. Tillery placed the young farm hand on a special five-year probation following the six months and recommended Raynor for immediate work release.

Raynor was arrested and charged with second-degree murder the

morning after the Dec. 16, 1983 shotgun slaying of Jesse Ray Davis Jr., 22, of Beulaville. On Monday, the day his trial was to begin, Raynor pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of involuntary manslaughter.

Raynor told Tillery in a sentencing hearing Thursday afternoon he had not meant to shoot Davis. He said the gun went off accidentally and he didn't know Davis, who was standing behind him, had been hit.

Tillery ordered Raynor to pay \$1,000 in restitution to Davis' family for the victim's funeral expenses.

Tax Collector Takes Office

Faye Peterson was sworn in as town tax collector during a special meeting of the Wallace Board of Commissioners last week.

A public hearing was also held on rezoning a tract of land on the southern edge of the city for commercial use to allow Wallace Medical Village to build a permanent center. The board also considered an agree-

ment with the state to repave portions of the runway at Henderson Field, the Wallace airport.

Mrs. Peterson has been employed by the town for several years. She replaced Elizabeth Knowles who retired. In her new position, Mrs. Peterson will be paid \$13,317.17 a year.



Families Begin To Salvage Remains Of Home In Pine Forest

Winery Plans To Use Area Grapes

Wine will flow and North Carolina grape output will grow if plans for a greatly expanded wine industry succeed in Rose Hill.

Ground breaking ceremonies for what is expected to become the state's largest winery will be held on the site just north of Rose Hill at 1 p.m. May 5.

David Fussell of Rose Hill, secretary-treasurer of the newly incorporated Carolina Winery, said the new winery will have juice storage capacity of 300,000 gallons in 12 25,000-gallon tanks which he described as giant thermos bottles. The tanks were obtained from the now-

closed Joseph Schlitz brewery in Milwaukee for \$78,000.

In an average production year, the grape harvest from 300 to 500 acres would be needed to fill the tanks.

"If this operation succeeds it will make grape production at least half way economical for the farmers," Fussell said.

Fussell is head of Duplin Wine Cellars of Rose Hill, now the major wine producer in the state. The firm is a cooperative, owned by several vineyard owners including the Fussell family.

The new company also is owned by area vineyard owners. Burl William-

son of Clinton is president.

Among the investors in it are Charles Daughtry of Newton Grove, Gerald Simmons of Kinston, Willard Hinnant of Goldsboro and Carlyle Clayton of Candor.

Duplin Wine Cellars is supplying office and laboratory facilities and bottling facilities. It will receive stock in payment for services to the new company, Fussell said.

He said he expects Carolina Winery's plant can be built in time to begin production this fall. Fussell estimated the new plant would cost \$754,000.

Fussell said the new company's

projection calls for purchase of about 2,000 tons of grapes this fall, 2,400 tons in 1985, 2,800 tons in 1986 and 3,400 tons by 1987.

The new winery, like Duplin Wine Cellars, plans to use the Muscadine type grapes favored in this area. Competition for these grapes has been limited, primarily to one wine producer, Canandaigua of New York, which has a winery at Patrick, S.C.

Duplin Wine Cellars used about 500 tons of grapes last year and expects to use about the same amount this year, Fussell said.

Fussell said about 1,500 acres of muscadine type grape vineyards are in a 50-mile radius of Rose Hill.