

# Charity Island Newsletter

## The Great Storm of November 1913

### One Lightkeeper alone On Charity Island ?



*Northeast Ohio & Wreckage from the Storm of 1913*



## A White Hurricane

I am fascinated by stories of the **Great Storm of 1913**, a true hurricane that slammed the Great lakes 98 years ago.

The storm began on November 6<sup>th</sup> of that year and is recorded as the deadliest, most destructive natural disaster to ever hit the Great lakes.

When it was finally over twelve steel hulled freighters had gone down with all hands. 253 sailors died in that storm. 31 additional cargo ships & barges were disabled .

Eight of the twelve ships lost in that storm went down on Lake Huron, two in Lake Superior, and one in Erie.

I have experienced two hurricanes in Florida, both in 2004. Hurricane Charley and Hurricane Jeanne.

With 110 mph winds slamming Kissimmee I stepped outside my home into Hurricane Charley to experience the incredible energy these storms have.

So I have some sense of what a hurricane sounds and feels like when temperatures are in the 90 degree plus range.

The Hurricane that hit the Great Lakes in November of 1913 had temperatures below freezing with sustained winds of 70 mph.

At one point the the storm belted land and lake, from **Lake Superior to Erie**, with wind and snow, and came to be called the "**White Hurricane**".

On southern **Lake Huron**, the evening of Sunday the 9th, sailors found 40 foot waves, blinding snow, and winds gusting to **90 miles-per-hour**.



According to records the only lightkeeper assigned to duty on Charity Island during the Great Storm of 1913 was 1<sup>st</sup> Asst. lightkeeper Joseph Singleton.

I've tried to imagine what it must have been like to be alone on Charity Island during that storm. Typically, a Great Lakes Gales' highest winds will last four to six hours. During the Great Storm of 1913 they lasted 16 hours.



## 12 Ships Lost with All Hands 253 Sailors Dead

It would seem a safe bet that Singleton had no idea that first week of November 1913 of what was to occur between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of that month.



As the storm grew in strength early on Nov. 9<sup>th</sup> with sustained winds 70 mph gusting to 90 mph screaming around the light tower and lightkeepers' dwelling it must



have seemed to Singleton that the house would surely be blown apart. There had to have been a lot of damage to the house.

*And with snow coming down so thick it was dark all day, did it seem to Singleton like the world was coming to an end?*

He had family in Caseville. When the storm was over was he worried for them? And they for him? How long after the storm was it before someone brought him news of their condition? Or was there a boat on the island still in Condition it could be used to get to Caseville?

Being 98 years past, surely all with any memory of this storm have since passed away.

## Ships Lost in Lake Huron 1913



John McGean 28 victims



Regina 20 victims



Argus 28 victims



Wexford 20 victims



Wexford Victims washed ashore in Canada



We are working on a series of outside displays for the Island that tell the story of the ***Great Storm of 1913*** that will be ready this coming summer in time for the 100 year anniversary of the storm.

If anyone has pictures information or stories to share we would be very interested in them.  
roberwiltse@charityisland.com

We completed a series of similar outdoor displays that tell the history of the Island and light house that will be on display again this summer, see last page of this newsletter.

### ***Vessels Lost on Lake Huron that November 1913 cont'd***



**Isaac M. Scott 28 Victims**



**Hydrus 25 Victims**



**Charles Price 28 victims**



**James Carruthers 22**

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# One of Our New Outdoor Island History Displays

