May 27, 1909
Brownsville (Texas) Daily Herald

DEATH AND WRECK IN STORM AT HARLINGEN

New Church Collapsed - Contractor J.W. Montgomery Killed - Wife Fatally Injured

Many Smaller Buildings Also Damaged

Dead Contractor and Injured Wife Lie for Hours Under Debris of Church - Storm Occurred Near Midnight - Damage Not Known Until Morning - All Points in Valley Felt Severe Wind and Thunderstorm, Rain Falling in Deluge at Various Points

Special to the Herald: Harlingen, Texas, May 27--The new Seventh Day Adventist church, just nearing completion here, was completely wrecked and the contractor, J.W. Montgomery, killed and his wife fatally injured, in a severe wind and thunderstorm which occurred here last night about eleven o'clock. A number of small buildings were also blown from their foundations and other buildings more or less damaged by the storm. The wind came from the west, striking the town suddenly. It was blowing about fifty miles per hour. Continuous lightning and thunder and a very heavy rainfall accompanied it. The storm continued for an hour and a half, and the entire surrounding country was deluged with rain.

The extent of the damage was not even surmised until this morning when it was found that the church had collapsed and a number of smaller buildings damaged as stated. A searching party at once began looking for the contractor and his wife, who were occupying the church while it was in course of construction. The body of Mr. Montgomery was found pinned under the timbers, which had probably killed him immediately. He had been dead for hours. Not far away Mrs. Montgomery was found. She was unconscious. Her shoulders were crushed and several ribs broken, while she also suffered severe internal injuries, from which she is not expected to recover. She was at once removed to the hotel, where medical aid was given her.

The Seventh Day Adventist church was the first church to be built at Harlingen. It was very nearly completed, the windows not yet being put in however. The storm caused it to collapse, folding it up, almost like a packing crate. Besides the wrecking of the church, a number of barns and outhouses were demolished, besides several small cottages being blown from the foundations. The new sash and door factory was somewhat damaged and a new building just built by Alf Dierkmann of Houston, to be used as a furniture store, was blown from its blocks. A number of tents occupied by workmen, or by new settlers as temporary homes, while their homes are being built, were blown down, and their occupants forced to seek shelter from the storm. A large table opposite the telephone office was completely demolished. The extent of the damages is estimated at from $3,000 to $5,000.

The new cottage of A.J. Ernest, the real estate man, was blown from its blocks, not much damaged. A small house near the railroad track was lifted and carried about 200 feet away.

The rain which accompanied the storm continued for an hour and a half, fully three inches of water falling and the entire surrounding country is thoroughly soaked.