

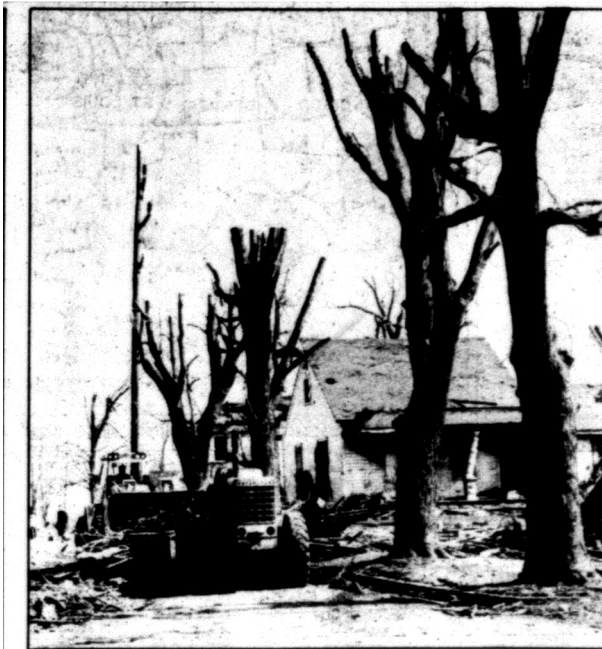


This Week in Indiana History

April 11th - 12th, 1965:
The Palm Sunday Tornadoes

On April 11th, 1965, forty seven tornadoes touched down in the American mid-west. Thousands were injured, hundreds died, and entire towns, like Russiaville, were almost completely destroyed. Indiana suffered the worst losses from these storms. Four out of every five people injured were Hoosiers, and over half of all the deaths caused by the storms were in Indiana as well.

Indianapolis Star, March 31, 1985



Trees were shaved and houses ravaged as tornadoes skipped down Russiaville street.



STAFF PHOTO

While the foliage has been replaced and houses rebuilt, haunting memories remain.

20 Palm Sundays later, Russiaville remembers

By **DAVID J. REMONDINI**
STAR STAFF WRITER

Russiaville, Ind. — This small Howard County community on Palm Sunday 1965 doesn't look anything like it did Palm Sunday 20 years ago.

New buildings have replaced rubble, leaving only haunting memories and a few scattered physical reminders of that day of horror, April 11, 1965, on which this community was destroyed by three of several tornadoes that swept through the state and the Midwest.

Three people were killed and dozens of others were injured here.

Those casualties represented only a fraction of the death and destruction that 37 tornadoes left in their wake in the Midwest that day. Indiana was hardest hit, with 137 deaths, 1,724 severely injured and millions of dollars in property damage in several communities.

It is considered the state's worst disaster.

But Russiaville, because it was nearly leveled, seems destined to remain as a prime example of the overwhelming destructive force of tornadoes.

Raymond R. Chandler, who is celebrating his 67th birthday today, remembers that

Sunday evening well.

He and his wife, Margaret, know the exact moment the three tornadoes, three blocks wide, approached from the west and roared straight down Ind. 26 through the downtown, before veering northeast.

Power lines went down first, knocking out electricity for several days, and the clock in the Chandlers' kitchen stopped at 7:35 p.m.

Last week, he dusted that clock off. It had been in an attic for years after the Chandlers remodeled their kitchen.

"I clipped the cord and taped over the controls on the back so nobody could change them. I wanted something to remember it

by," said Chandler, who was elected the first town board president when the town incorporated four months after the tornadoes.

"I stood on the porch and watched it (one of the tornadoes) until it got up on the hill and she (Margaret) was screaming for me to get down into the basement with the rest of them. All I could see was a black cloud. It sounded like a jet was coming. I wish many times I'd had the nerve to stay and watch longer," Chandler said.

In just a few minutes, the destruction was over. Residents emerged to view what

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