
Anyone who has lived in North Carolina for any length of time has either heard the stories of past great storms or has lived through the effects of a hurricane or its aftermath. It is simply something with which North Carolinians must cope, and for which they must prepare.

Jay Barnes’s classic, *North Carolina’s Hurricane History*, now in its fourth edition, is “updated with a decade of new storms from Isabel to Sandy.” The first edition was published in 1995. The first and third editions were examined in preparation for this review. It does not appear that earlier editions were reviewed in *North Carolina Libraries*, although a mention of the second edition was included in “Other Publications of Interest” section in 1998.

The most recent edition builds upon what has been documented previously. This is essentially the same book with additional chapters covering the later years’ storms and with minor revisions within the existing text. For all editions, the chapters covering the earlier storms remain the same. The introductory chapters and the later chapters in the fourth edition do have substantially new material.

The strength of the book is its exhaustive documentation of all major storms that have affected the state, as far back as 1524. Of course, the earliest accounts of storms are taken from diaries and historical documents, and impressions are often sketchy and incomplete. Some of the most fascinating stories center on predicaments faced by unsuspecting citizens before the advent of sophisticated hurricane tracking technology. For example, the 1879 storm caught North Carolina Governor Jarvis and many prominent guests from inland communities at the Atlantic Hotel in Beaufort. Another fascinating story relates the freakish relocation of the Providence Methodist Church in Swan Quarter. The church’s congregation wished to build a sanctuary on a piece of property near the center of town, but was refused by the landowner. After this refusal, they went ahead with construction elsewhere, and flooding during a storm in 1876 floated the structure several miles, settling it in the exact location where they had originally wanted to build.

A great feature of the book is the wealth of pictures and charts. Each hurricane’s path is charted simply but effectively to show the reader what part of the state was most affected. One of the most important takeaways is that hurricanes are diverse and no two are alike in the ways they cause destruction. A category 1 storm may cause more havoc than a category 5 depending on where landfall occurs and many other factors such as size, wind velocity, and rainfall amounts. No one, for example, had any reason to think that Hurricane Floyd would cause as much flood damage as what resulted. That storm’s devastating flooding moved the state to update floodplain maps and to reevaluate land management practices that had exacerbated the damage. The lessons learned from each storm have been incorporated in preparedness plans for the future.
The book concludes with advice to citizens about how to prepare for storms, and includes a good list of resources and further reading. Jay Barnes has created a successful series of editions to keep us up-to-date on the history of hurricanes as they have affected North Carolina.

Libraries of any substance in North Carolina should have at least one copy of this book, in the most recent edition. Libraries that purport to collect North Carolinana should have all editions, especially research level collections and collections devoted to coastal or weather-related topics.

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