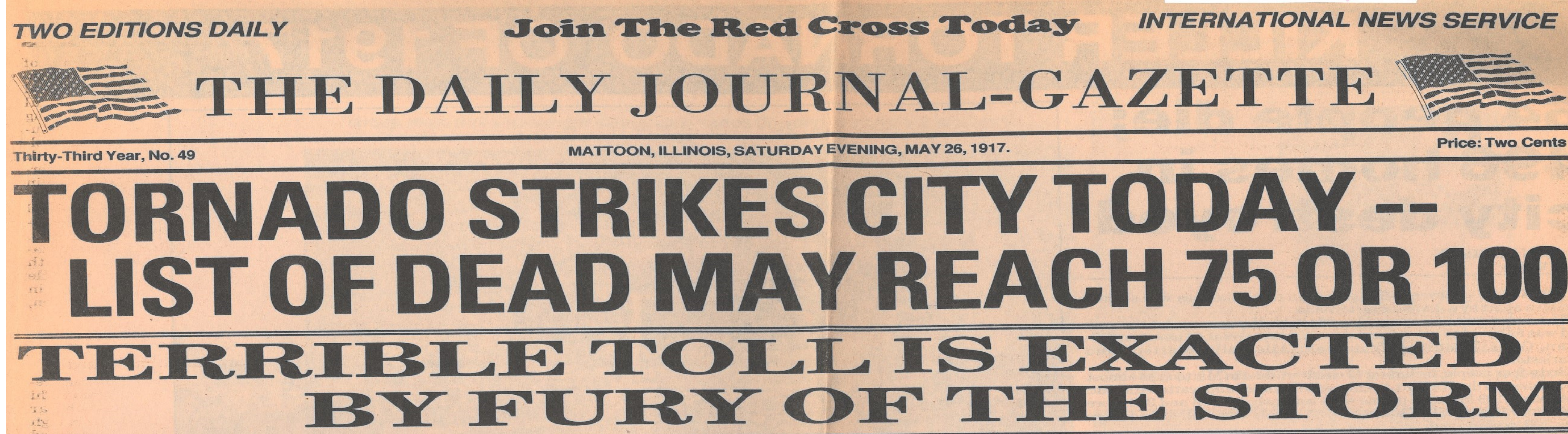


THE GREAT TORNADO OF 1917



On Saturday, May 26, 1917 at approximately 3:26 p.m. a tornado of destructive force touched down at the northwestern edge of Mattoon and cut a swath a half mile wide through the city. It is thought that it originally struck at the Powell Lane Road and continued eastward through town, reaching winds of 120 miles per hour. It levelled everything in it's path for 126 blocks.



Victims were taken to the newly constructed Methodist Memorial Hospital which providently was on the south edge of the storm and suffered only minor wind damage. It has just opened a few weeks earlier and had not had the formal dedication yet.

The hospital was soon overflowing and less serious cases were taken to aid stations hastily set up at: the First Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Reading Room at Mattoon Public Library and the infirmary at the I.O.O.F. Home.

The Hospital treated 170 patients that day and Mattoon physicians were assisted by physicians from Windsor, Effingham, Pana, Champaign, Neoga and Centralia brought in by special trains dispatched by the Illinois Central and Big Four Railroads.



In the aftermath the Governor sent in troops from the 4th Infantry Regiment of the Illinois National Guard to assist rescue operations and maintain order. The Guardsmen were in Mattoon for 19 days.

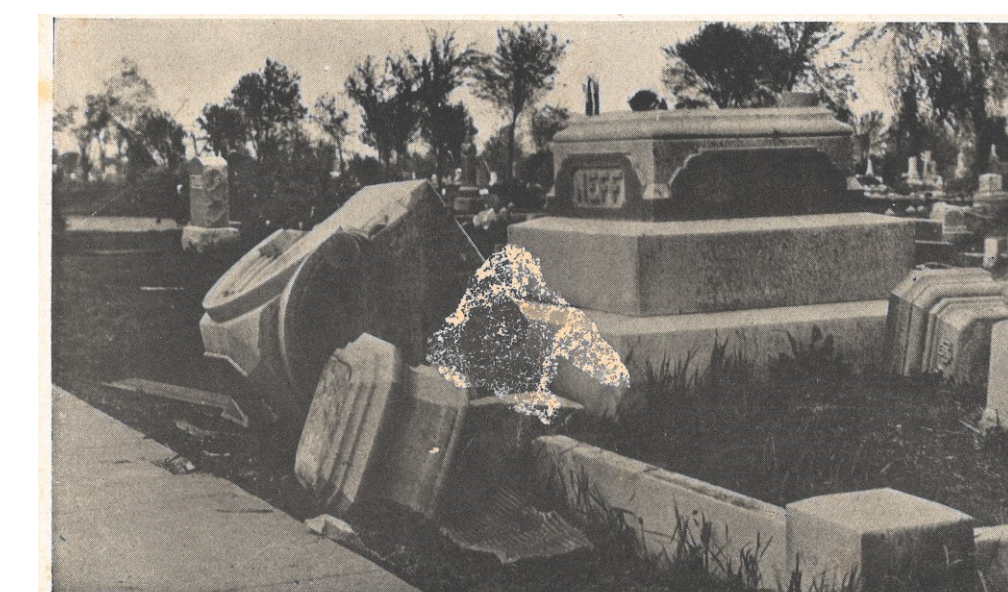
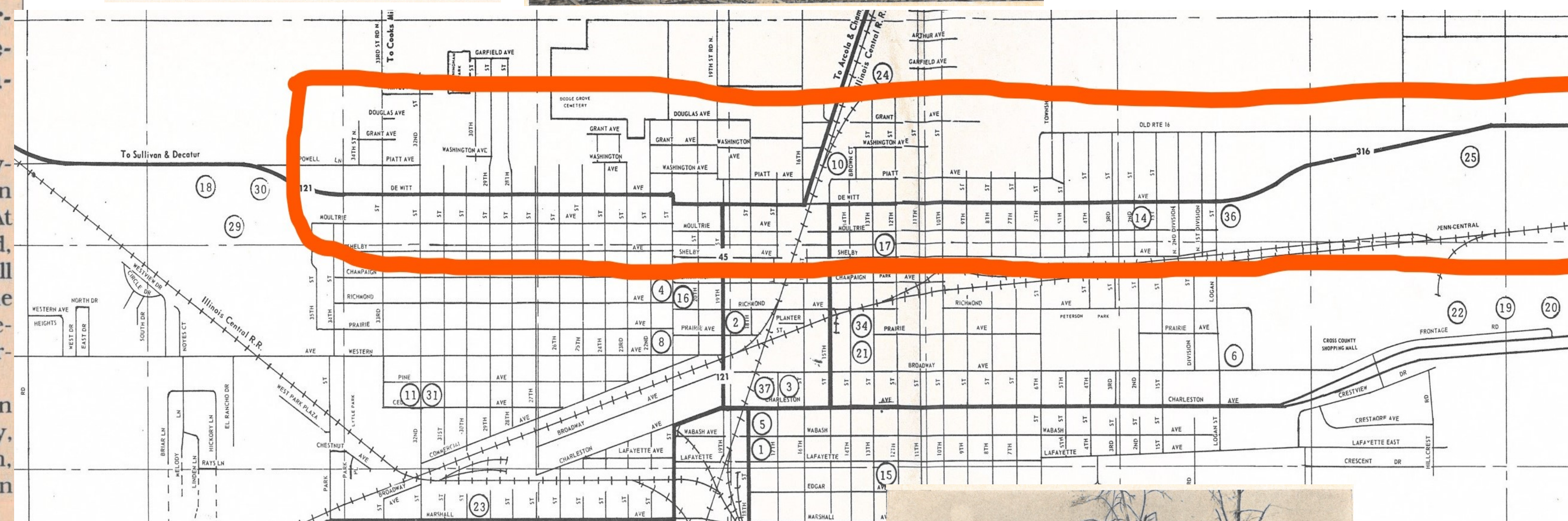


PATH HALF MILE WIDE IS CUT THROUGH CITY

Thirty-Eight Bodies, List of Dead Thus Far Recovered, Taken to the Morgues, and It Is Expected That This Number will be Swelled to Perhaps Three Times That Number Before the Wreckage Has Been Completely Gone Over and Examined

A tornado, dealing death and widespread devastation in its wake, struck the northern portion of the city about 3:15 o'clock this afternoon. At least thirty-eight persons are known to be dead, while the injured, many of whom it is feared will succumb from their hurts, will reach into the scores. It is believed the death list may reach between 75 and 100 when the ruins have been thoroughly examined.

The path of the storm was about half a mile in width and extended the full length of the city, reaping all before it and leveling dwelling, barn, mtbuilding and tree as if they had been mown down by a giant scythe.



There were 64 fatalities, 45 adults and 19 children
496 dwellings were destroyed and an additional 343 damaged.
Destruction was valued at \$1,286,000.



Relief efforts began immediately and monies came to Mattoon from all over the nation.

Mattoon residents raised \$58,379

The Red Cross raised \$30,201

Donations from outside Mattoon totaled \$107,574.

Examples of some of the outside donations are:

Arcola Citizens	\$603.00
Galesburg, Ill Citizens	\$800.00
Eisner Grocery Company	\$500.00
Wm. Wrigley Co, Chicago	\$100.00
Wallace-Smith Co, Milwaukee, Wis	\$100.00
Elks Lodge of New Orleans	\$500.00
American Law Book Co, N.Y.N.Y	\$100.00
Parker Hosiery Mills, Norfolk, Va.	\$100.00
Betta C. Snyder, Santa Barbara, Ca.	\$ 10.00
Carnation Milk, Seattle, Wa.	\$100.00
Waldert Grocery Company, Tyler, Tx.	\$ 50.00
Hobart Manufacturing, Troy, Oh.	\$ 50.00
James Reynolds & Co. East Orange, N.J.	\$100.00