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Mount Vesuvius - I

Lead: In the late summer of AD 79 the stratovolcano Vesuvius which towers over the Bay of Naples erupted. There was a tragic loss of life.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Vesuvius is a relatively young volcano, a little less than 200,000 years old. It towers a little more than 4000 feet over the waters of the Bay of Naples and the plain of Campania in south central Italy. Approximately half way up the sides of the volcano is a high semicircular

ridge called Mt. Somma, but in the first century Vesuvius had a single conical summit. Apparently, the mountain has long periods of quiescence in which there is little volcanic activity, followed by varying periods of eruption. During the quiet times vineyards and orchards grow in the rich soil that covers the lower approaches. Higher up groves of oak and chestnut trees proceed almost to the very summit. During the long six century period before the giant eruption of 1631 there apparently were forests down in the 1000 foot deep crater and three lakes from which herds of sheep and cattle grazed unaware of the rumbling giant below.

In the summer of AD 79 the mountain had lay quietly for centuries. Except for a powerful earthquake 17 years before, there was no advance warning to the citizens of the three small cities of Stabiae, Herculaneum, and Pompeii which occupied the plain wrapped around the base of the volcano. Each of these cities was unique. Stabiae was a spa known for the medicinal springs that attracted wealthy patrons. Herculaneum was a seaside resort of ancient Greek origin named for the mythical man of strength, Heracles. The largest of the three was Pompeii, a prosperous commercial city built on a volcanic spur just to the east of Vesuvius. All three and their populations were buried under

**mountains of ash and rock on a warm
afternoon in late summer. Next time:
a cloud in the shape of a pine tree.**

**At the University of Richmond,
this is Dan Roberts.**

Resources

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