

= 1903 Jamaica hurricane =

The 1903 Jamaica hurricane devastated Martinique , Jamaica , and the Cayman Islands in August 1903 . The second tropical cyclone of the season , the storm was first observed well east of the Windward Islands on August 6 . The system moved generally west @-@ northwestward and strengthened into a hurricane on August 7 . It struck Martinique early on August 9 , shortly before reaching the Caribbean Sea . Later that day , the storm became a major hurricane . Early on August 11 , it made landfall near Morant Point , Jamaica , with winds of 120 mph (195 km / h) , with would be the hurricane 's maximum sustained wind speed . Early on the following day , the storm brushed Grand Cayman at the same intensity . The system weakened before landfall near Playa del Carmen , Quintana Roo , early on August 13 , with winds of 100 mph (155 km / h) . The system emerging into the Gulf of Mexico early on August 14 after weakening while crossing the Yucatán Peninsula , but failed to re @-@ strengthen . Around 00 : 00 UTC on August 16 , the cyclone made landfall north of Tampico , Tamaulipas , with winds of 80 mph (130 km / h) . The hurricane soon weakened to a tropical storm and dissipated over San Luis Potosí late on August 16 .

In Martinique , hundreds of homes were deroofed in Fort @-@ de @-@ France , while about 5 @,@ 000 people were left homeless in the villages of Fond , Fourniols , La Haye , Recluce , and Tivoli , all of which were established after the eruption of Mount Pelée in 1902 . The hurricane also left extensive damage to crops and eight fatalities . In Jamaica , several communities were completely or nearly destroyed , including Manchioneal , Port Antonio , and Port Maria . Thousands of homes also suffered damage in the capital city of Kingston . Banana crops were devastated so severely that many growers were forced into bankruptcy . Numerous ships were wrecked , particularly on the north coast of the island . There were at least 65 deaths and about \$ 10 million (1903 USD) in damage . In the Cayman Islands , more than 200 houses and seven of eight churches on Grand Cayman were destroyed or heavily damaged . Of the 23 ships in the harbor , only the Governor Blake survived . Most of the crews on board those ships were reported killed , but loss of life on shore was minimal . The storm also caused heavy damage on the Yucatán Peninsula . Many ships were wrecked and communications were cutoff in several places . In the Tampico area , there was considerable damage to the port and many ships being sunk or driven ashore . Much of the land between Tampico and Cárdenas in San Luis Potosí was submerged due to flooding . In all , the storm is believed to have killed at least 149 people .

= = Meteorological history = =

A tropical storm was first observed by a ship about 835 mi (1 @,@ 345 km) northeast of Cayenne , French Guiana , early on August 6 , according to historic weather maps . However , due to scarce observations , its genesis likely occurred earlier than this time but was undetected operationally . With initial winds of 60 mph (95 km / h) , the system moved generally west @-@ northwestward and strengthened into Category 1 hurricane on the modern day Saffir ? Simpson hurricane wind scale about 24 hours later . The first indication of the storm to the east of Barbados was on August 8 via telegraph reports . Early on August 9 , the cyclone struck Martinique as either a strong Category 1 or a weak Category 2 hurricane . The storm entered the Caribbean Sea shortly thereafter . Around 12 : 00 UTC , the cyclone intensified into a Category 3 hurricane , becoming the first major hurricane in the Atlantic basin since the second storm of 1900 and the first in the Caribbean Sea since the 1899 San Ciriaco hurricane .

After 06 : 00 UTC on August 11 , the cyclone struck Jamaica near Morant Point with winds of 120 mph (195 km / h) . At 06 : 00 UTC on August 12 , while brushing Grand Cayman , the hurricane peaked with maximum sustained winds of the same intensity and a minimum barometric pressure of 958 mbar (28 @.@ 3 inHg) , observed by the Governor Blake . The system weakened to a Category 2 around the time of landfall near Playa del Carmen , Quintana Roo , early on August 13 , with winds of 100 mph (155 km / h) . By 12 : 00 UTC , the storm further weakened to a Category 1 , based on the Empirical Inland Wind Decay Model . After crossing the Yucatán Peninsula and emerging into the Gulf of Mexico early on August 14 , the hurricane failed to re @-@ strengthen .

Around 00 : 00 UTC on August 16 , it made landfall north of Tampico , Tamaulipas , with winds of 80 mph (130 km / h) . The hurricane soon weakened to a tropical storm and dissipated over San Luis Potosí late on August 16 .

= = Impact = =

Telegraph reports of " a disturbance probably of dangerous strength " approaching Barbados from the east were sent to stations throughout the Lesser Antilles on August 8 . Shipping interests in the Gulf of Mexico and in parts of the western Atlantic were alerted daily of the progress of the hurricane until August 14 . Additionally , hurricane warnings were issued by the Weather Bureau for Florida and the Gulf Coast of the United States as the storm approached the western Caribbean , due to the possibility of the storm curving northward .

In the Windward Islands , Martinique suffered the worst damage . At Fort @-@ de @-@ France , hundreds of homes were unroofed . Streets were covered in roof tiles and impassible due to uprooted trees , which tore up the roads . Several vessels were severely damaged . Additionally , the towns of La Trinité , Le Carbet , Le François , Saint @-@ Joseph , and Sainte @-@ Marie " suffered considerably " . About 5 @,@ 000 people were left homeless in the destroyed villages of Fond , Fourniols , La Haye , Recluce , and Tivoli , all established after the eruption of Mount Pelée in 1902 . Throughout the island , there was extensive damage to crops . Eight deaths were reported , with one in Fort @-@ de @-@ France and seven in La Trinité .

The storms severely damaged crops on Dominica , particularly cocoa . After several years of increasing amounts of exported cocoa , there was a decrease of approximately 1 @.@ 86 % in pounds between 1902 ? 03 and 1903 @-@ 04 . In Puerto Rico , there was high winds and heavy rainfall along the north coast of the island .

The northern shore of Jamaica was devastated , with many ships being washed ashore . There was a storm surge about 20 ft (6 @.@ 1 m) in height at Falmouth . This implies that the storm surge along Jamaica 's northern coast may have reached that height . Numerous ships were also wrecked along the coast . Only six homes remained standing at Port Antonio . The hotel , offices , plantations , and wharves owned by the United Fruit Company were nearly destroyed . Additionally , the company 's five vessels were beached , including the Alfred Dumois , Brighton , and Simon Dumois . In Port Maria , which was almost obliterated , " it was impossible to find where streets had been after the storm . " Homes were destroyed in such a way that " how anyone escaped alive is a mystery . " At Manchioneal , all but a few dwellings suffered destruction from the wind or were swept out to sea . The Norwegian steamship Salvatore di Giorgio was swept ashore at Annotto Bay . In the eastern portions of the island , entire villages were demolished , leaving thousands of peasants without shelter or food .

Thousands of homes were damaged in Kingston , while the electrical works building was deroofed , disabling the machinery . Local railroad traffic and streets cars stopped . Waves damaged wharves and capsized several vessels in the harbor . Some areas on the south side of the island were left completely devoid of crops . Although the western areas of Jamaica were not as devastated as other portions of the island , some banana plantations there were partially destroyed and there was a loss to orange and coffee crops . Throughout Jamaica , devastation to the banana crop was " complete " , forcing many growers into bankruptcy . It was estimated that the fruit trade would be paralyzed for as much as a year . Damage reached \$ 10 million and there were at least 65 deaths , while other reports indicate as many as 90 fatalities .

At the Cayman Islands , wind gusts reached as high as 110 ? 120 mph (180 ? 190 km / h) . More than 200 houses and seven of eight churches on Grand Cayman were destroyed or heavily damaged . In George Town , a number of dwellings were destroyed . Of the 23 ships in the harbor , only the Governor Blake survived . Most of the crews on board those ships were reported killed but loss of life on shore was minimal . Throughout the islands , all trees and crops were destroyed . In Cuba , the hurricane knocked out telegraphic communications in the eastern portions of the island , but the connection to Santiago de Cuba was quickly restored . A number of dwellings were damaged there , some were deroofed , while other homes were reduced to fragments . Pieces of

sheet iron also became airborne . East of the city , all small ports received impact from the storm . Cienfuegos was " ravaged by the storm " , while extensive damage occurred in Cárdenas and Matanzas . In the outskirts of Havana , thatch houses were blown away . Farther west in Pinar del Río Province , some crops and small buildings were demolished .

In the Gulf of Mexico , the British steamship Rosina encountered the hurricane . The storm damaged the pipes and smokestacks , ripped out the ventilator , and washed 30 @, @ 000 oranges into the sea . Additionally , a Greek sailor was swept overboard and presumably drowned . The storm sunk or drove many ships ashore along the Yucatán Peninsula . Communications were disrupted in many areas after telegraph lines fell , while a number of roads were left impassible after trees toppled . In the Tampico area , there was considerable damage to the port and many ships being sunk or driven ashore . All of the bridges along Monterey and Mexican Gulf Railroad were destroyed . The roof at the general market was almost completely torn off . Many of the businesses suffered serious losses after rain subsequently poured in the building , with damage reaching at least \$ 4 @, @ 200 (10 @, @ 000 pesos) . The chamber of commerce building collapsed with people inside , though no injuries or deaths occurred . Much of the land between Tampico and Cárdenas in San Luis Potosí was submerged due to flooding . In Barra , a city in Tamaulipas , the hospital was nearly destroyed , as was the marketplace . In San Luis Potosí , the casino and restaurant in Tamasopo were demolished . Twenty bridges were destroyed in San Luis Potosí . Railroad traffic between San Luis Potosí and Monterrey , the capital of Nuevo León , was completely disrupted .

Overall , the storm is believed to have killed between 149 and 188 people .

= = Aftermath = =

After the storm , thousands in Jamaica were left destitute , without food or shelter . Committees were formed in each parish affected to assess the damage , with Governor Augustus Hemming later visiting the areas of destruction . On September 17 , the Parliament of Jamaica passed the Hurricane Loans Law , which provided low interest loans to planters impacted by the storm . The Secretary of State of Jamaica authorized just over \$ 241 @, @ 000 (50 @, @ 000 £) to be used for the loans . A total of 2 @, @ 983 people applied for a loan , 1 @, @ 477 of whom were granted . During a meeting in Port Antonio , the citizens issued an appeal to Americans for aid , after receiving approval from Governor Hemming . Relief efforts originated both locally and from other British possessions via the West India Committee . The Daily Gleaner newspaper was credited for its efforts in obtaining considerable amounts of food and building materials . Trinidad , then a colony of the United Kingdom , donated almost \$ 5 @, @ 000 (£ 1 @, @ 000) .