

= Great Hurricane of 1780 =

The Great Hurricane of 1780 , also known as Huracán San Calixto , the Great Hurricane of the Antilles , and the 1780 Disaster , is the deadliest Atlantic hurricane on record . Between 20 @,@ 000 and 22 @,@ 000 people died throughout the Lesser Antilles when the storm passed through them from October 10 ? 16 . Specifics on the hurricane 's track and strength are unknown since the official Atlantic hurricane database only goes back to 1851 .

The hurricane struck Barbados with winds possibly exceeding 320 km / h ( 200 mph ) , before moving past Martinique , Saint Lucia , and Sint Eustatius ; thousands of deaths were reported on the islands . Coming in the midst of the American Revolution , the storm caused heavy losses to British and French fleets contesting for control of the area . The hurricane later passed near Puerto Rico and over the eastern portion of Hispaniola . There , it caused heavy damage near the coastlines . It ultimately turned to the northeast and was last observed on October 20 southeast of Atlantic Canada .

The death toll from the Great Hurricane alone exceeds that of many entire decades of Atlantic hurricanes . Estimates are marginally higher than for Hurricane Mitch , the second @-@ deadliest Atlantic storm , for which figures are likely more accurate . The hurricane was part of the disastrous 1780 Atlantic hurricane season , with two other deadly storms occurring in October .

= = Meteorological history = =

The exact origin of the hurricane is unknown but it probably developed , as do many hurricanes , in the east Atlantic Ocean off the Cabo Verde Islands in early October . The system strengthened and expanded as it tracked slowly westward and first began affecting Barbados late on October 9 . Late on October 10 , the worst of the hurricane passed over the island . Early on October 11 , the hurricane turned north @-@ northwest about 90 kilometres ( 56 mi ) east of Saint Lucia , and later that night it neared the island of Martinique . The cyclone gradually weakened as it passed to the southwest of Dominica early on October 12 and subsequently struck the island of Guadeloupe .

After hitting Guadeloupe , the hurricane turned west @-@ northwest , passing about 145 kilometres ( 90 mi ) southwest of Saint Kitts . The hurricane steadily neared Puerto Rico as it paralleled the southern coastline , and on October 14 made its closest point of approach , to the southwest portion of the island . It subsequently turned to the northwest , hitting the island of Mona in the Mona Passage before making landfall near the present @-@ day Dominican Republic province of Samaná . Late on October 15 , it reached the Atlantic Ocean and after passing about 260 kilometres ( 160 mi ) east of Grand Turk Island , it is estimated to have recurved to the northeast . The hurricane passed 240 kilometres ( 150 mi ) southeast of Bermuda on October 18 , and was last observed two days later about 475 kilometres ( 295 mi ) southeast of Cape Race , Newfoundland , Canada .

On October 19 , strong winds and high tides were reported in the British province of East Florida ( the northeastern portion of present @-@ day Florida ) . One modern historian suggests the hurricane passed much closer to the province than previously thought . Another possibility considered was an extension to a hurricane in the western Caribbean Sea . Because of lack of data , the exact track of the Great Hurricane is unknown .

= = Impact = =

The Great Hurricane first began affecting Barbados with rain late on October 9 . Northwestern winds increased through the day on October 10 .

" ... a dreadful hurricane which began to rage with great fury at noon and continue with great violence till four o 'clock the next morning , the 11th ; At eight o 'clock at night St. Thomas 's parsonage was demolished and the church where the Rector and his family sought shelter began to fall about two hours after , the Chancel fell while the family were in the church ... St. Thomas 's Chapel , St. Michael 's , St. George 's , Christ Church 's and St. Lucy 's churches were totally destroyed , the other churches were severely ? injured ? ( except St. Peter 's and St. Philip 's ) .

Because of the demolition of the parish church and chapel ? divine services ? continued in the ? boiling house ? at the ? Rock Hall ? estate of Thomas Harper by Rev Wm Duke and curate Hugh Austin of St Thomas . Most other buildings and works were blown down and many lives were lost . The dead could not be brought to a church so were buried in gardens and private land . ?

The ships in the bay broke their moorings by 4 pm , and the " full impact " arrived by 6 pm . The wind gradually backed to westerly through the night and peaked at midnight . Wind speed returned to normal by 8 am on October 11 . These winds suggest that the eye of the storm passed north of Barbados . The hurricane produced violent winds " so deafening that people could not hear their own voices . " The hurricane stripped the bark off trees and left none standing on the island . Even the strongest hurricanes do not strip the bark off trees , and Cuban meteorologist José Carlos Millás estimated that this phenomenon would require rain and winds over 200 miles per hour ( 320 km / h ) . The winds also destroyed every house on Barbados . The hurricane also destroyed all forts on the island . According to British admiral George Brydges Rodney , 1st Baron Rodney , the winds carried their heavy cannons aloft 100 feet ( 30 m ) . About 4 @, @ 500 people died on Barbados .

In Saint Vincent , the hurricane destroyed 584 of the 600 houses in Kingstown . At Grenada , 19 Dutch ships were wrecked . On Saint Lucia , rough waves and a strong storm tide struck the fleet of British Admiral Rodney at Port Castries , with one ship destroying the city 's hospital by being lifted on top of it . The hurricane destroyed all but two houses at Port Castries , and throughout the island about 6 @, @ 000 perished . Among the ships lost from Rodney 's fleet were the frigates HMS Phoenix wrecked on the Cuban coast , and HMS Blanche which disappeared without a trace , the sixth rate frigates HMS Andromeda and HMS Laurel which were wrecked on Martinique with heavy loss of life and five other smaller vessels either wrecked or foundered . By far the worst losses in the British fleet however were among the squadron of Rear @-@ Admiral Joshua Rowley , which was caught at sea by the hurricane off the San Domingo coast . Ships of the line HMS Thunderer which foundered with all hands , and HMS Stirling Castle which was smashed on the coast with fewer than 50 survivors , were lost and the remaining six ships were all severely damaged .

A fleet of 40 French ships involved in the American Revolutionary War capsized as a result of the hurricane off Martinique ; about 4 @, @ 000 soldiers drowned . Among the French losses were the ships of the line Palmier , Intrépide and Magnifique and the frigate Junon . The hurricane produced a 25 @-@ foot ( 7 @. @ 6 m ) storm surge on Martinique , destroying all houses in Saint @-@ Pierre ; 9 @, @ 000 died on the island . High winds , rains , and storm surge caused severe damage at Roseau , Dominica . A storm surge also struck the south coast of Guadeloupe and caused considerable damage . Strong winds affected Antigua and Saint Kitts , and in the latter island , many ships were washed ashore . A Dutch sea @-@ officer whose ship was blown from St. Eustatius to Martinique by the hurricane reports on the damage in Saint @-@ Pierre ( Martinique ) , St. Vincent and St. Lucia . On his return to St. Eustatius he reports that here " too some houses are destroyed " and the sea water ruined the merchandise that was left on the beach . However , he says that the situation was not as bad as on the French and English islands and does not speak of any dramatic death toll ( Jong , C. de . Reize naar de Caribische Eilanden , 1807 @. @ p . 140 ) .

Heavy damage was reported in southern Puerto Rico , primarily in Cabo Rojo and Lajas . Severe damage also occurred in the eastern region of Santo Domingo . The hurricane later grounded 50 ships near Bermuda . Throughout its path , the hurricane killed over 20 @, @ 000 people , possibly as high as 24 @, @ 000 , making it the deadliest hurricane in Atlantic hurricane history .