

= 1812 Louisiana hurricane =

The 1812 Louisiana Hurricane was a major hurricane that struck New Orleans , Louisiana , during the War of 1812 . It was the worst storm of the early history of New Orleans and was very likely the hurricane which made the closest landfall known to affect the city .

It was first observed in the eastern Caribbean Sea on August 12 as a tropical disturbance , which later affected Jamaica as a tropical storm . After entering the Gulf of Mexico , it intensified into a hurricane , with winds estimated at over 115 mph (185 km / h) . The circulation affected areas from the Florida Panhandle to Natchez in the Mississippi Territory , but the worst effects were in the New Orleans area . There were around 100 deaths , many of them due to drowning .

= = Meteorological history = =

On August 12 , a tropical disturbance entered the Caribbean Sea to the south of Antigua , believed to have been a strong tropical wave . Moving westward , it developed into a tropical storm by August 15 , based on ship observations in the region . That day , it passed to the south of Jamaica and later turned to the northwest . Due to the ongoing War of 1812 , there was a British blockade of American ships , which caused a lack of observations in the region . As a result , the storm 's track was uncertain , although it is believed that the system entered the Gulf of Mexico by August 18 ; that day , a ship reported hurricane @-@ force winds . After moving northward , the hurricane turned to the northwest off the coast of Louisiana .

Although meteorologist David Roth assessed the storm as making landfall on August 19 at Isle Dernière to the west of New Orleans , a research paper from the American Meteorological Society estimated that the hurricane moved ashore about 40 mi (60 km) southeast of New Orleans . Modern research suggests the storm was the equivalent of a major hurricane (a Category 3 on the Saffir @-@ Simpson Hurricane Scale) , or with winds of at least 115 mph (185 km / h) , when it made landfall . It passed just southwest of the city , becoming the closest major hurricane to New Orleans . The wind diameter was average to slightly below @-@ average , and the forward speed was normal . Due to its movement , the hurricane likely maintained much of its strength after making landfall and by the time it affected New Orleans . The hurricane gradually weakened over land , passing near Baton Rouge , Louisiana and Natchez , Mississippi on August 20 . Heavy rainfall was reported in eastern Ohio beginning on August 21 , potentially from the remnants of the storm merging with a cold front .

= = Effect = =

When the storm was moving through the Caribbean Sea , it produced rough seas and heavy rainfall . In Jamaica , gusty winds damaged crops , including to corn and plantains .

As the storm moved ashore in Louisiana , outer rain bands produced gale @-@ force winds and heavy damage at Pensacola , in Spanish West Florida . At Cat Island offshore of Bay St. Louis (claimed from Spain in the same year , as part of the Mississippi Territory) , strong winds washed several boats ashore . Hurricane conditions began in New Orleans around 8 p.m. local time on August 19 . In southeastern Louisiana , Fort St. Philip sustained heavy damage , after it was flooded . Most soldiers in the fort drowned . There was a rumor during the storm that the British took over Fort St. Philip , causing a panic in the midst of the War of 1812 ; however , the British fleet was scattered throughout the region , and many British ships were damaged . In New Orleans , the hurricane damaged 53 ships , and several boats were washed ashore along Lake Pontchartrain . The USS Louisiana , a cutter commissioned in 1804 , was wrecked during the hurricane while at port in New Orleans , and the entire crew except for the captain was killed . Debris and bodies from the ships were dispersed along the lake 's coastline . The USS Viper lost its mast while offshore during the storm . Ten people died on the ship " Harlequin " .

The storm produced heavy rainfall , along with a powerful storm surge . Flooding up to 15 ft (4 @.@ 6 m) deep was reported in New Orleans and portions of Plaquemines Parish . In the Parish ,

45 people drowned , and there was heavy damage to the sugar crops . The levee system in New Orleans was heavily damaged . The strong waves washed saltwater 75 mi (121 km) up the Mississippi River . High winds damaged most buildings in New Orleans , some of which were destroyed , and most trees were blown down . The city 's market house was wrecked , despite being described as " indestructible " . Damage was estimated at \$ 6 million (1812 USD) , and there were around 100 deaths . Further northwest near Natchez , Mississippi , the storm 's winds were strong enough to knock down trees . The barometric pressure there was 986 mbar (29 @. @ 1 inHg) , although the observation was not calibrated and was later corrected to 995 mbar (29 @. @ 4 inHg) to account for elevation and air temperature .

In the two centuries since the hurricane , the oceans rose about 0 @. @ 5 ft (0 @. @ 15 m) , the wetlands around New Orleans have diminished , and the elevation has dropped due to subsidence . These have increased the threat to the city of a significant hurricane strike . The 1812 hurricane was not a worst @- @ case scenario for New Orleans , as a stronger and larger hurricane would have caused more damage . If the storm struck in 2012 , one researcher estimated the hurricane would have been among the costliest Louisiana hurricanes , comparable to Hurricane Betsy in 1965 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005 .