

# The Great Okeechobee Hurricane Of 1928: The Devastating Natural Disaster that Shaped Florida



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The Great Okeechobee Hurricane of 1928 was one of the most powerful and deadly hurricanes in the history of the United States. This catastrophic natural disaster wreaked havoc on the state of Florida, particularly around Lake Okeechobee, causing immense destruction and claiming thousands of lives. This article delves into the tragic events surrounding the hurricane, its impact on the communities, and the subsequent efforts to recover and rebuild.

## **The Prelude to Disaster:**

In the late summer of 1928, the state of Florida was experiencing rapid growth and development. Its population was increasing, and towns and settlements were expanding, creating prosperous conditions. However, the state was vulnerable to hurricanes due to its geographic location. On the morning of September 6th,

1928, a tropical storm was forming in the Atlantic Ocean, and over the next few days, it rapidly intensified, becoming a category 5 hurricane.



## The Great Okeechobee Hurricane of 1928

by Wayne Neely (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

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File size : 21611 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 343 pages



### Unleashing its Fury:

The Great Okeechobee Hurricane made landfall near West Palm Beach on September 17th, unleashing its full fury on the unsuspecting communities. With sustained winds exceeding 145 miles per hour, the hurricane caused immense damage to structures, uprooted trees, and submerged entire neighborhoods in water. The catastrophic storm surge intensified as it approached Lake Okeechobee, leading to the collapse of the dike protecting the surrounding areas.

### Devastation and Loss of Life:

The collapse of the dike resulted in a deadly wall of water rushing through the region. Towns and farmlands were swiftly submerged under several feet of water, trapping thousands of people. The storm's destructive power claimed the lives of approximately 2,500 individuals, with the majority being farm laborers from the migrant workforce. The human tragedy caused by the hurricane was further compounded by poor preparation and a lack of warning systems.

## **Recovery and Rebuilding:**

In the aftermath of the disaster, the affected communities faced overwhelming challenges in their efforts to recover and rebuild. Emergency relief efforts were initiated, with volunteers assisting in rescue operations and providing aid to the survivors. The government also intervened, allocating resources and implementing measures to prevent future disasters. The tragedy of the Great Okeechobee Hurricane helped shape Florida's disaster preparedness and prompted the construction of a more robust dike system around Lake Okeechobee.

## **The Ongoing Legacy:**

The Great Okeechobee Hurricane of 1928 remains a somber reminder of the devastating power of nature and the importance of disaster preparedness. The lessons learned from this tragedy have influenced subsequent hurricane response and recovery efforts in Florida and other hurricane-prone regions. As the state continues to face the threat of hurricanes, the legacy of the Great Okeechobee Hurricane reminds us of the need for continuous improvement in disaster management and protection of vulnerable communities.

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The Great Okeechobee Hurricane of 1928 was a monumental natural disaster that forever changed the state of Florida. Its immense destruction and tragic loss of life left an indelible mark on the affected communities, prompting significant improvements in disaster preparedness and response efforts. As Florida continues to face the threat of hurricanes, the lessons learned from this historic event serve as a reminder of the importance of being vigilant and resilient in the face of nature's fury.

## **Sources:**

- Smithsonian Magazine - "The Deadliest U.S. Hurricane Ever: The 1928 Okeechobee" by Gilbert King
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - "Great Okeechobee Hurricane" by Jay Barnes



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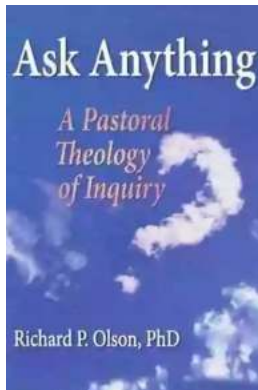
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If you live in the Caribbean or Florida, you've probably heard tales about the Great Okeechobee Hurricane, which killed thousands and left behind wide swaths of destruction. Also known as the Saint Felipe (Phillip) Segundo Hurricane, it developed in the far eastern Atlantic before making its way over land and taking the lives of Bahamian migrant workers and Florida residents. This thoroughly researched history considers the storm and its aftermath, exploring an important historical weather event that has been neglected. Through historical photographs of actual damage and personal recollections, author and veteran meteorologist Wayne Neely examines the widespread devastation that the hurricane caused. You'll get a detailed account on: • workers who were caught unprepared on the farms in the Okeechobee region of Florida; • challenges that those involved in the recovery effort faced after the hurricane passed; • personal

and community turmoil that took decades to fully overcome. This massive storm killed at least 2,500 people in the United States of which approximately 1,400 were Bahamians migrant workers, becoming the second deadliest hurricane in the history of the United States, behind only the Great Galveston Hurricane of 1900. To this day, it remains the deadliest hurricane to ever strike the Bahamas.



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