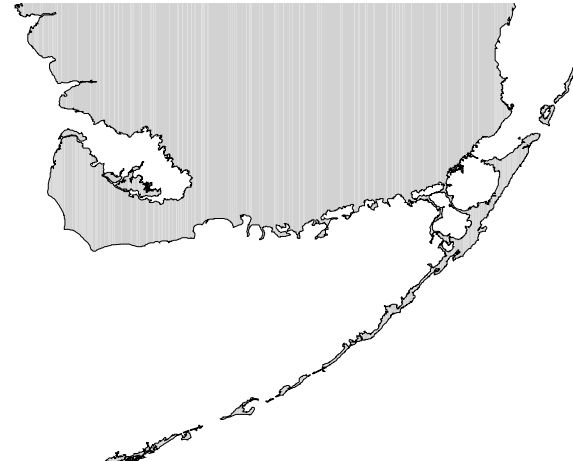


# The Key West Hurricane of 1846 - Oct. 11-12 - Part I



Lt. Pease aboard the "Morris" in Key West Harbor  
Gale began around 1000 on Oct. 11, blew a perfect hurricane by 1400. Ship was battered by the storm, and at 1600, the air was full of water and no one could look windward. Houses, lumber, and vessels drifted by the "Morris". Reported compass needles flying around uselessly. Hurricane gradually subsided into the evening, winds from the SE at 0000 on the 12th. The morning of the 12th showed large wrecks surrounding the "Morris" which had drifted three miles. The lighthouses at Key West (14 dead) and Sand Key (6 dead) were destroyed and Key West was in ruins. The tide was five feet high in Key West, all the wharves were damaged. Only 6 out of 600 houses were left in decent shape. The Fort was destroyed and Lt. Pease estimated the damage there at \$200,000. The streets and roads were impassable after being filled with lumber and the remains of houses.

Officer on the Brig "Perry" in Key West Harbor  
Not a house is left uninjured. Every vessel in the harbor is either sunk or driven ashore, and over 40 people have been killed. More than twenty wrecks counted near the island.

Letter from Geo. McMullin to the editor of the "Tallahassee Floridian".  
0000 on the 11th gave indications of gale with falling barometer. Daylight morning of the 11th, perfect gale blowing. At 1200, the wind was increasing in intensity. After dinner, "the whole town was in commotion, the sea was all up in the in the town; houses in every direction were falling; women, and children running in every direction... There is not a dwelling, store, warehouse, or wharf uninjured, nor a vessel of any size in the harbor or on the coast that is not a wreck."

Colonel W.C. Maloney called this storm the "most destructive of any that has ever visited these latitudes in the memory of man." This great hurricane left a path of destruction from Cuba northward along the West Coast of Florida, and then northeastward along the Atlantic coast to Canada. The course of the hurricane over Middle Florida cannot be determined as there were no reports between Tampa and St. Augustine. A storm track over Cedar Key is probable, then a turn to the NE between Tallahassee and Jacksonville. The principle ports of the South Atlantic coastline were to the east of the storm's center. The center of the storm passed between Augusta and Savannah, and between Columbia and Charleston. The storm accelerated through east-central North Carolina, and then entered Chesapeake Bay early on the 13th. It passed to the west of Norfolk, and caused notable damage to the Middle Atlantic States and western New England.

