1926 Hurricane Destroys Southwest Florida
Fact Sheet

Event date: September 11 – 22, 1926
Minimum pressure: 934.98 mb
Highest storm surge:
  14 feet in Miami
  6 feet in Ft. Myers

Landfall pressure: 934.98 mb
Death toll: ~373
Peak winds:
  150 mph in Miami
  100 mph in Punta Rassa

Figure 1. Damage to Knight's Chapel in Nokomis, FL

Summary of event:
Tropical storm force winds began in Lee County late in the evening on September 17, 1926. Storm warnings were placed along the southeast coast of Florida at noon on the 17th. At 11:00 pm those storm warnings became hurricane warnings. A mere 7 hours later the eye of the storm enveloped Miami, FL. The storm made landfall at 6:10 am in Miami, FL as a Category 4. The storm then exited the southwest coast of Florida near Bonita Springs, where the eye passed over Punta Rassa, FL at 3:15 pm on September 18, 1926 with a minimum pressure of 28.05 inches.

Fort Myers, FL experienced a storm surge of 4 to 6 feet above normal. The storm flooded the entire island of Sanibel with salt water, and forced almost half of the island's residents to relocate. The Naples Star reported that automobiles parked in the streets were, “filled with muddy saltwater and sea creatures. Those animals later died when the water subsided leaving a stench that lingered for weeks.” An excerpt from Mr. Reardon's personal journal stated that as he exited his shelter he saw, “whole sides of apartment blocks had been torn away... Everyone was looking for a drink of water – and there was none to be had... [There was] a boy covered in blood running blindly across the street.” Similar accounts of destruction abound throughout the path of this Major Hurricane.
According to a report by Christopher Landsea for the National Hurricane Center, the Great Miami Hurricane of 1926 ranks as number one for damage costs as normalized to 1995 dollars by inflation.

Figure 2. Proposed storm tack according to the National Hurricane Center.
Figure 3. Damage photographs and flooded streets.
Figure 4. Flood waters and damage photographs.
Figure 5. Newspaper headlines and damage photographs.

Links for more information:
http://www.miamibeach411.com/History/photo_1926_hurricane_1.html,
http://www.aoml.noaa.gov/hrd/Landsea/USdmg/#table7,