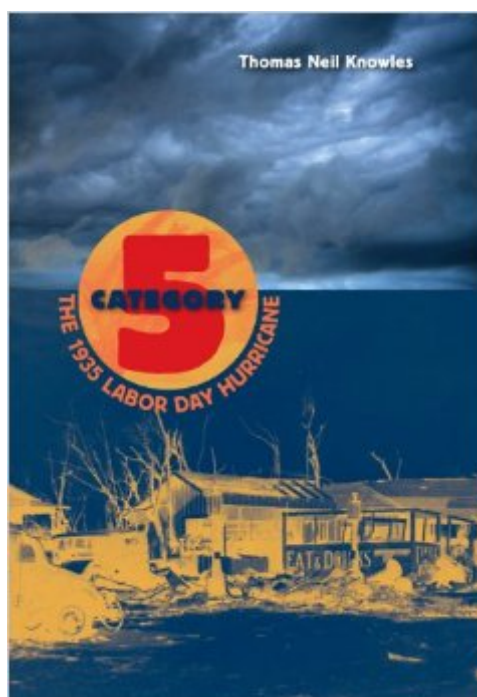


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# Category 5: The 1935 Labor Day Hurricane



## Synopsis

In the midst of the Great Depression, a furious storm struck the Florida Keys with devastating force. With winds estimated at over 225 miles per hour, it was the first recorded Category 5 hurricane to make landfall in the United States. Striking at a time before storms were named, the catastrophic tropical cyclone became known as the 1935 Labor Day Hurricane, and its aftermath was felt all the way to Washington, D.C. In the hardest hit area of the Florida Keys, three out of every five residents were killed, while hundreds of World War I veterans sent there by the federal government perished. By sifting through overlooked official records and interviewing survivors and the relatives of victims, Thomas Knowles pieces together this dramatic story, moment by horrifying moment. He explains what daily life was like on the Keys, why the veteran work force was there (and relatively unprotected), the state of weather forecasting at the time, the activities of the media covering the disaster, and the actions of government agencies in the face of severe criticism over their response to the disaster. The Labor Day Hurricane of 1935 remains one of the most intense to strike America's shores. Category 5 is a sobering reminder that even with modern meteorological tools and emergency management systems, a similar storm could cause even more death and destruction today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book contains many maps that show the southern end of Florida breaking up and drizzling into the sea in long arcs of sand spits and islands known as the Florida Keys. The southern-most islands rest on the skeletons of coral reefs. The people who live or work in the lower Keys are barely above sea level, even on placid, sunny days. When a hurricane churns through these islands, the difference between land and sea blurs. Sand burns through the chaotic air, stripping the skin off of anyone unfortunate enough to be out in the storm. Islands are overwhelmed by the hurricane's storm surge, and entire buildings are washed into the sea. People drown in their own bedrooms. In 1935, the out-of-work World War I veterans who signed up for the labor camps in the Keys didn't comprehend the way wind and water could overwhelm low-lying islands and those edifices that were built upon them. In the end, they forfeited their lives through ignorance of what this author calls the wrath of the Mayan storm god, Hurakan. Perhaps because the category five hurricane that swept through the Florida Keys on Labor Day, 1935 came only a few years before World War II, this natural disaster has not been as thoroughly documented as, say, the Galveston hurricane of 1900. Yet it was the first of only three category 5 Atlantic hurricanes to devastate our coastlines through the whole of the 20th Century. This book and William Drye's Storm of the Century: The Labor Day Hurricane of 1935 go a long way toward increasing our knowledge of this devastating storm.

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