

## **1893: A Year of Great Storms and Important Lessons**

We have had, in a single hurricane season, storms like Hurricanes Hugo, Sandy and Katrina. The 1893 season was one of those terrible years. It is important to note that strong hurricanes are not just a current phenomenon.

There were five major storms that year with four hitting the United States. Two of those storms killed thousands of people. On August 27<sup>th</sup> a storm called the Sea Islands Hurricane hit Savannah, and coastal islands on the coast of Georgia killing between 1,000 to 2,000 people. And on October 1<sup>st</sup> of that same year the Chenier Storm, one of the first to be classified as a Category 4 storm, hit Louisiana. Over 2,000 people died the night of the Chenier storm. It was to be the worst of the powerful storms of that season. And for Louisiana, it continues to hold the record in loss of life.

That year a Category 3 storm weakened before it hit New York with 85 mph winds. A Category 3 storm hit South Carolina, and a 90 mph storm hit Newfoundland in Canada. 1893 also had four active hurricanes at one time. This was matched only one other time, and that was during the 1998 hurricane season. 1893 held the record for being the deadliest hurricane season until the 1900 Galveston storm where over 8,000 people lost their lives.

A centennial event took place in 1993 over a three-day period in lower Jefferson and South Lafourche parishes, to insure that the stories of that storm continued to educate. One reason for the event was to remind people that storm surge killed a large number of people, and that it could happen again. This was important since reporters began saying the deaths associated with rainfall from hurricane events had become more of a threat than from storm surge. Another important message was the story of the survivors retreating from the coast to form communities to the north which were less susceptible to storm surge. And some smaller communities were totally lost with no survivors.

The communities who knew of the 1893 storms and the risk that occurs with every hurricane season did not suffer from Hugo, Sandy and Katrina as much as the communities who ignored the lessons of 1893. Those lessons are still valid 120 years later.

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