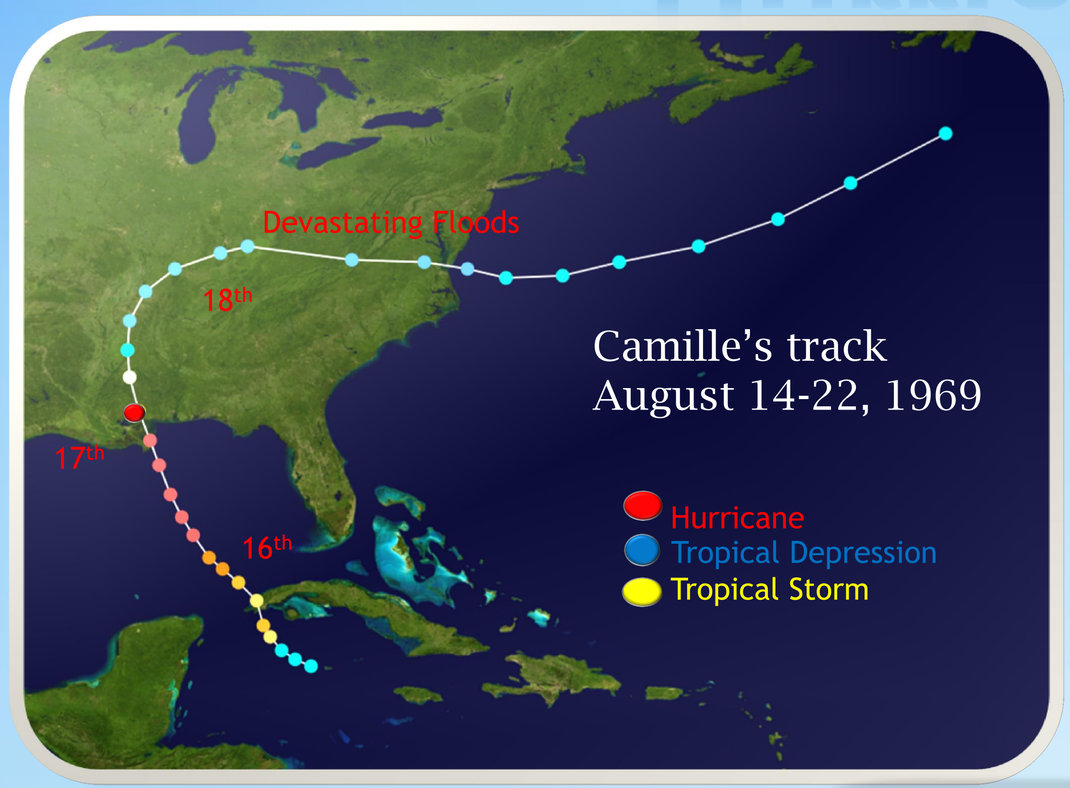
Small but mighty…

Hurricane Camille

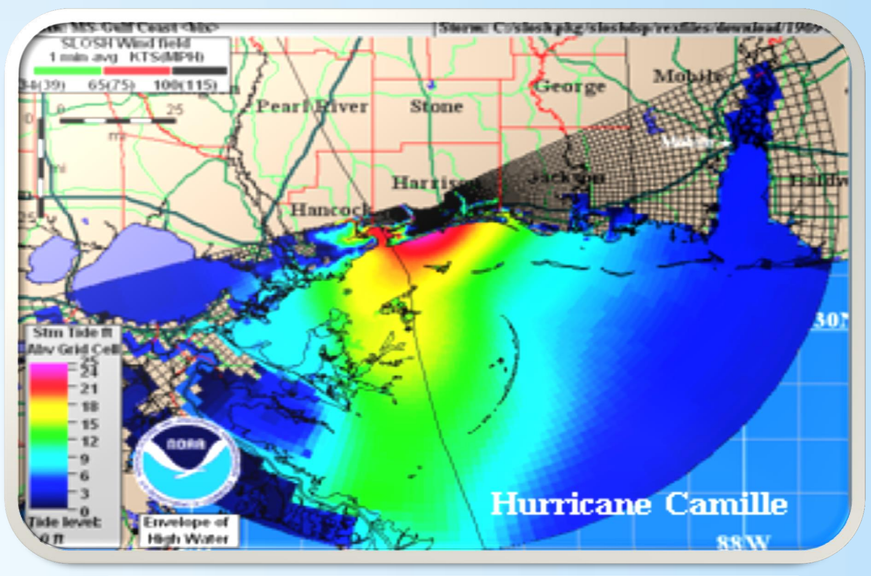


Overview

Known as one of the most catastrophic hurricanes of the 20th Century, the monstrous storm known as Hurricane Camille left complete devastation in her wake. Entire towns were destroyed, precious lives were lost, and thousands of citizens were left homeless. In 1969, Camille was only the second Category 5 hurricane to strike the U.S., following behind the "Labor Day Hurricane" in 1935. She was a small storm with an exceptionally tight eye and was under-estimated by forecasters. Camille highlighted the lack of hurricane preparedness and forecasting technology in the U.S. at that time. The Gulf Coast of Mississippi was torn apart due to Camille's high wind speed and storm surge, though the true devastation was the amount of lives that may have been saved if evacuation warnings and procedures were adequately developed beforehand. She went on to produce record-shattering rain in Virginia, leaving cities under water and destroyed.

Forecasting Difficulties

Camille was initially forecasted to head northeastward toward the Florida Panhandle. Instead, she continued northwestward and almost immediately intensified after leaving Cuba. Because her eye contracted to such a small diameter, Hurricane Hunters had difficulties obtaining Camille's strength until a flight late on August 16 identified her as a Category 5 hurricane with a recorded low pressure of 908 mb and estimated 175 mph winds. The forecasters expected those values to be the peak intensity. However, early on August 17, another Hurricane Hunters flight recorded a pressure of 905 mb, which was the lowest pressure recorded by reconnaissance aircraft at that time.



Camille's storm surge (photo curtesy of NOAA)

Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale		
Category	Wind Speed	
	mph	knots
5	≥156	≥135
4	131-155	114-134
3	111-130	96-113
2	96-110	84-95
1	74-95	65-83
Non-Hurricane Classifications		
Tropical Storm	39-73	34-64
Tropical Depression	0-38	0-33

"I saw the bodies of the Williams family mingle with several freshly buried coffins, airtight boxes, which washed up out of their graves under the intense pressure of the rolling waves."
-66-year-old carpenter Fred DeMetz on Camille

Timeline

August 5 — Satellite imagery identifies a typical tropical wave off the coast of Africa

August 14 — Now with 55 mph surface winds 60 miles west of the Grand Cayman Islands, forecasters classify a tropical storm

August 15 — Camille intensifies to hurricane strength (Category 3) with winds reaching 115 mph. Storm claims first 4 victims on western edge of Cuba and causes heavy damage from river flooding

August 16 — Reaches Category 5 strength 100 miles from the mouth of the Mississippi River with winds speeds ~190mph

August 17 — Camille makes landfall on the Mississippi Gulf Coast at its maximum intensity and produces hurricane force winds that extend out 60 miles to the east of the center

August 18 — Camille moves farther inland and weakens to a tropical storm 12 hours after landfall

August 20-21 — Now a tropical depression, remnants cause deadly Virginia floods & landslides

Significant Impacts:

- 256 U.S. fatalities (143 along Gulf Coast, 113 in Virginia floods)
- 24 foot storm surge through Pass Christian, MS – flooded 70% of Dauphin Island (14 mile long island on Alabama coast)
- 11 mile diameter eye
- Wind gusts up to 200 mph near center and 170 mph sustained winds with a radius of ~15 miles at landfall
- 905 mb intensity at U.S. landfall
- $1.42 billion of damage ($9.16 billion 2016 USD) due to destroyed roads, homes, industries, beach erosion, and bridges swept away
- Disastrous floods in the Appalachian Mountains of Virginia & West Virginia
- 200,000 people left homeless

Rainfall Accumulation

25+ inches dumped in Virginia

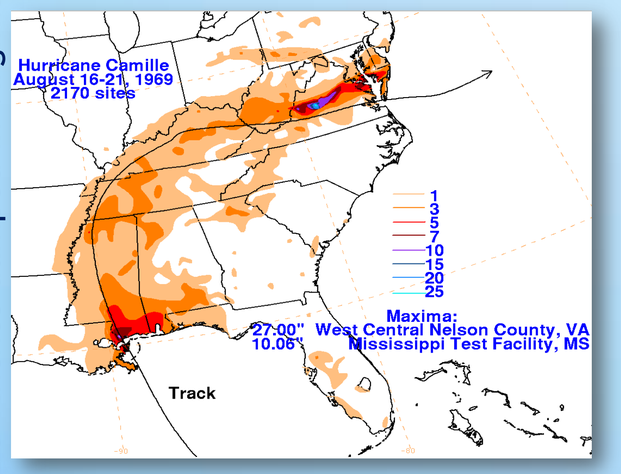
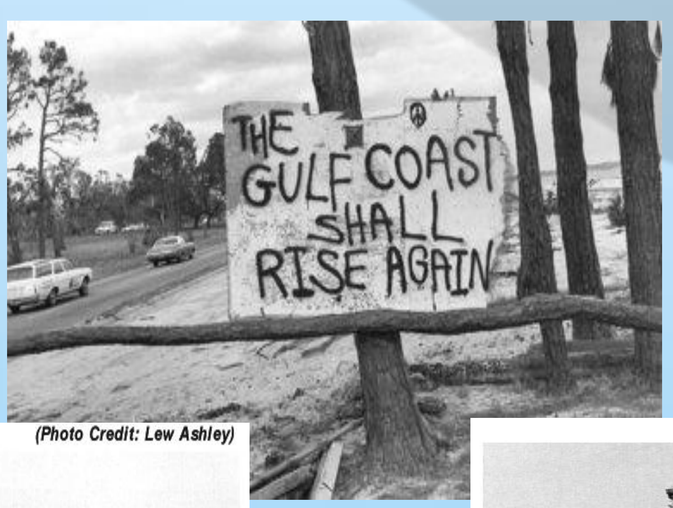


Photo curtesy of the National Climatic Data Center



The Gulf Coast Shall Rise Again…


(Photo Credit: Lew Ashley)

Merry Mansion Before Hurricane Camille


(Photo Credit: Chauncey Hinman)

Merry Mansion After Hurricane Camille

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