



SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-PRESS

■ This photograph was taken after the 1926 hurricane, showing damage to the Planetary Court at what is now the Koreshan State Historic Site.

MICHAEL WIDNER

Wildfire, hurricanes well-documented

It can be said that "History Lives" at the Koreshan State Historic Site. Not only does it live, but through careful study of the documents that have been left behind, we find that history does, in fact, repeat itself. The recent wildfires in Estero are an example.

Much of what we know of the Koreshan's daily lives comes from their record called the "Community Current Events."

This monthly column appeared in the Koreshan publication called "The Flaming Sword" every month starting in 1916.

Each month the CCE, as we

KORESHAN HISTORIC SITE

know it, recorded the events which may have seemed rather bland or boring, but today, 70 to 90 years later, are full of information about the people and the events of so long ago.

I mentioned that history repeats itself. In the June 1936 issue, mention is made of the following:

"A dry spell lasting several months left the surrounding woods in a condition to be easily devastated by fire. For weeks now the night sky has been illu-

minated by these woods fires."

In those days there were no means to control wildfires. No backfires, no helicopters, nothing. All they could do, for the most part, was to stand by and watch.

We've just entered hurricane season and the Koreshans were no stranger to that danger as well. Again, there were no weather radios, no NOAA or National Hurricane Center. Cables were sent from other places warning others that a hurricane may be approaching, so there was some warning, but nothing like the warnings we receive these days.

In 1926 a hurricane (in those days they were unnamed) hit Florida.

Dennis Richards wrote in the Community Current Events:

"Residents of Florida were forewarned of the hurricane that was heading in our direction from the Caribbean Sea and the Islands of the West Indies, and which was due to reach us on Saturday, Sept. 18, but little did they realize that it would carry in its wake so much destruction to life and property as it finally turned out to have done.

"The damage to the state has been estimated at a fabulous sum; but great as this loss is, it is

nothing in comparison to the loss of life sustained by Miami, Moore Haven, and other sections of the state.

"The situation at the Unity was quite serious when roofs were blown away, large trees uprooted, and the park strewn with debris, but the climax came when our large dining hall was blown from its foundation on the west end. The wind at this time was raging from the north, but it abated for a while and turned to the south, and from this direction it came with all its previous fury, creating a tidal wave that caused destruction on both land and sea."