



WHAT ABOUT BOB?

For lo the flowers are gone, the summer is over and past, and the voice of the chain saw is heard in our land! We have a particular interest in things past in our family and so it was expected that my daughter would ask how Bob compared with former hurricanes on Cape Cod, in velocity and damage. An exact comparison is not possible, as many gales which were clearly hurricanes are called storms and other storms which did not occur in the hurricane season are referred to as hurricanes. Weather observations for the area were purely amateur and, as is true of all history, the observations depend on the viewpoint of the observer. There are several storms, however, which clearly followed the same path as Bob and a review of the damage to Cape property done by each tells us a lot about the changing scenes of the Cape. The first is the one which has made hurricanes so interesting to members of our family. Now known as the Great Colonial Hurricane, it occurred on August 15, 1635. Many of the first families of our town were newly arrived in Massachusetts Bay at that time, and the likes of it had never been seen by the English, nor by the native Americans, in their lifetime. Described by both William Bradford and John Winslow, it appears to have lasted longer than Bob, flooding, uprooting trees, and toppling chimneys from the tiny homes in the new settlements. Our ancestors Anthony and Elizabeth Thacher were travelling from Newbury to Marblehead and were shipwrecked by this storm, the only two survivors of the passengers and crew of the vessel Watch and Wait. As far as damage to the Cape itself, we do not know, as the Cape towns were not yet established. The next century was a cold one and most of the storms recorded were deep snow falls and winter ice storms. It was not until 23 September 1815 that another true hurricane can be identified here. That storm was an economic disaster in this area, including Rhode Island and Buzzards Bay, for it also struck with a storm surge which flooded and carried away hundreds of feet of salt works, which had but recently been built along our shores. By this time, however, most of the Cape had been stripped of large trees, so very little damage to homes and trees is reported. The Cape economy was already very depressed as a result of the War of 1812, which had kept Cape fishing interests in harbor. A third hurricane which hugged the southern coast occurred on the 8th of September in 1869. By that time wharves and piers had been built along the shores and good sized fishing fleets were berthed at Dennis Port, Bass River, East Dennis, and at the harbor created at Corporation Beach. There was much destruction of these structures and of the fleet, which following on the heels of the Civil War was another economic disaster. Still, very few trees of any size lined our streets and no wires except for those to the telegraph offices, which were temporarily down. Hurricane students include the Hurricane of 1938 in the list of "Bob Path Storms". But many who remember it better than I say that Dennis was spared the brunt of those deadly winds. This hurricane was the first in which any warning was received, but it was late in arriving and little could be done to protect shore property. Most of the damage in this "storm of the century" was in Rhode Island, Buzzards Bay, Falmouth, and Onset. It is most remembered for the tremendous loss of human life, some estimates as high as 700, but officially 600. It was also noteworthy because it was the first great storm which cut off electricity in the area. Residents were not inconvenienced to anywhere near the degree of today, for many homes were still relying on coal and wood, and kerosene lamps. The next great damaging hurricane to strike Dennis was the storm of September 15, 1944. Many of us remember this as a storm which arrived at night and blew for hours. Much of the damage in this town was caused by the huge tidal surge. It struck during a full moon and at high tide, and destruction on our south side was terrible. Yes, electricity was out. Being but a schoolgirl, I saw this as a plus. No school for several days! But mother, with 6 children to wash for, probably felt more of its inconvenience. However, with no freezer or microwave, not even television and Nintendo to be deprived of, we really were not that much put out. I do remember, however, that tree damage was extensive, not only along our streets but in the town forest, planted in the center of town in a Cape-wide effort to reforest the Cape. 1954 brought two hurricanes back to back. Both of these followed more along the path of 1938, flooding the Taunton River and Bristol County, although there was some coastal flooding in the mid-Cape. Then along comes Hurricane Bob. I suspect that this storm will be remembered as the one which caused difficulty in maintaining the activities of daily life to which we have all become accustomed. Of course we all mourn the loss of our beautiful trees, and the early advent of falling foliage. There are many who have sustained damage to their homes, cars, and boats. The economic losses will not be truly known for months. But when the next historian chronicles the list of tropical hurricanes which have struck our fragile land, the storm may well be remembered as the ComElectric Storm, rather than the Salt Works Storm, the Wharves and Piers Storm, or the Tidal Surge Storm. Thank God it will not be remembered, as is '38, for the loss of human life. Frozen food can be replaced.

INDEXER WANTED

You probably all know that Harold Merriam spent long hours last year setting up a system and indexing our several years of newsletters. We are very grateful to him, for this index has been very helpful to your board and your newsletter staff, in finding articles of historical interest and for checking on past programs and activities. Now that the system is up and working, we need someone to take up the task of indexing each letter as it comes out. Mr. Merriam will explain his system and get you going, and board members will file your index cards. Is there anyone out there who will volunteer to do this important job each month?

CALENDAR

Sept. 11 7:30 P.M. DHS Annual Meeting at Carleton Hall. See article below.
Oct. 7 7:30 P.M. Nan Waldron's slide presentation "A View From Outermost House"
Oct. 9 7:00 P.M. DHS Board meeting at the Manse.

REARRANGEMENTS BY BOB

Sounds like the name of a new business, doesn't it? Usually in this space we relate what a wonderful time everyone had participating in our Dennis Festival Days activities. Sorry to say--there was no informative bike tour or slide show on Monday, (we all had slide shows going on outside our windows!), our two lovely houses were not open on Tuesday through Friday, and the bus tour on Friday was cancelled due to the clean up of our town roads. The Village Garden Club flower show which always enhances the Josiah Dennis Manse so beautifully was only a dream on Tuesday morning. In a few short hours Bob rearranged all our plans for the week. We do certainly thank all the volunteers who had planned to help with those various programs, and hopefully they will be ready to try again next year. However, all is not lost! Nan Waldron has graciously consented to reschedule her presentation on the Outermost House to October 7th at 7:30 P.M. in Carleton Hall. We'll look forward to seeing you there. Come and bring a friend.

A CHAIN SAW STORY

You may have already heard the story of Uncle Eph and his chain saw, but it's certainly timely and a good story to remind you of. Uncle Eph Crowell was along in years, but vigorous. He still earned money from time to time by sawing wood for the summer folks' fireplaces, and also for a few folks who still had a wood range in the kitchen. Uncle Eph's son had Gone Away to seek his fortune, but on a visit to the Cape one fall, he talked to Uncle Eph about getting himself a chain saw. Uncle Eph didn't hold much truck in new-fangled stuff, but when Caleb said he'd take him to Bradford's Hardware to look at one, he consented to go, and came home with a brand new saw. Brad had said he could get his money back if he didn't find he could cut four cords of wood a day with the new saw. Well, Uncle Eph tried it out one day, and that evening he went over to Maude Howes' to call Brad on her phone. "Gosh darn it", says Eph, "try as I might, I could only cut 2 cords in a day with the darn thing". "Well", says Brad, "you probably need a little practice. I'll stop by next week to check it out". So, one morning Brad did stop on his way to Hyannis. Eph says, "Even after practicin' alls I can do is 2½ cords". So Brad says to Eph, "Well, I'll just see what's wrong". So he revs it up--Vroom VROOOOM goes the saw. "Hey", says Uncle Eph, "What's that noise"?

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Among our recent gifts are a quilt in the log cabin pattern presented by Phyllis (Mrs. M. Jerome) Darling. It was made by her grandmother, Sarah Clement Clark, born March 6, 1844. Parts of her husband's Civil War uniform are in the quilt. Pauline Derick passed along some turn-of-the-century photographs of West Dennis. A courting mirror willed to DHS by Jane (Mrs. Daniel) Chase was received, and just recently a Stone Family Bible was given by Alison Stone Kennedy and Sheila Stone Hawes. Inscribed on the cover of the Bible is: John Murray Stone A souvenir for the rescue of Luther Hall and Cyrenius Hall from drowning on 27 June 1856. We'll do some research on this. It sounds like an interesting story. Our sincere thanks to these donors.

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