

Bristol, Rhode Island – Historical Material

Hurricane of 1938

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The Great Hurricane and Tidal Wave of
1938: Scenes of the Disaster in Rhode
Island's East Bay

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THE GREAT HURRICANE AND TIDAL WAVE OF 1938

Scenes of the Disaster in Rhode Island's East Bay



RICHARD V. SIMPSON

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Author's Note: Some long passages of text are quotes from unidentified newspaper clippings.

Cover Image: A gasoline yacht in the Barrington River is lifted by the tidal wave and deposited on the pilings of a pier washed away during the tempest.

Preface

The State of Rhode Island went through as harrowing an experience as ever visited upon Rhode Island. Disaster found us unprepared and left its cruel and saddening wake. Sorrow sat in numberless homes, but let there be consolation in the knowledge that the heart and prayers of the community were offered to the forlorn.

Railroad trestles of the Providence, Warren & Bristol trolley line that ran over the tracks of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad were completely washed out in Barrington and Warren. Entire sections of track were undermined and the rail bed crumbled by the flood. In other sections the rails were twisted and the ties were swept into the river upturned like a picket fence. In Warren's north end the rail bed had disappeared leaving the rails dipping in the air like roller coaster tracks.

Bristol County to the south of the Warren River was without a road not blocked by fallen trees and utility poles. The Town of Bristol was totally isolated for fully two days because telephone communication was shut down, rail service disrupted and the Mount Hope Bridge was unapproachable.

The Herreshoff boat yards were wrecked. Three America's Cup defenders were badly damaged, and the massive sheds where they were built were reduced to rubble. The Bristol Yacht Club's large two-story shingle-style club house was entirely washed away; all that remained on the club's stone-faced pier was the flagpole. The shore front Thames Street was littered with Coast Guard bell buoys, spars and channel markers.

The job of all the people in the State was bigger than the calamity which hit us between the eyes. We went through an emergency that was met, with courage and fortitude that showed the caliber of our citizens.

During the trying hours since that memorable Wednesday afternoon, nerves were unstrung and the patience of normal routine was at a premium. That is wholly understandable. Citizen volunteers, community police and firefighters, and the National Guardsmen put their personal concerns behind them; they spent many hundreds of hours over uncountable days and nights exerting their combined strength to the mighty task of rescue and cleanup. It is to the eternal honor of these people who put their minds and talents to restoring stability to infrastructure and to the human comfort to our State.

The names of many of the countless citizens who sacrificed time away from their families, to come to the aid of their fellow citizens who lost much, are recorded in this volume as a lasting tribute

The wind and the waters were terrible, and the picture is perpetually etched upon our minds thanks to the photographs preserved here through the generosity of Bristolians H. Sanford (Sandy) Town, and Robert (Bob) Tetreault. But these images are of the past. Let us remember that after the storm the sun appeared and spread its kindly and warming beams upon us. Staunch Rhode Islanders turned their faces to the sun and rebuilt for the future.

Introduction

Every so often, the Atlantic whips herself into a fury, unsettles our Narragansett Bay and sends her waves to inundate Rhode Island's coastal plantations.

The first recorded hurricane-strength storm, called the Great Gale of 1815, swept in on September 22. To old timers familiar with the fall storms of previous years, this one was just another arriving for her annual spell of mischief.

When Rhode Island folks went to bed the night of September 22, 1815, they anticipated the usual results of low lying street flooding, fallen tree limbs, and a few swamped boats but nothing of great consequence; they slept with the wind beating in the northeast quarter with rain falling in torrents. During the night the wind increased in force, and dawn found the wind veered to the east-southeast, increasing with a frightful force, it gradually worked around to the southeast and blew a powerful hurricane, for two hours, which instruments of the day were unable to measure.

The powerful wind pushing angry swelled waves drove yachts, rafts, piers, and buoys onto the low lying shores of all East Bay towns. William DeWolf's 160 ton brigantine, the *Juno*, was pushed from her Bristol Harbor anchorage taking the sloop *Toadfish* with her; together they hurdled the wharf of Deacon Royal Diman, and came up against Captain Sam Wardwell's new brig sending her to the bottom. All the harbor buoys were uprooted and sent sailing to the head of the harbor. The south end of Thames Street, including the entire length of Constitution Street to Burton Street was washed away. Four boys were drowned when endeavoring to cross from Poppasquash by way of the sluice of the old windmill at Windmill Point.

The so-called gale of 1869, a two-day September tempest, sank every boat in Bristol Harbor, uprooted 197 elms, toppled the Baptist steeple and caused general devastation throughout the East Bay.

The surprise hurricane and tidal wave of September 21, 1938, lives in the annuals of Rhode Island history as the foremost natural disaster of the century. This destructive storm swept the New England coast, from Connecticut on the west to beyond Buzzard's Bay to the eastward, and the islands of Martha's Vineyard, Block Island, and Long Island. So widespread and serious was the damage that the total number of lives lost and the value of property destroyed have never been accurately calculated.

While Rhode Island watched its hurricane death toll mounting hourly with the discovery of additional bodies on the shifted shoreline, a glance backward at other tropical wind disasters reveal that this state's tragedy will take its place among the major storms in United States history.

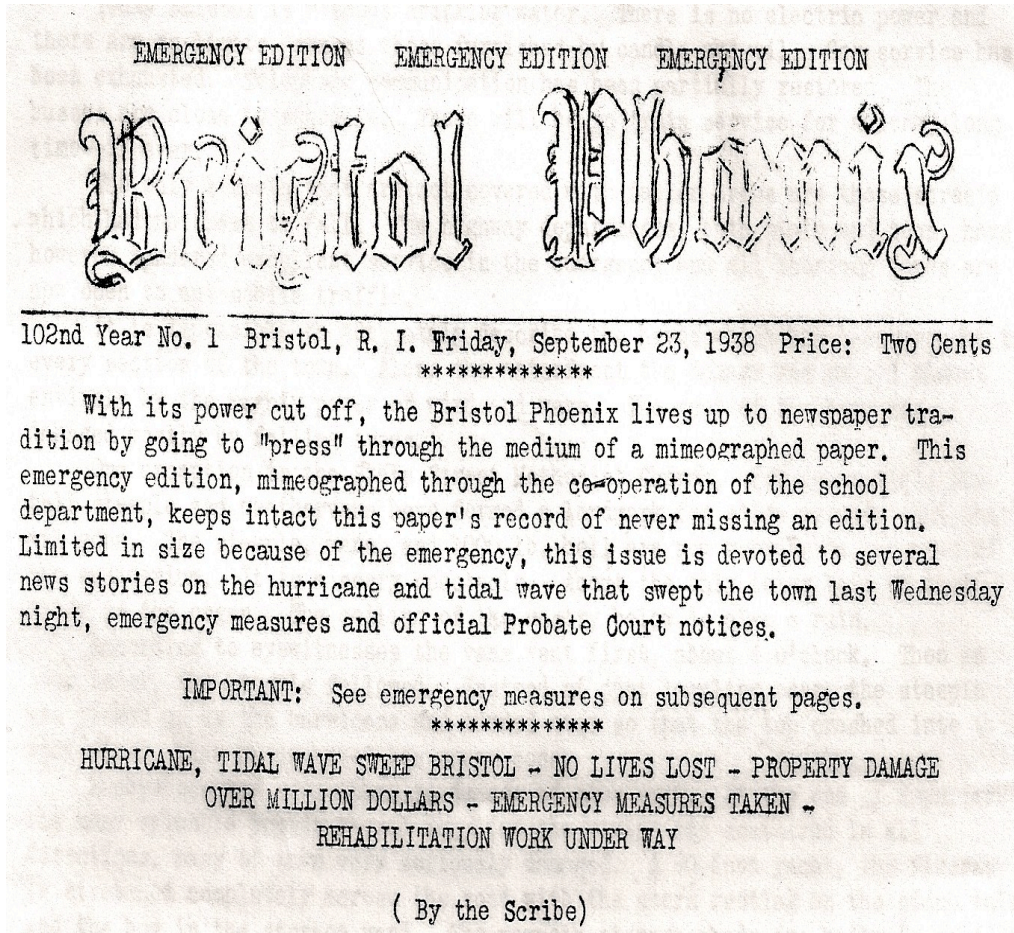
The final report of loss by the Red Cross was 57,034 homes destroyed or damaged in New England and Long Island, and 326 boats destroyed and 933 damaged in costal towns. Live stock lost: 615 work animals, 125 cows, 68,000 poultry and 22 hogs.

For more about hurricane-ravaged Bristol see *Historic Bristol: Tales from an Old Rhode Island Seaport*, The History Press, 2008.

Chapter One

The Tidal Surge and its Aftermath as Reported by The Scribe

The Scribe, also known as Roswell S. Boswell, Sr., owner and publisher of the *Bristol Phoenix* rushed to publish an emergency edition of the weekly newspaper after the hurricane and tidal wave struck on September 21, 1938.



From the Bristol Phoenix of Friday, September 23, 1938

"Just another hurricane that's missed Florida." That was the reaction most of us got when the Wednesday morning papers referred to the tropical storm as having turned north and as being headed up the Atlantic Coast, well east of Cape Hatteras.

We dismissed it with a sort of thankful feeling that Florida had once escaped a calamity such as we had seen pictured in the movies but had never experienced in this section of the country during our lifetime.

But that was Wednesday morning. Before the day was over the hurricane had paid us a visit and left its calling card. With an unbelievable suddenness the 76-mile an hour gale accompanied by a heavy rain, descended upon the town not long after 3o'clock in the afternoon. Even before that time it could be seen that we were in for a gale of unusual

strength because by noontime a sailboat had broken loose from its moorings and lay on the shore at the head of the harbor.

By 3:30 things began to happen and they kept happening until darkness had fallen over the town and the fury of wind and water had abated.

Today, two days after the catastrophe, it is impossible to estimate the tremendous amount of damage it has left in its wake. Fortunately it is all property damage as far as Bristol is concerned. Many lives were snuffed out in other parts of the State and of New England but here in Bristol there were no fatalities. There were narrow escapes but only minor injuries were reported.

The property damage will run into will over a million dollars, it is believed. The greater loss occurred along the waterfront. Collins and Aikman Corporation and the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company estimate their losses as running into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The property damage with its merciless slaughter of Bristol's beautiful, stately elms would have been severe enough but in addition there was what amounted to a tidal wave that swept everything in its path before it.

Many persons testify as having witnessed a 15-foot wall of water rush up the bay creating havoc and destruction wherever it struck. Watermarks in the interior of William W. Perry's house on the north side of silver Creek show that the sea rose to a height of 15 feet above the normal high-water mark.

Mr. Perry had a very narrow escape from drowning. As the waves crashed against his house which was surrounded by raging water, he opened the door to the library on the south east corner and stepped in, thinking to rescue some sewer records and instruments he thought were there. But the flooring had disappeared and Mr. Perry found himself sinking in 15 feet of water. When he came up he managed to grab hold of the side of the building and for nearly three hours he was alone in that room trying to pull himself out of the water. He finally managed to do it and he also saved the records he went after.

Mrs. Perry had been calling on friends in the early afternoon and being unable to reach her home was forced to spend the night at the home of a relative.

Today Bristol is without water,. There is no electric power and there are no lights, except those furnished by candles and oil. Gas service has been exhausted. Telephone communication has been partially restored. The busses are close to schedule. There will be no train service for a long, long time, if ever. The only streets that are not covered with fallen trees are those streets which had no trees to fall. The highway departments, both state and town, have however rendered excellent service in the emergency and all thoroughfares are now open to automobile traffic.

It is impossible to adequately describe the havoc which has been wrought in every section of the town. Along the waterfront the damage was caused almost entirely by the mighty power of wind and wave. The rest of the town was damaged mostly by falling trees.

One exception is the State Street Methodist Church. For generations its tall steeple and weathervane have formed a landmark for miles around. But that's all gone. The steeple, vane, and 1000 pound bell are now resting on the pews of the auditorium. It is a

sorry spectacle. About the only thing left on the floor is the organ. The ceiling of the vestry is also a ruin.

According to eyewitnesses the vane went first about 4 o'clock. Ten an hour later, the steeple followed. Instead of just toppling over, the steeple was picked up by the hurricane and turned over so that the top crashed into the roof first, like an inverted ice cream cone.

Everywhere one goes there is damage of some sort. At the end of Hope Street the many valuable yachts stored away for the winter are scattered in all directions, many of them very seriously damaged. A 90-foot yacht, the Firenze is stretched completely across the road with the stern resting on the stone wall and the bow in the storage yard. The mammoth storage sheds are badly in need of repair. Two big yachts survived without a scratch. One was Harold Vanderbilt's the *Prestige*, and the other was the *Ramallah* owned by R.H.I. Goddered.

The Lobster Pot, well known eating place owned by Charles Brownell was completely wiped out and a total loss estimated at \$35,000. Nothing is left but bare ground where its buildings once stood.

The Rockwell property seemed to come through unscathed although the garage yard is strewn with big timbers and other wreckage including two or three small boats.

The house owned by Sidney Herreshoff was in direct path of the hurricane and felt its full force. The basement and some of the foundations were badly damaged. The speedboat *Bubble* is a wreck and the new boat *Lang Syne* which Mr. Herreshoff had just bought is resting on top of it very close to the garage, or what was the garage.

The home of the late N.G. Herreshoff received a severe buffeting by the damage was confined to a part of the foundation.

The little summer house now owned by Harold Paull on the west side of Hope Street is gone as is also the seawall north of Love Rocks.

The seawall at the foot of Burton Street and around Miramar, the Francois DeWolf residence is demolished. Pete Haffenreffer's sailboat, the *Skidoo* rests on the DeWolf lawn. Hope Street in front of the Lanpher home was impassable due to a high barricade of lumber of all sizes and descriptions.

It is impossible to adequately describe the havoc which has been wrought in every section of town. Along the waterfront the damage was caused almost entirely by the mighty power of the wind and wave. The rest of the town was damaged mostly by falling trees.

One of the most discouraging sights in town is that of the Herreshoff Company building at the foot of Burton Street. The two main buildings are still standing but they are badly battered from a terrific beating. The yards on the north side are a mass of boards and heavy timbers and miscellaneous equipment. The Cup yachts moored there are apparently O.K. the Anna M hauled up in drydock is also in good condition. The sea wall at the foot of Burton and around Miramar, the residence of Francois deWolf, is demolished. Pete Haffenreffer's sailboat the *Skidoo* rests on the deWolf lawn. Hope Street in front of the Lanpher home was impassable due to a high barricade of lumber of all sizes and description.

"Wyndestowe" the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Wallis Howe was not damaged but Octave LeClair's boat the *Go On* was deposited on the Howe terrace. All the huge red

buoys belonging to the government lighthouse service are scattered in all directions. Some of them are on the east side of the railroad tracks beyond fort Hill.

The Bristol yacht Club has disappeared. There isn't a trace of it. It was swept away just before the lighthouse tender the *Shrub* was forced to leave its mooring at about 5 o'clock.

All the waterfront property of Collins and Aikman was badly damaged. Expensive machinery and thousands of pounds of raw materials are included in the loss.

A huge gap was torn in the side of the State Armory. The ferry boat *Prudence* is high and dry on the Seth Paull Company dock. Arthur Carr's boat the *Janice* is also there at the bottom of the heap. In the water at the side of the dock are several autos left by people who had gone to Prudence.

Four horses belonging to the Seth Paull Company were drowned. They defeated every attempt to rescue them. Practically every building on the west side of Thames Street had its foundation badly damaged.

Lumber from Paull's and the Wardwell Lumber Company is up as far as the Excelsior tennis courts which was where the water stopped at its highest point.

The two mammoth gas storage tanks once located at the old "sugar house" had a wild ride. One is at a crazy angle on what was the stone wall on the west side of town bridge and the other is way up above the head of mill pond and forms one of the strangest sights left by the hurricane.

The Franklin Street railroad and express station is almost beyond repair. The night watchman, Charles Johnson, reported that the hundreds of birds that make the station their home all disappeared Tuesday night long before the storm struck on Wednesday.

The Mount Hope Diner recently constructed by Arthur J. Duffy is a total wreck and so is the salesroom, garage and repair shop of the H.H. Lawson Company. The Franklin Street garage suffered considerable loss but is able to carry on business. Tuplin's Garage was damaged to a less extent. The Phoenix office was completely spared and damage except a large pane of glass blown out.

Sousa's filling station and Borges' second-hand auto sales place on the town bridge are not there any more. Archie Miller's house was torn from its foundation and is tilted at an angle. The house occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Megathlin was undermined and everything was lost. The small house in the rear where Mr. and Mrs. Francis Bragg had been living was swept away like a box of matches.

The so-called "Castle" [restaurant at Windmill Point] is still where it was but it is plain to see what it went through. Sam Wardwell's boat yard is all gone. The two small houses at the railroad crossing at Poppasquash are both things of the past.

We could go on and on telling of further loss around Poppasquash and other parts of the town but space and time forbid. The Phoenix, in an attempt to chronicle the storm for posterity, will greatly appreciate the cooperation of its readers in furnishing it with interesting items concerning the hurricane.

Extraordinary yeoman service performed by citizenry

United in a common cause, Bristol's citizenry responded with a will to extraordinary yeoman service during and after the hurricane. Unsung heroes are many, men, women and even children co-operating in the emergency work.

Untouched by an fatalities during the storm, the town's waterfront resembled the shambles of a municipality ravaged by warfare. Streets were blocked by fallen trees. But the emergency work continues at rapid pace despite many obstacles.

As the fury of the storm struck Bristol, Police Chief Anthony J. Ferrara began assembling emergency crews late Wednesday afternoon. Regular and reserve police officers were called into service. Firemen, under the leadership of Acting Chief Moses Moore, assembled at their respective stations and other strategic points.

Citizens living along the waterfront were helped to places of safety. The most thrilling rescue was that of three State Police officers from the State Police boat *Commodore*. A few minutes after these officers were helped ashore by Bristol Police, a tidal wave swept the *Commodore* atop the Staples Coal Company dock.

Looters began plying their despicable vice as darkness engulfed the town. Strict vigilance by police and other citizens stopped the looting before it became widespread. Three looters were arrested. They were held in \$500 bail each after pleading not guilty to charges of looting yesterday afternoon before Justice of the Peace Joseph A. Harmill.

Members of Battery C, 243rd Coast Artillery, under the command of Captain A. A. Moren, were pressed into service shortly before 8 O'clock Wednesday night. Town employees, SUR and WPA workers were rounded up by Highway Surveyor James Holmes and his assistant, Joseph Pannone, to help clear the streets of debris and fallen trees.

Operators at the Bristol telephone exchange, in charge of Dorothy M. Foster, head supervisor, stuck to their posts throughout the night. Incoming and outgoing messages were relayed until the service was entirely disrupted by fallen wires. But the operators kept to their posts until service was partially restored late yesterday morning.

Fallen trees and flood waters in Warren cut Bristol off from that community. Many Bristol residents stranded in Barrington and Warren walked to Bristol, arriving here, on the verge of exhaustion, after fighting their way along debris covered highways. Metacom Avenue was partially cleared late Wednesday night, opening an avenue to other sections of Bristol County for the first time in six hours. With rehabilitation work stalemated during the early morning hours, yesterday, the breaking of dawn found the regular forces augmented by many hundreds. Boy scouts and members of Kearney Post, No. 6, American Legion playing a leading part.

After a hurried survey of the damage throughout the community, town officials and Dr. Alfred M. Merriman, chairman of the Disaster Relief Committee of Bristol Chapter, the American Red Cross, hastily conferred to adopt relief measures.

Doctors, dentists, several clergymen, school superintendent Elmer S. Mapes and District Boy Scout Commissioner George R. fish joined Town Council President Prescott B. Paull, Chief Ferrara and Dr. Merriman in the conference.

With water supply completely shut off, the Disaster Relief Committee and Dr. Joseph Castronovo, Director of the Southeastern District Health Unit of the Rhode Island

Department of Public Health, made arrangements to have the town's well water supply supplemented by truck loads of water from Pawtucket. Emergency measures to prevent disease were adopted. Large posters, printed under difficult conditions at the Bristol Phoenix by foreman Charles W. Gromer and Pressman John Maciel, were posted throughout the town.

The Town Council swung into action again yesterday afternoon, meeting in special session at the home of Dr. Merriman, they moved to enlist the aid of town, state, and federal officials. The Disaster relief committee took steps to provide all physicians with anti-tetanus serum and other medicines. Guy Morrow, manager of the Bristol county Water Company, reported that 700,000 gallons of water were being held in reserve in the two supply tanks to safeguard the town against fire. Mr. Moarrow stated he hoped to be able to supply the town with water by tomorrow or Sunday. Mr. Otten stated he expected the gas and electric service would be restored to normalcy by tomorrow.

Schools may open Monday

Superintendent of Schools, Elmer S. Mapes, stated late this morning that the schools would resume sessions Monday morning. However, this is contingent on the water service being restored by that time. Assisted by principal Edward J. Fitzgerald of Colt Memorial High School, Principal James E. Sullivan of the Guiteras Memorial Junior High School, and other teachers, Mr. Mapes took a leading part in the rehabilitation work.

Clothing and other commodities supplied

Canon Anthony E. Parashley, rector of St. Michael's Church, and chairman of the Bristol Branch of the American Red Cross, announced this morning that persons who had lost clothing, furniture and bedding could receive these commodities by applying at the Red Cross office in the Post Office Building.

The SUR and WPA supervisory staffs were organized by Town Treasurer William H. Angevine in temporary headquarters in the Burnside Memorial Building. These agencies distributed commodities to those stricken by the storm. The Y.M.C.A., through Earl H. Hobson, secretary, also assisted, providing lodging for several families made homeless by the hurricane. Sixteen out-of-town Legionnaires were taken care of by the Kearney Post.

Destruction at the Narrows

At Bristol Narrows many of the summer cottages which border the shore of Mount Hope Bay, collapsed after their underpinnings had given away. The Brown house which was built at the end of the wharf at the Narrows were entirely swept away. Many trees are down in the thickly populated section of this summer colony.

At the town beach on the Leahy property the waters rose several feet entirely demolishing the public bathhouse and sweeping the debris hundreds of yards into the woods. The tide rose so high as to entirely eliminate the retaining wall along the shore and take with it many feet of earth. Thirty-seven trees are down between Metacom Avenue and the town beach on the road that leads to the summer resort.

At Camp Wampanoag, the Boy Scout summer camp, the only damage was the losing of several fine trees along the shore front and the falling of several feet of the embankment in front of the cabin.

Chapter Two

Bristol Street Scenes

The National Guard on 24-Hour Duty

Members of Battery C, 243rd, Coast Artillery, in command of Captain Albert A. Moaren, are cooperating in every way with the local authorities in the preservation of private property.

On duty 24 hours each day they are of particular value after nightfall when the town is in complete darkness except for a block on the main street.

Every avenue of approach to the waterfront areas from Warren down to Ferry Hill and on both sides of the Bristol peninsula has its guardsmen equipped with rifles for use in case of need.

During the daytime volunteers assisted in conducting surveys of property damaged by the storm in the vicinity of the shore. Property owners compiled lists of all articles which could be salvaged, packing them and citizens aided owners in reclaiming their property.

Armed National Guardsmen turned back hundreds of potential sightseers from other parts of the State and New England. Only food and produce trucks were allowed to run into the town and others with needed replacements for needed construction supplies.

Chapter Three

An Inventory of Commercial Damage

Monday, September 26, 1938

The cost of damage estimated at \$2,000,000

Town Council President Prescott B. Paull estimated Bristol's damage at about \$2,000,000. Paull said immediate efforts would be concentrated on the cleanup of debris in the down town, waterfront part of town. After the cleanup, reconstruction work will begin.

Financial assistance from the Federal government was asked for through the offices of U.S. Senator Theodore Francis Green, Congressman Aime J. Forand and Governor Robert E. Quinn.

Narragansett Electric Company and the New England Power Association crews were rushing the work to restore light and power to businesses and homes.

Water for sanitary purposes was provided by the Bristol County Water Company. Fresh water from wells with continued warnings that it be boiled for at least 10 minutes before it is consumed was being distributed by the town's volunteer fire fighters.

A search for bodies was conducted along the entire town waterfront by workers of the Works Progress Administration workers who were in town building a recreation project. In the WPA survey they probed wreckage of boats and automobiles and they reported no deaths.

With the restoration of water service, sessions for the town's 2300 public school children and 220 parochial school pupils were scheduled for the week of September 26.

Salvage work in the Collins and Aikman Mill on Thames Street was nearly complete by Sunday September 26. Management of the firm said resumption of work was dependent on the availability of electricity.

The United States Rubber Products, Inc., (formerly National India Rubber Co.) had to wait for the restoration of gas supply in order to reopen. The only damage to the U.S. Rubber facility was a detached storehouse. The Carr Manufacturing Co. was also waiting for the resumption of electric power.

Business firms in Bristol reported estimated losses varying from \$50,000 at the Seth Paull Co., to \$2000 at the ice plant of the N.J. and H.W. Vermette Co. The Paull Co. lost considerable lumber, coal, and four horses. At the Vermette plant more than 50 tons of ice was ruined and machinery damaged.

More than 250,000 board feet of lumber were among the stock floated away from the Wardwell Lumber Co., at an estimated loss of \$15,000.

Several garages along Thames Street reported heavy damage. John H. Tuplin said his used cars and accessories garage were damaged to the extent of \$3500. The automobile salesroom and garage of Henry Lawson was virtually wiped out and the loss was about \$10,000.

Crews from the Narragansett Electric company and the New England Power Association were rushing the work of reestablishing light and power service to business houses and homes. Water for toilet purposes was provided by the Bristol County Water Company late Saturday Night.

Fresh water from wells with continued warnings that it be boiled for at least 10 minutes before it is consumed, was being distributed by the town's fire trucks. Lack of house gas was still inconveniencing many householders.

A search for bodies was made along the entire town waterfront by workers of the WPA Recreation Project. In their survey they probed wreckage of boats and automobiles and are reported no deaths.

Schools to Reopen

With the return of water, sessions for 2300 public school children will open Wednesday and those for 220 parochial school pupils will open tomorrow.

Rev. Michael L. Ryan, pastor of St. May's church, announced a perpetual novena of thanksgiving in honor of the Queen of the rosary would begin at 7:30 o'clock Wednesday night.

Factories on Partial Scale

Manufacturing plants are expected to resume activities on a curtailed basis today. In many cases only lack of electric power necessitated shut-down. Electricity may be available today.

Salvage work in the Collins and Aikman Mill on Thames Street were nearly complete yesterday. Employees worked throughout the day at the task. Officials of the firm said resumption of work was dependent on power. No estimates of the damage sustained could be obtained.

The U.S. Rubber Products, Inc., must await restoration of a gas supply, in order to reopen. The gas is used in the manufacturing process. A storehouse was the only part of the paint damage in Wednesday's hurricane. The Carr Mfg. Co., will resume when power returns. No serious damage was reported there.

Business firms in Bristol reported estimated losses varying from \$50,000 at the Seth Paul Co., to \$2000 at the ice plant of the N.J. and H.W. Vermette Co. The Paul Co., lost considerable lumber, coal, and four horses. At the Vermette plant more than 50 tons of ice was ruined and the machinery damaged.

More than 250,000 board feet of lumber were among the stock floated away from the Wardwell Lumber Co. The loss may reach \$15,000.

Several garages along Thames Street reported heavy damage. John H. Tuplin said his used cars and accessories were damaged to the extent of \$3500. The automobile salesroom and garage of Henry Lawson was virtually wiped out and the loss may total \$10,000.

No estimate was made of the loss sustained by Charles E. Brownell in the destruction of his restaurant, the Lobster Pot. The Mount Hope Diner on Hope Street was wrecked. Reconstruction may be made on a smaller scale.

Chapter Four

Yachts Ravaged by the Elements

Friday, September 30, 1938

Wind and wave played strange pranks among the boats of the yacht club's fleet bringing complete destruction to some and handling others gently. Three of the larger yachts were saved by the good seamanship of their owners or professional skippers, and some of the smaller ones by the whim of Lady Luck.

Charles Marshall's little cutter, the *Valiant*, moored off the Ferry, dragged her anchor until she reached the place just south of the Herreshoff shop where she usually lies, where her anchor got a good hold in the mud. One Bristolian quipped she acted just like a cow coming home to the barn at feeding time.

Commodore Paul C. Nicholson's professional skipper gave the motor yacht, the *Onza*, all the reach he had, and with the engines turning over to take the strain off the mooring rope, kept her heading into the wind until the danger of dragging was over.

Commodore Rockwell went aboard his yawl, the Herreshoff-built *Belisarius*, and with his skipper, got her under way and cruised around, until it was safe to pick up the mooring again. Adaman Henckes' skipper did the same thing with his new cutter, the *Orient*.

The waves that smashed through the foundation walls of Francois DeWolf's mansion, "The Tides", lifted Pete Haffenreffer's Fisher's Island sloop, the *Skidoo*, over the sea wall and dropped her with her bow almost on the sidewalk, where telegraph wires against her mast stopped her from going further, leaving her virtually undamaged.

One of the most discouraging sights, we have learned, is that of the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company's buildings at the foot of Burton Street.

As far as can be seen, the four large yachts hauled out at Herreshoff's and not under cover are about the only yachts there that were not thrown around or toppled over.

About a quarter of the J-class Cup defender *Resolute*'s winter cover was blown away and a couple of sections of the *Vanitie*'s housing went after the *Resolute*'s. Ranger's doesn't show any holes, and apparently the bronze hulls of the old cup defender and her rival of the 1937 America's Cup winner have suffered no injuries. R.H.I. Goddard's schooner the *Ramallah* hauled out of her cradle in the south yard, stayed right through the storm while the sides of the big storage sheds, a board or two at a time as the waves ripped them off, small boats and big spars that had been placed under cover, went swirling past her, over stone walls and the street into the fields between Hope and High Streets until they fetched up three or four hundred feet inland.

Yachts inside the shed had a little protection from the surge but there was enough of it left after smashing through the boarding to wash shores from under some of the larger craft and to carry small boats along with it as it rolled through.

Commodore W.A.W. Stewart's schooner the *Queen Mab*, the flagship of the New York Yacht Club; the M class sloop, the *Carolina*, owned by R.V.N. Gambrell of Newport, and some others had supporting shores washed out and were eased down on

their bilges, while Harold S. Vanderbilt's M class yacht, the *Prestige* was left upright on her cradle.

The 87-foot power cruiser, the *Firenze* was carried out at the shed, swung around and dropped across Hope Street with her bow in the stone wall on the opposite side of the street and her stern in the Herreshoff yard, blocking the street as effectively as if she was a stone fortress.

While the siding of the big storage shed is pretty well demolished, the steel frame of the building has not been broken or twisted, and the Herreshoff Company statement that it will be in shape to haul yachts in about 10 days does not seem the sheer optimism that a look at the plant might make it appear to be.

The only thing that prevents the south wall of the Herreshoff building shop from caving in is Frank D. Camerford's cruiser, the *Aide de Camp*. She is on the ways inside the shop, and the studding stopped when it struck against her house-top.

Herreshoff takes destructive wind and waves

Sidney DeWolf Herreshoff's home was in direct path of the hurricane and felt its full force. The basement and some of the foundation were badly damaged. Sid's entire collection of tools and instruments were washed out of his basement shop and lost. However, all his boats were saved, some in a damaged condition, but none beyond repair.

The boat shed between Sid's and his father's (Capt Nat) house collapsed, and of the seven boats stored in it, the *Velita* was the only one not completely destroyed. Sid's dinghy, the *Glory B* was washed onto the piazza of the senior Herreshoff's house, resting there in perfect repose. Sid's little sloop, the speedboat *Bubble* was feared lost, until she was dug out from a heap of kindling wood wreckage of several small waterfront cottages.

The newest addition to Sid's fleet, the 46-foot cabin launch, the *Lang Syne*, recently brought around from Marblehead, accommodatingly came ashore in his yard, so he had his whole flotilla stranded within a dozen feet of his shop door.

Capt Nat's home received a severe a severe buffeting but the damage was confined to a part of the house's raised foundation.

Bristol Yacht Club Washed Away

On Tuesday night, September 21, Charles B. Rockwell was reelected Commodore of the Bristol Yacht Club. Less than 24 hours later, all he had to be commodore of, as he expressed it, was a \$1,500 debt and the flagstaff for the clubhouse, wooden wharf and floats were gone and the flagstaff was all that was left standing of the club property.

Wreckage of the Bristol Yacht Club was scattered along the town's wharves. The club's piano washed ashore and was found on State Street. Peter Geddes' sloop, the *Silver Heels*, landed in Bill Angevines's front yard, but his dinghy, the *Guppy*, chose a more congenial place to come to rest. The *Guppy* swam into one of the flooded Thames Street pubs.

Charles Marshall's little cutter the *Valliant*, moored off the Ferry, dragged her anchor until she reached the place just south of the Herreshoff shop where she usually

lies, where her anchor got a good hold in the mud. One Bristolian said she acted just like a cow coming home to the barn at feeding time.

Scenes of more harbor side damage

The little summer cottage owned by Harold Paull on the west side of Hope Street is gone as is also the seawall north of Capt Nat's Love Rocks.

All of Collins and Aikman's waterfront mill property was badly damaged. Expensive machinery and thousands of pounds of raw materials are included in the loss.

A huge gap was torn in the side of the State Naval Reserve Armory. The prudence ferry was high and dry on the Seth Paull Company dock. Arthur Carr's boat Janice is also there—at the bottom of the heap. In the water at the bottom of the heap of the dock were several automobiles left by people who had gone to Prudence Island.

Four draft horses belonging to Seth Paull Company were drowned. Every attempt to rescue them was in vane. Practically every building on the west side of Thames Street had its foundations badly damaged.

Lumber from the Paull and the Wardwell lumber yards floated up as far as the Excelsior tennis courts on Hope Street which is where the water stopped at its highest point.

The two mammoth gas storage tanks once located at the old "sugar house" near the terminus of the railroad had a wild ride. One tank floated to rest at a crazy angle on what was the stone wall on the west side of the town bridge and the other ended up above the head of mill pond.

The Franklin Street railroad and express station was considered to be almost beyond repair. The night watchman, Charles Johnson, reported that the hundreds of birds that make the station rafters their home all disappeared Tuesday night long before the storm struck on Wednesday.

The Mount Hope Diner recently constructed by Arthur J. Duffy had his hopes for a flourishing business was dashed by the total wreck of his building.

The salesroom, garage, and repair shop of the H.H. Lawson automobile sales suffered considerable loss but was able to carry on business. Tuplin's Garage was also damaged, but to a lesser extent. The *Phoenix* office was spared any damage except for a blown out window.

Sousa's filling station and Borges' used auto lot on the town bridge were completely washed away. Archie Miller's house was torn from its foundation and was tilted at an odd angle. The house occupied by the Megathlin family was undermined and everything was lost. The small house in the rear where Francis Bragg and his wife had been living was crushed like a box of matches and swept away.

The Castle Restaurant at Windmill Point survived, but it did not escape some damage where the powerful waves surged right through the building.

Sam Wardwell's boat yard was totally destroyed. The two small railroad train waiting shelters at the Poppasquash crossing have disappeared.

Bristol damage near \$2,000,000

Bristol's hurricane damage was estimated at near \$2,000,000 by Town Council President Prescott B. Paull. He said immediate efforts would be concentrated on a cleanup of debris. Until that task is completed plans for reconstruction will be held in abeyance, he said.

Financial assistance, probably from the Federal government, will be necessary for rehabilitation, the council head said. U.S. Senator Theodore Francis Green, Congressman Aime J. Forand and Governor Robert E. Quinn were petitioned for aid by town officials.

Electric crews restoring power

Crews from the Narragansett Electric Company and the New England Power Association were rushing the work of reestablishing light and power service to businesses and homes. Water for toilet purposes was provided by the Bristol County Water Company late Saturday.

Fresh water from wells with continued warnings that it be boiled for at least 10 minutes before it is consumed was being distributed by the town's fire trucks. Lack of house gas was still inconveniencing many households.

A search for bodies was made along the entire town waterfront by workers of the WPA Recreation Project. In their survey they probed wreckage of boats and automobiles and reported no deaths.

Schools to reopen

With the return of water, sessions for 2300 public school children will open Wednesday and those for 220 parochial school pupils will open tomorrow.

Rev. Michael L. Ryan, pastor of St. Mary's Church, announced a perpetual novena of thanksgiving in honor of the Queen of the Rosary would begin at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Armed National Guardsmen turned back hundreds of would-be sightseers from other parts of the State and New England. Only those bent on business were permitted through the lines. Food and produce trucks continued to run into the town with needed replacements for the depleted supplies.

Factories running on part time

Manufacturing plants are expected to resume activities on a curtailed basis today [Monday]. In many cases only lack of electric power necessitated shut-down. Electricity may be available today.

Salvage work in the Collins and Aikman Mill on Thames Street was nearly complete yesterday. Employees worked throughout the day at the task. Officials of the firm said resumption of work was dependent on power. No estimates of the damage sustained could be obtained.

The U.S. Rubber Products, Inc., must await restoration of a gas supply, to reopen. The gas is used in the manufacturing process. A storehouse was the only part of the plant

damaged in Wednesday's hurricane. The Carr Mfg. Co., will resume a full work schedule when power returns. No serious damage was reported there.

Business firms in Bristol reported estimated losses varying from \$50,000 at the Seth Paull Co., to \$2000 at the ice plant of the N.J. and H.W. Vermette Co. The Paull Co, lost considerable lumber, coal, and four horses. At the Vermette plant more than 50 tons of ice was ruined and the machinery damaged.

More than 250,000 board feet of lumber were among the stock floated away from the Wardwell Lumber Co. The loss may reach \$15,000.

Several garages along Thames Street reported heavy damage. John H. Tuplin said his used cars and accessories were damaged to the extent of \$2500. The automobile salesroom and garage of Henry Lawson was virtually wiped out and the loss may total \$10,000.

No estimate was made of the loss sustained by Charles E. Brownell in the destruction of his Lobster Pot restaurant. The Mount Hope diner on Hope Street was wrecked. Reconstruction may be made on a smaller scale.

Friday, September 30, clean up continues

Bristol today continued its task of clearing the storm wreckage with a corps of nearly 350 relief workers under the direction of Highway Surveyor James Holmes and his assistant, Joseph F. Pannone.

Working in crews of 20 men each, several relief squads were concentrating their efforts on fallen and unsafe trees, especially those hindering the work of utility company employees. Trees deemed unsafe were being grounded, cut up into small pieces and carried away.

Stumps of the trees are being loosened with picks and shovels and will be pulled away by steam rollers.

Electric current has been restored to about 25 percent of the town's consumers but the streets are still pitch dark at night with every indication that they will remain so for at least several more days. Fresh drinking water is still being delivered by trucks from house-to-house and Guy Morrow, manager of the Bristol County Water Company, said that faucet water for drinking purposes would not be made available until officially sanctioned by the Department of Public Health.

Most of the stores in town were doing business as usual with the return of electric current. Many employees returned to their work at the Namquit plant of the Collins and Aikman Mill, which suffered much damage during the hurricane. Postal service too, is virtually normal.

It is said that the Bristol branch of the United Rubber Products, Inc., as a result of the widespread havoc created by the storm to the telephone and power lines throughout New England is faced with an enormous amount of orders. Electric power had been restored at the factory and during the past few days "tank" gas has been installed to take the place of the regular supply of gas, so that production is now almost back to normal.

The foot of State Street, the most chaotic spot in town had been cleared out by the relief workers and now presents a more orderly picture, a direct contrast to its appearance

the day after the storm when the hurricane assisted by the tidal wave made the spot the catch-all for the boats, buoys, lumber and in fact everything which came within its path.

Rapid strides toward recovery

Bristol is making fast strides toward recovery from the devastating effects of last Wednesday's hurricane-tidal wave.

Workmen from both the telephone and electric companies are utilizing every hour of daylight to restore the services normally offered by these utilities.

The town is still without lights with the exception of a short stretch on Hope and State Streets. Telephone service is also resumed on a comparatively small scale.

When the gas service will be resumed is still a matter of great doubt and it may be several days before consumers will be able to have it at their disposal again.

Industrially the town is on "its way again." With temporary emergency repairs completed the Bristol plant of the United States Rubber Products Inc., yesterday afternoon started operations on a three eight-hour shift schedule. Work was resumed on a smaller scale at the Collins and Aikman mills.

With "cleaning up" the present order of business the management of the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company, hard hit by the catastrophe, is planning a quick rebuilding program, a fact which will thrill the heart of every true Bristolian.

The educational system also resumed activity today with the reopening of St. Mary's parochial school. The public schools will reopen tomorrow.

The business life of the community moved at a slower pace. This was due to the lack of lighting facilities. However, this is expected to be remedied by nightfall.

Religious life has continued without interruption since the disaster. The only exception was at the State Street M.E. church, the steeple of which crashed through the roof of the edifice at the height of the storm. From a reliable source it was learned that parishioners plan to rebuild. Several churches have extended the use of their facilities.

Bristol is still without drinking water from home faucets and residents continued to rely on artesian wells and water brought in trucks from various sources. Engaged in conveying water to the community are trucks from the Vermette Ice Company, the Bristol fire Department, two National Guard trucks, three trucks loaned by the City of Providence, and also one truck belonging to the Narragansett Racing Association.

The Bristol County Water Company service was restored Sunday but water was used for toilet facilities only.

The shortage of meat which threatened the town was remedied today when new supplies were brought in from Boston. Many local merchants were forced to discard meats spoiled by lack of refrigeration.

Aided by a corps of 340 WPA, SUR and NYA workers Highway Surveyor James Holmes and his assistant Joseph F. Pannone, were continuing their excellent work today of clearing the town of wreckage caused by the storm. National Guardsmen of Battery C, 243rd Coast Artillery, and the 103rd Field Artillery were combing the waterfront for bodies which might have drifted into Bristol Harbor from other shores.

Fearful that unless men were made available at a moments notice, fire might threaten the town, Acting Fire Chief Moses Moore had men stationed at the four fire stations throughout the night ready to answer any emergency fire alarm.

Due to the ravages of the storm, many activities planned for this week were postponed, among them being the annual ball of the Bristol Police Department scheduled for Friday night at the Bristol Casino; the boxing show which was to have been held tomorrow night in Italo-American Hall, for the benefit of Michael Ruggiero; the installation planned on the same night by Bristol Council Knights of Columbus; the harvest supper of Reba Rebecca Lodge, to have been held Thursday night, and the meeting of the Bristol Garden Club tomorrow afternoon.

Chapter Five

The Methodist Episcopal Church

The dignified State Street edifice that raised its stately steeple to heaven since September 17, 1857 was destroyed beyond repair during the unexpected 1938 hurricane.

During the first week of November, 1938, workmen began tearing down what was left of the church after the hurricane had finished its devilish work of ripping off the tall spire and sending it crashing through the building's roof into its sanctuary. Citizens lamented the loss of the town landmark whose tower was a guide to sailors returning to Bristol Harbor.

For generations the tower bell summoned townsfolk to worship. Its weathervane, turning conspicuously into the wind is gone — no longer an indicator for inquiring eyes the direction of the wind. For eighty-plus years the steeple withstood the buffeting of the elements. On many occasions observers declared they had seen it sway back and forth in the teeth of a howling 'noreast gale and yet it always was there when the storm blew over. It even laughed in the face of the great gale of 1869. But then the spire was in its infancy and was strong and firm.

Finally, however, there came a wind which was not to be denied, the end came grudgingly. According to eyewitnesses, about 4 o'clock, the weathervane was snatched away with a tremendous ripping and tearing. Then an hour later, the steeple followed. Instead of just toppling over, the steeple was picked up by the hurricane and turned over so that the top crashed into the roof first, as though it were a mammoth spear delivering the mortal blow to the rest of the structure,

It was indeed a mortal blow.

After the disaster, the congregation of 125 families attended services held in St. Michael's Church parish house. Without a permanent place to worship, and with the prospect of the high cost to rebuild, the congregation made the decision to disband.

Bristol Landmark to be Razed

The stately spire which once guided ships into port brought doom to the State Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Bristol. Piercing the sky with its slender form the steeple was one of Bristol's landmarks.

Today that steeple lays a mass of broken beams and tangle of twisted cross-pieces, up-ended in the main part of the 82-year-old church. Buried beneath the wreckage is the half-ton bell which rang forth, happily or sadly depending on the occasion, for more than a quarter of a century.

The September hurricane sent the spire crashing down through the roof of the old State Street M.E. As that part of the building fell before the roaring gale, it marked the close of a chapter in the history of Methodism in Bristol.

The old structure is to be razed. That much has been definitely decided. Sentimental members of the congregation have begun itemizing the articles they want saved from the wreckers' hammers. The huge bell, the many pews, the organ—these are some of the treasures. The congregation remains divided on rebuilding. The younger element of the church eager to preserve the handiwork of their forebears, enthusiastically urges

reconstruction. Older persons, cognizant of the heavy financial burden such action would entail, shake their heads sorrowfully and say little.

The State Street M.E. Church was dedicated September 17, 1856, and when the devastating winds destroyed her she was but four days into her 83rd year. Long before the erection of the present building, Methodists practiced their religious beliefs in Bristol.

The history of the congregation dates back to 1791, when Rev. Lawrence Smith was engaged as the first pastor of the little flock. Through the years to 1805, the parishioners met in various places about the village. In that year the first church was built on the southwest corner of the Common. The Society was incorporated in 1813 with 57 names in the Act.

As matters stand today, Rev. Marvin W. Topping, pastor has a congregation of more than 125. Services are being held in St. Michael's Episcopal Church parish house since the disaster.

Friday, November 4, 1938

Good-Bye to an old Friend

Workers are now tearing down what is left of the Methodist church after the hurricane had finished its devastating job of ripping off the tall spire and sending it crashing through the road. Soon nothing will remain of this beautiful old building which, since 1857, has been one of the outstanding landmarks in the town.

For generations its bell has summoned people to worship. Its toll will be missed by all who lived within its friendly sound. Its weather vane no longer indicates, for inquiring eyes, the direction of the wind. For years its steeple withstood the buffeting of the elements. On many occasions observers have declared they have seen it sway back and forth in the teeth of howling gales and yet it always was there when the storm blew over. It even laughed in the face of the great gale of 1869. But then the old spire was in its infancy and was strong and firm.

Finally, however, there came a wind which was not to be denied. The end came grudgingly. First the vane was snatched away and soon, with a tremendous ripping and tearing, the steeple itself was picked up bodily, turned over and made to deliver the mortal blow to the rest of the structure, as though it were a mammoth spear.

It was indeed a mortal blow. We all had hoped that the "spear" could be removed and the wounded body healed. But it is not to be. The damage is too great. And so with these few lines, we pay our respects and say "good-bye" to an old friend.

Chapter Six

The Aftermath

The September hurricane will long live in the memory of New Englanders, Rhode Islanders, and especially folks in Rhode Island's East Bay and nearby Massachusetts' cities and towns; they were left reeling from Mother Nature's devastating blow.

There were many narrow escapes from injury and death but perhaps the most harrowing was the experience by Mrs. J. Francis Connell. During the height of the storm as she was driving her coupe down from Warren on Hope Street, a large elm fell directly across the hood of her car. Fortunately the windshield was not smashed although the hood was badly bent. Mrs. Connell suffered a severe nervous shock but is thanking her lucky star that it amounted to nothing worse than that.

A strange thing that happened to a woman and her son; they came to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Calbraith B. Perry asking if they could obtain shelter there for the night. They were on their way to St. George's School in Newport, but because of the fallen trees they were stopped in their tracks and could make no progress.

The mother and her son were total strangers to the Perry's, but with true Bristol hospitality, they were welcomed. During the course of the evening they learned they were related. To the mutual pleasure of the Perrys and the storm-weary stranger they discovered the woman is the great granddaughter of Commodore Mathew Calbraith Perry and Calbraith Perry is his great, great nephew. It took the hurricane to unite long unknown cousins.

For some time, Ernest W. Weaver petitioned the town to remove two trees from the front of his High Street home. The storm removed the trees and no permission was needed.

Public pay telephone No. 201 was found in the yard of William Perry not far from the Hope Street Excelsior tennis courts. It is said that the booth and phone seemed to be intact and need only be connected to the proper wires to return to service.

Mount Hope Dinner owner Arthur Duffy was crowned one of the heroes of the day. A number of people, including several women and children, sought shelter at the diner thinking it would prove a safe refuge. But as the waters mounted higher and higher and cars in the diner's front parking area began crashing against the comparatively fragile structure of his diner. Mr. Duffy knew that it was no longer any place for his women and children patrons. So one by one he carried them to the dwelling in the rear of the diner. He no sooner had them lodged there, but the waters began to threaten that building and there was nothing else to do but carry them still father back to higher ground. And he did it.

Worse, Duffy watched as his newly built dinner, only one year old, was demolished as car after car was tossed about and sent crashing into the building.

The homes of John Church and Mrs. Burt, both at the head of Bristol Harbor took devastating hits by the wind and waves. The yard of the Burt house was filled with all matter of large and small boats. Poppasquash Road was washed away in many places but was quickly repaired sufficiently for residents on Poppasquash Point to have passage into town. The stone barriers on both sides of Poppasquash Road were ruined by boats and automobiles that were strewn helter-skelter.

Colt's Drive from the Surprise Hill entrance around to the shore of the bay to the Lindemuth cottage was completely underwater; however the fickleness of the storm is here obvious because little of the road was damaged, but the Lindemuth house was completely torn away, all that remained were the piles that formed the foundation of the place.

According to the Scribe writing his *Phoenix* report, "The high water mark along the Drive is easily seen because on one side of it the grass is dead as can be while on the other is a beautiful green. The [bronze] statue of the dog was not moved nor damaged and he still sits there [looking southwest into the ocean] waiting for his master to come back from the sea."

Certainly one of the worst examples of the chaos caused by the hurricane is along Thames Street from the Seth Paull Company dock down along the shore to the Ever Ready Volunteers' Fire Station.

The Scribe informs us, "The fury of the hurricane could not budge the foundation of the coal pockets at the Paull Company. So that from that point back to the rear of the Staple Company office at the foot of State Street, there was a perfect catch-all. And it seemed as if everything was caught there. It is impossible to tell what it all looks like. But it makes you think of one of this new fangled sur-realist drawings where the artist goes on a bat and has a nightmare."

Several days after the storm had passed, clean up crews were still trying to dig through tangled lumber as well as enormous Coast Guard buoys, parts of skiffs and other debris to reach the carcass of the last of Seth Paull's four drowned horses.

The Prudence ferry was high and dry, sitting on a pile of lumber and so was the *Janice C.* They were thought to be safe moored to the lee side of the Church Street wharf, then came along the tidal wave and swept them up and away. Joe Kinder's boat was keeping them company as well as the state police boat the *Commodore*.

The wooden buildings on the west side of Thames Street near State Street felt the full force of the storm. The foundations of all of the buildings were undermined and in several cases the entire street-level floor was flooded.

Damage to the United States Rubber Company buildings on Weed Street was slight, estimated cost to repair was about \$2000.

During the hurricane and after, amateur photographers were in evidence everywhere. We owe the images recorded in this volume to the photographic efforts of Sandy Town and Bob Tetreault who so generously loaned their photos to me with the thought that one day I might use them in a publication. The entire collection, some of which are not reproduced here, is now in the archives of the Herreshoff Marine Museum.

Hurricane News Clips

Sunday, October 2, 1938

Its property loss running well over the million-dollar mark, Bristol had one consolation from last Wednesday's disaster. Not a single victim was claimed by the storm; not a single major injury was reported.

However, the town's heartfelt sympathy goes out to those communities in Rhode Island and other States, where the hand of Death reached out and claimed many citizens.

But confidence in the future is apparent everywhere. The people of Rhode Island and other States have met the emergency and see the rays of bright sunshine in the future.

Profiteers reap as they sow

Brother of the looter in times of disaster is the profiteer.

To a small degree this was emphasized in Bristol during the present emergency.

A few cases of profiteering were reported. It is true the few responsible for this cowardly practice did make extra profit on the sale of much-needed commodities and other supplies. But they are beginning to reap an unwanted harvest, the scorn and resentment of former patrons.

A Wood Street retailer took the No Profiteering warning too literally a survey of the business establishment last Saturday revealed.

When placards containing the warning were posted near his store, the merchant read the bulletin carefully and then set up new prices in his store. Bent on obeying the order, the retailer sold commodities at cost — at no profit to himself.

Mr. Mooney's aid

An important figure in the recent emergency work in Bristol was Lawrence A. Mooney commandant of the Soldiers' Home. After looking out for the welfare of his charges at the home, Mr. Mooney hurried to emergency headquarters in Bristol and offered the full facilities of the home in any flood-stricken families.

With the water shortage a major problem in the community, Mr. Mooney supplied thousands of gallons from the artesian well at the home to hundreds of families in Bristol.

Estimating the damage at the home at \$5,000, Mr. Mooney quickly made plans to remedy conditions there. The damage at the home included a crop loss of about \$900 and property damage of more than \$2300 to the buildings.

Politics seemed to be taboo during the past few days. However, indications are that political conversations will supplant hurricane chats soon.

Guiteras Field

After a survey of Guiteras Athletic Field, baseball and football enthusiasts breathed a sigh of relief. Planks in the stands were moved by the wind and water, but were undamaged. The greens turned brown by the salt water and debris is not irreparable.

Lighting the business district

Contrasts were offered by two sections of the town's main business district last night. For the second successive night, that section of the business section between Court and State Streets was brightly illuminated with its usual supply of electric and neon lights. The other half was lighted by candle power as the lines feeding those circuits had not yet been repaired. On the other hand, the Wood Street business section fared well with bright lights the length of the street.

Tanker Straddling Fall River Road

The log of the tanker *Phoenix*, now settled on the Fall River-Boston highway in Somerset is missing certain entries.

Captain B.H. Larson made his last entry at 5:18 p.m., Wednesday, in the Fall River Harbor.

He had written: Wind increasing at 3 p.m. We put out extra lines.”

Then: “The storm reached full force at 5 p.m. At 5:18, we broke loose.”

Hurricane and tide picked up the *Phoenix*, which had ridden out some terrific gales in the tanker routes from the Gulf of Mexico, and swept her across the river. Finally, riding high, the Phoenix drove onto Somerset shore and settled on the highway.

Captain Larson said he found his log today. He said he thought he ought to make some more entries, but he hated to write a log with his ship planted in the middle of a road.



The tanker *Phoenix* loaded with 57,000 BBLS of gasoline driven ashore at Somerset, Massachusetts. Photo taken October 17, 1938.