

(Advocate)

# Hurricane Flays Town

## Fish Traps In Ruins

### Boats Lost--Damaged

Provincetown Shows Amazing Recovery As It Digs Itself Out Of Maze Of Huge Fallen Trees And Debris—Outside Communications Established—Light And Power Come On—First Estimate Of Damage Puts Figure at \$500,000—Army, Coast Guard, Navy, State Guard And All Other Agencies Do Invaluable Work

#### Prelude To Disaster

Afternoon, September 14 . . . This morning the sun came out finally, but a heavy atmosphere of deadly quietness permeated everything. Throughout the morning there was scarcely any movement in the air at all. The harbor was quiet. The shores of Truro clear. About midmorning two square red flags moved up to the top of the staff on Monument Hill. They have square black centers, and they mean HURRICANE.

The Coast Guard has called all of its men back from leaves and liberty to their stations—to Wood End, to Race Point, to Highland, and to the other stations along the Cape. Fishing boats have tied up to their moorings and those who haven't any are using government moorings.

All Navy craft left this morning for the shelter of the Canal and those whose pleasure sailboats are in the water have put down double sea anchors.

So we wait in absolute quietness for the night and what it may bring . . . lower caper in last Thursday's issue.

It was about 2:30 the next—Friday—morning when it seemed impossible to stay inside any longer, in a feebly candle-lighted room of an old building that had been tortured through three endless hours of hurricane.

By that time the wind had slowed down to a 60-mile drive. The rain had stopped. A State Guard near the Post Office said, "No smoking" and then added that Leno Dutra's gas boat, the Elsie Howard, was ashore in back of the building. Push-blasts of wind brought the odor of fresh gasoline. "Any others?" "Yes the Dorothy is right along side." Two within a few yards of each other, and the beach several miles long! It sounded like the overture to tragedy and disaster. Postmaster Bill Cabral was standing by his post office in the shelter of the portico. For a minute we watched the old horse chestnut tree in Mattie Atkins' front yard fighting the gale to stand and live, and then went up to see Lieut. H. J. Larrabee, assistant Captain of the port, sitting near the

phone in the light of a smokey lantern. It was too soon for any news.

At that time no one knew what had really happened, but there was the smell of doom in the awful darkness that had diminished its screaming and crashing to a dull roaring. All of it seemed so unreal, so impossible—the radio warnings, the pleas by the governor, the precautions. Even the hurricane had insinuated itself gradually with a fresh 40-mile breeze at ten o'clock. By eleven it was 55, with gusts to 65, from the southeast and the sea, with a tide just ebbing, was sluicing and smashing along the shore. The hurricane was starting.

#### Lights Go Out

By this time, in many places in town, electric wires had rubbed off their insulation against poles, tree limbs, houses and against each other, sending out white flashes. Then at 11.11 it was impossible to hold the switches at the Provincetown Light and Power plant against the automatic throw-outs and the current to all of Provincetown and Truro was

cut off.

And right then is when the hurricane seemed to strike, as the M. I. T. measurements at the Race Point experimental station later proved it did. Savage 80-mile gusts cut and wrenched. Minute by minute the power of the wind increased until midnight had come and passed with the height of the hurricane at 93 miles an hour and gusts up to 100. For an interminable hour the end of the Cape was blasted by an 87-mile wind. Through its howling could

be heard the crashing of glass, the thud of falling bricks and the tearing of branches.

It was shortly after two in the morning when the hurricane began dying down. The rain which had been driving like bullets had subsided. The wind had demonstrated its awful power beyond need of further proof and was moving on.

Scenes along Commercial street were sickening. The Atlantic House sign swung crazily and it had broken one of the big windows in Matta's store. The street was strewn with branches and tangled wire. One of the Yarmouth Florist windows was bellied in and a couple of panes were gone in Burch's Bakery. Town Hall was surrounded with fallen branches and twisted trees. A window was gone in the Mid-Way Grill and two or three in the New York Store. Canned fruit and vegetables spilled into the street when the front window of the First National Store crashed. The huge elm that was the glory of middle Commercial street in Joe Sylvia's yard was uprooted and lay against the roof of his house. A tree in front of the library had been knocked down and the chimney had gone through the roof.

#### Big Trees Down

The big tree in front of the Pilgrim House was flat and the Captain Alec Kemp and Katherine McLeod houses near the corner of Center

street were damaged and obscured by the great elms which had fallen on them. A huge tree completely blocked Center street. Further along could be seen more of Provincetown's finest trees tilted at rakish angles or lying over houses.

It was the same to the westward. Big trees had fallen on each side of Filmore Miller's house, one of them blocking Court street and another crashing through the peak of the roof of the house formerly owned by Angie Fuller. The tree in front of the Centenary Church was down and Winthrop street was blocked. Charles Rogers' front doorway appeared to be barricaded and it developed that the roof of Phebe Freeman's porch in the rear had blown off, sheared neatly the Rogers' chimney and had landed smack against his front door. When he looked out he thought sure it was a dory standing upright on his porch.

George Allen's front windows were gone and Bill Hannum's big elm lay against his roof and his chimney on the ground. One of the tall elms in front of Josette's was held up only by the electric light cable and wires. Further along, around Kelly's Corner several of the largest trees were leaning against houses. The open Town parking space at the West End let the full force of the hurricane hit the big trees along the street and one lies over on Josephine Blanch-



Between Court Street & Winthrop Street. Fuller House, left