

STORMS AND SHIPWRECKS IN BOSTON BAY

AND THE RECORD OF

THE LIFE SAVERS OF HULL

BY

FITZ-HENRY SMITH, Jr.



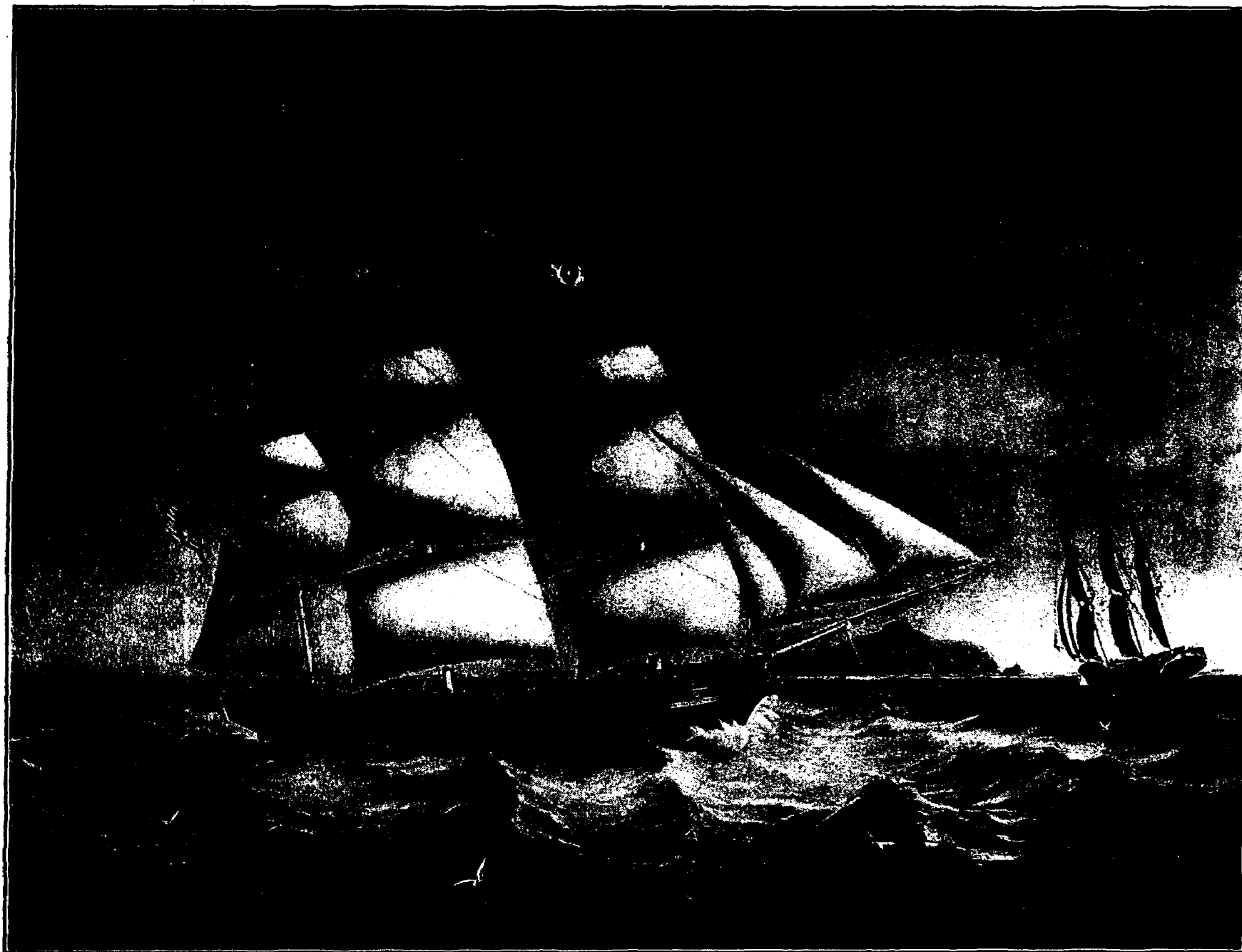
BOSTON
PRIVATELY PRINTED
1918

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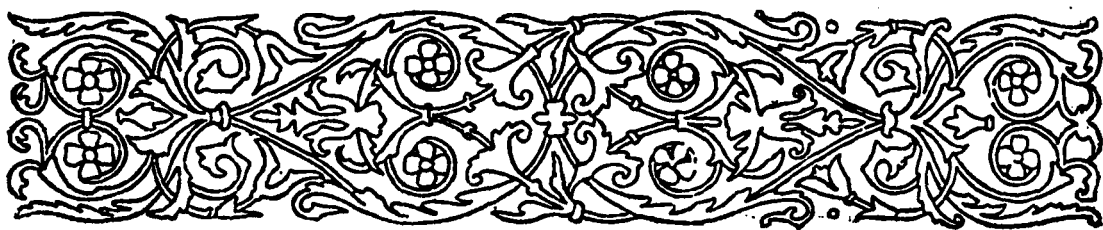
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BOSTONIAN SOCIETY'S PUBLICATIONS, VOL. II, SECOND SERIES.**

MR. FITZ-HENRY SMITH, JR.



SHIP "COLUMBIANA"

From an oil painting in the possession of Charles H. Taylor, Jr.



STORMS AND SHIPWRECKS IN BOSTON BAY

AND THE RECORD OF THE LIFE SAVERS OF HULL

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE BOSTONIAN SOCIETY, COUNCIL CHAMBER
OLD STATE HOUSE, DECEMBER 19, 1916, WITH ADDITIONS, BY

FITZ-HENRY SMITH, Jr.,



WHEN he arrives in President Roads, in Boston harbor, the ship master finds himself in an ample anchorage basin, well protected on all sides by islands and headlands. But the very presence of these islands and headlands, and the character of some of them at the harbor's entrance, makes the approach to Boston from the sea both difficult and dangerous. Point Allerton with Harding's Ledge, Toddy Rocks off Telegraph Hill, and The Brewsters with Shag

Rocks and The Graves jutting eastward and the great sand bar running inland, are menaces to the ship in the outer waters of the bay.

In 1715 the General Court of Massachusetts Bay voted to build a lighthouse on the Little Brewster, and a reason given was that the lack of such a structure had been "a great Discouragement to Navigation by the loss of the lives and Estates of Several of His Majesties Subjects," and upon the completion* of the new lighthouse on The Graves there was published in the *Boston Globe* of September 1, 1905, a poem by Henry J. Clark, which is worth quoting.

TO "THE GRAVES."

Out from the Ocean's tumultuous breast
Long, long hast thou lifted thy black jagged crest;
Long hast thou ruled, a cruel despot, the waves
At Boston's fair entrance, Thou menacing Graves.

Fierce rage the waters, but fiercer their shock
When shattered to spray on thy breastworks of rock;
Loud shrieks the wind, but more wildly it raves
When torn by their summits, Thou merciless Graves.

Now thou art conquered, thy terrors are gone;
Grim death is displaced, and life sits on thy throne:
Secure on thy rock the light shines that saves
And guides to the haven, Thou welcoming Graves.

* Superstition was thrown overboard when the lighthouses were first used, for both went into commission on Friday — Boston Light on Friday, Sept. 14, 1716, and The Graves Light on Friday, Sept. 1, 1905.

There may be an impression that The Graves were so called because of many lives lost there, that does not appear to have been the fact. The name is found on a chart as early as 1687, and it has been thought that the ledges were named after Admiral Thomas Graves,* who, in 1643, commanded the "Tryal," the first Boston ship, and comparatively few vessels seem to have been wrecked on them.

Unfortunately, lighthouses and like devices are merely aids to navigation. They cannot prevent storms or eliminate marine disasters, and shipwrecks have occurred in and about the harbor notwithstanding the precautions of the government. Indeed, it would almost appear that the risk of ocean travel has kept pace with the improvement in the instrumentalities of navigation. It was very recently that the government undertook to dig the channel in Broad Sound which made The Graves Light a necessity. Until that work was done—for more than two centuries in fact—the main entrance to Boston Harbor lay between Point Allerton and The Brewsters, which serves to show why the town of Hull, with the long stretch of Nantasket Beach, and the bight of Stony Beach, connecting Point Allerton with the village and swept by northeast storms,

* Shurtleff, *Topographical History of Boston*, 3rd Ed., Preface, p. xxxiii. See Bostonian Society Publications, Vol. 2, p. 15, for a note on Adm. Graves.

should come to play so important a part in the life saving operations in Boston Bay.

What disasters the General Court had in mind when they voted to build the first Boston Light does not appear, but we know that less than a year previously, to be precise, on November 12, 1714, His Majesty's Sloop "Hazard" was wrecked on Cohasset Rocks,* probably near where Minot's Light now stands. Petitions in the State archives for the remission of duties show the loss of other vessels before that time,† and doubtless they were not the only ones.

The dangers at the harbor's entrance were, however, early evident to mariners, as Winthrop makes known to us. Thus, in 1631, the Bark "Warwick" coming into

* *Sewall's Diary*, Vol. 3, p. 33, note (Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll. 5th Ser., Vol. 7).

Queen Anne died on the 1st of August, 1724, and the "Hazard" was bringing to Boston a message from the new monarch, George I. The message seems to have been saved, for the Council Records of December 10th recite that "The Proclamation of His most excellent Majy King George expressed by His Majesty's Sloop the Hazard drawn up especially for this Province was solemnly read, & published by the High Sheriffs of the County, followed with loud acclamations of God save King George & expressions of joy." Council Records, Vol. 6, p. 283.

† Sept. 28, 1697, the Ship "Providence," Michael Gill, master, was returning from Barbadoes on her first voyage when she was wrecked on Harding's Ledge and most of her cargo lost. Mass. Archives, Vol. 62, p. 215.

On Jan. 31, 1702, the Brigantine "Mary" with logwood from the Bay of Campeachy, was wrecked "upon the rocks lying before Marblehead." *Ibid.*, p. 399.

Nantasket Roads with a southeast wind barely escaped being driven on the rocks by a sudden gust,* and in 1636, the "Charity" of Dartmouth, of 120 tons, laden with provisions, bound in with a strong northeast wind, was nearly lost between Point Allerton and Telegraph Hill. Says the governor,† "but the Lord, in his mercy to his people delivered her, after she had struck twice, and upon the ebb." The provisions were bought at a figure which saved the country £200, and were delivered to the towns that needed them.

It is only by diligent search that the details of the early disasters about Boston harbor can be found. In fact, no United States law authorized the collecting and compilation of wreck statistics previous to 1874. Some twenty-five years ago, Mr. Sidney Perley‡ industriously gathered together the data relating to the great storms of New England, but he did not devote himself

And on Nov. 3, 1703, the Ship "John" of Exon, with salt and wine from Lisbon and Fyall, after apparently reaching Nantasket Roads in safety, was "by reason of the high Swelling of the Sea after a violent Storm" cast upon the rocks lying off Pemberton's (now George's) Island, where she filled and destroyed most of her cargo. *Ibid.*, p. 448.

* *History of New England*, by John Winthrop (Savage's Ed., 1825), Vol. 1, p. 72.

Five years later the vessel was not so lucky and was wrecked, just where, is not apparent, but she seems to have ended her days in Dorchester Bay. A warrant was issued "to the constable of Dorchester to inventory and appraise" her. Winthrop, Vol. 2, p. 345. And the name "Barque Warwick Cove" or Creek appears on maps of the present day to mark the inlet to the Neponset River south of Commercial Point and crossed by the bridge of the latter name, though

entirely to shipwrecks, and the great marine disasters have not always taken place in the great gales. As will appear later, snow storms have been a most common cause of the wrecks upon our coasts.

The first gale of importance of which there is a record was the "Great Storm," so called, of August, 1635, when the wind, having blown from the south and southwest for a week, changed suddenly to the northeast with rain and great violence, blowing down trees and houses, and causing vessels to drag their anchors. The "Great Hope" of Ipswich, a ship of 400 tons, was driven ashore at Hoffe's Point, and then when the wind changed to the northwest was blown off again and ran ashore near Charlestown. The change of the wind to the northwest was accompanied with the very curious phenomenon that the tide seemed to come in twice in the

bridge and inlet sometimes appear as "Tenean Bridge" and "Tenean Creek."

That portion of what is now Freeport Street, extending from Union Street to the bridge, appears on a "Plan of Land belonging to the Commercial Point Association, Dorchester, Sept. 30, 1835, Thomas M. Moseley, Surveyor," (scale reduced by Alex. Wadsworth, Surveyor, July 1, 1848), as "Barque Warwick Street." The street was so known before that time, its name being changed to Commercial Street, Mar. 11, 1840, and again changed to Freeport Street Mar. 1, 1892.

For reference to the above plan, which may be found in the office of the Engineers of the Street Commissioners of the City of Boston, I am indebted to Mr. John H. Edmonds. And see the article on *The Barque Warwick* in 21 *N. E. Hist. Gen. Reg.* 223.

† Winthrop, *History of New England*, Vol. 1, p. 185.

‡ *Historic Storms of New England*, by Sidney Perley, Salem, 1891.

space of twelve hours, for after it had fallen about three feet, it began to flow again for an hour, and rose two or three feet, which Winthrop* says "was conceived to be that the sea was grown so high abroad with the north-east wind that meeting with the ebb it forced it back again." Gov. Bradford wrote† that none living "either English or Indeans" ever saw so mighty a storm — "Being like (for ye time it continued) to those Hauricanes and Tuffons that writers make mention of in ye Indeas." And he ventured the statement that "the signs and marks of it will remaine this 100 years in these parts where it was sorest." Two nights later there was an eclipse of the moon.

The tide was of unusual height. Bradford says that south of Plymouth, which seems to have been the center of the gale, the wind caused the sea "to swell about 20 foote, right up & downe and many of the Indeans to clime into trees for their saftie." The normal rise of the tide at Boston is about ten feet, and if anything like a twenty foot tide occurred in the harbor it established a record, but we should not be warranted in making that assumption from what the worthy governor says took place on the cape. Not for many years can we refer to the record of a tide as authentic.

* *History of New England*, Vol. 1, p. 164.

† *History of Plimoth Plantation*, by William Bradford, Boston, 1898, pp. 401, 402.

The presence of an extraordinarily high tide was characteristic of the storms of the 18th century. The tide which accompanied the storm of February 24, 1723, has been estimated as sixteen feet, a figure not approached for more than one hundred and twenty-five years, and which seems never to have been exceeded. The storm was so severe that it was feared it had damaged the light house. Perley relates that the tide was twenty inches higher than had been known before, and that it rose above the tops of the wharves and flowed up the streets of Boston until, according to the *News Letter*, the inundation "looked very dreadful."*

* *Historic Storms of New England*, p. 41.

The estimate of 16 feet for the tide of Feb. 24, 1723, is made by Mr. John H. Edmonds in Boston City Document No. 26. *Report of the Public Works Department for 1913*, p. 126.

There were other unusual tides in the 18th century and in the first half of the last century, notably on Oct. 20, 1770, Dec. 4 and 8, 1786, Mar. 26, 1830, and Sept. 26, 1847. The elevation of tides in Boston harbor is now determined by reference to gauges or marks figured from a definite base, but that was not always the situation, and the difficulty in making an accurate comparison between the old and modern tides is illustrated by some of the data collected by Mr. Perley.

Thus he remarks of the tide of 1723 that at Dorchester, Mass., it was "only excelled by that of April, 1852" (? 1851). *Historic Storms*, p. 41. Speaking of the tide of 1770, he states that it came to "within a foot" of the tide of 1723. *Ibid.*, p. 86. And in respect of the tide of 1830 he says that it "rose at Boston one and one-half inches higher than in the great tide of December, 1786, which was ten inches higher than the highest that any person then living remembered." *Ibid.*, p. 251. Surely there must have been some living in 1786 who remembered the great storm and tide of 1770. Query, was the tide of 1786 higher than that of 1770? And what can we determine from the quotations about the height of the tide of 1723?

October 21, 1743, there was a total eclipse of the moon, followed by a terrible rain storm and high tide, which Deacon Tudor says did the greatest damage in Boston "that ever was known in the Memory of Man," and he mentions two tides in 1764, one in April and one in December, which did much harm to wharves and cellars, though not so high as the great tide of 1723. In March of 1765, there was a northeast storm which kicked up the biggest sea in the harbor that the oldest men of the town ever saw, and with the high tide did damage estimated as at least £10,000.

Deacon Tudor's Diary so far as it goes is far more satisfactory, for he seems to have referred back in each case to the tide of 1723. We find him writing of the storm of Apr. 20, 1764, that it "brote in the Tide higher than it's been for 40 Year" (p. 16); of the storm of Dec. 26, 1764, that it "Rais'd the Tide hier than it has been for 43 Years before" (p. 17), and that in 1770 the tide rose "to a greater height than has been known for 50 Years (which I well remember was on the Sabbath day tho' I was then but aboute Eleven Years old)" (p. 35). Feb. 24, 1723, was a Sunday.

The memory of the "oldest inhabitants" is not always to be trusted in such matters. A further difficulty is that the same tide does not register the same elevation at all points of observation. The averages sometimes vary, as will be noticed below, and we cannot be certain of comparative estimates.

The next record tide was that of Apr. 16, 1851, in the storm which destroyed the first Minot's Light, the highest reading showing 15.74 feet and the average of observations in Boston harbor 15.62 feet Boston City Base. This was followed by the tide in the snow storm of Dec. 26, 1909, figured on elevations determined by Mr. Edmonds as averaging 15.64 feet (*Report of the Public Works Department, supra*, pp. 126 and 127), but which has elsewhere been said to have averaged but "slightly over" 15.60 feet in Boston harbor as against 15.62 for the Minot's Light tide, all estimated on Boston City Base so called. (See

October 20, 1770, occurred one of the most violent and destructive storms of wind and rain that had taken place on the coast of New England.† More than a hundred vessels were wrecked and a hundred lives lost. Only one ship successfully rode out the gale in Nantasket Roads. The tide is said to have risen within a foot of the tide of 1723. Wharves were again overflowed and streets and cellars flooded, and Tudor figured the damages to the Province of Massachusetts Bay alone as £100,000.‡

In December, 1786, occurred two violent snow storms with very high tides. In the first, which began on Monday, the 4th, the British Brig "Lucretia" was wrecked on Point Shirley, where several of her crew who succeeded in getting ashore were lost in the snow, and the second, which followed on Friday, the 8th, a coasting schooner was driven on Lovells Island with the loss of all on board.

Mass. Public Document No. 94. *Report of the Directors of the Port of Boston for 1914*, pp. 161 and 162, where the figures are given upon a base approximately .5 feet *above* Boston City Base). The Navy Yard records give the height of the 1909 tide there as 15.58 feet Boston City Base.

The question of the height of the 1909 tide was involved in a recent case before the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth, *Hecht v. Boston Wharf Co.*, 220 Mass. 397, where the Court (Rugg, C. J.) says at page 404:

"This tide was described by witnesses as extraordinarily high. The height reached by it was fifteen and six-tenths feet above the arbitrary level in common use in the neighborhood, known as Boston base, which

That was not the only catastrophe which Lovells has witnessed. The winter of 1645 was very cold, ships were dragged from their moorings by the ice, and a ketch was carried out to sea and wrecked on the island. § In January, 1767, Susanna Haswell, then an infant in arms, but afterwards as Mrs. Susanna Rowson, a distinguished actress, author and school teacher, was coming to join her father at Hull, when the brig on which she sailed from England was wrecked on Lovells Island in a blinding snow storm. By good fortune the vessel held together, and the next morning, when the tide had fallen, all on board were safely landed by means of a ladder placed against the wreck, except little Miss Haswell, who was lowered over the side with

was about sixty-four one hundredths of a foot below mean low tide. This height had been exceeded slightly by the tide of 1851 which destroyed Minot's Ledge Light House. There were also tides higher than fifteen feet in 1830 and in 1847, and on seventeen other occasions from 1850 to 1905 the tide had risen to fourteen feet or more. The tide in question was three and eighty-six one hundredths feet above its predicted height. This was attributed to an accompanying severe storm, low barometer and a northeast wind of great velocity." . . . "A severe storm, known as the Portland storm because a steamer of that name then was lost, occurred in 1898. Its accompanying tide arose to a height of fourteen and ninety-four one hundredths feet."

Therefore, so far as the question of the comparative heights of the tides of 1851 and 1909 is capable of judicial determination, it seems to be settled in favor of the Minot's Light tide. But for all practical purposes the tides may be said to have been of equal extent.

† *Historic Storms*, pp. 86-91.

‡ *Deacon Tudor's Diary*, Boston, 1896, pp. 3, 16, 17, 35.

§ Winthrop, *History of New England*, Vol. 2, p. 254.

a rope.* In the early part of the last century a coaster was wrecked on that part of the island known as Ram's Head. It was an exceeding cold night in mid-winter, and although the passengers, some fifteen in number, succeeded in reaching the shore, all froze to death before morning.†

There are also stories of wrecks near Boston Light. In 1727, John Hayes, the keeper, addressed the General Court about the damages which the lighthouse boat had suffered in his effort to help a sloop from North Carolina, which went ashore in a storm "upon the Spit of Sand off the Lighthouse,"‡ and in the southeast gale of December 4, 1768, a Boston brigantine, Thomas Morton, master, was driven on the rocks near the lighthouse island, where she went to pieces.§ The people on board were saved with difficulty. In the next century there were notable wrecks and rescues in the same locality, as will be referred to.

In the storms of the 19th century we hear more of the violence of the wind than of great tides, though the latter were present, as is usually the case with severe

* See the *Memoir of Mrs. Susanna Rowson* by Elias Nason, Albany, 1870, pp. 7-9, and the paper by Oscar Fay Adams in *The Christian Register* for Mar. 27 and Apr. 3, 1913, entitled *Susanna Haswell Rowson*. Cf. also Mrs. Rowson's novel *Rebecca*, wherein the voyage is described.

† Stark, *Illustrated History of Boston Harbor*, Boston, 1879, p. 80.

‡ Mass. Archives Documents, Vol. 63, pp. 461-463.

§ *Historic Storms*, p. 72.

easterly winds of long duration. The great gale of September, 1815, will at once come to mind, but it was preceded in October, 1804, with a storm of rain and snow, thunder and lightning, which tore the roof from the tower of King's Chapel and blew down the steeple of the North Church, besides damaging vessels lying at the wharves in Boston.*

The gale of 1815 blew down houses and trees indiscriminately. At the entrance of the harbor the wind tore a path through the little village of Hull and completely destroyed the old church, which it is said had stood there since 1733. The damage to wharves and shipping was enormous and the loss of life considerable. Perley says that the newspapers declared they did not have space to record the marine disasters, and that the storm caused greater and more general havoc than any since the settlement of the country.† Readers of Holmes will recall that it was this storm which caused the good doctor, writing in a lighter vein, to bewail the loss of his Sunday breeches,

“It chanced to be our washing day
And all our things were drying.”

Fifty-four years later occurred another September gale, which did almost as much damage.‡

* *Historic Storms*, pp. 168 *et seq.*

† *Ibid.*, pp. 187 *et seq.*

‡ Sept. 8, 1869, *Ibid.*, pp. 329 *et seq.* Cf. Shurtleff, *Topographical History of Boston*, p. 324.

In December of 1839 there was a series of storms, which, so far as the shipping was concerned, was the most disastrous of any on this coast up to that time. The exact loss of life seems not to have been known, but it was large, for more than ninety vessels were lost, and nearly two hundred dismasted, driven ashore and otherwise injured.* The storms occurred at intervals of about a week. The first commenced Saturday night, December 14th, at midnight, and raged until late the following Monday. Among the wrecks were the Schooner "Enterprise," cast high and dry near Worrick's Hotel, Cohasset, all on board being saved; the Schooner "Margaret," cast ashore north of the lighthouse, but not much damaged; the British Brig "Susanna" driven up to Quincy; the British Schooner "H. Davenport" cast ashore on Hospital (Rainsford) Island; and the Schooner "Katherine Nichols" wrecked at Nahant.

The second gale followed on Sunday and Monday, the 22nd and 23rd of December, and though less severe than the first, caused the wreck of the Schooner "Charlotte" at Nantasket, her crew being saved, and the wreck of the Bark "Lloyd" at the same place with loss

* The story of the storms is told in a twenty-four page pamphlet printed in Boston the following year, and entitled in part *Awful Calamities or the Shipwrecks of December, 1839, Being a Full Account of the Dreadful Hurricanes of December 15, 21 & 27, on the Coasts of Massachusetts.*

of life. The latter vessel went ashore about noon of the 23rd, and six of the crew who attempted to reach shore in the lifeboat were drowned. Another of the crew, named George Stott, succeeded in getting so near the shore in the small boat that he was saved by the inhabitants. Capt. Montford and the two remaining hands lashed themselves to the rigging, from which the seamen were soon swept overboard and the captain alone remained, to be finally brought ashore by the crew of the "Charlotte" who had themselves just suffered shipwreck. The captain was insensible when taken off and did not survive his experience.*

The third gale began Friday morning, December 27th, and blew a hurricane until near sunrise of the 28th. The tide rose to a very great height and much damage was done on shore, though happily few lives were lost. The Ship "Columbiana" of over 600 tons was at Swett's wharf, Charlestown, partly loaded with ice, when she slipped her moorings, probably on account of the height of the tide, and was driven by the wind, bows on, against the old Charlestown bridge. She made a clean breach of the bridge and brought up against the wharf at the Warren bridge, completely

* In the interval between the storms the Schooner "H. Davenport" had been pulled off Hospital Island, but was driven on again by the second storm with such violence that it was doubted whether she could be floated a second time.

demolishing the drawtender's house, although the drawtender and his family, who were in bed at the time, escaped without injury. The ship was in charge of the mate, who, finding that the vessel was adrift, took the wheel and steered her, and she probably would have gone through the Warren bridge had he not luffed her in time. It is said that the destruction of property by the three storms must have been near a million dollars.

The decade from 1841 to 1851 was prolific of bad storms, which resulted in many disasters. The record of wrecks in 1841 is a long one, including the Schooner "Emeline" at Point Allerton, and the Sloop "Warsaw" at Cohasset, in the storm of April 30th; the "Maine" of Bath, at Scituate, and other vessels along the South Shore in the gale of October 3rd and 4th;* the Brig "Constantia" at Scituate, November 20th, and the Ship "Mohawk" at Point Allerton, December 17th. December 30th, a year later, another vessel called the "Maine" was wrecked at Cohasset in a snow storm, and the year 1844 witnessed the wrecks of the Brig "Tremont" at Point Allerton on October 7th, and the Ship "Massasoit" at the same place on December 11th. October 7, 1849, the Brig "St. John" was wrecked on

* From papers found on board a small schooner ashore on Nantasket Beach near Whitehead, the vessel was thought to be the "Miller" of Essex, and of another wreck near by, supposed to be a fishing vessel, not enough of her was left "to judge who or what she was." *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Oct. 6, 1841.

Minot's Ledge, and the gale of April 16, 1851, one of the severest ever known here, is famous for the destruction of the first Minot's Light.

Some of the wrecks just mentioned will be referred to again, for we have now reached the period of the beginnings of an organized life saving service and of the many rescues which preparedness in that field has made possible. The credit for the initiative in the great work of saving life upon our coasts belongs not to the federal government,* but to that most estimable local organization, the Humane Society of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, commonly known as the Massachusetts Humane Society.

The Humane Society was organized in 1786 and incorporated in 1791 "For the recovery of persons who meet with such accidents as to produce in them the appearance of death, and for promoting the cause of humanity by pursuing such means from time to time as shall have for their object the preservation of human life and the alleviation of its miseries." The rendering of aid to shipwrecked persons at once appealed to the organizers as an undertaking well worth the best efforts

* The U. S. Life Saving Service was not created by a single legislative act, but was the result of a series of enactments, dating back to 1848, which had in view the preservation of life and property from shipwreck on the coasts. In 1871 a definite life saving system was inaugurated and administered in conjunction with the Revenue Cutter Service until June 18, 1878, when Congress established the Life Saving Service as a separate organization.

of the society. Their contribution first took the form of huts of refuge stationed in exposed places. In January of 1787 a committee of the society asked the advice of a still older Massachusetts organization, the Boston Marine Society, as to where the huts would better be placed, having in mind to erect three of them, and the Marine Society replied that the most eligible places were Marshfield Beach, "the Beach back of Nantasket" and Lovell's Island. For a fourth hut they suggested Lynn Beach.* Later the work of bringing shipwrecked crews ashore was taken up, and what was perhaps the first lifeboat of the kind in America was stationed by the Humane Society at Cohasset in 1807, where it remained until 1813.†

Little more seems to have been done at that time apparently for lack of funds, but the great purpose was not forgotten. The Society finally applied to the legislature, which in 1840 appropriated \$5000, and with that money the society built and stationed, each in a house to protect it, eleven lifeboats, one of which was at Nantasket Beach, and that boat up to the year 1845 was alone the means of saving thirty-six lives.‡ Fur-

* *Gleanings from the Records of the Boston Marine Society*, by Nathaniel Spooner, Boston, 1879, p. 28.

† *History of the Humane Society of Massachusetts*, Boston, 1845 (New Ed. 1876), p. 18 and cf. the Report of the Society for 1899-1900, p. 30, where some of the History is reprinted.

‡ *History of the Society*, Ed. 1845, p. 23, Ed. 1876, p. 25, Report of the Society, 1899-1900, p. 36.

ther appropriations were made from time to time by the Commonwealth and also by the federal government* until a work was well launched which has since been maintained to the honor of all concerned.

The manning of the lifeboats was left to volunteers. The Society has been accustomed to grant awards for services so rendered, usually cash, with a medal, bronze, silver or gold, and sometimes a certificate, for exceptional cases. A record of the awards has been kept, and the names of the men of Hull who have thus been recognized may be found in the list printed in the Reports of the Society. It is the best brief of what they have done. Concerned with the most serious sort of labor, the list is, at the same time, not without humor, as may be seen from the award made to three men in 1910 in language as follows: "Who manned dory at Hull and went to assistance of two men in rowboat, who jumped overboard before dory reached them and swam ashore. The rowboat was saved."

Hull names first appear in 1844, when Moses B. Tower was given a gold medal and ten dollars, and John W. Tower and William James and five others of the society's lifeboat at Hull — whose names are not given — each received ten dollars. What the awards were for the list does not state, but it appears from the His-

* See *History of the Society*, Ed. 1876, appendix, p. 99.

tory of the Society* that they were given for heroic exertions in saving the officers and crew of the Brig "Tremont" of New York. The brig was driven ashore in the storm of October 7th and struck on Point Allerton at low water, where she was in imminent danger of being broken to pieces. She was discovered there by Mr. Moses B. Tower, who with the help of two men (apparently his son and Capt. James) and his own horses succeeded in conveying the lifeboat a distance of a mile and a half to a place suitable for launching it. On the way he picked up the five other men, and after a row of something more than a mile they reached the wreck and there found the captain and crew, where they had been for more than seven hours, exhausted and in the greatest peril, and brought all safely to shore.

Speaking of the rescue, the *Boston Daily Advertiser* and *Patriot* of October 14, 1844, says: "This is the third instance in which this boat stationed at Hull has been the means of preserving life. The first was that of the crew of the 'Emeline,' from which five men were saved; the second, that of the 'Mohawk,' when twelve were saved; and thirdly, this of the 'Tremont,' as just related [eight saved]. Had the Legislature of Massachusetts made provision only for this single boat, such results would alone have sufficiently attested the wisdom and humanity of the appropriation."

* Ed. 1845, pp. 59 and 78, Ed. 1876, p. 75.

The "Emeline" was a schooner wrecked at Point Allerton April 30, 1841, as previously mentioned.* The "Mohawk" was a ship of about 350 tons, built on the Kennebec in 1832 and valued at \$21,000. She entered Massachusetts Bay Thursday afternoon, December 16, 1841, with fine weather, when it came on thick with an easterly wind which changed to the northeast and began to blow hard. She tacked back and forth across the bay until Friday afternoon, when having blown away all her sails and made breakers ahead, she let go both anchors. Sometime thereafter she began to drift and an attempt was made to cut the chains. This being unsuccessful her masts were cut away in the hope that she would bring up again, but she continued to drag until she struck on Point Allerton bar. The lifeboat was damaged in an attempt to get to the ship and save the crew, but later all were safely landed in a small boat which was put out from the shore.†

Moses B. Tower, who led in the rescue of the crew of the "Tremont," was the keeper of the hotel in Hull, situated near the east end of the village and sometimes since known as the "Nantasket House." William

* *Supra*, p. 24.

† *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*, Dec. 18 and 20, 1841.

Unfortunately we do not know the names of the men who made the rescue. The *History of the Humane Society* (Ed. 1845, p. 77), says that the lifeboat "was driven on the rocks and badly stove" in the attempt to reach the wreck.

James, who assisted in the rescue, was a Dutchman, the original spelling of his name being Jaames. Born at Dokkum, he came to America early in the last century, settled in Hull and married there in 1808 Esther Dill, a daughter of one of the old families of the place, and their descendants have made the name of James famous in the life saving annals of the country.*

In 1845 nine members of the volunteer crew of the same lifeboat received ten dollars each, and seven members received fifteen dollars each, for two attempts, the first unsuccessful, and the other successful in rescuing Capt. Berry and eleven members of the Ship "Massasoit" wrecked December 11th, the year previous.† The "Massasoit" was an Indiaman from Calcutta, and like the "Emeline" the "Mohawk" and the "Tremont" was lost at Point Allerton, where she struck late in the evening. The sea broke entirely over her during the night, and the next morning, when the position of the vessel was discovered, the waves were running so high that the lifeboat which attempted to go out to her was filled with water six times. Later, by watching for a favorable moment to approach the wreck, and by using the most strenuous efforts, the volunteers got near enough to take off all on board except a passenger, Mr.

* William James died at Hull, Jan. 11, 1866, aged 84 years. His wife was drowned at "Hull Gut," Apr. 3, 1837.

† *History of the Humane Society*, Ed. 1845, p. 87, Ed. 1876, p. 75.

Stephen C. Holbrook of Roxbury, Mass., who fell in the main hatchway. As he did not reappear, they started back for the beach, when Mr. Holbrook was seen to creep upon the deck again. Two small boats manned by Boston pilots, who had been in the vicinity of the ship all the morning then endeavored to save him, but before they could reach him the ship split open and he was seen no more. The crew were nearly exhausted when taken off, and Capt. Berry was unable to speak for an hour after.*

The publications of the Humane Society fail to tell us who put out to the wreck, but the names of the seven men who made up the crew on the second attempt when the rescue was effected are given in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* and *Patriot* of December 17 as John Mitchell, captain; Samuel Sawyer, John Thompson, Albertis James, Solomon Dill, Samuel March and John F. Cable. John Mitchell, like William James, was a foreigner, it is said a Dalmatian, who Anglicized his name to Mitchell, and coming to this country settled in Hull,† where his descendants have been prominent to the present day.

The numerous wrecks so close to their doors furnished the people of Hull with an opportunity for busi-

* *Boston Daily Advertiser* and *Patriot*, Dec. 13, 1844, where the names of the pilots are given as Wm. Phillips, Alfred Nash, Wm. Fowler and George Williams.

† Captain Mitchell died at Hull, Oct. 27, 1876, aged 98 years.

ness as well as for the saving of life, which some of them were not slow to grasp. In 1845 Mr. James Lloyd Homer wrote a series of letters from Hull, published in the *Boston Post*, which he subsequently printed, with notes, in a pamphlet entitled "Notes on the Sea Shore; or Random Sketches" by the "Shade of Alden" (Boston, 1848). His remarks on "Wrecks and Wreckers" give us a contemporaneous picture of the place and of some of its inhabitants not obtainable elsewhere, and of such interest, that they are quoted at length. He says* :

"Hull is a great place for wreckers, and for wrecks. Mr. Tower, Mr. Mitchell, and some others, whose exertions have often been witnessed amidst the tempest and the storm on Nantasket beach and its vicinity, live in Hull. The former gentleman keeps the only hotel in the place; he is visited every summer by thousands of persons.

* * * * * *

"He is a 'prosperous gentleman' and keeps an excellent free-and-easy temperance house. Mr. Mitchell, a foreigner by birth, from small beginnings, has become quite a land holder here, and is said to be rich.

* * * * * *

"On the beach, near Mr. Tower's hotel, lie the wrecked hulls of two or three vessels and masts and

* Pp. 15 and 16.

spars innumerable. Some of the Hullonians are in the habit of buying wrecks, and then breaking them up — saving the iron, copper, and such other parts as are valuable, and using the wood for fuel. The wreck of the ill-fated *Massasoit*, and that of the brig *Tremont*, cast away last winter at Point Alderton, have been entirely broken up, and the materials are piled up mountain high before the house of Mr. Mitchell, who has enough of this kind of stuff to load a ship of three hundred tons. He is a wholesale dealer in wrecked vessels — in old masts, spars, rigging, iron, and brass. The wreck of the old brig *Favorite* lies upon the beach,* as does that of the schooner *Emeline*, both of which vessels, heavily laden, were sunk, some three or four years since, off Nantasket beach, and afterwards raised by Mitchell and others, on shares, and towed into Hull bay. I think they must have lost money by these jobs. The hull of the *Favorite*, at low water, was formerly used as a shelter for horses, when the stable of Mr. Tower was full: it is now too deeply embedded in the sand for that purpose. There are numerous relics of the old ship *Mohawk*, which was wrecked off P. Alderton, with a valuable cargo, from Liverpool: her figure-head decorates one of Mitchell's buildings: her round-house he uses as a counting-room, and for other pur-

* We have not been able to locate the wreck of the "*Favorite*" referred to by Mr. Homer.

poses. I have been informed that, at one period, the inhabitants held their political and town meetings in this accidental fixture, but I have my doubts. At any rate, the school house, a diminutive ten-footer, is used for this purpose.

* * * * *

“At the suggestion of Capt. Sturgis and Mr. Tower, the Humane Society have recently erected a new boat house on the north side of Stony beach, near Point Alderton, in which there is an elegant, substantial, copper-fastened life-boat, of extensive dimensions. I should think it capable of holding thirty or forty persons, besides her ‘gallant crew.’ She is calculated for eight oars. This boat was much wanted. There are now two excellent boats there, one of which is on the northeast side, besides ‘two humane houses,’ for the accommodation of shipwrecked seamen. The people of Hull are now better prepared to render assistance to wrecked vessels and their crews than they ever were before.”

In 1850 the French Brig “L’Essai” was wrecked on Nantasket Beach, near Strawberry Hill. Her crew were saved by a lifeboat of the Humane Society after an heroic effort, for which service the society conferred a bronze medal upon three of the volunteers, viz.: Joseph Cobb, Samuel James and Joshua James, all of Hull. The first named appears to have been the keeper



FIGUREHEAD OF THE "MARITANA."

In the Marine Museum, Boston, Mass., bearing the following legend :

Originally on a French vessel captured in the war of 1798 ; placed on the American Ship " Caroline " and saved when the vessel was wrecked on the coast of New England ; placed on the Ship " Maritana," and again saved from the wreck of that vessel near Boston Light ; then placed on a building at the head of Lincoln Wharf. (Photograph by courtesy of Joseph P. Loud.)

of the Society's boats in Hull, a position which he occupied as late as 1869 and perhaps longer. Samuel James was a son of the William James who took part in the rescue of the crew of the "Tremont." Later in his life he was the designer of a successful lifeboat, and in 1861 he received a certificate of the Humane Society and ten dollars for rescuing twelve persons from the Ship "Maritana" wrecked near Boston Light.

The story of the "Maritana" is that of a notable wreck and rescue. The vessel was a fine ship of 991 tons, built at Quincy in 1857, owned in Providence, and commanded by Capt. G. W. Williams of Dedham. She was returning from Liverpool with an assorted cargo when, on Saturday night, November 2, 1861, there arose a heavy southeast gale, with driving rain. The tide arose to a great height, so that in Boston "the water came up nearly to the Custom House," and the wind was so severe that, the *Advertiser* says, "such articles as signs, spouts, awnings and chimneys were distributed about the city with considerable freedom." * The "Maritana" came into the bay Sunday morning, running before the gale for Boston Light, when suddenly breakers were discovered directly ahead and the vessel struck almost immediately on Egg (or Shag) Rocks, lying just to the eastward of the lighthouse island. Soon after her masts were cut away and

* *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Nov. 4, 1861.

attempts were made to reach the shore, first by five sailors in a small boat ; but the effort was unsuccessful and they were hauled back to the ship. A seaman named Thomas Haney then fastened a life preserver to his body and undertook to get ashore with a line. Although he reached the rocks, the sea broke over them with such violence that he could not remain, and he was pulled back to the vessel more dead than alive. The gangway plank was next gotten out and several seamen attempted to get ashore as upon a raft, but as in the previous cases the surf prevented and they were drawn back, and a further attempt to take a line ashore, made this time by the second mate, James Donnough (or Dunagh), was also futile.

Not long after the vessel struck she showed signs of breaking up and the passengers and crew were ordered into the weather chains which nearly all were fortunate in reaching, when about half-past eight on Sunday morning the hull parted amidships and one half rolled into the sea carrying all who were upon it. Most of them were drowned, and Capt. Williams, who was standing on the quarter-deck at the time, fell between the parts and was crushed to death. From the remaining half of the ship seven persons floated to the rocks on the top of a house. Five others reached the rocks by swimming, and there the twelve clung, swept by the seas until Sunday afternoon, when Pilot Boat No. 2 —

the "Wm. Starkey" came to their rescue. A line was thrown to them and made fast. The other end was fastened to a boat which lay off, while a second boat ran near enough to the rocks for the men to jump aboard, and in that way all were safely removed; but eleven of the crew and thirteen passengers had perished.* Says the *Boston Journal* of November 5, 1861, "A more complete wreck was never seen. Fragments of the ship and her freight strew all the lower islands, and occasionally a mangled body is thrown upon the jagged rocks. God save us all from a death like this."†

The man who accomplished the task of going back and forth in the small boat and rescuing the survivors was Capt. Samuel James of Hull. With him, according

* See *Boston Daily Advertiser* of Nov. 4, *Boston Daily Journal* of Nov. 4 and 5, and *Boston Evening Transcript* of Nov. 4, 1861. The *Journal* of Nov. 4, contains an interview with John Manning of Providence, "the carpenter of the ill-fated ship." Cf. the *Transcript* of the same date.

† The body of Capt. Williams was recovered, and his funeral, which took place at Dedham on Wednesday, the 6th, was attended by ten of the officers and crew of the ship. *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Nov. 8, 1861. Only two of the passengers were saved. *Evening Transcript*, Nov. 4.

In the same storm the Bark "Nathaniel Cogswell" was wrecked on Scituate Beach — all hands saved.

Mar. 9, 1860, witnessed the strange wreck of the Brig "Ewan Crerar" near the scene of the loss of the "Maritana." The brig struck in a thick snow storm near The Graves, but came off and anchored between Shag Rocks and the Outer Brewster, where she shortly sank in seven fathoms of water, the crew taking to the boats and landing at the lighthouse. *Advertiser*, Mar. 10, 1860.

to the *Boston Evening Transcript* of November 4, in an item headed "Heroism in Boston Bay" were H. S. Locke and George Kibble, and those two, together with R. S. Hunt and F. B. Wellock, each received ten dollars from the Humane Society for assisting in the rescue.*

Joshua James, the third volunteer to receive a bronze medal for saving the crew of the Brig "L'Essai," was another son of William James, and destined to acquire a unique distinction, namely that of being the foremost life saver of his day and generation. At the time of that rescue (1850) he was only twenty-four years old; but while it is the first record we have of an award to him for services rendered, it was not the first time that he had put out to a ship in distress. Seven years later he received a certificate embellished with pictures of the members of his crew, for his "persevering efforts in rescuing the officers and crew of the Ship Delaware on Toddy Rocks" off Telegraph Hill, March 2, 1857.† The ship seems to have reached the harbor, when she dragged ashore near Stony Beach in a thick snow storm and lay in that dangerous place where some of the most

* *History of the Humane Society*, Ed. 1876, p. 82. Cf. the list of awards in the recent Reports of the Society for the correct spelling of the names. Capt. Samuel James died at Hull, Dec. 3, 1915, aged 91 years.

† *Joshua James "Life Saver,"* by Sumner I. Kimball (Superintendent U. S. Life Saving Service) in the series "True American Types," American Unitarian Association, Boston, 1909, p. 36. The Reports of the Humane Society do not mention this award.

notable rescues by the life savers of Hull have been made.

The same storm caused the loss of the British Brig "Odessa" at Stony Beach and the Brig "Lorana" on Nantasket Beach,* and the year 1857 was disastrous to shipping in other parts of Massachusetts Bay. January came in very cold. On Sunday, the 18th, there began a blustering snow storm which completely crippled the railroads and greatly interfered with travel in Boston. The harbor threatened to freeze, and vessels were employed to run up and down the channel to keep it open for the "America," whose arrival was daily expected. In the vicinity of Provincetown the storm was one of the worst ever experienced. There were twenty vessels at anchor in the harbor and all but three were dragged ashore by the ice. At Gloucester, ice formed in the inner harbor, and, when it started, carried away every vessel with which it came in contact, including the Ship "California," which was driven completely across the bay and cast ashore near the Brig "New Empire." The "New Empire" had struck on the outer rocks at Cohasset, but drifted over and brought up on Black Ledge.

In addition there were the wrecks of the Schooner

* *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Mar. 3 and 4. The "Delaware" hailed from Bath and was valued at \$25,000. The "Lorana" was a new vessel of 329 tons, built at Thomaston in 1856, owned in Boston and valued at \$12,000. *Advertiser*, Mar. 5 and 6.

“ Geneva ” at Scituate Beach, and of the Bark “ Tedesco ” at Swampscott with the loss of all on board, including the captain and his wife, a Spanish lady he had recently married. The vessel was bound from Cadiz with a cargo of sherry wine and salt, and was seen lying to between Egg Rock and Nahant all Sunday. When she struck she went entirely to pieces and the fragments with broken wine pipes were mixed up on the beach with masses of ice, in some places piled ten feet high.*

The wrecks last mentioned did not take place within the field of operation of the life savers of Hull,† but following the “ Delaware ” there were other rescues on the South Shore, in all of which, save the first, Capt. Joshua James took part, and with the exception, perhaps, of the “ Helene,” as commander of the life saving crew, viz : in 1864, the Brig “ Swordfish ” ; 1870, the Schooner “ R. W. Genn ” ; 1873, the Schooner “ Helene ” ; 1882, the Schooners “ Bucephelus ” and “ Nettie Walker ” (in a blinding snow storm) ; 1883, the Schooner “ Sarah

* *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Jan. 21, 22 and 24, 1857.

The “ New Empire ” was a new vessel of 476 tons, built in 1854 and valued at about \$25,000. The “ Tedesco ” was built in 1847 and valued at \$15,000. The “ California ” was older, having been built at Medford in 1831. She was of 369 tons and owned in Gloucester. *Advertiser*, Jan. 21.

† The crews of the “ California ” and “ New Empire ” were saved by volunteers at Cohasset and Scituate, and there have been other splendid rescues by the life savers of those towns as the Reports of the Humane Society show.

Potter"; 1885, the Brig "Anita Owen" *; and 1886, assisting the captain of the Schooner "Mollie Trim."

In 1872 there was a wreck at Point Allerton under conditions where the life savers were unable to assist, that of the Bark "Kadosh," in the memorable storm of December 26 of that year, which included in its toll the loss of the Ship "Peruvian" on Cape Cod with all on board. The weather had been exceedingly cold, when on the 26th, it began to snow and developed at night into a violent gale. The snow was of a dry consistency, and while there were but a few inches on a level the drifts and snow banks were large; the horse cars had to be discontinued in places, and the railroads were interfered with and the mails detained.

The "Kadosh" was a vessel of 655 tons, built at East Boston in 1864, and bound from Manila with a cargo of sugar, hemp and sandalwood, under the command of Captain Matthews of Barnstable, it being his first voyage as master of the vessel. Like the "Mohawk" thirty years previous, the "Kadosh" beat about in the bay until it came on thick, when she anchored and shortly afterward struck on Point Allerton and

* For an account of the rescue of the Brig "Anita Owen" as told by Capt. James, see his life by Sumner I. Kimball, p. 41. Mr. Kimball says (p. 36) that Capt. James went out to the "Swordfish," but the Reports of the Humane Society do not so state. The award made by the Society in 1860 to the captain and crew of the lifeboat at Nantasket does not tell who participated in the undertaking or name the vessel.

began to break up. The crew at once put off in two boats, and the one commanded by the mate reached shore in safety, but the captain's boat was capsized and all in it drowned.* The bark was dashed to pieces and scattered along the shore,† and the following editorial from the *Boston Daily Advertiser* of December 28th, gives us an idea of the impression which the storm made at the time :

“Only those who have approached these shores from the sea in wintry weather and known how anxiously the mariner watches every indication of the sky and the weather-glass, can accurately apprehend the dreadful sense of danger always present. The national government has done much by erecting light-houses, furnishing life-saving stations and other securities to lessen the natural perils, but in the circumstances of the case these cannot be wholly avoided. In the gloom and wildness of such a storm as that of Thursday night all that human ingenuity can accomplish will avail little for protection against the tremendous forces of the elements. All chances are reduced to the unequal conditions of a struggle of half-frozen, quickly-exhausted men working on rolling, slippery decks, with ice-stiffened cordage and rent sails, amidst blinding clouds of snow,

* *Boston Daily Advertiser*, Dec. 27, 28 and 30, 1872.

† Her gun was secured and may be seen to-day in front of the library in the village of Hull.

against the fury of the north wind and the mighty assaults of the waves.

“Happy the ship that meets the storm in the open sea. There is no peril of the ocean so hopeless as the peril of the shore, and we may well imagine there is no death so hard for the voyager to meet as the death in sight of port. To the families of all who perished either by being washed off the breaking hull of the ‘Peruvian’ or by drowning in the last desperate effort to reach shore in a boat of the abandoned ‘Kadosh,’ or by whatever misfortune of that terrible bleak night, the cordial sympathy of the whole community is extended. Prayers for their consolation will ascend to heaven from hundreds of homes which have never known the anxiety of watching for returning ships, or the grief for those who go over the sea and never come back.”

Joshua James was appointed keeper of the Humane Society’s lifeboats at Hull in 1876—comprising one boat at Stony Beach, one at Point Allerton and two on Nantasket Beach, and December 19th, 1885, the Society voted him its silver medal and fifty dollars in money “in recognition of his conspicuous bravery and ability during his connection with the society’s lifeboats from the year 1842, when he was only fifteen years of age,”—in the course of which service it was asserted

that he had assisted in saving over one hundred lives. As Capt. James was born on the 22nd of November, 1826, he reached his fifteenth year in 1841, which may mean that he took part in the rescue of the crew of the "Mohawk" on December 17th of that year. The occasion of his first service is, however, somewhat in doubt,* but there were no conspicuous wrecks near the village of Hull in 1842, and the wreck of the "Emeline" on April 30th, 1841, was some months before he attained the age mentioned in the vote of the Society. The medal was inscribed : †

To
CAPT. JOSHUA JAMES
FOR BRAVE AND
FAITHFUL SERVICE
OF MORE THAN
40 YEARS IN THE
LIFEBOATS OF THE
HUMANE SOCIETY
1886.

Yet he was to perform still greater service, which brings us to the great gale and snow storm of November 25 and 26, 1888. The storm was particularly severe in the vicinity of Boston, and was the most destructive experienced here for many years. Many vessels were driven on the beaches from Nantasket to Scituate, and a large number of lives were lost.

* See *Joshua James*, by S. I. Kimball, p. 32.

† *Ibid.*, p. 49.



CAPTAIN JOSHUA JAMES.
Life Saver.

On the afternoon of the 25th, Capt. James having observed that several vessels in Nantasket Roads were dragging their anchors, called a crew together and got his lifeboat ready for use. No sooner had he done this when a large schooner — the “Cox and Green” — stranded just west of Toddy Rocks and her crew were landed by means of the breeches buoy. Meanwhile, the Schooner “Gertrude Abbott,” another three-master and laden with coal, struck the rocks a little to the eastward and hoisted a signal of distress. She was so far off that she could not be reached with the beach apparatus, it was growing dark, the tide was high, and the storm was raging with increased fury. It was accordingly thought best to wait for low water before attempting to launch a boat. A fire was lighted on the bluff so that the vessel could be kept in view ; but the tide fell slowly, owing to the violence of the gale, and between eight and nine o’clock at night the life savers decided not to wait longer but to attempt to put out to the schooner. They managed to launch a surfboat, and after a desperate pull, during which two of the crew were obliged to bail constantly to keep the boat from swamping, they got near enough to heave a line on the bow of the schooner. The eight sailors then swung themselves into the boat and a start was made for the beach. With the sea that was running and the boat’s crowded condition the return was exceedingly hazardous. Not far from the

beach they struck a rock and nearly capsized, but were able to right the boat and to haul in one man who had fallen overboard; and although they struck a number of times again, they succeeded in maintaining headway to the shore, and finally landed all safe.

Says the Report of the United States Life Saving Service,* from which this account of the rescue is taken, "This was a notable rescue and one that put to the test the noble qualities of every member of the boat's crew. Actuated by the highest motives, they set forth amidst untold peril and triumphed by their cool courage and determination of purpose. There are few examples of greater heroism."

It is said that when Capt. James warned his crew that the chances were that they would never return from an attempt to save the shipwrecked men every member offered himself without a moment's hesitation.†

During the remainder of the night a strict watch was maintained along the beach, in itself an arduous and perilous task, and about three o'clock in the morning the three-masted Schooner "Bertha F. Walker" was discovered ashore about half a mile northwest of the "Abbott." She also was beyond the reach of the shot line, and they had to go all the way to Strawberry Hill Station for a boat to take the place of the one that had been

* Annual Report for 1889, p. 62.

† *Joshua James*, by S. I. Kimball, pp. 55 and 56.

damaged in the rescue of the crew of the "Abbott." The new boat was recently built from designs by Capt. James' brother, Samuel, and had never been tested in actual rescue work. Nevertheless, it was brought to the scene of the wreck of the "Walker," launched, and after a hard struggle in which the boat proved itself, the wreck was reached and those who remained alive on board were brought safely to shore.*

About that time a messenger arrived from Atlantic Hill, five miles distant, with the tidings that two vessels were ashore there. One was the Schooner "H. C. Higginson," which had struck the evening before. News of the fact had been conveyed to the keeper of the government life saving station at North Scituate, who, when he arrived, found volunteers of the Humane Society's boat at Crescent Beach already at work. Both succeeded in firing a life line aboard the schooner, but one was out of reach of the crew, and the other became so fouled with floating wreckage that it was impossible to free it. Capt. James then arrived with the large surfboat "Nantasket," and seeing the predicament he at once launched the boat and started for the wreck. The newcomers managed to get through the surf, but after battling for three-quarters of an hour with the furious sea, were driven ashore with two holes stove in

* *Joshua James*, by S. I. Kimball, p. 60.

their boat. Repairing the damage as best they could, they dragged the boat to another place, launched it again, and after a long and hard pull reached the vessel, where they were confronted with another predicament.

Of the five men who were alive on board, one was in the mizzen-top and four in the foretop. The schooner was lying with her stern to the beach. The lifeboat had come up to the stern and four of the men were at the other end of the vessel. They had been in the tops for fourteen hours and were in such condition that they could do little to help themselves. Something had to be done, however, and first the man in the mizzen rigging cautiously descended until he reached a position where he could catch a line thrown to him, which he tied around his body and then leaped overboard and was hauled into the lifeboat. By a great effort the boat was then forced forward to abreast of the mainmast, but that was as far as the crew could move her, and the remaining men were in the foretop. The only way for them to escape was by sliding down the hawser, which had been sent aboard for the breeches buoy and was trailing in the main rigging, and they all took the chance, each in turn. When they reached the main rigging a line was thrown to them and they were hauled aboard the lifeboat, and brought ashore in safety.*

* *Joshua James*, by S. I. Kimball, pp. 65, *et seq.* U. S. Life Saving Service, Report for 1889, p. 62.

The other wreck was the Schooner "Mattie E. Eaton," but the sea had forced her so high upon the beach that the crew were able to get ashore at low tide without help. The Hull life savers thereupon started for home, and when they had gone about half way they came upon the Brigantine "Alice," which had parted her moorings at Gloucester and been driven across the bay. Capt. James went aboard with his crew and found her deserted. Soon after they were obliged to put out again and rescue two men who meanwhile had reached the vessel and had been left there when their boat was washed away.

As a result of the twenty-four hours' work the volunteers of Hull placed to their credit the saving of twenty-nine human lives. Capt. James was in command throughout the whole time, and four of his crew took part in all the trips out of a total of twenty men engaged.* Says the government report,† "When it is considered that they imperiled their lives practically without hope of reward, influenced solely by the desire to succor their fellow-creatures, too much praise cannot be accorded them."

Under the authority of an Act of Congress the Secretary of the Treasury conferred upon Capt. James and the volunteers who took part in the rescue of the crew

* *Joshua James*, by S. I. Kimball, pp. 72, 73.

† U. S. Life Saving Service, Report for 1889, p. 63.

of the "Gertrude Abbott" each a gold medal, and upon those who did not participate in that rescue but who made up a part of the boat's crew that went to the "H. C. Higginson," silver medals were given. In addition, the Humane Society made awards for all of the rescues and gave Capt. James a gold medal and the other participants each a bronze medal. The volunteers who with Capt. James received medals from the federal government were, Osceola F. James, Alonzo L. Mitchell, H. Webster Mitchell, Ambrose B. Mitchell, John L. Mitchell, Eben T. Pope, George F. Pope, Joseph T. Galiano, Louis F. Galiano, Frederick Smith, each a gold medal, and Eugene Mitchell, Eugene Mitchell, Jr., William B. Mitchell, Alfred Galiano and George Augustus, each a silver medal, and they, with five others, received the bronze medal of the Humane Society.*

The Galianos just mentioned were sons of Andrew Galiano, who was born at Rovigno in Istria, an Adriatic province of Austria-Hungary. Reaching this country about the middle of the last century he settled in Hull, and like his predecessors, William James and John Mitchell, became the ancestor of a family now prominent in the place. John Augustus, the first of the

* Cf. U. S. Life Saving Service, Report for 1896, p. 282, and List of Awards in Reports of the Humane Society. The "five others" who received a bronze medal were Francis T. James, Harrison Mitchell, Stephen Lowe, James Lowe and Reinier James, Jr.

family of that name to make Hull his home, is said to have come from Trieste.*

The great loss of life and property occasioned by the storm of November, 1888, emphasized the need of additional government life saving stations about Boston, and led to the establishment of a station at Stony Beach early in the year 1889. When it came to the selection of a keeper, Capt. Joshua James was the first and only choice, notwithstanding that he was over sixty years of age at the time, and that the regulations of the service fixed the age limit for keepers at the time of their appointment at forty-five years. He easily met all physical requirements, however, and his record as a volunteer demanded this selection, but his is said to be the only instance in the history of the United States Life Saving Service where the regulation as to age limit has been waived. Capt. James took charge of the

* Andrew Galiano married at Boston, Mass., Dec. 26, 1855, the daughter of John Robinson, born at Oxford, England. He died at Hull, Feb. 6, 1910, in his 84th year.

John Augustus married at Hull, Aug. 30, 1840, Adaline W. Turner, the daughter of Elisha Turner of Scituate and Elizabeth Dill of Hull, who were married at Hull in 1812.

Joshua James married the daughter of John Lucihe (originally Luciche) who was born at Ragusa, in Dalmatia, came to this country from Trieste and married at Hull, Mar. 3, 1836, Elizabeth Torry Lovell, the daughter of Caleb Gould Lovell and Jane (Dill) Lovell.

Sirovich is another well known family name in Hull, suggestive of the eastern shore of the Adriatic. Nicholas Sirovich married Esther James, June 24, 1827. Cf. in part for the above *Hull Vital Records to 1850*, by James W. Baldwin, Boston, 1911.

station October 22, 1889, and served until his death in 1902, hereinafter related ; the charge of the stations of the Humane Society being intrusted by that organization to the captain's son, Osceola F. James.

Seven years after the establishment of the government station at Stony Beach occurred a rescue which well shows the despatch and efficiency with which the service there is performed, to say nothing of the determination and heroism of the men who participated in the rescue. December 16, 1896, the British Schooner "Ulrica," which was compelled to anchor because of the loss of her sails, dragged her anchors and stranded during a northeast gale and thick snow storm on Nantasket Beach about two and one-half miles from the station. A patrolman discovered her and immediately engaged a man and horses to haul a near-by lifeboat of the Humane Society to the scene of the wreck, and then hastened to report to the station.

Capt. James had already been informed by telephone, the railroad offered transportation to the place, and the crew at once started. They arrived at the same time with the man and horses bringing the lifeboat. Heavy seas were breaking over the vessel, threatening her destruction and the lives of the seven men on board, and fearing to wait for the beach apparatus which was on its way from the station, Capt. James decided to make an effort to reach the schooner with the lifeboat.

Six volunteers were secured, in addition to the government crew, and a launch was made. Only slow progress was possible because of the sea and the current, and when about half way to the schooner an immense wave struck the boat and drove her astern, tossing up the steering oar and throwing Capt. James overboard, but he got hold of a surfman's oar and was dragged ashore uninjured. The beach apparatus having now arrived, two shots were successfully fired over the mizzen rigging, nevertheless no attempt was made by the crew to haul the line aboard. A third shot was then fired which landed lower down within reach of the crew, and the hawser was pulled aboard and made fast. It was so low down that Capt. James saw it would be dangerous to attempt to haul the exhausted men through the breakers in the breeches buoy, so it was decided to try again with the lifeboat. A line was taken into the boat from the beach to aid in guiding it, and then another launch was made, five volunteers besides the regular crew being in the boat. By hauling on the hawser that had been sent out for the breeches buoy, and using the oars, together with the help of the line from the shore, the furious seas were safely met and the wreck reached, and one by one the exhausted and frostbitten men were taken off, and all landed without mishap.*

* U. S. Life Saving Service Report for 1897, p. 147.

This splendid piece of work was recognized by the Humane Society by the gift of a silver medal to Capt. James, seven members of the government crew, and seven volunteers, namely: to Capt. Joshua James, George F. Pope, F. B. Mitchell, Matthew Hoar, James H. Murphy, Martin Quinn, J. H. Thorburn and F. L. Galiano, of the life saving station, and the following volunteers, — J. T. Galiano, A. A. Galiano, A. L. Mitchell, B. F. Pope, A. B. Mitchell, J. F. Dowd, and George Lowe.*

November 27, 1898, witnessed the last great storm on the coast of Massachusetts, more furious than any since the storm of 1851 when Minot's Light was destroyed, and according to some accounts the worst storm that ever visited the coast of New England. Perhaps it will be longest remembered in Boston as the storm in which the Steamer "Portland" went down with all on board. Referring thereto, the Life Saving Report said,† "No such appalling calamity has occurred anywhere near by the coasts of the United States, or on the shore, for almost half a century, and it is doubtful whether there has been within the same period a coast storm of such Titanic power." It was particularly severe on the south shore of Massachusetts Bay. There were at least ten wrecks in that locality, viz: — The Pilot Boat "Colum-

* See List of Awards in the Reports of the Society.

† U. S. Life Saving Service Report for 1899, p. 26.

bia" at Scituate Beach, where she completely demolished a cottage, none of the crew surviving to tell the tale of the wreck.

The four-masted Schooner "Abel E. Babcock" pounded to pieces on Toddy Rocks, with the loss of all on board.

Coal Barge "No. 4" on Toddy Rocks, where she speedily went to pieces; of the five persons on board only two, the captain and a sailor, succeeding in reaching shore alive by clinging to a piece of the deck house.

The three-masted Schooner "Henry R. Tilton" near Toddy Rocks, all on board saved.

Coal Barge "No. 1," Windmill Point, Hull, all saved.

The Schooner "Calvin F. Baker" on the lighthouse island, with the loss of three lives.

The fishing Schooner "Mertis H. Perry" near the Brant Rock Life Saving Station, with the loss of five of her crew.

The two-masted Schooner "Jordan L. Mott," and the three-masted Schooner "Lester A. Lewis" sunk in Provincetown harbor, with the loss of seven lives.

The Schooner "Albert L. Butler" near the Peaked Hill Bars station, Cape Cod, all on board being lost.

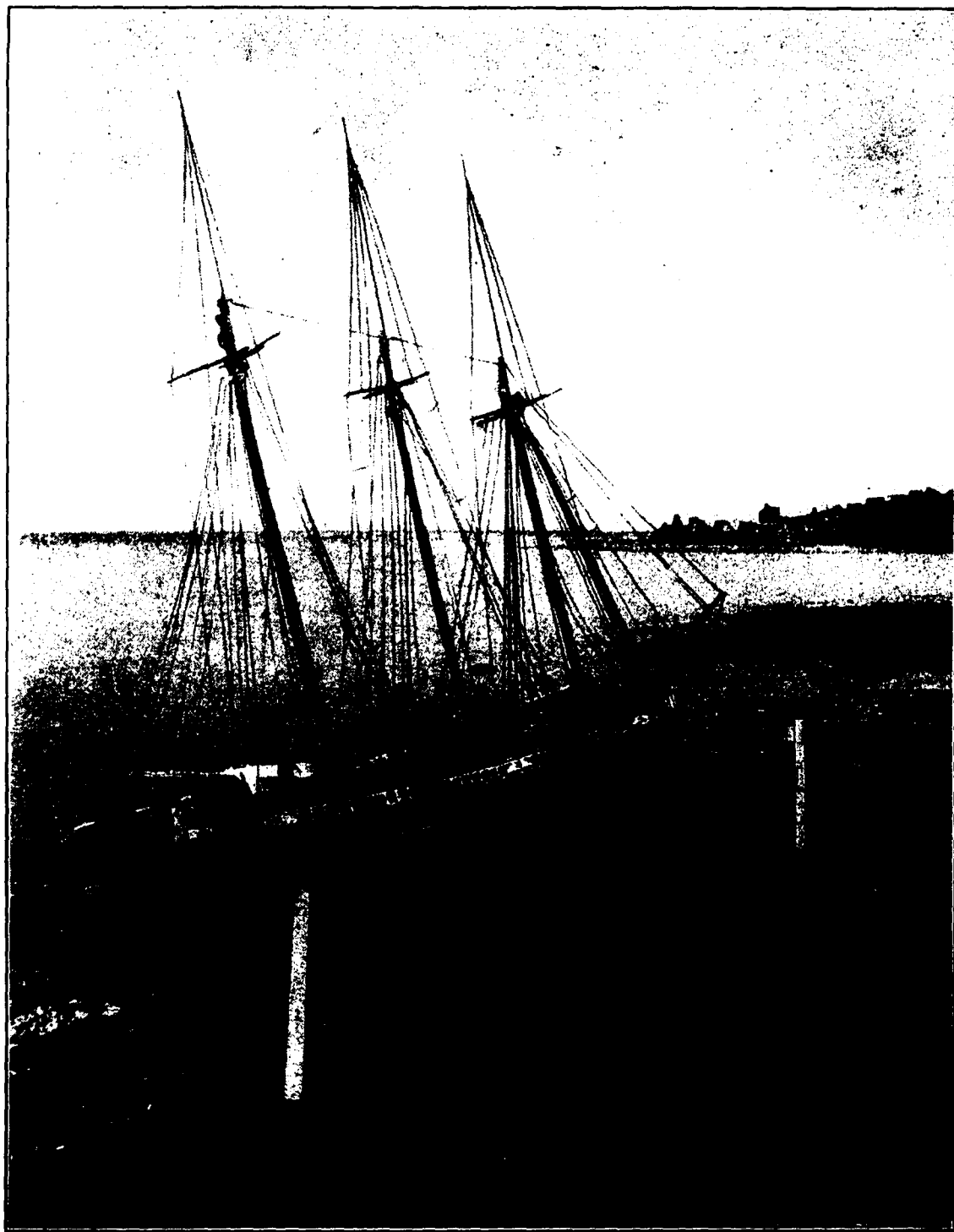
Half of the wrecks were in the immediate vicinity of the life saving station at Stony Beach. Not since the great gales of December, 1839, were there so many disasters in the harbor. The storm struck like a tempest

on the evening of Saturday, November 26th, and raged with unprecedented violence for twenty-four hours, and with gradually abating force for twelve hours longer, — two nights and one day. There were indications that a storm was brewing, but what followed far exceeded all apprehensions. Said Capt. James, “By ten o’clock it was blowing a gale from the northeast, with sleet and snow so thick that we could not see a hundred yards at most. At midnight it was a hurricane.”

Great damage was done to property along the coast. In the town of Hull, including Nantasket Beach, the loss was estimated at upwards of \$200,000. The railroad sea wall, constructed of heavy granite stones, was ruined for a mile, and the beaches were lowered two or three feet in some places and narrowed ten or fifteen feet. On Monday, November 28th, when the storm had spent its fury, the shores and surroundings were a stretch of wreck and ruin.* A collection of forty-eight photographs taken in Hull immediately after the storm and published by Robert King Macadam, which may be found in the Boston Public Library, well bears out the accounts of the destructiveness of wind and wave and is worth an examination.

* U. S. Life Saving Service Report for 1889, pp. 25 *et seq.*

“At Scituate Point the whole village numbering upward of 100 dwellings was almost ruined, while many of the inhabitants narrowly escaped with their lives. In one instance, a woman was drowned while her husband was trying to assist her to escape from their dwelling,” p. 26.



SCHOONER "HENRY R. TILTON."

On Stony Beach, Hull, after the Great Storm of November, 1898.

The work of the patrolmen was attended with exceptional difficulty and risk, the wind being so fierce as to compel them frequently to turn their backs and to stop and crouch near to the earth for breath, while the in-rushing breakers rolling across the encumbered beaches often made them run for their lives to the upland. Nevertheless, the watch was maintained, and said Capt. James, "We succeeded in getting every man who was alive at the time we started for him, and we started at the earliest moment in every case."*

The destruction of the Schooner "Babcock" and Barge "No. 4" on Toddy Rocks was so sudden and complete that no one knew anything of the disaster until the wreckage was discovered early in the morning near Windmill Point. The crew of the Schooner "Henry R. Tilton," which was driven ashore near the scene of the other wrecks, were more fortunate; the vessel held together and all seven on board were rescued by means of the breeches buoy, an achievement described by Lieut. Worth G. Ross, the District Inspector, as "a clean and efficient piece of work notwithstanding tremendous difficulties." In fact, during a considerable portion of the operation the life savers were exposed to as much danger as were the shipwrecked men. The work occupied several hours and

* *Joshua James*, by S. I. Kimball, pp. 91 and 95.

was successfully completed and the apparatus taken back to the station, when the wearied rescuers were informed that a coal barge known as "No. 1" had stranded and was going to pieces on the rocks lying off Windmill Point. They rushed to that wreck and were just in time to save the five men on board with the assistance of volunteers of the Humane Society, as in the case of the "Tilton."

The next morning Capt. James made out the masts of a vessel near the lighthouse. The distance was so great that it was not feasible to attempt to reach her with the government boat from the north side of Stony Beach, so the keeper went to the Humane Society's boat given by the *Boston Herald*, which was situated on the south side of the beach, and launched her into the smoother waters of Hull Bay. The crew then pulled to the Pemberton steamboat landing, where the Tug "Ariel" was engaged to tow the boat through Hull Gut and down to the lighthouse. The sea was running so high that the tug could not get nearer than a quarter mile from the island. Whereupon the surfboat was cast off and the life savers started for the wreck, a difficult and most dangerous task because of the character of the place where it was lying. Nevertheless, they succeeded in reaching the wreck, which proved to be that of the Schooner "Calvin F. Baker" from Baltimore to Boston with a cargo of coal, and in an hour and

a half were back to land with the five living members of her crew.

No sooner had they returned than they were advised that there were three men making signals of distress on Black Rock, at the extreme southerly end of Nantasket Beach, and more than six miles from the village of Hull. A team was secured to take the surfboat over land, and with five volunteers of the Humane Society they started off for another rescue. Arriving at the scene they found a tremendous sea dashing upon the rock. The boat was successfully launched, but when the ledge was reached it was found that it would be madness to attempt to approach the three men, and Capt. James ordered his men to rest upon their oars. For an hour the boat lay by waiting for an opening. Finally it came. The boat was rushed in, the three sailors drawn into it and in due time landed. "So successfully was all conducted," says the Life Saving Report, "that the boat had not suffered a single bruise."* The three men rescued belonged to the Barge "Lucy A. Nichols" which had been broken up by the storm and they had managed to reach the rock on one of the masts.

That was the final task which the life savers were called upon to undertake in the great storm of 1898, and Capt. James could say with pride that they got

* Report for 1899, p. 33.

every man they started for.* It was also the last notable rescue in which Capt. James was to figure. March 19, 1902 — some four years later — he called out his crew at seven o'clock in the morning for boat drill in the self-bailing boat. The drill was satisfactory, and the captain so expressed himself to his crew. When they landed he sprang out and turning remarked, "The tide is ebbing," and dropped dead on the beach. Thus ended the career of probably the best known life saver in the world. Those are not the writer's words, but the twice expressed opinion of the then superintendent of the Life Saving Service, who knew whereof he spoke.†

Capt. James' record speaks for itself, and without commenting upon the heroism of others in the service, this much at least may be said, that it is doubtful if he has had an equal in his ability to handle a boat in a sea. He was seventy-six years old at the time of his death, and if we take 1842 as the date when he first took part in a rescue, it means that he served as a life saver for full sixty years, — all of his manhood and part of his youth in that great work. His biographer has pointed out that there were eighty-six casualties within the field

* No medals were given for the rescues. For the awards made by the Humane Society, see the List in the Reports of the Society.

† *Joshua James*, by S. I. Kimball, p. 100.

U. S. Life Saving Service Report for 1902, p. 14.

of operations of the government station at Hull during the twelve years it was under Capt. James charge, that the value of the vessels and their cargoes totalled almost a million and a quarter dollars, and that they had on board 556 persons. Of property, approximately three-quarters was saved, and of the persons imperilled but sixteen lost their lives,—all in the great gale of November 26 and 27, 1898, under circumstances which placed them beyond the reach of human aid, and which even precluded an attempt to assist them.*

The captain lies buried in the little graveyard on Gallup's Hill at Hull near the life saving station, where so much of his life work was performed, and over his grave stands a stone placed there in 1909 by the Humane Society, the first it is said ever erected by the Society in memory of a life saver. The stone is of pink Tennessee marble with the seal of the Society and the following inscription on the front :

CAPTAIN JOSHUA JAMES

BORN IN HULL



DIED IN HULL

NOVEMBER 22, 1826

MARCH 19, 1902

Greater Love Hath No Man Than This That

A Man Lay Down His Life For His Friends.

On the back, a fouled anchor and the inscription :

* *Joshua James*, by S. I. Kimball, p. 76.

Erected by the Humane Society
of the
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
in memory of
Joshua James
Captain of the Humane Society's Life Boats
At Hull and Nantasket for Many Years
And Keeper of the United States Government's
Life Saving Station at Hull 1889 to 1902.

The "decorations" received by Capt. James during his life were as follows :

- 1850 Bronze Medal — Humane Society — Brig "L'Essai."
- 1857 Certificate — Humane Society — Ship "Delaware."
- 1886 Silver Medal — Humane Society — Forty Years Service.
- 1888 Gold Medal — Act of Congress — November Storm.
- 1888 Gold Medal — Humane Society — November Storm.
- 1896 Silver Medal — Humane Society — Schooner "Ulrica."

The government station was temporarily in command of Francis B. Mitchell until the appointment of William C. Sparrow, the present keeper, on June 30, 1902. The Humane Society's boats are still in the care of the old keeper's son, Capt. Osceola F. James, and the work of both regulars and volunteers continues with the same quiet heroism and the same unselfish success.*

* By Act of Congress approved Jan. 28, 1915, the former Revenue Cutter Service and Life Saving Service were combined into the United States Coast Guard (Navy Department), with a "Captain Commandant," and the station at Stony Beach is known as Coast Guard Station No. 26.

The snow storm of Dec. 26, 1909, which has been mentioned because of the extraordinary height of the tide which accompanied it (*supra* p. 11, note), happily did not cause any serious loss of life or shipping, but was productive of very great damage along shore. In the town of Hull all of Pemberton Point was submerged and the streets of the village flooded. The railroad track where it skirted Telegraph Hill and Stony Beach was washed away, and all along Nantasket Beach the water flowed inland, filling cellars, washing away the underpinning of houses, and otherwise injuring them. No one seems to have remembered so great a flood from the sea in that locality, and it was believed the damage would reach \$100,000. See *Boston Globe* of Dec. 27, 1909.

NOTES

A

Dates, character and tides of principal storms.

- Aug. 15, 1635. "The Great Storm," N. E. rain storm, violent wind, very high sea and tide ; followed by eclipse of the moon.
- Feb. 24, 1723. N. E. rain storm, some hail, high wind and record tide, estimated 16 feet.
- Oct. 21, 1743. N. E. rain storm and high tide ; eclipse of the moon.
- Apr. 20, 1764. N. E. rain and snow storm, high tide.
- Dec. 26, 1764. E. to N. E. wind storm and high tide.
- Mch. 25, 1765. N. E. snow storm, high sea and tide.
- Dec. 4, 1768. S. E. rain storm, violent wind.
- Oct. 20, 1770. N. N. E. rain storm, violent wind, very high sea and tide, 15 feet (?) ; began on night of 19th.
- Dec. 4, 5, and 8, 1786. "The Snow Storms of December, 1786." Two N. E. storms, much snow, very high tide, 15 feet (?).
- Nov. 17-21, 1798. "The Long Snow Storm," an unprecedented fall of snow.
- Feb. 21, 1802. "The Great Snow Storm," almost a week of snow.
- Oct. 9, 1804. S. E. to N. N. E. storm, rain and snow, thunder and lightning, very high wind.
- Sept. 22, 23, 1815. "The September Gale," N. E. rain storm, then E., E. N. E. and S. E., violent wind in gusts and high tide ; began on morning of 22d, abated, blew again fiercely on 23d and ceased suddenly.
- Mch. 26, 1830. N. E. rain and snow storm, very high tide, 15.12 feet.
- Dec. 15, 21 and 27, 1839. "The Dreadful Hurricanes of December, 1839." Three E. storms : First, Snow, freezing rain and violent wind ; Second, Less severe ; Third, E. to E. S. E. violent wind and high tide.
- Oct. 3, 4, 1841. "The October Gale," E. storm, high wind and sea ; began at midnight Oct. 2nd, increased in violence to 4th, abated morning of 5th.

Nov. 30, 1842.	E. S. E. snow storm, then rain, high wind.
Sept. 26, 1847.	N. E. storm and very high tide, 15.24 feet.
Oct. 7, 1849.	N. E. rain storm, unusual fall of rain.
Apr. 14-16, 1851.	"The Minot's Light Gale," E. storm, rain, hail and snow, wind of great violence; began 14th and reached height 16th, when it blew down first Minot's Ledge Lighthouse; extraordinarily high tide, averaging 15.62 feet.
Sept. 8, 1869.	The second September Gale, S. E. storm, heavy rain, violent wind.
Nov. 25, 26, 1888.	"The Storm of November, 1888," N. E. snow storm of great violence.
Nov. 26, 27, 1898.	"The Great Storm of November, 1898," sometimes called "The Portland Storm," N. E. snow storm of tremendous power and destructiveness; high tide, 14.94 feet.
Dec. 26, 1909.	N. E. snow storm and extraordinarily high and destructive tide, average 15.60 feet.

B

Dates, names and locations of principal wrecks.

Sept. 28, 1697.	Ship "Providence,"	Harding's Ledge.
Jan. 31, 1702.	Brigantine "Mary,"	Marblehead.
Nov. 3, 1703.	Ship "John,"	George's Island.
Nov. 12, 1714.	Sloop "Hazard,"	Cohasset.
Jan. 28, 1767.	Brig —,	Lovells Island.
Dec. 4, 1768.	Brigantine —,	Near Boston Light.
Dec. 4, 1786.	Brig "Lucretia,"	Point Shirley.
Dec. 8, 1786.	Coasting Schooner,	Lovells Island.
Dec. 15, 1839.	Schooner "Enterprise,"	Cohasset.
Dec. 15, 1839.	Schooner "Katherine Nichols,"	Nahant.
Dec. 22, 1839.	Schooner "Charlotte,"	Nantasket Beach.
Dec. 23, 1839.	Bark "Lloyd,"	Nantasket Beach.
Apr. 30, 1841.	Schooner "Emeline,"	Point Allerton.
Apr. 30, 1841.	Sloop "Warsaw,"	Cohasset.
Oct. 4, 1841.	"Maine" of Bath,	Scituate.
Oct. 4, 1841.	Schooner "Miller,"	Nantasket Beach.
Nov. 20, 1841.	Brig "Constantia,"	Scituate.

