

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 26, 1933

A MEMORABLE GALE

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology.

Apropos of the recent storms along the Atlantic coast, a correspondent reminds me that one of the most memorable gales that ever visited New England about the equinoctial date was that of September 23, 1815, a graphic account of which is given in Sidney Perley's "Historic Storms of New England." This storm caused immense devastation by land and sea. It destroyed or damaged thousands of buildings and took vast toll of woods and forests; and this conjunction of events had an interesting result.

"In order," says Perley, "to save as much as they could from the ruins of their forests, the owners had the logs sawed into lumber, with which they constructed houses, barns and other buildings. Probably New England never knew another season of such building activity as prevailed in 1817 and 1818, the logs having been sawed in the winter of 1815-1816, and the lumber seasoned during the following summer."

The winds carried salt water more than forty miles inland, where the falling rain had a strong briny taste, brooks and small rivers became quite brackish, and some springs, it is said, did not fully recover from the effects of the salt deposit for years afterward. At that distance from the ocean the salt gave all vegetation "the appearance of having suffered from a severe frost."

Oliver Wendell Holmes, who was six years old at the time of the storm, has given us an amusing account of it in his poem "The September Gale."

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