

Caught in the Ice, Provincetown, Mass.



January 17, 1918

Regular Arctic scenery prevails hereabout at present. An ice floe comparable only to the memorable floe of the winter of 1875-6 fills the harbor and much of Cape Cod bay, heaps the shore and extends clear to Billingsgate Island. Tuesday's gale from east in morning, south in afternoon and west during the night, used the floe as a battering ram with which to ravage the waterfront. More damage was done to wharves by ice than ever before. The outer end of the Consolidated wharf went down—100 linear feet, say; a shorter section of the George O. Knowles wharf gave way; the bridge part of the Provincetown Cold Storage pier suffered the same fate, and more than 300 feet of the long Fisherman Cold Storage wharf collapsed.

Jan. 11, 1940

Harbor Ice Starts Forming

For the first time in several years real ice started forming on the waters of Provincetown Harbor through Tuesday night, making a skim of ice between the wharves. Ice has been forming on the lee shore of Long Point all week making going difficult for the Long Point and Wood End light keepers and the crew of Wood End Coast Guard Station.

February 14, 1918

The great ice floe that hovered off the harbor mouth through Saturday and Sunday entered and filled harbor Sunday night. The wharf on which the summer headquarters of the "Provincetown Players" stands received a bad squeezing by ice Tuesday. The outer end was raised aloft, the middle part

was depressed. It is believed the whole structure will collapse when the surrounding floe moves from the vicinity.

\*\*\*\*\*

The flat-fishing dredges have had no opportunity to fish since a week ago last Saturday, owing to the presence of ice in harbor and ba

THE CAPE CODDER

AUGUST 8, 1946

Cape Cod's "Arctic Winter" of 1875

The Winter of 1875 was called "the arctic Winter" by Cape Codders of that day, for miles and miles of Cape Cod Bay were frozen solid and 150 fishermen were frozen in off Cape Cod. A thrilling account of the cold wave (in February) that benumbed this coast for several weeks is found in a faded newspaper clipping, which relates, "flags of distress are flying at mainmast heads along the ice-fringed coast, and their mute appeal floating on every breeze remains unanswered. A terrible sight truly, and unless some soft southern breeze comes to undo the freezing work of the past fortnight an unparelled disaster may occur."

Provincetown waters were "one sheet of ice" and along the length of the Cape there was nothing but the arctic wastes. Thus: "Never before within the memory of any inhabitants along the Cape coast, has ice formed in the bay to such an extent as at the present time. Provincetown harbor is closed up entirely and a vast field of ice fills the area between Wood End and Sandwich, 22 miles across, and extends clear up to Brewster and Orleans, a distance of 30 miles from the water line.

28 CRAFT ICE-LOCKED

"Where always before the eye has seen the blue waves of ocean toss is now a plain of snow-white ice, only broken here and there by vessels, wrapped and

well-nigh hidden in the cold embrace of the new element, and high jagged piles of ice thrown up by the action of the wind and tide.

"The scene is dreary and desolate, but it affords no hint of the awful peril which threatens the lives of 150 or more fishermen as fast imprisoned upon their vessels as if hung with chains behind bolts and bars. Here are 28 vessels, varying in size from 500 to 25 ton, held immovable. Most of them are fishing schooners of about 100 tons burden, carrying from ten to 15 men and provisions for a three or four days' cruise, and they have already been bound in nearly that time. Food and water are fast giving out, aid cannot reach them, nor they in many instances reach it. The ice which crowds about their vessels, fastening upon them with relentless grip, resists the efforts of the powerful steam-cutter to force her way through it, but soft and treacherous, will not bear their weight, so that they cannot escape upon it. Many of those who can get away will not attempt it, for their craft is all the property they possess and they cannot abandon it and go back to poverty while there is the slightest hope of saving it.

"Twenty signals of distress, the American flag with the union down, could be counted from the lifesaving stations at Provincetown on Saturday. The revenue cutter Gallatin has been doing excellent service, by breaking out those vessels nearest the edge and the help at the life-saving station has rendered such assistance as it could. The great danger, aside from that of starvation, is that a

northeast gale will spring up. If it does, nothing but a miracle can save the vessels from destruction, and the loss of life must be very great. If on the other hand, the weather should moderate, and a southern wind should blow, they may all escape. The probabilities for this morning indicate cold and clear weather with a northwest wind."

