

HATTERAS, TREACHEROUS AND DEADLY

WHERE THE SEA CLAIMS MORE SHIPS AND LIVES THAN AT ANY OTHER POINT ALONG OUR COAST.



The Proposed Lighthouse to be Built on Diamond Shoals

EVER since American shipping has been of sufficient importance to claim attention the deadly menace of Cape Hatteras has been dreaded by the mariner. Most dangerous point along the entire coast line of the United States; it has exacted a frightful annual toll of lives and property.

When the storm that swept up the Atlantic in mid-September had howled its way past Hatteras, eight derelicts had been added to old Neptune's prey off that point.

Thrusting its long shoulder far out to sea, and then with diabolic cunning reaching beneath the waters for miles beyond, a deadly trap of sandy shoals that are as iron to the pounding bottoms of unfortunate vessels, Cape Hatteras leers both up and down the coast for its victims, and many a gallant world-rover has sunk there to doom.

It isn't alone the danger of going ashore at Hatteras that makes the sea voyage so perilous off that point.

The cape itself is a rather harmless projection of sandy shore that butts boldly out from the coast line, but from that point the bars of deadly Diamond Shoals reach out eighteen miles into the Atlantic.

In rough weather the lamps of the light-ship stationed there are not always discernible before the storm-tossed and bewildered sailor finds his ship foundering on a lump that juts up from the bottom.

When this happens the craft may be dismantled, overturned or broken-backed, and drift off, a derelict on the lapping waves, without having been near enough to Cape Hatteras itself to permit its plight being seen from shore.

Then, too, gales rage with peculiar fury off this point, probably because of the peculiar coast formation.

Soon after a severe gale, reports begin to come in to the United States Hydrographic Office like the following, which were received after the storm of the middle of September last—brief and almost nonchalant paragraphs, each telling of some dread tragedy.

- Sept. 17—Ward Liner Mexico passed a wooden vessel of 700 tons, bottom up, off Diamond Shoals.
- Sept. 18—Cruiser Cleveland reported by wireless that the three-masted schooner Job H. Jackson was wrecked near Hatteras; 3 seamen lost; captain and 4 men rescued. Vessel a derelict. Another derelict, bottom up, was also seen.
- Sept. 20—Steamer Frederick, Baltimore to Savannah, landed crew of British brigantine Ohio, lumber laden, from Brunswick, Ga., to Cape Breton, which was wrecked in storm of Sept. 17.
- Sept. 21—Steamer Moro Castle passed vessel bottom up, wreckage alongside. Same day saw another vessel bottom up; little later passed vessel, evidently schooner, with port side up, masts and spars alongside.
- Sept. 22—Schooner Fairfield, from Port Royal, S. C., to Philadelphia, struck a partially submerged wreck of Diamond Shoals, and was damaged. Passed another wreck.
- Sept. 23—Schooner Helena, from Savannah, passed

a vessel bottom up, and a large quantity of lumber and wreckage.

Sept. 23—Steamer Monterey, from Havana, passed wrecked schooner bottom up.

Sept. 23—Schooner Robert McFarland, Savannah to Philadelphia, passed two wrecks about one mile apart, very low in the water, apparently deeply laden coal barges about 120 feet in length.

These reports would indicate thirteen wrecks in all, but it is probable that the same derelict, in some instances, was reported by two or three more vessels. So far as can be ascertained, eight wrecks were left in the trail of the storm of Hatteras—the record, as far as known, for even that dangerous coast in one gale.

An Austrian bark was discovered on fire off Hatteras on September 19, but this disaster, while swelling the remarkable number of derelicts in those waters, is probably not chargeable to hungry Diamond Shoals.

Many tales of hardships and extraordinary escapes have been filtering in since the terrific blow of September 16-17. The schooner Twilight, lumber laden, was capsized off Hatteras September 17.

James Olsen, one of the crew—and the only one rescued, so far as known—managed to get clear of the wreckage and to seize hold of two planks.

Olsen remained floating on these planks for sixty-six hours. Altogether he had been seventy-two hours without food or drink when picked up at midnight, on a dark night, by the United States cruiser Minneapolis, on her way to Cuba.

Even greater hardship was endured by Thomas Hook, sailor on the schooner Oliver S. Barrett, who clung to a piece of floating timber 108 hours without food or sleep.

When the vessel turned turtle all the crew, except the captain, the cook and Hook, were plunged, as he thought, to instant death. The three got hold of pieces of timber, but the captain and cook were soon washed away, leaving Hook to endure the hours of torture alone. He was picked up by a steamer and carried to Denmark, from whence he made his way back to New York.

The ghastly maw of Hatteras has been fed

with many victims during recent years. In the fiscal year—the period of reports by life-saving stations—ending with June, 1906, there were nineteen disasters. Two lives were lost and ninety-eight persons were helped at the station. How many others went down with ships not seen by the life-savers no one will ever know.

Thirty-two wrecks, two lives lost and eighty-one persons helped by the life-savers marked the previous year's record.

In 1903 there were thirty-one wrecks, eleven lives were known to be lost and 512 persons were assisted to safety by the coast guard. There were no drownings in 1903, but twenty-eight wrecks comprised the toll of Hatteras, and ninety-six persons were rescued by the life-saving crews.

Three were drowned as a result of the twenty-seven wrecks of 1901, and sixty-nine persons were rescued.

During 1900 there were forty-two known wrecks in the life-saving district that embraces Cape Hatteras, resulting in thirty-five deaths. None of the other life-saving districts of the entire country reported more than four drownings.

A disastrous year at Hatteras was 1899. In a single hurricane, in August, three vessels were wrecked there; eleven lives were lost and seventeen persons were rescued by the life-saving crews.

During a gale that is said to have blown 100 miles an hour, the coffee bark Priscilla, from Rio to Baltimore, was swept ashore. Ten men were saved, but the captain's wife and two sons and the cabin boy were drowned.

From the wreck of the schooner Reppard, bound to Savannah from Philadelphia, five were drowned and only three saved. Another doomed vessel gave two of its crew to the hungry waters before they could be rescued.

Most noted and terrible of the many disasters at Hatteras was the wreck of the United States warship Huron, on November 24, 1877. Of 132 persons on board, Captain Ryan and ninety-seven others were lost.

At 1 o'clock on a Saturday morning during a heavy blow, the Huron struck on one of the ledges of Diamond Shoals. She hung together, however, pounded over this into the deeper water within, and then, staggering and helpless like a bewildered drunken man, was swept little by little ashoreward until she grounded finally on a bar 300 yards from the beach.

Through six terrible hours the vessel lay pounding on the bar until daybreak. Many of the crew had already been lost, together with the commander. About fifty men were huddled on the fore-castle.

Accompanied by Seaman Antonio Williams, who volunteered, Ensign Lucien Young swam ashore through the boiling surf and on the way rescued two sailors who were struggling in the water. Barefoot and bruised, Young ran to the life-saving station, four miles distant, only to find it locked and the crew off duty, as it was not the active season.

Breaking in the door of the station Young got out the mortar and other apparatus and hired a team to take them to the scene of wreck. While he was yet a quarter of a mile away, however, the Huron went to pieces and all that could be done was to assist ashore four officers and about thirty men who were floating on wreckage.

The steamer Metropolis was the only other big wreck that winter. This wooden vessel of 978 tons sailed January 29, 1878 from Philadelphia for Brazil, with a cargo of railroad iron and a large number of workmen for railroad construction.

She struck at 6 o'clock in the morning and went to pieces. Of the 245 men on the ship, eighty-five lost their lives.

When the British steamer Ariosto, from Galveston, went ashore, December 24, 1899, in a driving rainstorm and with a heavy sea running, the captain put twenty-six of the crew of thirty men into boats, which promptly capsized.

Two of the struggling sailors were hauled back on board the wreck and one swam ashore. Two others got near enough to shore to be rescued by the life-savers, but twenty-one were drowned.

The four who remained aboard were taken off in a breeches buoy by the life-saving crew.

Not all the tragedies of Cape Hatteras are known. Many a vessel sails proudly from port and is never heard of again.

In 1903 the steamer Luckenbach started from Sabine Pass, Texas, for Philadelphia, with 1,250,000 gallons of oil. She got as far as Cape Hatteras and disappeared. Nothing has ever been heard of the ship or her crew of twenty-one men.

While a lightship has been kept off Diamond Shoals for many years, and has doubtless warned many vessels from the dangerous place, it has not proved entirely satisfactory.

A massive permanent lighthouse is now to be erected on the outer edge of Diamond Shoals, at a cost of \$750,000. This will carry a light at a height of 150 feet above sea level, which can be seen at a distance of fifteen miles.

Such a structure, it is believed, will stand the most angry pounding of old ocean, and will do much good to break the terrors of Hatteras as the most deadly place along the American coasts.

