

# Finding Aid to the Martha's Vineyard Museum

## Record Unit 265

### Hurricanes Collection

By Julia Novakovic & Will Joyner

#### Descriptive Summary

**Repository:** Martha's Vineyard Museum

**Call No.**

**Title:** Hurricanes Collection

**Creator:** various

**Quantity:** 1 cubic foot

**Abstract:** The Hurricanes Collection holds many newspaper and magazine articles documenting the aftermath of major hurricanes that affected both Martha's Vineyard and overall southern New England during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Also included in this collection are published "hurricane souvenir" booklets of photographs, personal memories of the storms, and a government report on the Hurricane of 1938.

#### Administrative Information

**Acquisition Information:** The materials in the Hurricanes Collection were acquired by the Martha's Vineyard Museum throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century by various donors.

**Processing Information:** Julia Novakovic & Will Joyner

**Access Restrictions:** none

**Use Restrictions:** none

**Preferred citation for publication:** Martha's Vineyard Museum, Hurricanes Collection, Record Unit 265.

#### Index Terms

- Hurricanes
- Martha's Vineyard
- Great Hurricane of 1938
- Hurricane of 1944
- Hurricane Carol, 1954
- Hurricane Edna, 1954
- Hurricane Donna, 1960
- Hurricane Bob, 1991
- Hurricane Eduoard, 1996

#### Series and Subseries Arrangement

Series I: Newspaper Clippings

Subseries A: 1938

Subseries B: 1944

- Subseries C: 1954
- Subseries D: 1960
- Subseries E: 1991
- Subseries F: 1996
- Series II: Publications
  - Subseries A: 1924
  - Subseries B: 1938
  - Subseries C: 1944
  - Subseries D: 1954
  - Subseries E: Historical Over-View
- Series III: Personal Memoirs
- Series IV: Government Publications
- Series V: Drawings

### **Historical Note:**

The deadliest hurricane ever to strike above the North Carolina coast was the New England Hurricane of 1938 [September 20, 1938]. Every record for wind speed, barometric pressure, and tidal surge in Rhode Island, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts was set during this massive storm. With winds of estimated 115-120 m.p.h. at landfall, New England coastal towns had little chance of surviving unscathed. The Red Cross estimated 600-700 dead, with more than 3500 injured and 75,000 buildings damaged.

Six years later, Martha's Vineyard dealt with its most damaging natural disaster. The 1944 "Great Atlantic Hurricane" [September 14, 1944] killed 390 people – nearly all of them at sea. The "Vineyard Lightship," serving in the Vineyard Sound, was destroyed and its crew lost. Island homes were pulverized by the 85 m.p.h. winds and the main roads in Edgartown and Vineyard Haven were flooded.

In 1953, the World Meteorological Organization [WMO] began "naming" hurricanes in order to differentiate specific storms. The U.S. National Hurricane Center prepared lists of names [using all letters except Q, U, X, Y, and Z], alternating male/female. Soon after, Hurricanes Carol and Edna hit Martha's Vineyard on August 31 and September 11, 1954 respectively. Names of particularly damaging storms [either financially, of human casualties, or both] are retired by the National Hurricane Center. Both Carol and Edna were retired. Other destructive hurricanes affecting Martha's Vineyard include Hurricane Donna in 1960 and Hurricane Bob in 1991. Additionally, both of these hurricane names have been retired from circulation.

### **Scope and Content Note:**

The Hurricanes Collection is an artificial compilation that is the result of many donors throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The majority of this collection is of newspaper articles that documented the hurricanes affecting southeastern Massachusetts from 1938 through

1996. Of interest are the “hurricane souvenir” books that are housed within the second series, Publications. The report from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, published in 1938 and listed under Government Publications, gives a thorough and interesting history of major storms that hit Massachusetts from the colonial period up through the Hurricane of 1938. For photographic images of the hurricanes and their resulting damage on Martha’s Vineyard, please consult Photo Files 148, 246, 345, and 545.

## **Series Descriptions**

### **Series I: Newspaper Clippings**

This Series contains printed information on the major hurricanes that hit Martha’s Vineyard throughout the twentieth century. Newspapers included in this section include the *Vineyard Gazette*, *Boston Globe*, *New Bedford Evening Standard*, and the *Martha’s Vineyard Times*. Storm chronologies, images, and details of damages are in these articles.

#### **Subseries A: 1938**

Box 1 of 2

Folder 1: Newspaper Clippings: 1938 Hurricane.

#### **Subseries B: 1944**

Box 1 of 2

Folder 2: Newspaper Clippings: 1944 Hurricane.

#### **Subseries C: 1954**

Box 1 of 2

Folder 3: Newspaper Clippings: 1954, Hurricane Carol.

Folder 4: Newspaper Clippings: 1954, Hurricane Carol.

#### **Subseries D: 1960**

Box 1 of 2

Folder 5: Newspaper Clippings: 1960, Hurricane Donna.

#### **Subseries E: 1991**

Box 1 of 2

Folder 6: Newspaper Clippings: 1991, Hurricane Bob.

#### **Subseries F: 1996**

Box 1 of 2

Folder 7: Newspaper Clippings: 1996, Hurricane Edouard.

### **Series II: Publications**

This series contains “souvenir” booklets and other informative pamphlets regarding major storms to hit southern New England. The majority of these booklets contain photographs of the destruction of storms from 1924 until 1954. In addition, an article from 1987 appearing in *Cape Cod Life* gives an excellent photojournalistic essay of hurricanes that struck the Massachusetts coast throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Subseries A: 1924**

Box 1 of 2

Folder 8: Publications: Pamphlet, 1924, “*Pictures of the Worst Storm in New Bedford History.*”

### **Subseries B: 1938**

Box 1 of 2

Folder 9: Publications: Booklet, 1938, *The Great Hurricane and Tidal Wave, Rhode Island.*

Folder 10: Publications: Booklet, 1938, *The Complete Historical Records of New England’s Stricken Area, 21 September 1938.*

Folder 11: Publications: Pamphlet, 1938, *When the Great Hurricane of 1938 Swept Connecticut.*

Folder 12: Publications: Booklet, 1938, *1938 Hurricane Pictures* and supplement.

### **Subseries C: 1944**

Box 2 of 2

Folder 1: Publications: Booklet, 1944, *September 14, 1944 Hurricane, Southeastern Massachusetts.*

Folder 2: Publications: Essay, 1944, Hurricane of 1944 by Martin Meigs, Sr.

Folder 3: Publications: Article, 1944, “1944 Hurricane,” in *Life Magazine.*

Folder 4: Publications: Booklet, 1944, *Martha’s Vineyard Hurricane, 1944.*

Folder 5: Publications: Booklet, 1944, *The Great Atlantic Hurricane, September 14, 1944.*

### **Subseries D: 1954**

Box 2 of 2

Folder 6: Publications: Booklet, 1954, *Hurricane! 1954.*

### **Subseries E: Historical Over-View**

Box 2 of 2

Folder 7: Publications: Article, 1987, “Hurricane Tracks,” *Cape Cod Life*, Aug/Sept. 1987.

### **Series III: Personal Memoirs**

This series contains personal memories of experiences during the hurricanes that struck Martha’s Vineyard. Of note is a transcribed copy of the ship *Seawolf*, which found itself out in the water in the middle of the hurricane of 1954.

Box 2 of 2

Folder 8: Personal Memoirs: Log of Ship *Seawolf* from 1954 Hurricane.

Folder 9: Personal Memoirs: 1938 Hurricane, from *Virginia's Journal* by Virginia Berresford, 1989.

Folder 10: Personal Memoirs: 1954 Hurricane, "Two Hurricanes in Eleven Days" by Lawrence Saunders, 1954.

#### **Series IV: Government Publications**

This series contains a report from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health regarding the Hurricane of 1938. The first half of the government report deals with a history of storms that hit New England from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century up until the Hurricane of 1938. The second half of the paper shows illustrations of the 1938 storm's path and other logistic diagrams.

Box 2 of 2

Folder 11: Government Publications: "Cyclonic Storm of September 21, 1938" by Joseph C. Knox, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 1938.

#### **Series V: Drawings**

This series contains printed drawings of the aftermath from the Hurricane of 1944 that affected Martha's Vineyard. Subjects are mainly from Edgartown, with a few other Island town drawings mixed in. The artist is Mary Drake Cole, whose sketches were later produced en masse as a series of postcards.

Box 2 of 2

Folder 12: Drawings of Hurricane of 1944.