

# The Great Gale of 1846

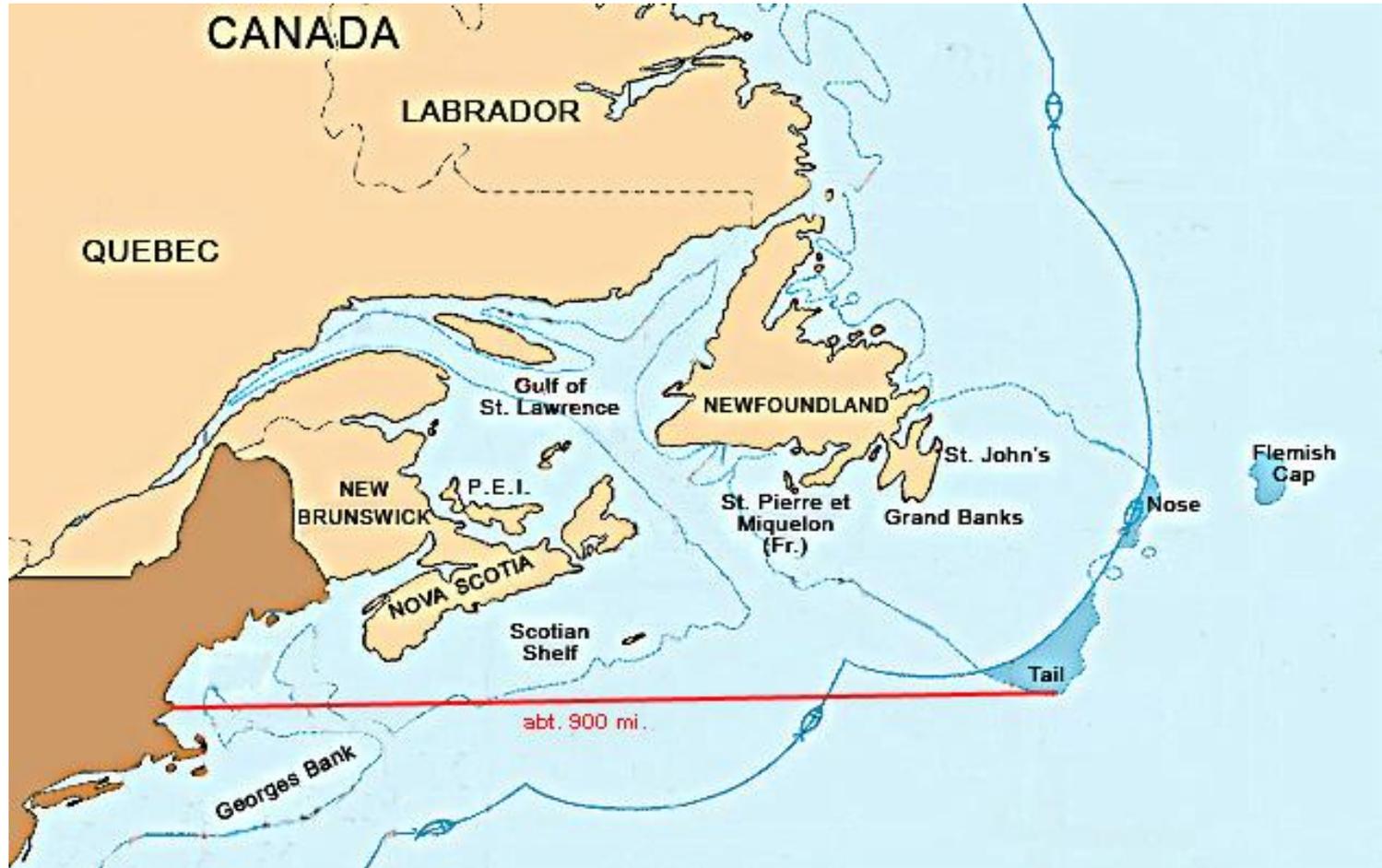
## Marblehead's Maritime Disaster

Standley Goodwin  
and  
Jack Attridge

# Marblehead's Maritime Disaster

- 170 years ago on September 19, 1846 a major hurricane passed near Marblehead's fishing fleet on the south-east edge of the Grand Banks.
- 34 schooners crewed with 238 men and boys from Marblehead were fishing the Bank.
- 9 schooners with 63 crew sunk during the Gale.
- Two additional schooners survived as derelicts and were abandoned, one having lost 2 men.
- The grim total was 11 schooners and 65 men and boys lost; leaving 43 widows and 155 fatherless children.

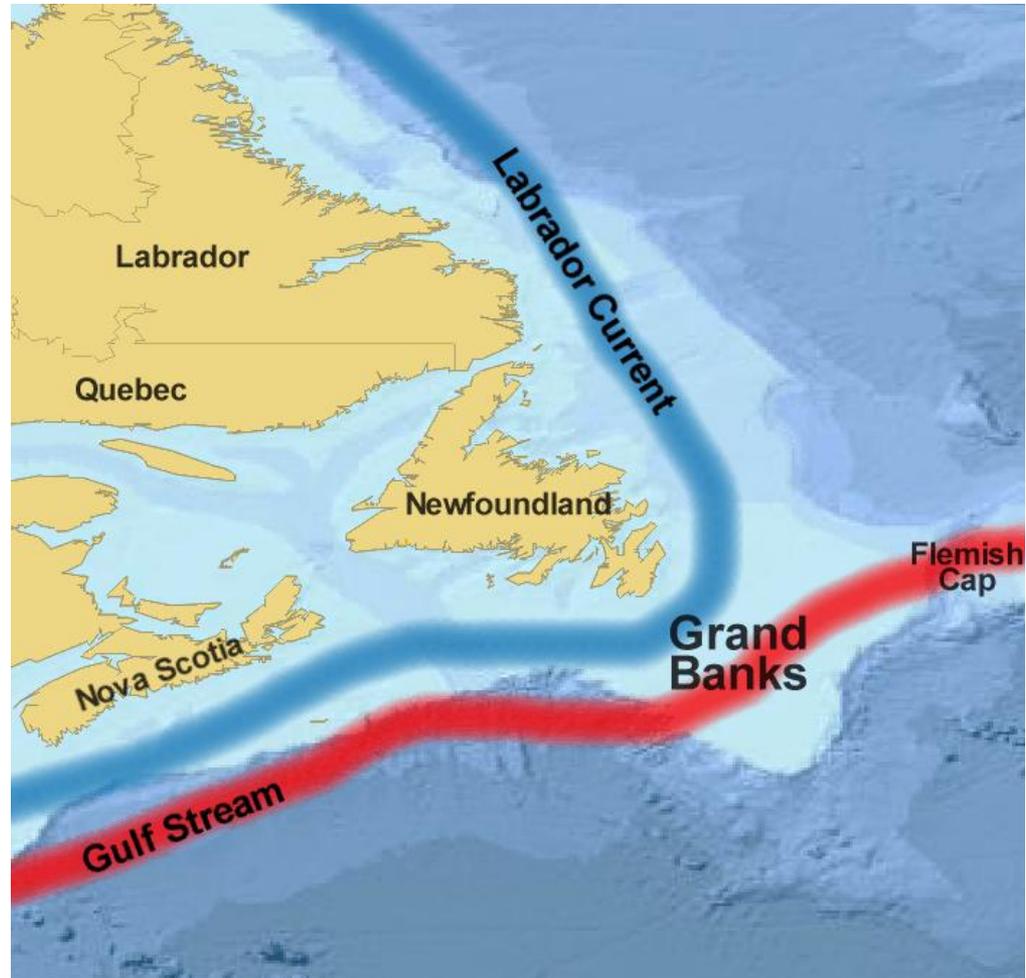
# Location of Grand Banks



# The Grand Banks

- The Grand Banks is an extremely unpleasant and dangerous place.
  - The water temperature is near freezing.
  - Icebergs are common in the spring.
  - Impenetrable fogs last for days.
  - Storms with large seas are common.
- It is also on the main shipping lane from Europe.
- It's one advantage was that in the 1600's and 1700's it was teeming with large numbers of big codfish.

# Grand Banks Currents



# The Marblehead Fishing Schooner

- The Marblehead Fishing Schooner was about 65 ft long with 17 ft beam and carried 50 to 80 tons.
- They were blunt bowed and slow. Strength and carrying capacity were more important than speed.
- The typical crew was seven men who fished from the schooner.
- In a storm these schooners had little choice but to lay to and weather it out.

# Marblehead Fishing Schooner “Friendship”



Model by Capt. John Bridgeo 1865; Courtesy of Abbot Public Library

# Fishing Schooner "Warrior" Account

Dr.	Sand Standley	Cr.
1838	1/4 Sch Warrior & bill 1103.81 1/4	1838 By Cash pd to Capt - 225.00
		" 1/4 Sch's Earnings - 419.93 1/4
		644.93 1/4
		" Bal to new a/c - 458.88
	<u>\$1103.81 1/4</u>	<u>1103.81 1/4</u>
1839	To Bal from old a/c \$458.88	1839 By 1/4 Sch's Earnings 311.26 3/4
" Out 1 year - 27.50		" Bal to new a/c 339.54 3/4
" 1/2 Sch's bills - 164.10 1/2		
	<u>650.81 1/2</u>	<u>650.81 1/2</u>
1840	To Bal from old a/c 339.54 3/4	1840 By 1/4 Sch's Earnings 163.40 1/2
" Out 1 year - 26.37		" Bal to new a/c 299.62 1/4
" 1/2 Sch's bills - 103.10 3/4		
	<u>463.02 1/2</u>	<u>463.02 1/2</u>
1841	To Bal from old a/c 299.62 1/4	1841 By 1/4 Sch's Earnings 110.78 1/2
" Out 1 year - 17.96		" Bal to new a/c 343.24 1/4
" 1/2 Sch's bills - 136.39 1/2		
	<u>453.99 1/4</u>	<u>453.99 1/4</u>
1842	To Bal from old a/c 343.24 1/4	1842 By 1/4 Sch's Earnings 241.89 1/4
" Out 1 year - 20.54		" Bal to new a/c 296.71 3/4
" 1/2 Sch's bills - 174.80 3/4		
	<u>538.61</u>	<u>538.61</u>
1843	To Bal from old a/c 296.71 3/4	1843 By 1/4 Sch's Earnings 286.81
" Out 1 year - 17.80		" note & interest - 241.30
" 1/2 Sch's bills - 173.31		
" 1/4 By J Bowden - 124.09		
" 1/4 Spauldwick's - 2.23		
" 1/4 Leather - 26.00		
" Bal new a/c - \$1000.00		
	<u>528.11</u>	<u>528.11</u>
		1844 By bal on old a/c - \$226.71

Waukegan Jan 1. 1844 Settled in full of all a/c's to this date for your part of Earnings & Expenses in Sch Warrior  
 Errors Excepted Goodwin & Bowden

# Fiftieth Anniversary of the Gale

- On the fiftieth anniversary of the Gale of 1846 the MARBLEHEAD MESSENGER printed two articles that contained a large amount of information on the gale and fishing on the Grand Banks.
- It also contained the stories of three surviving Captains.

**THE GALE OF '46.**

**Fiftieth Anniversary To-morrow of  
One of the Worst Disasters  
in the Town's History.**

GRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF THE STORM BY  
SKIPPER FROST ONE OF THE  
SURVIVORS.

STATISTICS REGARDING THE DEAD AND  
THE LIVING.

To-morrow will be the fiftieth anniversary of the great gale on Grand Banks on Saturday, September 19, 1846. Half a century since that memorable disaster in which so many of this town's sturdy population found watery graves, and the death knell was sounded for Marblehead's sole industry. These years have passed bringing many changes, and all that remains to recall the importance which attached at one time to the hazardous calling is the remembrance of joys and many sorrows of those hard working, perilous times.

Out of thirty-four skippers, who sailed to the Banks in that year only two are living, Captain Richard Frost and Captain John Proctor. Both these gentlemen have the most vivid recollections of the September storm. Captain Frost says, "I have as good a recollection and

water passing away to the leeward where it broke not above half a mile from us. Had it broke over us all would have been at an end. Nothing that ever floated could have withstood the fall and shock of such sea."

It was Captain Frost's opinion then and is to-day, that it was a tidal wave which they passed through. The water was stirred clear from the bottom and was as discolored as in any dock.

Resuming the narrative the captain continued: "The Franklin behaved well and the only damage sustained was a broken cat head to the sheet anchor. This threw the anchor in on deck but it was quickly secured again. The wind had been from the sou' sou' west all day but at about three o'clock in the afternoon shifted directly opposite and blew from the northwest. There was no more than the ordinary uneasiness aboard. We knew it was a hard blow but we had weathered hard blows before. Having suffered no accidents of any consequence, no doubt contributed to this feeling. Shortly after it began to moderate and at midnight it was quite so. The next day we judged by soundings we had been blown about forty-five miles off the edge of the bank and then tried to get back. It took several days on account of head winds. Three days after the blow we fell in

- Schooner Salus, Skipper John Trefry. Sailed July 11.
- Sch. Alolope, Skipper Ezekiel Russell.
- Date of Sailing Unknowns.
- Schooner Hope, Skipper Philip Graves.
- Sch. Ceres, Skipper Benjamin Swasey.
- Sch. Marblehead, Skipper John Bridgeo.
- Schooner Elizabeth, Skipper John Freeto.
- Sch. William Franklin, John Gardner.
- Schooner Eliza Ann, John Peach.
- Sch. Leader, Skipper Samuel Cloutman.

Eleven vessels, the entire crews of nine of them and two of a tenth crew, in all sixty-five men and boys were lost leaving forty-three widows and a hundred and fifty-five children fatherless.

The list of the lost is as follows:  
In the Schooner Pacific, John Cross, Eleazer Leach, Edward Homan, John Hunt, Isaac Wadden, Robert Devereux, John Bates.

In the Schooner Liberty, Ebenezer Lecraw, John Jancy, Samuel Graves, George LeMaster, Thomas Doliber, Robert Blare, Richard Goas.

In the Schooner Sabine, Samuel Dodd, Joseph Homan, David Pierce, Edward H. Dixey, Benjamin Garney, Nicholas Florence, Henry Pitman.

In the Schooner Senator, Charles Chadwick, Joseph Graves, John Gilbert, Edward Dixey, Jr., Mark H. Giles, John Glover, Elisha D. Pedrick.

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# The Survivors Stories

- The three surviving Captains were:
  - Captain Richard Frost – Skipper of the schooner *Benjamin Franklin*.
  - Captain John Proctor – Skipper of the schooner *Samuel Knight*.
  - Mr. Edward Thompson – The third Skipper of the *Clinton* which lost two skippers during the Gale but survived. She was abandoned later.
- Jack Attridge will now present those accounts.

# Captain Richard Frost's Story



Schooners in a Gale: abt. 1880 Painter Unknown

# Rogue Wave



# Captain Richard Frost's Story



Schooners in a Gale: abt. 1880 Painter Unknown

# Captain John Proctor's Story



Fireboard by William Bartoll 1812-1859: Courtesy of PEM

# Sch. Warrior's Moses Boat Stern



The only wreckage brought back from the Gale

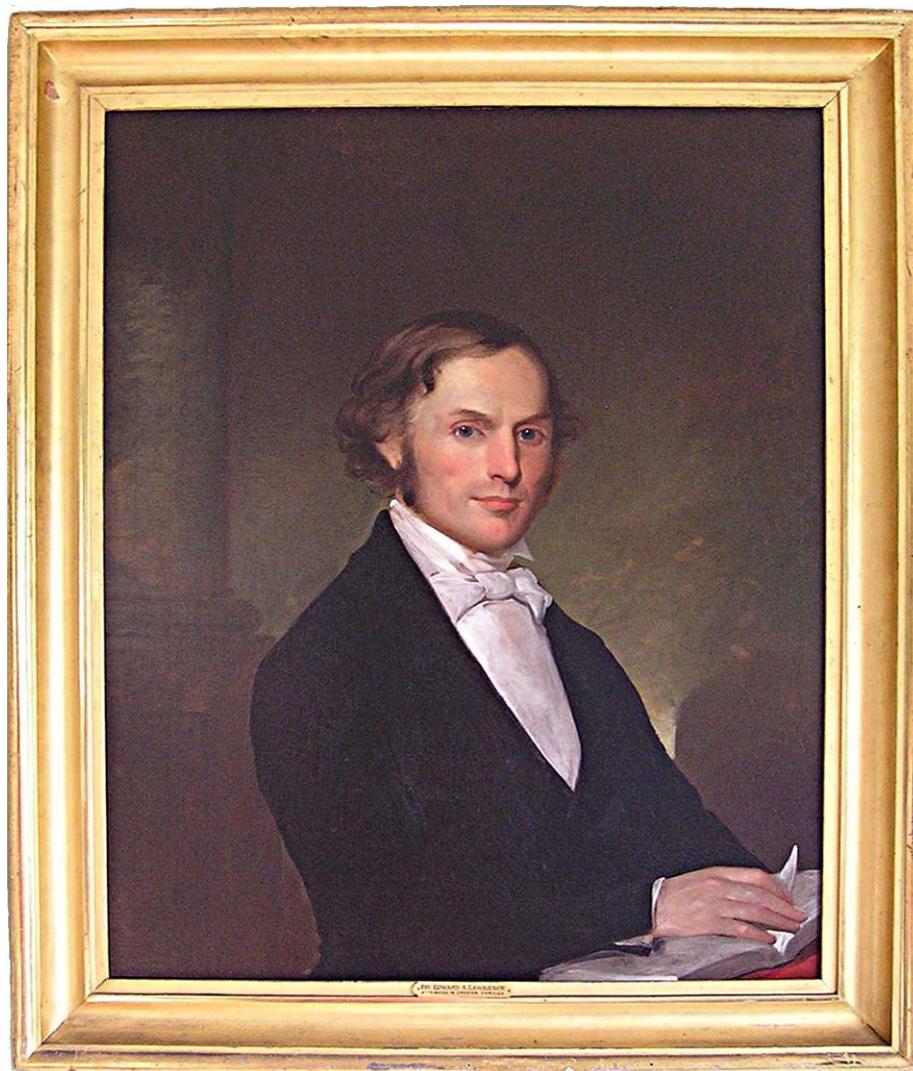
# Mr. Edward Thompson's Story



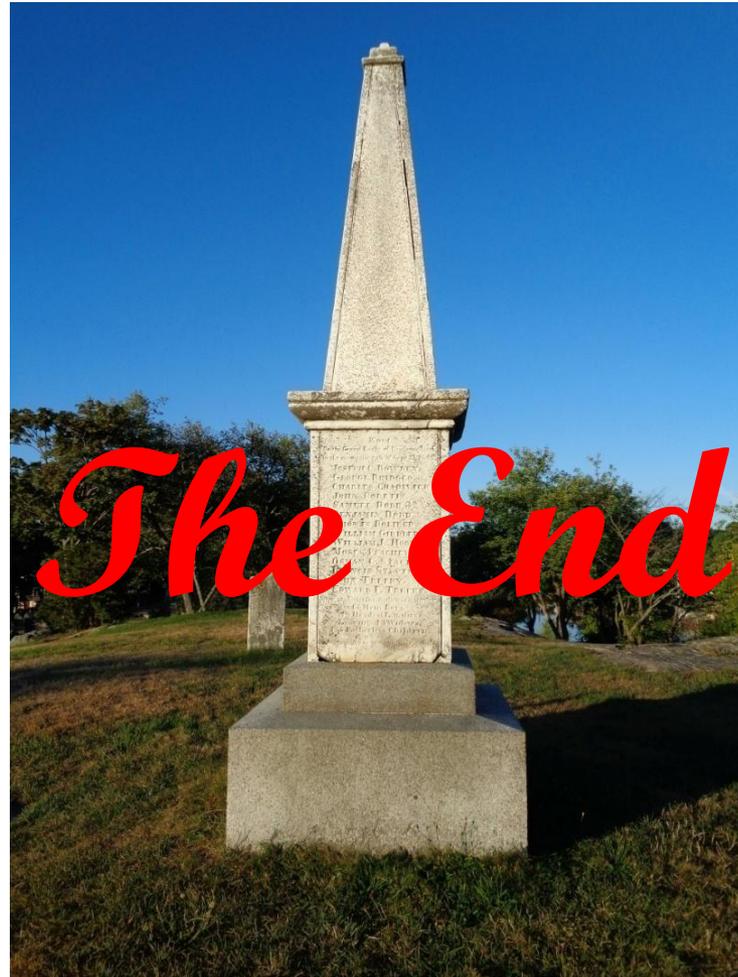
Storm: JOJ Frost 1852 -1928: Courtesy of MMHS



# Rev. E. A. Lawrence's Sermon



lost from Marblehead in the Gale; 65 men & boys,  
leaving 43 widows, and 155 fatherless children



Old Burial Hill Cemetery; 1848