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## COLLECTIONS

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VOL. XXX                      JANUARY, 1937                      No. 1

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### Records of Narragansett Weather 1797 to 1802

With Additional Notes from Newport to 1804

By CAROLINE HAZARD

Some years ago, when working over the Diary of Thomas B. Hazard — Nailer Tom — I called the attention of the Weather Bureau in Washington to his important record. Beginning midsummer's day — June 21, 1778 — for over sixty years Nailer Tom kept a record of the weather, ending it in November 1840. Rain, snow, hail, are all recorded; the direction of the wind is given daily. Frost and heat are mentioned, but the Weather Authorities could not avail themselves of all this data because Nailer Tom had no thermometer.

Fahrenheit first used mercury as a measure of temperature in 1720, but the general use of his invention did not come till much later. It is therefore of great interest that a book has been found with actual figures recorded by the new instrument beginning March 1st, 1797, dated Charleston, S. C., No. 111 Trade St. The record was made in a

paper bound blank book 12 x 7½ inches, carefully ruled in ink at the left-hand side into five columns, and lightly ruled in pencil across the page. The first column is headed by the name of the month, the day follows below, and then the time of day according to a ship's watch, 8, 12, 4, 8, with the record under each. Thus the first record reads:

"March 1, 50, 49, 52, 51½. N.E. Cloudy and stormy. Damp unpleasant," written in a clerkly hand when penmanship was still an art. The entries continue to April 4, when the thermometer is recorded at 72, 74½ and 76, with no eight o'clock record. Wind was S.S.E. and S.W. "very dry." Page two has a change of handwriting, and is headed South Kingstown, Rhode Island 1797, "June 23-66.66. 66.65-E. Rain all day," and continues in the same hand for many pages. That handwriting I had seen; one might say it was founded on clerkly lines, but with a good deal more freedom. November the sixteenth the thermometer stood at 34 - 36 - 39 - 32, hard frost, and the seventeenth, there was snow most of the day, with the thermometer at 30 for three readings, and not higher than 32 all day. Nailer Tom records snow that day, too.

If the hand writing was that of the man I surmised surely he would mention his father's death. So I turned to August 1798. There it was: "So. Kingstown, August 26, 80, 84, 89, 77. S.W. clear, very warm. Father Hazard died this evening at 8 o'clock."

For the 27th and 28th there are no entries. On the 30th they begin again. Nailer Tom gives a little more detail:

- "1/26th. I went to meeting. Dined at Thomas Hazard's and drank tea.  
 2/27 Thomas Hazard died about 7 o'clock last evening. I helpt lay him out and George Kinyon and I watched with him.  
 3/28 I carried my wife to the burial of Thomas Hazard."

Thomas Hazard was son of Robt. as he liked to sign himself, called College Tom. So the record is made by

Rowland Hazard, his third son, born in 1764. It is started in Charleston, where he was a merchant, by Isaac Peace, his father-in-law, whose name appears in the back of the book, and continued in South Kingstown.

The heat of the summer of 1798 continued through September. The fifteenth the thermometer touched 80 at the noon reading and 82 and 83 the next two days, with wind from the south-west. "The grass almost parched up, and the wells and springs mostly dry." But the 21st, with the thermometer at 76 - 78 - 77 - 76, came rain with thunder and lightning, and the 25th the wind changed to north-east bringing rain. "Very chilly" is the comment on a temperature of 62. "The wind all round the compass — small showers," came on the 28th, so the drought was broken.

Heavy frost was early that year with thick ice on the 30th of October, though the recorded temperature is 44 - 46 for the day, and a good deal of snow fell that night and most of the 31st. November had rain, hail and snow, and December began with very severe cold. Christmas Day had 25, 28, 27 recorded for the four observations; snow had fallen the day before, but "Thick chilly air" is the comment.

The New Year of 1799 opened with a temperature of 32° all day, and was cloudy with snow in the evening. Fifteen and a half is the lowest temperature recorded for the month. "Extreem cold" is the comment. On the 6th 15½ - 18 - 16 was the range. On the 12th with rain 50 is the highest. That came also on the 15th, with a north-west wind. "Clear and very pleasant."

The old proverb "When the days begin to lengthen the cold begins to strengthen" seems to have been true that year, for February was colder than January. "Extreem cold" is again recorded on the 23rd with the glass reading 20, 23, 24, 23. January had eleven days with a temperature at or below freezing at eight o'clock. February, a shorter month, had 14. Cold continued into March, which on the 5th registered 11, 12, 20, 16 with a north-west wind

and "Extrem cold" again, with snow on the 13th, 14th and 15th.

There is a break from March 16th to April 16th, when the thermometer touched 65, "Clear and very pleasant." May that year of 1799 brought a heavy rain storm which lasted into June, and the 6th to 9th of June have no recorded temperatures, but two days of very wet weather. One wonders if these two days were the yearly meeting days in Newport, to which the family usually went, but on the 7th Nailer Tom "carried home Rowland Hazard's wife. She drank tea here." So it was only the recorder who was away.

July had a very warm week with the temperature from the 13th to the 20th from 73° to 80° at every reading and ended with the last day and the first of August at 80° at eight o'clock in the morning. In September comes the first entry of outside affairs since the mention of College Tom's death. The 18th only the evening temperature is taken, at 70°. "Cloudy, Received I. P.'s letter dated 31st August." This was Isaac Peace, father-in-law to Rowland Hazard, who is mentioned in May as having written to Mary, his daughter.

The new Century 1800 began with a north-west wind "Clear and pleasant," and the thermometer from 37° to 40°, with 36° for the evening reading. The 16th it touched 50°, "remarkable warm." But the 26th was below freezing all day, and the last days of the month had morning temperatures of 18°, 16°, and 23°.

The first days of February had freezing temperatures and from the 10th to the 18th the morning reading was below 32°, once as low as 21°.

Then comes a break, of two years, and the more clerkly hand of the first page begins again after a ruled line:

"Tower Hill, 1802. So. Kingston Narraganset I. Peace arrived at Newport 10th Ins. from N. York.

August 1802, 19 - 73. Overcast fair. I. P. came here from the Ferry this morning."

It was a warm August. A drop from 80° to 70° on the 28th is noted. "This fall of the mercury took place in a quarter of an hour."

Isaac Peace does not confine himself to the state of the weather, but records the state of his health which was often poor, and his journeys to Newport.

September 11. "I. P. went to Newport. 29th Sept. I. P. came to Tower Hill from Ditto." In October it was "cool and very pleasant," with a temperature about sixty, but "Mind uneasy, very unwell." He rode ten miles "but was dizzy." A little later he records "Sciatica, full of trouble, some pain," and the 28th "sent trunk to the ferry" and 25th "I. P. went to Newport, much indisposed."

This is evidently Isaac Peace who speaks of himself in the third person, the father of Mary Peace Hazard, wife of Rowland. He was not an old man then, only sixty-four, and he lived to be eighty — sixteen years longer — but there is something pathetic in the brief records, put down in his beautiful handwriting, with the four times a day temperature, and the phases of the moon noted. His daughter Rebecca came with him and went back to Tower Hill for a few days. A little later — "Mary and Becky came from Tower Hill to New Port," and after a week "Mary (Mrs. Hazard) returned to Tower Hill."

December temperatures in Newport were mild in 1802; only four days are recorded as below freezing at the early reading. But the 17th made up for it with 7½° 10° 18° and 12° recorded. "Stormy wind. Extrem cold" is the comment, though that same day, "Rowland carried the mare over," to Tower Hill that would be. The 24th "Rebecca sailed for Charleston in Ship Octavia, Capt. Reynolds." Capt. Bigby arrived from Charleston. "Received Segars from Capt. Bigby but no letter."

Morning temperatures during January 1803 were mild in general, with twelve days below freezing, and only 3 days below twenty. The lowest reading is 14° 18° 24° 22°. "Clear and cold. Wrote to Becky this day by Burdick."

The ships are recorded. The "Brigg Algerona" sailed in mild and serene weather the 27th by which he wrote to his daughter. Rowland (his son-in-law) came to Newport on his way to New Bedford, and stopped each way. Thomas Hazard, his older brother, was living there, who was called "Bedford Tom."

February was colder, and with temperatures under freezing all day the recorder caught cold, and some days of illness and dizziness with "high fever" followed.

On the 14th there is an interesting note. The morning temperature is recorded at 38° but 30° out doors "when I exposed the thermometer ten minutes, which is 20 degrees variation in a few hours, for last night it was rather uncomfortably warm." Fifty is recorded for the last two readings of the 13th. The whole page is headed "Within doors."

Letters came by ship — one from Joseph, his son, on February 24th of July 27th, presumably from England. The Earl via Providence on the 9th brought a Charleston letter of January 27th. The Brig Concord sailed on the 21st, but put back and sailed the next day. The 26th "began a letter to Becky intended for the Hermes." Such were the difficulties of correspondence.

March opened more cheerfully, "very little complaint this day," though it was cold. Two temperatures are given again, 13° and 10° "within doors," but early in the month he walked out and caught cold and was very unwell again. Later he records, "head better but feverish," and once when the thermometer touched 52° "Washed head in Rum and Brandy, very unwell." But the next day he was still very unwell."

All of April in spite of spring weather and a spring snow storm he continued unwell. The Algerona sailed, the Concord arrived with letters. The Hermes brought furniture, and on the 22nd, with the thermometer touching 60° there was "Fire in Church Lane" and instead of sending a letter by a ship, on the 30th "wrote to Becky by Post."

May had a cold storm with "Frost and ice this morning,"

on the 7th though 41° is the lowest temperature recorded with a north-east wind and full moon. But every day he had fever and was very unwell. So on the 12th "I. P. sailed for New York this morning, Sloop 2 Sisters, John East master." The next day "in Sound at anchor at Hell-gate. Fever all night." The fourteenth "Arrived this morning at New York, better." The records continue regularly in New York, with pleasant weather, and each day he is better. On the 22nd "Fire — Bread Company's Building. Burnt, some lives lost and wounded in Vesey street at Fire." The last day of the month records the temperature up to 4 p. m. "Manhattan Water 58° per thermometer at No. 319 Pearl Street," and sailed June 1st." Arrived at New Port about 1 o'clock this morning" is the entry for June 3rd, three days of sailing, at least, during which they had variable winds and a thunder storm. The records continued, with the sign for "better" for two days, then F. again which means fever, "a bad night, very unwell." The seventh of June, "Rowland and Mary came for the annual festival" which would be yearly meeting probably, and two days later the records cease. The last one is only the noon temperature at 73°, "Warm, very unwell."

But this is not the end for after an interval of six months in December 1803 the record is resumed by another hand. Isaac Peace began it. Rowland Hazard continued it. This third hand which runs from December 1803 to June 1804 from Newport "wrote my Father" on the 16th, and January 3rd "received a letter from my Father of Dec. 23" which was about the time a letter from Charleston would take. So I conclude that Rebecca, Isaac Peace's daughter, took up the record. The page is headed New Port, and the weather is cold, with some snow with morning temperature about freezing, but rising to 40° on the 17th, and falling to 14° on the 21st. Early in January 1804 she "wrote to Brother," that would be Joseph Peace, and the same day "began French, M. Carpentier Decrox."

The record goes on in the same hand through the spring,

with only the weather noted, till March 26 "Moved to the Point." April and May continue, and June begins. On the 18th "I. P. arrived from New York" entered in his own handwriting, and the entries are fuller. The weather was generally "Fair and pleasant." June twenty-fifth 1804, "Rowland and Mary went to Narragansett." So it is fair to conclude Rebecca had spent the winter with them in Newport.

In July comes an interesting entry. The 16th, only a morning temperature of 70° is recorded. "Sailed for Providence with Rowland and Mary." The next day "Went to Smithfield with Rowland and Mary to place Isaac and Thomas at school there. Returned to Providence" and "Arrived at Newport from Providence" the eighteenth. Isaac Peace Hazard was born in 1794, so he would be ten years old, and Thomas was three years younger, later known as Shepherd Tom.

The 26th of July "Went to Providence with Joseph, Becky, etc." and spent several days there. Joseph went to Boston. "Very warm days at Providence," is the entry for several days though the thermometer was not with him evidently.

August 2, 1804. "I. P. arrived at New Port from Providence." The entries continue till August 15, 68° 72° 74° with no eight o'clock figure, and this is the end.

The blank book is not more than half full, and after the manner of the time has been used beginning at both ends. I. PEACE is written in large letters two inches high at one end, across a sheet containing the heads of his will which are crossed out, and on the next page is a full statement of property including Bank stock, United States certificates, houses and lands in Trenton, New Jersey, divided into three parts, one each for Joseph Peace, Mary Peace Hazard, and Rebecca Peace. This memorandum is dated NewPort, R. I. December 11, 1802, and signed Isaac Peace.

Then, also in the manner of the times, follow some useful Receipts: For sore throat, To make good soft soap, Cure

for Cancer, are the first three; to make spruce beer, and to cure the Dropsy, which seems simple enough, to drink a solution of cream of tartar in the prescribed strength, follow. But the cure for Dysentery is unusual. "Cut a sheet of paper into slips, boil in a pint and a half of milk to a pint to be taken at twice, recommended by Dr. Maryatt.

"Dr. Maryatt says 'I was called to a Lady who had been seized with the most dreadful Dysentery I ever saw, in a quarter of an hour after taking the boiled Paper was well.'

"Vide Maryatt's Art of Healing."

Paper was much more substantial in those days as the survival of the old book proves, but its curative effects are new. An example of its preservative powers is before us, for not only is the state of the weather recorded, but hints are given of commerce, of the ships which sailed Narragansett waters, and family life is revealed in the record of a grandfather going with his two oldest grandsons to place them at school, and in the constant letters he wrote to his youngest daughter.

Life was much the same as in our own day, and the study of an old book of dry figures and brief sentences gives us an illuminating glimpse into the past.

## William Dyer, a Rhode Island Dissenter — From Lincoln or Somerset?

By WILLIAM ALLAN DYER

For generations the ancestry of William Dyre, the first General Recorder of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, and that of his wife, Mary Dyre, the Quaker martyr, has been sought in vain.

Many years ago an attempt to discover it was made by Professor Louis Dyer of Harvard University, when he was at Oxford, England. He made some investigations, drew