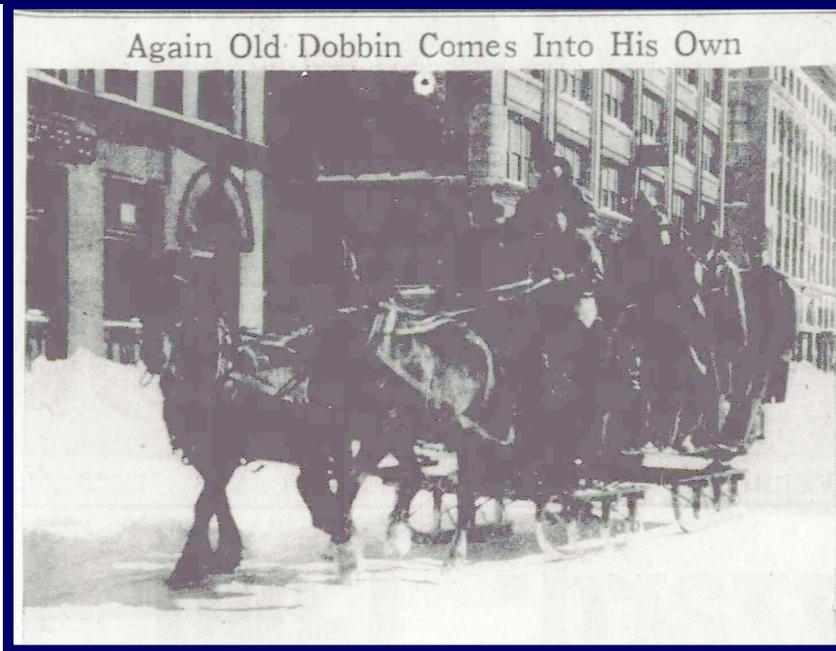


The exhibit of the Sisters of Notre Dame was highly commended and at the close of the Fair, which lasted six months, a diploma and medal were awarded to fifteen of our houses in Massachusetts, Lowell's parish and day schools being among the favored ones. See XIII., Columbus, Queen Isabella, and

Annals from the Archives

Valentine's Day Blizzard 1940



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Boston Fire Department
resorting to horse and sleigh
to get to emergency

From the *Boston Globe*
February 15, 1940

—Nowadays we have multiple sources to provide us with the latest weather updates: local news broadcasts, newspaper predictions, and many weather apps that give us hour by hour forecasts. We often assume that we will have plenty of notice before a storm. Though that is not always true, we are seldom as unprepared for horrific weather as people were more than fifty years ago.

New Englanders have always braced themselves for winter storms. And Valentine's Day in 1940 was no different. Newspapers predicted it to be like many other winter days in New England. Light snow and perhaps some rain was expected. And so, few people were concerned as they made their way to work as light flurries began to fall. That soon changed. By mid-day, the winds picked up and snow became heavy. Gusts up to 60 miles an hour were recorded and snow fell thick and heavy, coming down at a rate of three inches per hour.

Because most of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur lived in convents that were usually beside their school, few annalists mentioned the snow. In Cambridge, however, the sisters wrote that, "At the beginning of February, our dear Sister Supervisors, wishing to see how our pupils were progressing, came to visit us. But, alas, the elements were against them, for during their stay the weather was so bad that the storm signals sounded 'no school' on two occasions."

The situation for the sisters in the St. Mary's Convent in Lynn, MA was far different. They wrote in intimate detail of the storm they endured and the damage it caused to their home. "St. Valentine's Day, we had a blizzard, the worst of its kind for many years. . . After supper a Sister went to her dormitory only to find a large stream of water running in the upper corridor. . . Many Sisters came to help mop up the water but the harder they worked the more the water came in. . . Finally Sister Superior called the Rectory to explain the situation. . ."

The pastor, not knowing what else to do, quickly called the police station. Two officers arrived to provide assistance, staying until 11 p.m. to mop and do what they could to stop the flow of water. "The Sisters gave the men a good lunch before they left us, as they were drenched and dirty beyond description."

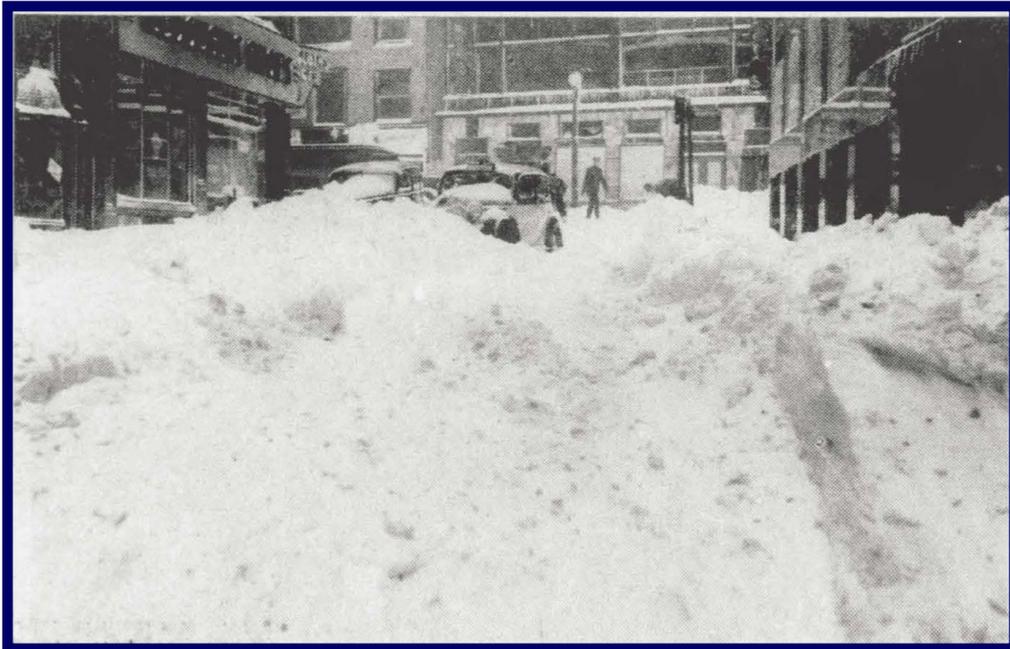
The sisters were fortunate, though, as the annalist described. "The blizzard raged all night, doing considerable damage everywhere. . . One of our Curates was giving a lecture at the Seminary when the storm became so violent. He started about 10:30 to return to Lynn and reached the Rectory at 8:15 the next morning having spent most of the night on the B & M train which could not plough its way through the drifts."

Those drifts rose from eight to ten feet in height. By the end of the storm, 31 people had died. The *Boston Globe* reported that the winds were the worst since the Hurricane of 1938, fifteen months before. And in a scene reminiscent of the Blizzard of 1978, the *Boston Globe* reported that, “Thousands of autoists, finding it futile to battle high drifting snow, abandoned their machines and made their way homeward on foot. The Boston Elevated Service was crippled, while bus lines canceled their schedules. . . .On the outlying sections and highways, the roads were lined for miles with automobiles unable to move toward or from the city.”

Thousands of people who had gone to see the famed Olympic ice skater, Sonja Henie, were stranded at the Boston Garden when all train service ended at 8:45 p.m. Hotels in the city soon filled up, forcing the staff to set up cots for those stranded in the city. Others wandered the local restaurants, waiting until the following morning to attempt to make their way home when the trains were finally able to run at 10 a.m.

Any man with a shovel was hired in Boston and other local cities as street departments ran out of shovels to clear the streets, sidewalks and railway tracks. In addition to shoveling, the city also used bonfires and flame throwers to clear the tracks for the trains to begin moving again.

The storm was so powerful and left such a lasting impression on those who lived through it that newspapers assured readers in February of 1941 that such a storm was not predicted in the near future. And this time, those predictions held true.



People attempting to clear city streets
From the *Boston Globe*, February 15, 1940

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