

Spot Of Owl's Head

One day as I was sitting in the dining room of the Owl's Head Lighthouse keeper's home, his daughter Pauline Hamor told me the story of her springer spaniel Spot, who loved the giant signal bell near the lighthouse, and the boats of the bay.

Spot's entire interest seemed to be centered on the lighthouse, the fog bell, and the shipping that passed the promontory. He always watched for boats to sail by the light.

As soon as they would get near enough to the cliff to hear a signal, he would run over to the bell rope and give it a few quick tugs with his teeth. The peal of the bell would echo out over Penobscot Bay.

Then as the craft answered with either whistles or bell, the happy dog would dash down to the water's edge and bark at the vessel.

One of the best loved of all craft that sailed by the light was the Matinicus mail boat, captained by Stuart Ames of Rockland.

One wild stormy night, when the snow-laden wind was cutting in across Owl's Head, the lighthouse telephone rang. It was Mrs. Ames, terribly worried about her husband who had been scheduled to land his mail boat at Rockland several hours before. She asked if there had been any sign of the boat.

"My husband speaks of often of your dog and of his ability to ring the lighthouse fog bell. Do you think that Spot might be able to hear the mail boat's whistle?" asked the almost frantic wife.

Keeper Hamor replied that he would let the dog leave the house to see what might happen. But after half an hour outside in the gale, Spot returned and scratched at the door to be let in. He had a dejected air which told the others that he had not heard the mail boat.

Shaking the snow from his shaggy coat, Spot warmed himself at the fireplace and then went over to his favorite place in the corner.

Just as he started to settle down to go to sleep, Spot raised up on his haunches, his ears alert, and every muscle in his body tense with expectation. Everyone in the room knew that Spot had heard the mail boat whistle.

Springing up from his corner, Spot scampered across the hallway and barked to be let out. The others watched him scramble through the great drifts as he fought his way to the lighthouse bell.

Unfortunately, he was unable to reach the signal rope, for the drifted snow was then several feet high. Prevented from ringing the bell, after several futile efforts to reach the rope Spot made his way along the edge of the cliff, where the wind was sweeping the snow clear, and soon he reached the spot nearest to the ocean. There Spot began to bark furiously.

Keeper Hamor, after struggling

into his warm coat, went out into the storm and followed the dog. Soon he, too, could hear the whistle of the mail boat.

He realized that if the dog's bark could be heard on the craft, Captain Ames in turn would know where he was and be able to get his bearings in spite of the storm.

Sure enough, after a period of violent barking, there came an answer out of the blizzard—three distinct blasts of the mail boat's whistle—a signal indicating that Ames had heard the barking dog.

From that moment the Matinicus mailboat was assured of charting a safe course for Rockland.

Two hours later a grateful wife called up the Hamor residence and expressed her thanks to the spaniel Spot who had saved the mail boat from disaster. The hero of the moment was then sleeping soundly in his corner.

The spaniel died many years ago and is now buried at Owl's Head near the fog bell he loved so well.