

MY GRANDPARENTS ON THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 8, 1900

My great grandfather, George A. Christie, and his father arrived in Galveston Texas in 1858 from Scotland. He married a native Houstonian, Dora Hoxie, in 1860 and raised six daughters and one son in Galveston. In 1890 their son, George R. Christie married Mary Elizabeth Walker. Together they had a daughter, who was my Mother.

George R. and Mary E. Christie lived in Galveston in a rented house located 6 or 8 blocks from the beach. The house was raised, but only a half-rise. On the night of September 8, 1900, this is where they lived and remained inside during the 1900 Hurricane.

Because of the heavy rainfall, about two o'clock in the afternoon my grandfather came home from the office with great difficulty. The rain was falling in torrents and the seawater was gradually covering the streets in the lower parts of the city. Having lived on the coast and being accustomed to ordinary coast storms, they were not apprehensive of any danger.

As night was approaching a neighbor asked my grandparents to come to her house across the street. She was alone and alarmed but she did have a fully raised house. By this time the water had risen to such a level that it was impossible to cross the street. Even though the rain was something altogether unexpected, they had never for a moment thought, the water would reach into their yard.

The house was rocking like a cradle and it seemed almost beyond human belief that the house could withstand, for even a single moment, such a terrific wind. Earlier the whole family had started praying and still there was no fear.

They felt a terrific jar or jolting. Soon they discovered water coming through the floors. As the water came pouring in through the door casings, they knew the house was off its foundation. The lights had gone out and they were groping around in total darkness. At the time, water was up to my grandmother's waist.

My grandfather took Mother in his arms and with my grandmother and a domestic went to one door, but failed to open it. Quietly but swiftly they went to another door and through it reached the kitchen. From the kitchen they could see a door that had blown open and they discovered that they were indeed floating.

Soon the water reached the crease in my grandmother's chin, and then they found that every piece of furniture in the house was floating. Something must be done, and quickly. In a short time, the water would be too deep for my grandmother to get up on the top of the stove without further difficulty.

About eleven o'clock, mother noticed that the water was receding and in some unforeseen way they found a lamp and some dry matches. Now they were able to see.

This experience lasted from five o'clock in the afternoon until half past two in the morning. Most of that time they were in the water. While standing on the stove, mother (who was thinly dressed) complained of being cold. Without knowing how it got there or where it came from, my grandfather reached out and found a coat of his, floating around on something. It proved to be a heavy one, and although water soaked, it kept her nicely warm.

Not until they were able to leave their house, did they realize how wonderfully they had been protected and how much they had to be thankful for. By this time, there was not a single structure standing between their house and the beach. The debris floating around caused their house to be knocked from its foundation. By daylight their house had floated two blocks, knocking the corners off two different houses. Their house had floated a distance of two squares. Not until they returned to the original sight of their home, did they realize the awful destruction that had been wrought.

Just the afternoon before, they could view hundreds of pretty homes that were now a barren of waste. The houses were piled up in mountains of wreckage all around them. Their house had been carried to the highest part of the highest street in the neighborhood, and there it stood perfectly intact, out of harm's way from the floating debris, which would surely have demolished it, had it not gone when it did.



Compiled from notes from my grandmother and from my mother

Elizabeth Dennis Rockwell