



**Tales From the Keeper's Log:  
Life and Life-Saving at a Life-Saving Station**

**By Debbie Allyn Jett**



**The Point Aux Barques U.S. Life-Saving Station is now a proud part of the Huron City Museums, located on M-25, south of Port Austin, near the tip of Michigan's Thumb. Thanks to the Museum, the station was saved from demolition when it was purchased and moved in 1964. Photo: Jett.**

Many aspects of day-to-day life at a U.S. Life-Saving Station were not so different than ours are today. There were meals to be prepared, cleaning to be done, clothes to be washed, repairs to be made. The surfmen of old were not only trained to be proficient at saving lives, they were also handymen, hunters, carpenters, blacksmiths, cooks, painters and mechanics. Many of the men built small cottages near the stations for their families to reside in. Much of the food they ate was grown in their own gardens. They hunted local game and caught fish to put meals on the table. If the Keeper was married, his wife was often employed to do the cooking. Otherwise, the men cooked for themselves. On occasion, if he was a good cook, a surfman would be excused from lookout and

patrol duty in order to become full-time cook. Many of the additional buildings on the station grounds were built by the men, as were new or extended docks. Often, they cleared roads or built new ones. The care and upkeep of the station and equipment was foremost on the list of chores the men performed. They repaired or replaced shingles, painted interiors and exteriors, replaced broken windows, cut the grass, did repair work on the boats and motors, and generally fixed whatever was broken or worn out. Most of the early surfmen were also familiar with horses, knew how to ride and how to hitch up a team to a wagon, surfboat carriage or beach cart.

In her book "Time and the Town, A Provincetown Chronicle," Mary Heaton Vorse stated, "All coast guards make wonderful husbands. They are carpenters, painters; they know how to putty a window and how to plumb; how to build a fire, how to keep a cookstove clean, and how to cook."

Most of the tales told today of the U.S. Life-Saving Service do not detail the excitement of puttying a window or digging a new pit for the outhouse. The stories that most of us want to hear about are the ones of daring rescues during horrific storms, in which the mettle of the men was truly tested. There are hundreds of rescue stories and tales of daring-do in the Keepers' Logs and the Annual Reports of the Life-Saving Service. There are also many more stories, mostly in the logs and in the lore handed down, of smaller feats of bravery and foolishness, new men hired, men fired, men deserting, helping out their neighbors in times of need, and doing what they were told to do by the Keeper. They also saved thousands of lives.

In between doing laundry or scrubbing floors would come the call for help. Often, the call came by signal from a vessel in distress, and was observed by the man on patrol or lookout. He might spot a red lantern hung in the rigging, hear cries of distress or spot a flag union-side down in the rigging. He might come across debris or a body on the beach or perhaps a survivor who made it to shore. Sometimes a messenger on foot or on horseback would arrive at the station with news of a ship ashore and an urgent appeal for help. Whatever was being done at the time was laid quickly aside as the crew prepared to go to the assistance of those in need. The decision would be made by the Keeper as to which equipment would be used; either the surfboat, or lifeboat, or the beach apparatus. He would have to use his best judgment quickly, based on the conditions of the surf and the weather, the distance to those in need of help, and whatever other information he was able to obtain. In the early days, the U.S.L.S.S did not supply horses, so the equipment was either pulled by the men themselves, or by a horse or team that was borrowed from nearby. Often, Keepers made arrangements in advance with a nearby farmer to borrow horses whenever they were needed. When they were needed, one of the surfmen would be dispatched quickly to obtain them. The owner was compensated by the service for the use of his animals. Later on, many stations kept their own horses. If it was determined that getting there the quickest would be via the water, the

boat was launched and the men rowed to the scene of the disaster. Often, the men were exhausted by the exertion it took just to get to the scene, but they summoned up their energy and courage and did what they had to do.

Captain Jerome G. Kiah's logbook from the Point Aux Barques Station on Lake Huron, at the tip of Michigan's Thumb, details life and life-saving at that station from the fall of 1878 through early summer of 1880. Here are some of the stories as told by him.



**Captain Jerome G. Kiah's portrait hangs in the Point Aux Barques U.S. Life-Saving Station, now located at the Huron City Museums in Michigan. Keeper Kiah was the lone survivor of the Point Aux Barques disaster on April 23, 1880, in Lake Huron. His entire crew of six surfmen perished in the cold waters of the lake while responding to a distress signal from a lumber vessel. Kiah was forced to resign as keeper 2 months later, due to injuries to his legs and feet from being trapped in the icy lake for 3-1/2 hours. Later that year, he became District Superintendent for Lake Huron and Lake Superior, after the drowning death of Dist. Supt. Joseph Sawyer, who was also Kiah's cousin. Photo: Jett.**

At half past ten on the night of November 30th, 1878, the crew of the scow "Mayflower" of Alpena, arrived at the station to report that their vessel had either broken adrift or had been stolen while they were ashore. Master and owner Joseph Campan and an unnamed man went with the crew in the surfboat to search for the missing scow. Even though it was too dark to expect to find anything, they launched anyway. The scow had no lights on board and the crew had no idea of where to look, so the search was halted for the night and the crew of the scow was sheltered at the station overnight. At daylight, the surfboat was again launched and the men rowed out into Lake Huron a distance of about 13 miles. Still not finding anything, they returned to the station at 1:30 in the afternoon. The crew of the scow was fed dinner at the station, then left on foot to look down shore for their vessel. The scow was valued at \$250 and carried no cargo.

On December 15, 1878, the station was put out of commission at the end of the season, per instructions of the District Superintendent. The equipment was inventoried and the station closed until April 1st of the next spring. Captain Kiah was required to make periodic trips to the station during the winter to check on it, making sure all was okay and that it had not been vandalized.

April 1st, 1879. Captain Kiah reopened the station per instructions from the Superintendent. The surfmen arrived and reported for duty. Captain Kiah had the men sign their articles of agreement, employing them for the season. Throughout April, the men were busy airing out the station, practicing Restoring of the Apparently Drowned, painting the surfboat and measuring lines. They also practiced faking the shotlines.

April 28th, 1879. "Crew helped to load lumber from Huron City dock onto the scow "Mary Amelia" of St. Clair. This was the same lumber the crew were instrumental in saving from the wreck of the scow "E.K. Kane" the previous November."

May 1879. "Crew busy clearing the patrol road so they will have a better view of the lake. Later in May, crew all absent from station with surfboat for 8 hours, after a load of potatoes."

May 30th and 31st. Captain Kiah prevented a schooner and a steamer from grounding on the reef by displaying International Signals "J. D." Both vessels steered clear of the reef safely, avoiding the danger.

Over the course of the season, the men were allowed days off, providing they could find a suitable substitute to take their places. They visited families, fetched personal items like clothing or tools. Captain Kiah and his wife, Annie, attended Sunday School and Church most Sundays.

June 14, 1879, Word received from the Lighthouse that there appeared to be a wreck ashore about 3 ½ miles from station. Keeper satisfied himself by looking from top of lighthouse with binoculars that it did look like a wreck. Surfboat was manned by crew in cork jackets and rowed to the scene. Upon getting closer, it was made out to be a dock under construction, not visible from station due to a point of land in between. Robert Morison overstayed his liberty by 10 minutes and missed the boat. He had to do 2 patrol shifts back to back as a result.

June 23, 1879. Robert Morison got into trouble for stopping at the church in Huron City for an hour, neglecting his duty. Captain Kiah reported him to Supt. Joseph Sawyer, as required by regulations. Crew busy painting the outside of the station.

July 3, 1879. Superintendent Joseph Sawyer overlooked Morison's neglect of duty and spoke to all hands and tried to impress on all their minds the importance of being faithful in their duties, especially patrol duty. He also instructed Keeper before all hands, that if any of the crew neglected patrol duty, to suspend them at once, without waiting for instructions. Surfman James O'Connor discharged from service due to ill health. Replaced on July 9 by Dennis Deegan.



**Surfman Dennis Deegan, lost in the Point Aux Barques disaster on April 23, 1880 in Lake Huron. Photo courtesy of Dennis Deegan.**

Aug. 15, 1879. Surfman McDonald left the station and service today. He was told by Keeper to hereafter be a little more particular in doing his morning duty, sweeping and dusting boat room. He told Keeper he wanted to be discharged. Keeper told him he could not discharge him for so small a matter. He told Keeper he "was going to leave anyway" and did. Keeper is not sorry for he has lately been doing much to make the crew feel discontented. Surfman McCann procured to replace him Aug. 17.

### **Excitement at Last!**

September 3, 1879. The screw steamer, Jacob Bertschy, of Detroit and commanded by Capt. G. W. McGregor, was bound from Saginaw to Cleveland, heavily laden with 1, 400,000 shingles and carrying 19 passengers and 33 crew. She was at Port Austin, Michigan, caught by an easterly gale, when the wind

changed and blew violently and began pounding the ship on the bottom. The captain weighed anchor and headed for open waters. Soon after clearing the dangerous reef, she sprang a leak. Her steam siphon pump became clogged and useless and she began to founder. Captain McGregor headed the vessel for Grindstone City, hoping to be able to beach her between the docks in order to get everyone off safely. Shortly after the pump ceased to function, the boiler fires were extinguished by the rising waters, leaving the Captain unable to control the vessel, and she fetched up on the bottom at approximately 10:00pm a quarter of a mile from shore and 300 yards southeast of the Grindstone City docks. The ship began to break up from the severe pounding she was receiving from the violent, wind-churned waves. Sheets of rain and waves washed over her decks, threatening to hurl the hapless passengers and crew overboard. Many of the bundles of shingles were swept into the maelstrom as the Captain and crew frantically tied the passengers to the bulwarks with whatever they could find. A yawl boat was launched with the first and second mates, along with four crew, with the intention of rowing to the Point Aux Barques Life-Saving Station, to summon help. It was immediately capsized when it hit the water and was washed to a shelf of rock, where the men scrambled to temporary safety. Above them loomed a 40 foot, steep bluff, which they were unable to climb, so they were forced to huddle together, cold, wet and hungry, and wait for help. Around midnight, a second attempt was made to launch another yawl, but she broke free with one man in her, and capsized. He was washed to the same rock shelf, where he huddled with the other crew members, bruised and frightened. Captain McGregor sounded the Bertschy's steam whistle for approximately half an hour, which was heard by a good many of the citizens of Grindstone City, but no help was summoned. (It was discovered the next morning that the telegraph lines were down due to the storm.) The good Captain, crew and passengers spent a terrifying night aboard the foundering vessel, not knowing if help would arrive before she broke into pieces.

The next morning, September 4th, Mr. Gruen, the Superintendent of the Grindstone City Works, arrived at dawn at the Works. Hearing faint screams from the direction of the lake, he peered through the continuing storm and spotted the Bertschy. He immediately ran to the telegraph office to notify Huron City to send for the life-savers. Upon arrival, he was notified that the telegraph wires were down and no messages could be sent. He hurried back to his office and discovered Mr. Reed arriving on horseback for work. He dispatched Mr. Reed to the Point Aux Barques Station to summon aid. Captain Kiah and his crew were unaware of the wreck, due to the fact that Grindstone City was 4 ½ miles beyond the limits of their patrol. Around 7:00am, the cries from the men stranded on the rock shelf were heard and they were pulled to the top of the bluff with ropes by citizens of Grindstone City.

In the log, Captain Kiah wrote: "September 4, 1879, 7:15am, word was brought to station that there was a wreck close to Grindstone City dock. Surfman A. Morison was immediately sent to procure a team to transport boat to scene of wreck.

7:30am, had boat onto wagon with oars, cork jackets, grapnel & heaving line into boat. 7:50am, team arrived and hitched onto wagon. Team came very near running away with boat and wagon on the start- they were a young team and spirited, and the load they had seemed to scare them. When we had got about two miles from station, we met a team coming to our assistance. Sent him to station with Surfman Deegan for Lyle Gun and apparatus with instructions to follow us as fast as possible. Without any mishap we arrived at scene of wreck at 9:32am. Distant from station about 7 miles and from proposed Station No. 3 about 1 ¼ miles. 9:37am, launched in good shape, cork jackets properly fastened onto each of the crew. 9:45am, threw our line aboard of wreck where it was caught with willing hands.”

The Annual Report stated that the Bertschy , “ seen through the driving rain, lay heeled over to starboard with the water at intervals flying in great sheets over her. She was already breaking up and her miserable passengers and crew, almost hopeless of relief, were grouped upon her upper deck, lashed to the bulwarks, where they had been for hours, drenched by the flooding breakers. The gale was from the north, and between the vessel and the pier was the breadth of a terrible sea, running from the north-northeast in heavy furrows. This threatening expanse the surfboat had to traverse in the desperate endeavor for the rescue, without the least shelter to her crew from the gale and sea beyond what the immediate lee of the dock afforded. A crew of volunteers attempted to go out to the wreck in a fish boat, but as soon as they got beyond the lee of the pier, and felt the sea, they put back. The life-saving crew, meantime, were on their perilous way. To the spectators on shore, and to those on the wreck, the surfboat seemed to have gone down as it sank from sight into the troughs, but on each occasion, the boat rose on the summit of the waves, with her bows steadily headed to the stranded steamer and her crew working together with all their might at the oars.” Within 10 minutes, they arrived at the wreck, heaved a line aboard and two of the surfman flung themselves into the water. With great exertion, they pulled themselves aboard the steamer to aid and direct the transfer of those on board into the surfboat.

In the log, Captain Kiah continued, “After getting all the ladies and one small boy aboard, 12 in all, we shoved off and landed them in a few minutes in safety. We had to keep every oar free as we had to pull right into the teeth of the gale with a heavy sea on starboard bow, we made the four trips in quick succession, stopping only long enough between 2nd and 3rd trips to bail out about a half barrel of water which she had taken in over her nose. At 10:30am, we landed the last one on the dock safe and sound, making in the four trips, 44 souls rescued. Captain McGregor was the last man to leave his boat. During each trip of our boat the passengers and crew were perfectly cool and seemed to be in good spirits. The good order and lack of confusion was due in a great measure to Captain McGregor and upon our assurance that we had come to take them all ashore. As we landed our last load from wreck, Surfman Deegan reported with Lyle Gun and apparatus, as there was no use for it- he was directed to take it



back to Station as soon as the team had taken rest. In making out "Preliminary wreck report" it reads 50 lives saved, it should read 51. Keeper tried to keep a correct count of every boatload, but the surfboat needed considerable watching along side of the wreck and the seas needed closer watching in pulling for shore." Later in his official report, he wrote "I cannot speak in too high praise of my crew. On leaving the wreck with my first load I told them that it would not be long before she went to pieces by the way her stanchions were cracking and her cabins settling. They responded by bending to their oars with a will and in making the four trips inside of an hour." Later that evening, when the storm abated somewhat, Captain Kiah and the crew returned to the wreck in a fish boat and brought back clothing and possessions of the passengers and crew, along with some stateroom furniture, which was stored in a shanty on the dock. The men took 2 hour watches, keeping an eye on the possessions and the wreck. In a rare opportunity to "eat out," they stopped for dinner at a fish shanty at the dock. The next morning, they again went to the wreck in the fish boat and brought back the Bertschy's safe, and more cabin and stateroom furniture. At about 11:30am, they left for home in the surfboat, arriving around 1:15pm, "feeling well satisfied that we had done our duty as members of the Life-Saving Service." Captain Kiah's pride was slightly wounded the next day, when he received a postcard from Mr. T. Willson, of the Port Austin U.S. Signal Office, where his preliminary wreck report had been sent to be telegraphed to Superintendent Sumner Kimball. The card read "Yours in regard to sending report to Supt. Life-Saving Station rec'd. It was not in proper shape to be transmitted, nor was I sufficiently informed to put it in proper shape. I was therefore compelled to mail your report." Willson was miffed that Kiah's report had been submitted to him written in pencil, due to the fact that it was prepared at the scene of the wreck. Willson evidently thought that Captain Kiah should have carried a pint of ink with him during the rescue! Willson also must have made quite a fuss about the use of pencils, because, in May of 1880, a circular was sent from Secretary of the Treasury John Sherman's office to all stations, forbidding the use of pencils on all official documents.

Life at the station settled back down into normal day-to-day work after the wreck of the Bertschy. The men were kept busy scrubbing floors, gathering potatoes, and cutting square timbers for a new dock.

In Part 2 of "Tales From the Keeper's Log," read about one surfman's dismissal for refusing to help lighten a vessel stuck on the reef. Later, the crew is summoned to three requests for help in one day during a terrific snowstorm and Captain Kiah and the Life-Saving Service suffer a terrible tragedy which becomes known as the Point Aux Barques Disaster.

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## Tales from the Keeper's Log Part 2

### Life and Life-Saving at a Life-Saving Station

By Debbie Allyn Jett

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In Part 1, we learned day-to-day life at a Life-Saving Station wasn't all heroic rescues and adrenalin-pumping excitement. The normal activities of maintaining a station and its equipment consumed much of the men's time. Drilling and learning how to use the rescue equipment like the beach apparatus and the boats kept the men busy for part of their

days; patrolling and lookout duty occupied much of their nights. In between calls for help, the keeper and crew were kept busy with the same activities that take up much of our time today; meal preparation and clean-up, laundry, repairs, yard work, and, for the keeper, a LOT of paperwork. The keeper was responsible for keeping an accurate inventory of all of the station's equipment, ordering new needed items, documenting old, worn out items, maintaining accurate receipts and documenting the required information in the station's log book. In the early days of the Life-Saving Service, the logs were plain, 9 X 12, lined journals with no printed sections to designate what info went where. Glued inside the cover of the log was a typewritten list of what information was to be documented. Required information included: Day of the week, date, month and year; state of the weather; barometer, direction and force of the wind, whether gale, fresh or moderate breeze, or calm; and temperature. This information was to be noted for sunrise, noon, sunset and midnight. Conditions of the surf and tides were also noted. Surf was notated as no surf, light, moderate, heavy, or extremely heavy.

Patrol and lookout shifts were also included, noting time of shift, whether it was lookout or beach patrol and each man's name in the proper spot. The condition of the house and equipment was also required, as were the names of any men absent from the station and the reason why; i.e. sick, on leave, after supplies or mail, and so on. Drills performed and work done was documented, as well as the number and type of vessels that passed by. Items received were listed in the log, too and carried on a separate inventory. Receipts were kept and copies sent to the superintendent, as well as a copy of the log entries themselves, which were sent weekly. The keeper also collected customs and filled out all the proper paperwork that went with it, signed up new surfmen on Articles of Engagement, and wrote out preliminary and regular Wreck Reports. The Wreck Reports were incredibly detailed and often filled up three or four pages in the log. These were

later rewritten by Sumner Kimball's staff and included in the U.S. Life-Saving Service's Annual Reports. Supplies and repairs required the filling out of the proper requisitions, and those were receipted when received. Ordering new requisitions involved requisitioning them. As a result, much of the keeper's time was spent at his desk with pen in hand. Some keepers were very terse in their log entries, while others included more details. All of us who do research today are grateful to the keepers like Captain Jerome Kiah, whose log entries were detailed and fairly legible.

Here are some more tales from his log from the Point Aux Barques Station, located at the tip of Michigan's Thumb on Lake Huron.

Thursday, Oct. 9, 1879, " 9:00am, All hands excepting Deegan took their places in the surfboat to take the wife of Assistant Light Keeper A. L. Kimball of Port Austin Light home. (Deegan had just returned from being ill for 12 days and was probably told to stay at the station to rest.) She had been accidentally thrown out of her buggy and after a consultation with the doctor, he advised her to be taken home in a boat as the jar from a buggy might affect her seriously, being hurt inwardly. No other boat being available we took her in the surf boat. About 4:00 pm, while on our return from Kimball's and when within two and one half miles of station, there being a thick fog, a steamer's whistle was heard to sound at short intervals, with 4 or 5 quick blasts, an unusual signal, the regular fog signal for steamers being one blast. Keeper immediately told the crew to 'bend to their oars' as in his opinion there was somebody in trouble outside. The crew responded nobly, by doing their best. In about twenty five minutes from the time we first heard the whistle, we were abreast of the station, and from the sound of the whistle, we judged the steamer to be directly abreast. The surfboat was immediately headed for the direction of the sound of the whistle. After pulling about two miles and when within about 100 yards we made her out to be a large Screw Steamer. After getting close aboard, her name was made out 'Roanoke' of Buffalo bound from Milwaukee to Buffalo with 31,000 bushels wheat and five hundred bbls. flour. She had fetched up on the outside reef, weather being thick, due east and about two miles from station. After finding out that he was hard on, Keeper told the Captain he would pull outside farther and hail a steamer that was answering Roanoke's whistle. After pulling out about 400 yards we hailed a tug which proved to be the 'John Martin of Port Huron,' piloted him to 'Roanoke,' where he got a line aboard and commenced pulling, with no success. About one hour afterwards, 7pm, the tug 'Wm. Goodman' hove in sight and got a line aboard of steamer and commenced pulling with no better success.

The crew of the steamer were busy dumping the cargo overboard to lighten her up. The Roanoke was laying in 11 ft. of water forward and 13 ft. aft. We were busy in sounding the water around the steamer and in helping the crew lighten the steamer. Surfman McGuire refused to help lighten the steamer, and as Keeper telling him that it was part of his duty as surfman to render all the assistance he could in such a case as this, he still refused to help. Keeper told

him he would either have to turn to or be dismissed. He chose to be dismissed. The rest of the crew with Keeper helped lighten. At 4:00am of the 10th, after throwing overboard 500 barrels of flour, about 20 tons of coal, and somewhere in the neighborhood of 5000 bushels of wheat, the tugs were enabled to pull her off. After being assured by the Capt. of the 'Roanoke' that he was all right and not making any water, we headed for station and 'Roanoke' headed for deeper water. The fog had lifted about midnight so that we experienced no difficulty in finding our way back to station."



Friday, Oct. 10th, 1879, Deegan absent, gone outside in fish boat to look for flour thrown overboard from 'Roanoke.' Shipped James Pottinger as surfman in place of McGuire discharged.

**Point Aux Barques Surfman James Pottinger, lost in the disaster of April 23, 1880. Photo taken in Sarnia, Ontario, sometime between 1869-1874. Courtesy of Nancy Pottinger Johnson-Smith.**

Saturday, Oct. 11th, 1879, All hands went in surfboat and picked up thirteen barrels of flour out of the Lake that was thrown overboard from steamer "Roanoke." (USLSS crews often retrieved cargo that was tossed overboard to lighten vessels. The cargo was held in safety until it could be returned to the rightful owners.)

Oct. 25th, 1879, In answer to a telegram from Superintendent Joseph Sawyer, all hands went to meet him at Port Austin with surfboat. He paid all hands for quarter ending Oct. 1 and kept on his way to Detroit, not coming ashore.

Oct. 30, 1879, Practiced in surfboat, experienced considerable difficulty in making a landing (due to heavy surf) as there was no shelter from our dock and the beach is bald and rocky. By watching our chance, we landed at dock without further mishap other than wet hides.

Nov. 20, 1879 Gale came in shortly after sunset with a snow squall, freezing hard. At 10pm Keeper first learned of four or five vessels going ashore at Sand Beach in the gale last night, attended with loss of life. A. Morison heard of it at Huron City while on first patrol. That was the first intimation we had of a wreck so near us, about 18 miles.

Dec. 15, 1879. Station put out of commission for the season.

Thursday, April 1, 1880. Station put in commission per Joseph Sawyer's instructions. Surfmen William I. Sayre, Robert Morison, James Pottinger, Dennis Deegan, Walter Petherbridge and James Nantau sign their Articles of Engagement for Surfmen for the season of navigation. On the night of March 9th, the Point Aux Barques Light was lit (early) for the first time this season, due to traffic on the lake.

ARTICLES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR SURFMEN.

We, the subscribers, do, and each of us doth, hereby agree to and with Jerome G. Riek, Keeper of Life-Saving Station No. 2, District No. 10, in the Life-Saving Service of the United States, in manner and form following, that is to say:

In the first place, we do hereby agree, in consideration of the monthly wages against each of our names hereunto set, payable at such times and in such proportions as are or may be prescribed by the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, to enter into the Life-Saving Service of the United States for the term of one year, unless sooner discharged by the order of the Secretary of the Treasury, and to repair to Station No. 2, District No. 10, by the 1st day of April, 1879, and remain there from that date until the close of Navigation, 1879, and during that time, unless sooner discharged by proper authority, to the utmost of our power and ability, respectively, to discharge our several duties, and in everything to be conformable and obedient to the lawful commands of the officers who may, from time to time, be placed over us.

Secondly. We do, also, oblige and subject ourselves, and for that purpose do hereby covenant and agree to serve during the term aforesaid, and to comply with and be subject to such rules and discipline as are or may be established for the government of the Life-Saving Service of the United States.

Thirdly. The said Jerome G. Riek, for and in behalf of the United States, doth hereby covenant and agree to and with the parties who have hereunto severally signed their names, and each of them, respectively, that the said parties shall be paid, in consideration of their services, the amount per month which, in the column hereunto annexed, is set opposite to each of their names, respectively, at such times and in such proportions as are or may be allowed by the General Instructions for the government of the Life-Saving Service.

Table with columns: NAMES, DATE OF ENTRY, TERM, IN WHAT CAPACITY, PAY PER MONTH (Dollars, Cts.), REMARKS. Contains handwritten entries for W. J. Sayre, Robert Morison, A. Morison, W. Sp. Guire, Alex Mc Donald, and James O'Connor, all with a pay of 40.00 and term of Navigation 1879.

W. J. Sayre

Articles of Engagement signed by surfmen William I. Sayre, Robert Morison, A. Morison, William McGuire, Alex McDonald and James O'Connor for the Season of Navigation, 1879, at the Point Aux Barques station on Lake Huron, Michigan. One year later, Sayre and Morison would return, only to perish in the disaster on April 23. Courtesy of Susan Abbott, NARA, Washington, D.C.

### Three In One Day!

Saturday, April 10, 1880. At about 10:00am, the wind commenced to freshen and gradually hauled around to N.E., by 11:00am, it was blowing a gale and snowing hard, so that it was impossible to see more than 100 yards.

At noon, Petherbridge was sent to patrol the beach and Sayre was sent to the New River dock, where the scow, "Mary Garrett" was tied up, partially loaded with salt. Sayre found the scow pounding hard against the dock. He and the Captain scuttled her in about 10 feet of water to save her from pounding herself to pieces against the dock. Petherbridge returned from S.E. patrol at 2:30pm, reported nothing in peril that he could see.

Meanwhile, up in the lookout tower, a vessel was observed, apparently stranded on the reef, about 4 miles S.E. of the station. Captain Kiah immediately dispatched one of the surfmen to procure a team, while he and the crew rolled the boat out, ready to respond. At 4:15pm, word was brought to the station that the "Home" was ashore at Port Hope with no yawl boat. She was dragging her anchor, with her crew of six stranded on board. At 4:25pm, the team arrived and was immediately hitched up to the boat wagon and Kiah and the surfmen were on their way. Sayre was still at the New River dock, so he was not in the boat with them. Kiah chose to go to the rescue of the "Home" first, which was about 8 miles south of the station. Without any mishap, other than bad roads, they arrived at the scene of the wreck at 6:25pm. "Keeper immediately fastened cork jackets on crew while volunteers were unloading surfboat from wagon. In about five minutes after arriving, we shoved off. The wreck lay about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of mile from where we launched. There was a heavy sea running from N.E. Our surfboat behaved herself splendidly. We came to leeward of wreck and got the crew in without trouble, and landed them in good shape, the spectators giving us three cheers on our arrival. Keeper immediately called for volunteers to haul out surfboat and load her onto wagon again. The call was answered and upon a further call, volunteers took the wagon by hand and pulled it about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to the barn where the team was." A local man had taken the team to his barn to shelter and feed them, so when the surfboat was loaded onto the wagon after the rescue, Captain Kiah discovered that the team was missing. Deciding it would be much quicker to get the boat to the horses, he had called upon the volunteers to help out. Many willing hands pushed and pulled the boat wagon quickly to where the horses were. Kiah also had apparently asked the messenger who had arrived at the station with the news of the "Home" to gather volunteers to help out, in order to get to the vessel stranded on the reef as quickly as possible.

The men then partook of a hasty meal that had been prepared for them and set off to aid the stranded schooner. The snow and wind was still blasting them, chilling them to the bone. After proceeding about half a mile, a Good Samaritan arrived with a fresh team of horses, kindly sent by Mr. W. R. Stafford, of Port Hope. The original team was pretty much used up by then. The fresh team was

hitched up without delay and the crew proceeded to get as close as they could to the schooner, which was found out later to be the "Montauk" of Chicago, bound from Buffalo to Chicago, carrying a load of coal. She had struck outside of the reef and began to leak, and was then run toward shore when she fetched up on the reef, where she remained, stuck. At 8:45pm, Kiah and his crew got as close as they could get to the "Montauk," which was about 1 ½ miles abreast of her. The water was filled with many boulders and was shallow and very rough. They located a small dock and put the boat into the water, taking advantage of the meager lee it offered. Earlier, Kiah had wisely pulled a barrel of salt, which was floating near the "Home," into the surfboat, and they now liberally spread its contents on the boat, the thwarts, the oars and between the thole pins. At about 9:15pm, they launched and headed where they thought the "Montauk" was. She was showing no lights that they could see and it was pitch dark and still blowing snow. They encountered a heavy sea running from the N.E. and the wind blowing a gale from the N.W. It was very cold, with the spray freezing to them as fast as it came aboard. In the Wreck Report, Kiah wrote, "After pulling one hour and not at any time being more than 150 feet to windward from where we started and losing an oar accidentally, she was headed for our starting place, where we arrived wet and with our hands so numb that we could with difficulty handle our oars. Captain Wm. Cleary (Jr.) of the small scow "Sunrise" which was lying at the dock, kindly invited us aboard to warm and dry ourselves. In about ½ hour after coming back, two surfmen were provided with lanterns, and patrolled the beach abreast of the wreck. They were relieved by two others in a short while, as the cold was so intense that it was impossible to stand it long at a time. In this way, we passed the night, keeping a sharp lookout for anything that might come ashore. There was one good oar picked up which we used afterwards in place of the one we lost." At some point in time over the course of the evening, Sayre arrived to join the crew.

The next morning, April 11th, the wreck was observed to be in good condition with no sign of her breaking up and no distress signal displayed. Captain Cleary fed the crew a warm breakfast, and, once again, they attempted to make their way out to the vessel. A heavy sea was still running and it was still intensely cold. The men were quickly covered with frozen spray and the boat took on so much icy slush that the oars kept unshipping. The surfboat was tossed about by one wave after another, broaching several times and taking on water. The men worked for 2 ½ hours and finally came within 1/8 of a mile of the "Montauk." They did not see anyone stirring aboard her, and were now caught in the heaviest of breakers. The waves took complete control of the surfboat repeatedly, causing them to lose two oars, which were retrieved. About 15 minutes later, the boat was violently seized by the surf, throwing William Sayre overboard into the frigid water. Three oars went over with him. Frantically, the men pulled on the two remaining oars trying to get the boat to Sayre, while he swam desperately toward it. The lake seemed determined to separate them, but the boat was soon moved close enough to a struggling Sayre to toss him the painter. He was pulled into the boat, nearly frozen. Kiah immediately headed the surfboat toward the beach, but

when about 100 feet from shore, the men were forced to get out and pull the boat through the boulder-strewn shallow water. There, they were kindly met by Mr. E. G. Johnson and William Cleary, Sr. who provided them with food and dry clothing. Captain Kiah and the crew had now been without sleep for about 26 hours, except for what little they were able to grab while sitting on the stools and the cold floor of the "Sunrise" the night before.

A messenger was sent to look for the missing oars. In the meantime, Henry Cleary, Frank Burbank and William Cleary, Sr. set out in a small boat for the "Montauk." Kiah wrote, "After about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour of hard work, they reached the wreck. Considering the boat they had, it was a gallant undertaking, and bravely performed." Soon after, the messenger returned the lost oars and Kiah and the crew readied themselves to head out. Kiah then noticed that the small boat had made it to the "Montauk" and was returning with a fourth man aboard. He decided not to launch, but to await their return to shore. At about 1:00pm, the yawl landed with Captain Gunderson of the "Montauk." He reported that the vessel was in good shape and was lying on the bottom, hard and solid, and the crew was contented to stay put. He had not displayed any distress signal as he felt safe and did not want to put anyone else at risk on their account, when there was no necessity for it. The Captain then stated he was going to Port Huron. Kiah told him that he and his crew would keep a sharp eye on the wreck, and if it should breeze up again, they would go out and retrieve the crew.

Captain Kiah then borrowed a team of oxen and two stone boats, and the surfboat was towed to a location where it could be loaded onto the boat wagon. The weary men then headed for home, feeling "pretty well used up." They arrived at approximately 5:00pm, and even though they were completely exhausted, they still had to do their watches and patrols.

Monday and Tuesday, April 12th and 13th, the crew visited the "Montauk," asking the crew to come ashore, which they declined to do. On Wednesday, Kiah and the men again went to the vessel and stayed all day, as the weather was threatening. Again, the schooner's crew refused. Kiah left 7 cork life jackets with them just in case. Thursday afternoon, the wind canted around to N.E. blowing hard. Kiah ordered his crew into the surfboat and in two hours, they were alongside the wreck. There they found the 2nd mate and two seamen from Norway ready and anxious to go ashore. Kiah urged the rest of the men to come ashore as well, but they again refused. He told them to signal if necessary and the surfboat would return to get them. Mr. E.G. Johnson offered his home to the life-savers and the men from the "Montauk," feeding and sheltering them for the next several days so that they could keep a closer eye on the wreck. Eventually, the seamen were returned to the "Montauk." Kiah and his crew went back to the station, but kept a close eye on the vessel in case they were needed. The "Montauk" remained stuck on the reef until April 29th, when she was lightened and towed down the lake, taking the seven cork jackets with her. Being ever



vigilant with government property, Kiah notified Superintendent Sawyer about the jackets.

### The Worst Day

Friday, April 23, 1880. "Crew all cold in death with the exception of Keeper. See report hereafter. Jerome G. Kiah, Keeper."

*Friday April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1880*  
*Midnight* Fresh E. wind, clear weather, moderate surf.  
*Sunrise* " " " " " " " " " " " "  
*Crew* all cold in death with the exception of  
*Keeper* see report hereafter.  
*Jerome G. Kiah*  
*Keeper*

Captain Kiah had no inkling of the nightmare that would occur that fateful day, when he was awakened shortly before sunrise by James Nantau, who reported that there was a scow on the reef with a distress signal. Kiah got up and climbed into the lookout tower to verify what Nantau had reported.

About three miles distant from the station, the master and owner of the scow "J. H. Magruder" had discovered that his vessel, heavily laden with lumber, was leaking and listing badly to starboard. He dropped both anchors, but at every heavy surge, she dragged the anchors, while the seas washed over her bow and she pounded on the bottom. On board with him was his wife, two young children and four crew. Fearing for their lives as well as his own, he displayed his flag at half-mast, ensign down, and hung a red lantern in the rigging. At about 7:30am, he saw an answering signal from the station.

Kiah wrote, "Keeper called all hands run the boat out, ready for launching, had all hands take a warm cup of coffee that had been hastily prepared, fastened cork jackets on each one of the crew, and, in about 15 minutes after Keeper made out the signal to be one of distress, we shoved off with all hands in their places in the boat." They crossed the reef "handsomely and found the sea heavier than expected, but still not so heavy as we had experienced on other occasions. After getting clear from the breakers of the reef, the boys were in excellent spirits, and we were all congratulating ourselves how nicely we got over." Their jubilation was short-lived, however, when a very large wave struck the stern of the surfboat, filling her completely with water. Unable to bail the water out quickly enough, the boat rolled over. The life-savers were able to right her, but she rolled again, and then several more times. For about ¾ of an hour, the men clung to the lifelines and fenders of the boat, at first able to keep their spirits high, but the icy water quickly stole the warmth from their bodies and dashed their hopes of

making it back to the shallow waters of the reef, where they had hoped to be able to right the boat. At the time the boat filled, they were about ½ mile from the reef and had left the station about one hour prior.

Kiah continued, “Surfman Pottinger gave out, from that time until the last one perished, I think it was about ½ hour. They all seemed to go in the same way, gradually going off in a stupor- something like being chloroformed- with one exception, they were all holding on the boat by the life lines or fenders when they gave up. Slowly their faces would drop forward until they touched the water and in a few moments after, their holds would relax, and the boat would slowly drift away from them. I encouraged the men all I could, reminded them that there were others, their wives and children, that they should think of, and to strive for their sakes to keep up, but the cold was too much for them, and one after another each gave out as did the first. Very little was said by any of the men; it was very hard for any of us to speak at all. The exception was Surfman Morison, he let go his hold or was washed away. When I noticed him, he was five or six feet from the boat, seemingly unconscious, his face was slowly dropping. I sung out to him, calling him by name, but he never showed any sign that he heard me, and in a moment or two, I saw that it was all over with him.”

“All six perished before we had drifted to the reef. I have a faint recollection of the boat grating or striking the reef as she passed over it, and from that time until I was taken to the station, I have but little recollection of what transpired. I was only conscious at brief intervals, I was not suffering, had no pain, had no sense of feeling in my hands, felt tired, sleepy and numb. At times, I could scarcely see. I remember screeching several times, not to attract attention, but thought it would help the circulation of the blood. I would pound my hands and feet on the boat whenever I was conscious. I have a faint recollection of when I got on the bottom of the boat, which must have been after she crossed the reef. I remember too, in the same dreamy way, of when I reached shore; remember of falling down twice and it seems as if I walked a long distance between the two falls, but I could not have done so, as I was found within thirty feet of the boat. I must have reached the shore about 9:30am so that I was about 3 and ½ hours in the water. I was helped to the station by Mr. Shaw (Andrew Shaw, Keeper of the PAB Lighthouse) and Mr. McFarland; was given restoratives, dry clothes were put on, my limbs were dressed and I was put to bed.”

In the USLSS Annual Report, Sam McFarland, a neighboring farmer, made the following statement: “I am a farmer, and was working on the farm about one-fourth of a mile from where the surfboat came ashore, when I heard gulls screeching, as I supposed, several times, but paid no attention to it. Presently my two dogs started to run for the cliff, and thinking that somebody might be calling from the shore, I went to the edge of the high cliff overlooking the lake, and saw a boat bottom up about 100 rods from shore, with one man on it. Not knowing that the station crew were out, started to notify them of what I saw. Upon getting to the station, about 9:00 o’clock, and learning that they were out, concluded it was

the surfboat I had seen, and went to the lighthouse after Mr. Shaw to accompany me to where the boat was drifting in. When we got there, the boat was ashore, and Captain Kiah was standing on the beach, about 30 feet from the boat, with one hand holding on to the root of a fallen tree, and with the other hand, steadying himself with a lath-stick and swaying his body to and fro, as if in the act of walking, but not stirring his feet. He did not seem to realize our presence. His face was so black and swollen, with a white froth issuing from his mouth and nose, that we did not at first know who he was. We took him between us, and with great difficulty walked him to the station. Several times on the way, he would murmur, "Poor boys, they are all gone." At one time he straightened out his legs, his head dropped back, and we thought he was dying, but he soon recovered again. Upon reaching the station he was given restoratives, his clothes were removed, and he was put to bed. His legs from above the knees were much swollen, bruised and black."

Andrew Shaw made the following entry in the lighthouse log: "Sam McFarland came and told me that there was some man drifting in on a boat and we both run fast as we could toward the Slide. I seen as soon as I caught sight of it that it was the surfboat. It was bottom up a few rods from the shore. Captain Kiah was standing on the shore, almost finished. We helped him to the life station, and then returned as fast as possible to where the boat came ashore. We naturally thought the men would come ashore in the vicinity of the boat. They did not. I was watching down there. My boys, wife and daughter were on the lookout and sent word to me that the bodies were coming ashore in the vicinity of the station, and by the time I got back, some of them had got to shore, and we carried two of them in and tried to restore them, but it was no use."

Kiah's entry in the station log continued, "At 12:00 noon my wife called me to say that the 'bodies were coming ashore' and someone said there appeared to be life in them. I immediately got up and went into boat room where the bodies of Surfmen Deegan and Nantau were. Mr. A. Shaw and Mr. Pethers tried to revive Surfman Deegan, while I worked on Surfman Nantau. We worked over an hour, but they showed no sign of reviving. I then sent telegrams to Superintendent Joseph Sawyer and to the families or friends of surfmen. About 2:00pm, the last body came ashore. By sympathizing friends the bodies were laid out in the boat room. I ordered coffins for them. The names of the heroic dead are as follows: Wm. I. Sayre, Dennis Deegan, Walter Petherbridge, James Pottinger, James Nantau, Robert Morison. Surfmen Deegan and Pottinger's bodies were claimed by relatives."

Shaw wrote, "We got all of the six bodies, and with the help of some men who had assembled, stripped them of the wet clothes and changed them for dry ones, and laid them out on thin cots."

Ironically, after a long wait, the Captain of the Magruder and her crew dumped her load of lumber overboard and got her safely off the reef on their own.

Saturday, April 24, 1880, "All the bodies were taken from the station. Surfman Sayre and Morison's by relatives, and Surfmen Nantau and Petherbridge were shipped to their relatives in care of H. A. Walker to Detroit. Called the doctor to examine my legs, they had chilled so that the circulation was stopped and they were very much discolored."

Sunday, April 25, 1880, "Superintendent Joseph Sawyer arrived, he attended the funerals of Surfmen Deegan and Pottinger. Doctor called and dressed by legs." Kiah was unable to attend the funerals due to the condition of his legs and feet and his anguished state of mind.



**Grave of Surfman Dennis Deegan, lost on April 23, 1880 in Lake Huron. He is buried in the New River Cemetery in Huron County, Michigan. His grave was marked with a U.S. Life-Saving Service bronze memorial marker in June, 2008.**

Monday, April 26, 1880, "Superintendent took my statement of disaster, he took statements of others also. Doctor called and dressed my legs."



**Grave of Surfman James Pottinger, lost on April 23, 1880 in Lake Huron. He is buried in the New River Cemetery in Huron County, Michigan. His grave was marked with a U.S. Life-Saving Service bronze memorial marker in June, 2008.**



**Grave of Surfman Robert Morrison (Morison) lost on April 23, 1880, in Lake Huron, while attempting to aid those in peril. His grave was marked with a U.S. Life-Saving Service bronze memorial marker in June, 2008.**

Tuesday, April 27, "Superintendent took his leave, doctor called and dressed my legs and told me he would not come again as I would be all right now without him."

Wednesday, April 28, "Visited Mrs. Pottinger and Mrs. Deegan. No crew excepting Keeper and one extra man.

With team and extra help, surfboat was got back to station. Her top plank around the quarters are pretty badly chewed up from pounding on the rocky bottom."

Thursday, April 29, "Shipped as surfmen: Henry Price and J. C. Cottrell, the extra man, S. McCann, promising to stay on until Keeper obtains enough surfmen to man surfboat."

The Point Aux Barques Life-Saving Station remained out of commission for the time it took to replace the lost surfmen. The communities surrounding the station were also stunned by the loss. William Sayre, from Port Austin, was widowed at the time of his death and left behind five daughters. Robert Morison, from Caseville, was also widowed and left behind three children. James Pottinger, of Huron City, left behind his wife, Annie and their four children, the youngest being 2 months old. Dennis Deegan, from Grindstone City, left behind his wife, Elizabeth and their four children, the youngest also only 2 months old. James Nantau and Walter Petherbridge were single. Sayre and Morison had served three seasons at the PAB Station, Pottinger and Deegan had served two seasons, and Nantau and Petherbridge were new surfman. The widows and families of the lost crew received \$30.67 from the USLSS, the pay due to each surfman for the period of April 1st through April 23. Superintendent Sawyer paid for the funerals out of his own pocket. Captain Kiah continued to have difficulties, both physically and mentally. His legs were slow to heal and on May 23, the doctor was summoned and lanced Kiah's right leg, which had become infected. He remained Keeper, although it became increasingly difficult for him to do so.

Wednesday, June 30th, 1880, " Keeper absent, procuring signatures to vouchers per instructions from Superintendent. My resignation as Keeper being accepted. Mr. H. Gill, Jr. inventoried the Public Property and assumes charge tomorrow morning."

Captain Kiah was not blamed in any way for the tragedy that befell him and his crew. Andrew Shaw, in his report in the Annual Report, stated, "Certainly it was the duty of the crew to answer to the signal of distress, and certainly they responded most promptly. There was no discord here; there was more than a friendly feeling existing between the keeper and crew. I have conversed with several who have served with Keeper Kiah, and all speak in the highest praise of him as a man, and of his superior skill in handling a surfboat. He has the sympathy of the entire community, including the friends and relatives of his dead crew, in his present trouble." The report continued "The closing incident in the

Point Aux Barques tragedy was the resignation of the stanch keeper, too shattered in mind and body, for the time, at least, to retain his position. Thus the heroic station was by a day's experience left at once vacant of its crew, who, this very year, had saved nearly a hundred lives."

Tragedy shattered Kiah's world again in the fall of 1880, with the drowning death of Superintendent Joseph Sawyer near Rogers City. Kiah and Sawyer grew up together in the small town of Ogdensburg, New York and were cousins and close friends. Kiah was offered Sawyer's job as District Superintendent, which he accepted. The Superintendent's headquarters were moved from Detroit to the Kiah home in Sand Beach, Michigan, which was later renamed Harbor Beach. He remained with the USLSS in that position for 35 years, retiring when the LSS merged with the Revenue Cutter Service in 1915, forming the Coast Guard, which finally allowed him to collect a pension.



**Group photo of U.S. Life-Saving Service General Superintendent Sumner Increase Kimball, seated center, and 10 of the 13 District Superintendents. Kiah, District Superintendent of the 10<sup>th</sup> District, covering lakes Huron and Superior, is to the left of Kimball. Photo was taken in 1906 or '07. Photo courtesy of Richard Ryder, U.S. Life-Saving Service Heritage Association.**

In November of 1880, Captain Jerome G. Kiah was awarded the Gold Life-Saving Medal of the First Class by the Secretary of the Treasury. The medal was engraved "To Jerome G. Kiah, Wreck of the Life-Saving Crew of Point Aux Barques, Lake Huron, April 23, 1880. In testimony of heroic deeds in saving life from the perils of the sea."

The Annual report stated, "The melancholy loss of the brave life-saving crew at Point Aux Barques, Lake Huron left but one survivor, Captain Jerome G. Kiah, and to this true man, in commemoration of the sturdy bravery with which he entered upon the perilous endeavor to aid the shipwrecked upon that occasion, and the intrepidity, the fortitude, and the tenderness which marked his conduct in the calamity which befell him and his crew, the gold medal of the service was awarded."

Kiah and his wife Annie were only able to enjoy his retirement for a short time. In December of 1916, the Kiah's departed Harbor Beach for a winter vacation in Los Angeles. On February 25 of 1917, Jerome suffered a heart attack and passed away, just a few months shy of his 74th birthday. He was buried in Los Angeles under the auspices of the Masonic Fraternity, of which he was a member. A special memorial service was held at the M.E. Church in Harbor Beach and was attended by Kiah's Lodge Brothers and even Governor Sleeper, who was also a Mason.

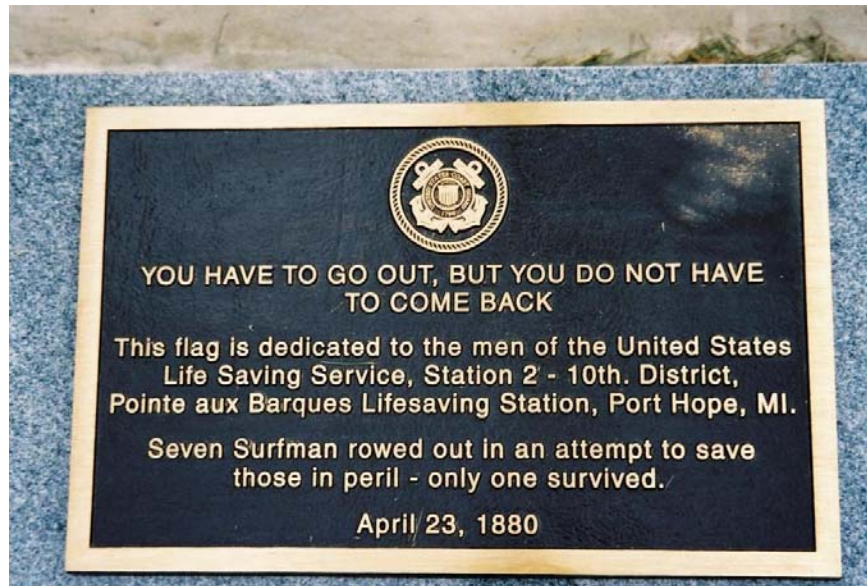
Captain Kiah served as a Keeper for a short time, compared to many other keepers who served for many years. His career continued for 3-½ decades as District Superintendent, but it was apparent in his log entries that he was dedicated to his men as well as to the Life-Saving Service.

**USLSS 10<sup>th</sup> District Superintendent Captain Jerome G. Kiah, who served in that capacity from 1880 to 1915, retiring when the USLSS was merged with the US Revenue Cutter Service to form the Coast Guard. Kiah passed away in Los Angeles on February 25, 1917, while vacationing with his wife, Annie, and was buried there. He was just a few months shy of his 74<sup>th</sup> birthday. Photo courtesy of Frederick Stonehouse.**



Kiah mentioned, on more than one occasion, the pride he felt for his crew and did not hesitate to speak of their achievements to his superiors. His log, preserved here in Chicago at the National Archives, gave me a chance to experience what life at a life-saving station was like for him and his courageous crew, and for that, I am grateful.





**In May, 2006, a plaque was dedicated at the Pointe Aux Barques Lighthouse, located in Port Hope, Michigan, honoring the PAB surfmen who perished in 1880 in the line of duty. The Point Aux Barques station was originally located just south of the lighthouse. The Pointe Aux Barques Lighthouse Society created the plaque to memorialize the heroic efforts of the lost crew. Photo: Jett.**

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The following are pages from Captain Kiah's logbook, his hand written account of the disaster that befell he and his crew from the Point Aux Barques Life-Saving Station on April 23, 1880. Courtesy of NARA, Chicago, IL.

Friday April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1880

Midnight Fresh E. wind, clear weather, moderate surf.

sunrise " " " " " "  
Crew, all cold to death with the exception of

Kupfer. see report hereafter.

Jerome S. Kiah

Kupfer.

Saturday April 24<sup>th</sup> 1880.

No crew excepting Kupfer & two extra men.

Jerome S. Kiah Kupfer.

Sunday April 25<sup>th</sup> 1880.

No crew excepting Kupfer & two extra men.

Jerome S. Kiah

Kupfer.

Monday April 26<sup>th</sup> 1880.

No crew excepting Kupfer & two extra men.

Jerome S. Kiah Kupfer.

Statement of disaster on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1880.

A little before sunrise Surfman Nantau called Kuper to see  
a scow that was <sup>BEING</sup> lying at anchor about E by S and about  
<sup>THREE</sup> miles distant from station, showing a signal of distress.  
(<sup>ENSIGN</sup> AT half mast.) Wind <sup>WIND</sup> East. Moderately fresh. Sea moderately  
heavy, weather clear and cold. After making out the signal of  
of distress, Kuper called all hands run out boat, ready for  
launching, had all hands take a warm cup of coffee that  
had been hastily prepared, ~~put them~~ fastened cork jackets on each  
one of crew, and, <sup>AS</sup> <sup>ABOUT</sup> 15 minutes after Kuper made out the  
signal to be one of distress, we shoved off with all hands in three  
junks in the boat, after getting outside the reef we found the sea  
heavier with an occasional very heavy one, we dodged and weathered  
them all right, until within about 1/2 mile from scow and nearly one mile  
distant from nearest point of land. Suddenly, I noticed a very big  
sea coming for us, there was only time to straighten our faces so that she  
might take it head on, but it proved to much for her, it came aboard  
and completely filled <sup>HER</sup>. As the sea was leaving I gave the order to bail,  
(we had two bailing dishes aboard) but the <sup>MAN</sup> <sup>SAW</sup> her gunwales were  
far below water <sup>AS SOON AS THE SEA HAD LEFT US</sup> as the sea had <sup>LEFT</sup> us, in a few minutes after  
she broached to ~~and~~ rolled over with us, we righted her and tried  
<sup>AND ROLLED OVER WITH US. WE RIGHTED HER AND TRIED</sup>

Statement of Inator on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. continued,

to work one of the ways to get her stem to the sea, but it was impossible her gunwales being so far below water, and in a few moments she rolled over again, we righted her again but with the same result, I am not positive whether we righted her again or not, but if we did not I think the sea rolled her over several times, but of this I am not sure.

All seemed to <sup>HAVE</sup> <sup>HOPE</sup> at first that we could hang on until we got to the reef, where we thought we might touch bottom and right her up, and <sup>GET</sup> the water out, at the time she filled, we were distant from reef about 1/2 mile, in about 3/4 of hour after filling surfman Pittinger gave out, from that time until the last one perished it I think it was about 1/2 hour, they all seemed to go in the same way, gradually going off in a stupor - something like being chloroformed. - with one exception they were all holding on the boat by the life lines or fenders when they gave up, slowly their faces would drop forward until they touched the water, and in a few moments after their holds would relax, and and the boat would slowly drift away from them, The exception was surfman Morrison, he let go his hold or was washed away, when I noticed him, he was five or six feet from the boat - seemingly unconscious, his face was slowly dropping, I <sup>SUNG</sup> out to him, calling him by name, but he never showed any sign that he heard me, and in a moment or two I saw it was all over with him.

~~Up to this time~~ Surfman Dugan was the last one to give up.

Up to this time my memory serves me very good, this must have been about 7 a.m. ~~the wind was very cold, and the~~ <sup>water</sup> ~~felt colder still.~~

from this time until about 12 noon I can remember only a very little that transpired. I was found on the beach by Mr. S. M. Farland and Mr. A. Shaw about 9-30 a.m. At 12 o'clock noon my wife called me (they had <sup>helped</sup> brought me home and put me to bed) to say that the bodies were coming ashore; and some one said there appeared to be life in them, I immediately got up and went into boat room where the bodies of surfman Dugan and Nantau were, Mr. A. Shaw and Mr. Pethers

Statement of Disaster on April 23<sup>rd</sup>

tried to revive Surfman Segan, while I worked on Surfman Nantam we worked over an hour, but they showed no sign of reviving. From the time I saw Surfman Segan give up until his body came ashore, it could not have been much less than four hours.

I then sent telegrams to Superintendent Joseph Sanyer, and to the families or friends of Surfmen. about 2 P.M. the last body came ashore. the bodies all drifted in shore around station, while 2 was found about one mile south of station.

By sympathizing friends the bodies were laid out in the boat room.

I ordered coffins for them.

The names of the Heroes dead are as follows

W<sup>m</sup> II Sanyer  
Louis Segan  
Walter Petherbridge  
James Pottinger  
James Nantam  
Robert Morrison.

Surfman Segan and Pottingers bodies were claimed by relatives. Saturday April 24<sup>th</sup> all the bodies were taken from the station. Surfman Sanyer and Morrison by relatives, and Surfman Nantam and Petherbridge were shipped to their relatives in care of H. A. Walker to Detroit. Called the doctor to examine my legs, they had chilled so that the circulation was stopped, and they were very much discolored.

Sunday April 25<sup>th</sup> ~~1880~~. Superintendent Joseph Sanyer arrived, he attended the funerals of Surfman Segan and Pottinger. Doctor called and dressed my legs.

Monday April 26<sup>th</sup> Superintendent took my statement of disaster, he took statements of others also