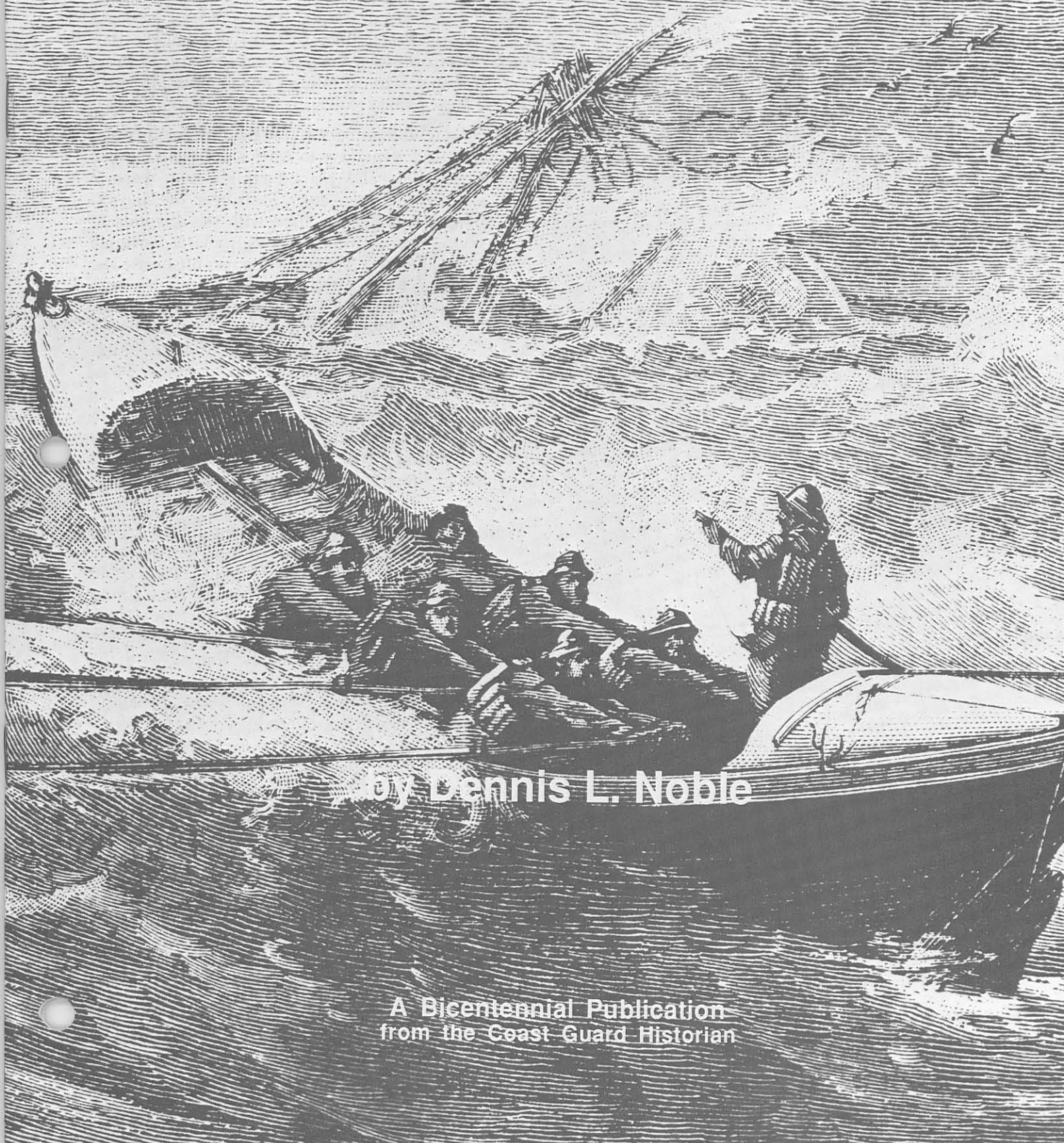


# A Legacy

The United States Life-Saving Service



by Dennis L. Noble

A Bicentennial Publication  
from the Coast Guard Historian

# A Legacy:

**T**he United States Coast Guard is noted for many accomplishments, but foremost in the public's mind is the Service's efforts in helping those "in peril upon the seas." Indeed, all of the various federal agencies that were brought together to form the modern day United States Coast Guard dealt in some manner with assisting those that were in distress or in helping the prevention of loss of life at sea.

The U.S. Lighthouse Service, for example, maintained lighthouses and sea markers to warn ships from danger. Lighthouse keepers also helped people who were in danger close to their stations. Each year the annual reports of the Service were filled with the accounts of keepers saving lives. The cutters of the U. S. Revenue Cutter Service assisted mariners in distress offshore. The Service began winter cruising, in 1831, to provide rescue craft when sailing ships were most likely to run afoul of bad weather. The Steamboat Inspection Service was established in 1838 in an effort to prevent disasters before they occurred. Despite the many accomplishments of these agencies, the organization that contributed the most to the U.S. Coast Guard's image as a lifesaver was the U.S. Life-Saving Service. It is important that the story of this Service be detailed, for many of the U.S. Coast Guard's procedures in search and rescue can be traced to this small service.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries large sections of the United States' eastern seaboard were sparsely populated. The crew of any ship running aground could expect very little, if any, help. As maritime trade increased, so did the demand for assistance for those wrecked near the shore. The chances of ships running aground is illustrated by examining the approaches to the nineteenth century port of New York, at the time the fastest growing city on the eastern seaboard. A sailing ship had to make a long funnel-like approach to the busy port, with the coast of New Jersey on the one side and the coast of Long Island, New York, on the other. During a strong nor'easter, a sailing craft could be driven upon New Jersey's lee shore. Both coasts contained sandbars located between 300 to 800 yards offshore. In a storm, any ship stranded on the sandbars usually went to pieces within a few hours. Few people could survive a 300 yard swim in 40 degree storm-tossed surf. Even if a few sailors managed somehow to reach the beach in winter, they stood a good chance of perishing from exposure on the largely uninhabited shore. On January 2, 1837 for example, the American bark *Mexico* wrecked on the New Jersey coast and all 112 emigrant passengers on board were lost.

The Historian's Office thanks CDR K. C. Hollemon and CDR G. R. Sorensen of G-OSR for their help with this project.

# The United States Life-Saving Service



This shingled garage-like structure built in 1849 is the preserved remains of the Spermaceti Cove Life-Saving Station, one of the first life-saving stations built in the United States with federal funds. This photograph was taken in 1926 at Sandy Hook, New Jersey.

The concept of assistance to shipwrecked mariners from shore based stations began with volunteer lifesaving services, spearheaded by the Massachusetts Humane Society. It was recognized that only small boats stood a chance in assisting those close to the beach. A sailing ship trying to help near to the shore stood a good chance of also running aground, especially if there were heavy on-shore winds. The Massachusetts Humane Society founded the first lifeboat station at Cohasset, Massachusetts. The stations were small shed-like structures, holding rescue equipment that was to be used by volunteers in case of a wreck. The stations, however, were only near the approaches to busy ports and, thus, large gaps of coastline remained without lifesaving equipment.

In 1848 the federal government entered the shore based lifesaving business. William A. Newell, a Congress-man from New Jersey, made a "vigorous and victorious" appeal to Congress for \$10,000 to provide

"surf boats, rockets, carronades and other necessary apparatus for the better preservation of life and property from ship-wrecks on the coasts of New Jersey ...." The Massachusetts Humane Society also requested, and received, funds for stations on the coastline. The stations were to be administered by the U.S. Revenue Marine (later called the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service), within the Treasury Department. Actually, once the stations were built, they were run like a volunteer fire department, but without anyone in charge, nor any inspection system to insure that men and equipment were up to standards.

The lifesaving system managed to continue under this type of organization for the next six years. Then a strong storm swept the East Coast in 1854. Many sailors died because there were not enough lifesaving stations and equipment had not been properly cared for. One town, in fact, used its lifeboat "alternately as a trough for mixing mortar and a tub for scalding hogs."

Again, Congress appropriated funds for more sta-



This beach cart is ready to travel. The Lyle gun can clearly be seen on top of the cart. Note the speaking trumpet in the right hand of the keeper at the extreme right. Pulling the cart through sand dunes could be very tedious.

tions. This time, however, some of the money was used to employ a full-time keeper at each station. Also included was money to hire two Superintendents to supervise the stations along the New Jersey and Long Island coasts. The problems, however, continued. As one old salt recalled, the 'only person on duty was a keeper who received \$200 a year, and if he discovered a vessel in distress he had to collect a volunteer crew.

Along the wilds of Barnegat Beach, New Jersey a keeper would have to tramp miles before he could get a crew together, and perhaps by the time they reached the station, the vessel would be broken up and all hands lost.

The American Civil War caused the neglect of the government's shore based lifesaving network. This neglect continued until 1870, when another vicious storm ripped into the East Coast and many lives were lost. Newspaper editors began to call for reform to "check the terrible fatalities off our dangerous coasts" and to revamp the lifesaving system so that sailors could depend

upon help "in the future." The year 1871 marked a turning point in the history of shore based federal lifesaving efforts.

Sumner Increase Kimball, a young lawyer from Maine, was appointed, in 1871, the chief of the Treasury Department's Revenue Marine Division.

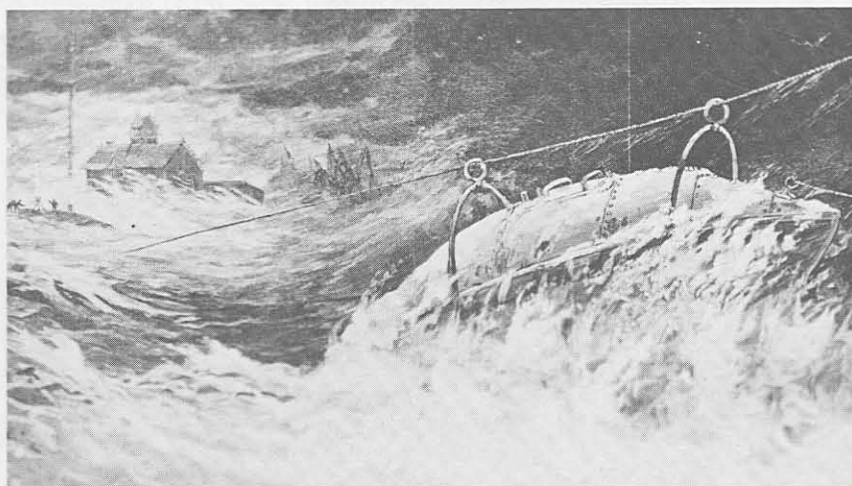
One of his first acts was to send Captain John Faunce, of the U.S. Revenue Marine, on an inspection of the lifesaving network. Faunce noted that rescue "apparatus was rusty for want of care and some of it ruined," some keepers were too old, few were competent, and politics had more influence in the selection of keepers than qualifications for handling boats. In short, the report painted a dismal picture.

Kimball, using his own political know-how and re-enforced with Faunce's report, proceeded to completely remake the lifesaving network.

He succeeded in gaining an appropriation of \$200,000

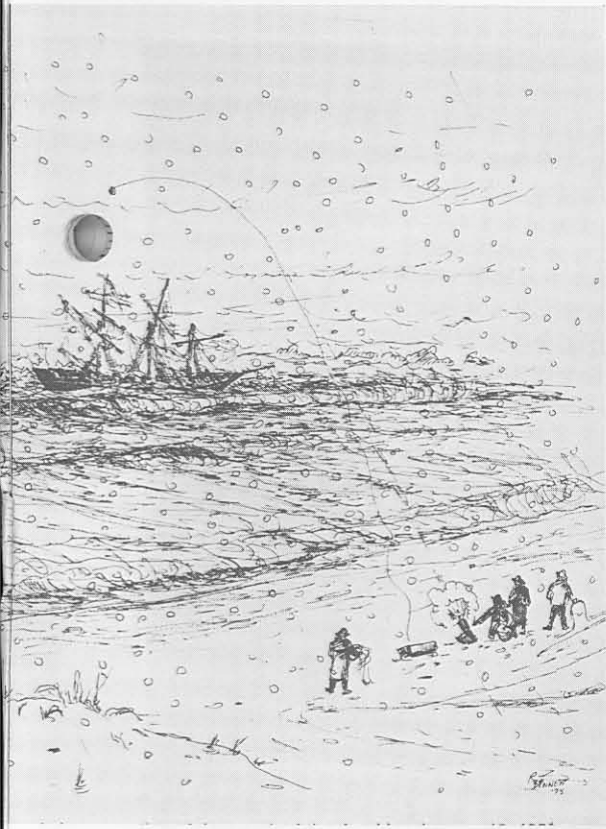


By the end of the 19th Century, horses were used to aid in pulling the apparatus to the scene of a disaster. Pictured above is the Orleans, Massachusetts, Life-Saving Station crew at the turn of the century.



Clockwise from top left: The Life-Saving Service developed methods and equipment in order to aid in the rescuing of those in distress. Many rescues took place close into shore from the beach, particularly during the early years of the service. In order to get all the specialized equipment to the scene of the disaster, a beach cart was used. ● The first rescue by the Life Saving Service took place on 12 January 1850 when 201 of 202 people were rescued from the Ayrshire off the New Jersey coast. The lost individual had not followed instructions. ● Another tool of the life-saving service was the surfboat. This tool was used when the surf was not running too high. There were many dangers for the surfboat. First, you had to fight your way out through the pounding breakers — rarely did a ship wreck in good weather. Next you had to rescue those in distress without becoming entailed in their wreckage, which usually included downed masts, spars, and lines. Then you had to pass back through the surf crowded with survivors, some of whom might be injured. If the number to be rescued was large, you would have to repeat the process. ● Although the name was changed from the U.S. Life-Saving Service to the U.S. Coast Guard, the tradition of rescuing persons in danger at sea remains the same. ● The heart and soul of the Life-Saving Service was its men. Most were local products with years of experience on the local waters before serving in the Life-Saving Service. ● This is an artist's concept of a life car in operation. Although some accounts state that up to eleven people could be rescued at one time, it is difficult to imagine how all were accommodated.

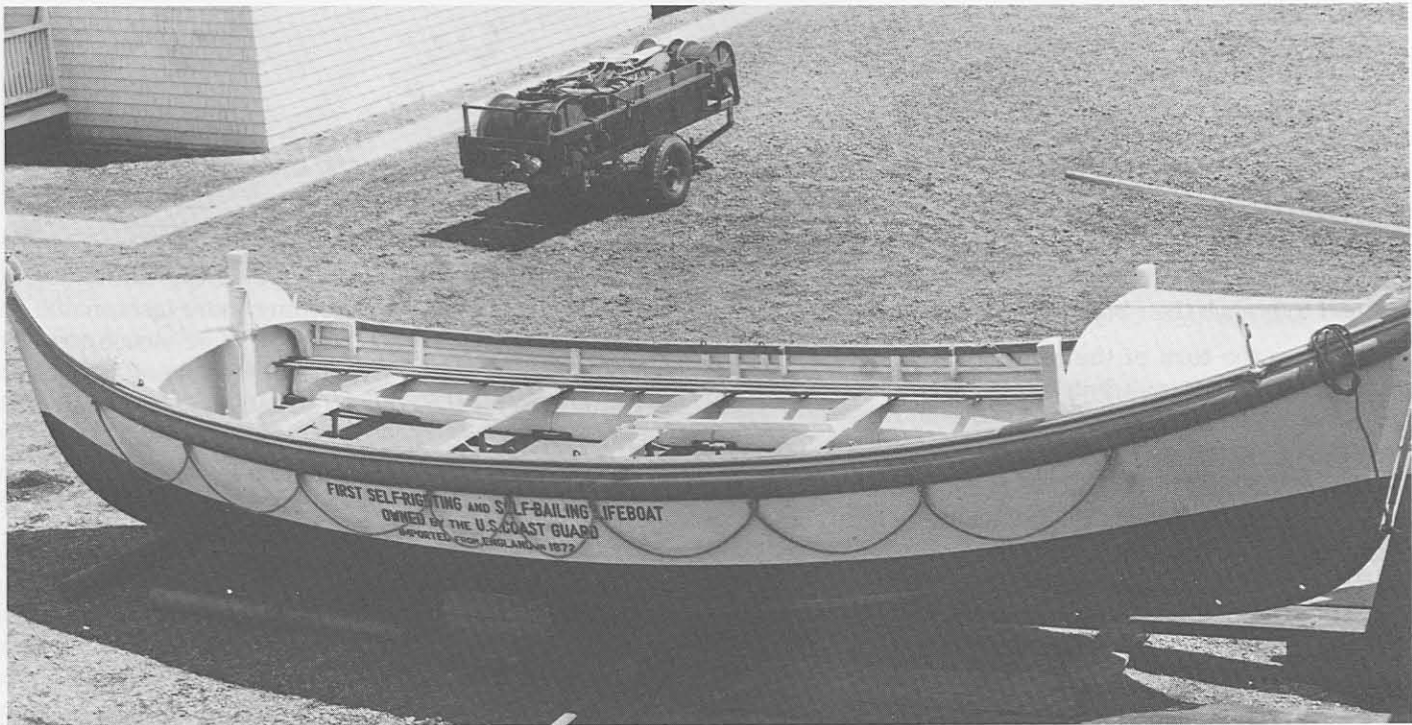
# USLSS in art





Sumner I. Kimball held the position of General Superintendent of the U.S. Life-Saving Service from 1871 through 1914. He was in large measure responsible for the outstanding reputation that the service held.





and Congress authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to employ crews of surfmen wherever they were needed and for as long as they were needed. Kimball instituted six-man boat crews at all stations, built new stations, drew up regulations with standards of performance for crew members, set station routines, set physical standards, and, in short, set the organization on the road to professionalization.

The number of stations increased. In 1874, the stations were expanded to include the coast of Maine and ten locations south of Cape Henry, Virginia, including the Outer Banks of North Carolina. The next year, the network expanded to include the Delaware-Maryland-Virginia peninsula, the Great Lakes, and the coast of Florida. Eventually, the Gulf and West Coasts would be included, as well as one station at Nome, Alaska.

In 1878 the growing network of lifesaving stations was finally organized as a separate agency of the Treasury Department and named the U.S. Life-Saving Service. Sumner I. Kimball was chosen as the General Superintendent of the Service. Kimball held tight reign over the Service and, in fact, remained the only General Superintendent of the organization. The law which created the U.S. Coast Guard in 1915, also provided for the retirement of Kimball. The Service's reputation for honest, efficient, and non-partisan administration, plus performance of duty, can be largely attributed to the efforts of this one man.

The stations of the Service fell into three broad categories: lifesaving, lifeboat, and houses of refuge. Lifesaving stations were manned by full-time crews during the period when wrecks were most likely to occur. On the East coast this was usually from November to April, and was called the "active season." By the turn of the century, the active season was year-round. Most stations

This is the first self-righting, self-bailing lifeboat owned by the Life-Saving Service. It was purchased from the Royal Lifeboat Society of England in 1872. The boat was evaluated in this country and its design served as the basis for the lineage of U.S. self-righting, self-bailing lifeboats. This 1872 boat has been preserved and is on display at The Mariners Museum in Newport News, Virginia.

were in isolated areas and crewmen had to be able to perform open beach launchings. That is, they were required to launch their boats from the beach into the surf.

Before the turn of the century, there were very few recreational boaters and most assistance cases came from ships engaged in commerce.

Lifeboat stations were located at or near port cities. Here, deep water, combined with piers and other waterfront structures, allowed the launching of heavy lifeboats directly into the water by marine railways on inclined ramps. In general, lifeboat stations were located on the Great Lakes, but some lifesaving stations were situated in the more isolated areas of the lakes. The active season on the Great Lakes stretched from April to December.

Houses of refuge made up the third, and last, class of Life Saving Service units. These stations were located on the coasts of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. A paid keeper and a small boat were assigned to each house, but the organization did not include active manning and rescue attempts. It was felt that along this stretch of coastline, shipwrecked sailors would not die of exposure to the cold in the winter as in the north. Therefore, only shelters would be needed.

The first stations consisted of one building measuring

42 by 18 feet. As the Service grew, so did the size of the stations. The early buildings were strictly utilitarian, but by the 1880s, they were becoming more fashionable and usually were made up of two or three structures. The main building contained the offices, boat house, and berthing area for the crew. It usually had a lookout tower on the roof.

Some were built to resemble a Swiss chalet and one was even designed with a clock tower. By the 1890s, the architect A. B. Bibb designed stations that looked much like beach resort homes with lookout towers.

The Life Saving Service operated under a dual chain of command. The Life-Saving District Superintendents reported directly to Kimball and were responsible for most of the administrative matters of the stations, including such matters as pay and supply. The other channel of command was the Inspector of Life Saving Stations, a Captain in the U.S. Revenue Marine Service. The inspector assigned assistant inspectors, usually lieutenants of the U.S. Revenue Marine Service, to each district and they were responsible for the operational matters concerning the Service.

The assistant inspectors held drills, investigations, and so forth. The Inspector of the Life-Saving Service also



If the wreck was located some distance from the life-saving station, the boat had to be pulled to the site. Initially manpower

reported to Kimball, thus creating a system of checks and balances.

The U.S. Life Saving Service had two means of rescuing people on board ships stranded near shore: by boat and by a strong line stretched from the beach to the wrecked vessel. The Service's boats were either a 700 to 1,000 pound, self-bailing, self-righting surfboat pulled by six surfmen with twelve to eighteen foot oars, or a two to four ton lifeboat. The surfboat could be pulled on a cart by crewmen, or horses, to a site near a wreck and then launched into the surf. The lifeboat, following a design originated in England, could be fitted with sails for work further offshore and was used in very heavy weather. Some crews, at first, viewed the lifeboat with skepticism because of its great weight and bulk. The skepticism soon changed and crews began to regard it as "something almost supernatural," for it enabled them to provide assistance "when the most powerful tugs and steam-craft refused to go out of the harbor. ..."

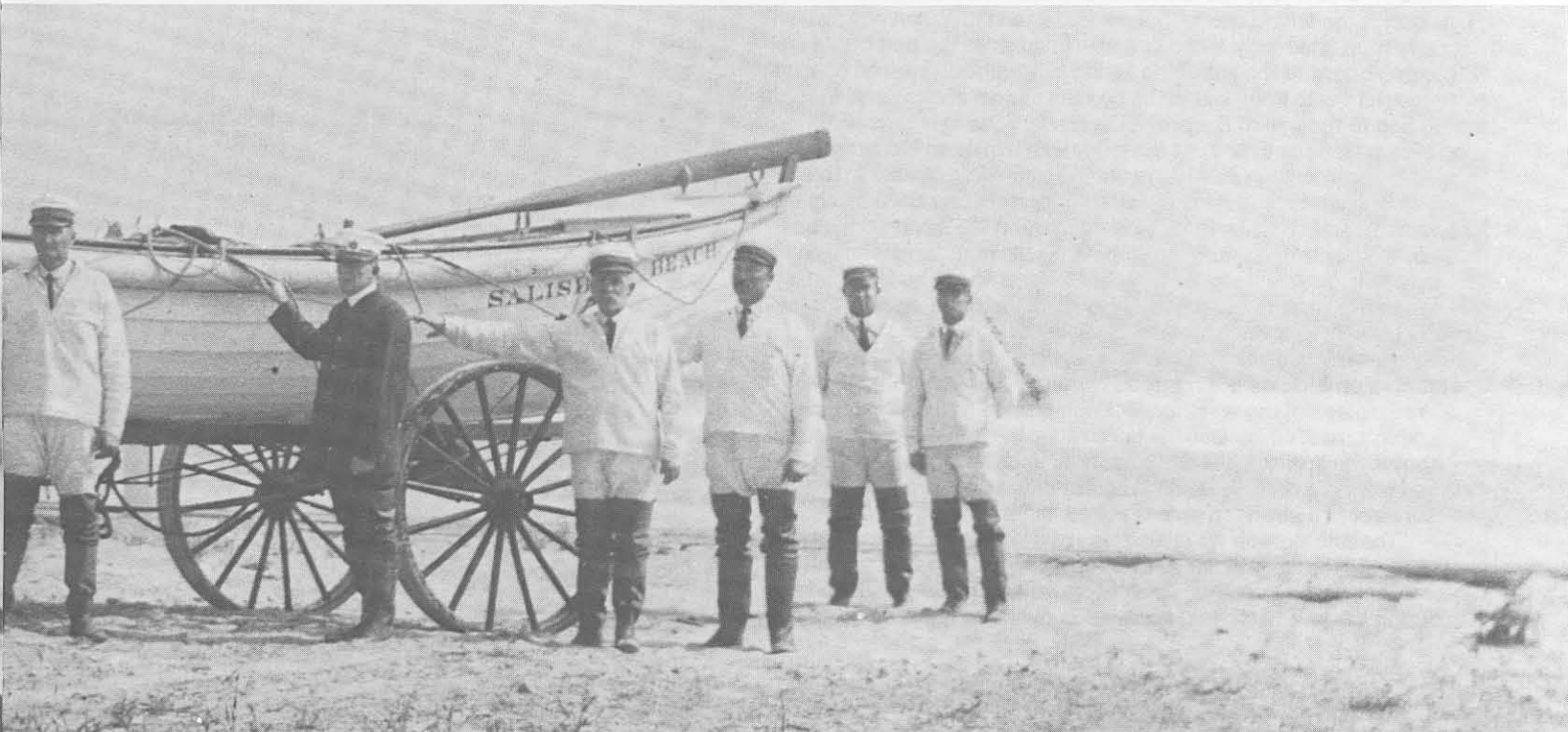
When a ship wrecked close to shore and the seas were too rough for boats, then the Service could use another method to reach the stranded mariners by stringing a strong hawser (line) from the shore to the ship. To propel the line to the ship, a cannon-like gun, called the Lyle

gun, was used. This shot a projectile up to 600 yards. The projectile carried a small messenger line by which the shipwrecked sailors were able to pull out the heavier hawser.

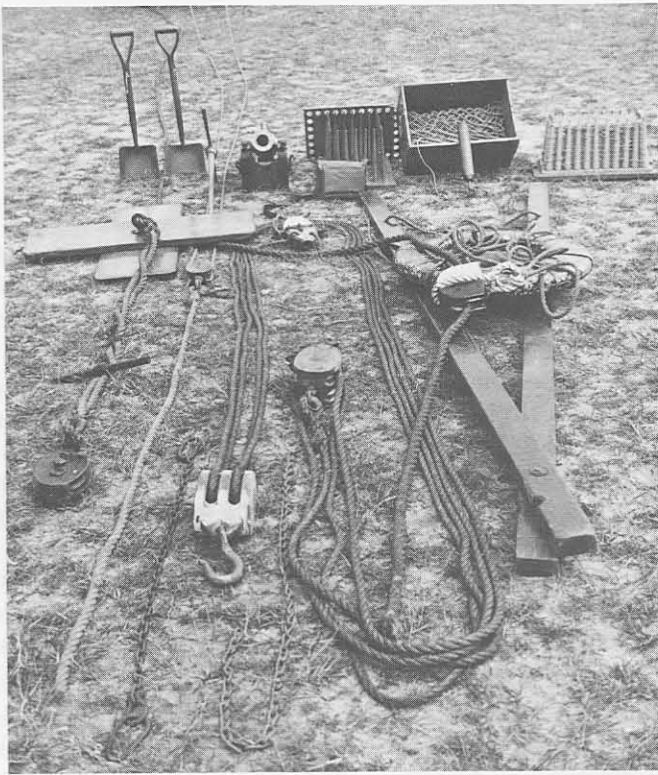
Once the line was secure, a life car could be pulled back and forth between the wreck and the safety of the shore. The life car looked like a tiny, primitive submarine. The life car could be hauled over, through, or even under the seas. After the hatch in the top of the car was sealed, there was enough air within the device to accommodate eleven people for three minutes. It is hard to envision eleven people crowding into the car's small compartment but, as one surfman put it, people "in that extremity are not apt to stand on the order of their going."

Typically, a life car carried four to six people. Life cars were heavy and difficult to handle. Also, as those in distress evolved from crowded immigrant packets with many on board to small commercial schooners with less than a dozen on board, the life car was widely replaced by the breeches buoy.

A breeches buoy resembles a life preserver ring with canvas pants attached. It could be pulled out to the ship by pulleys, enabling the endangered sailor to step into the life ring and pants and then be pulled to safety much

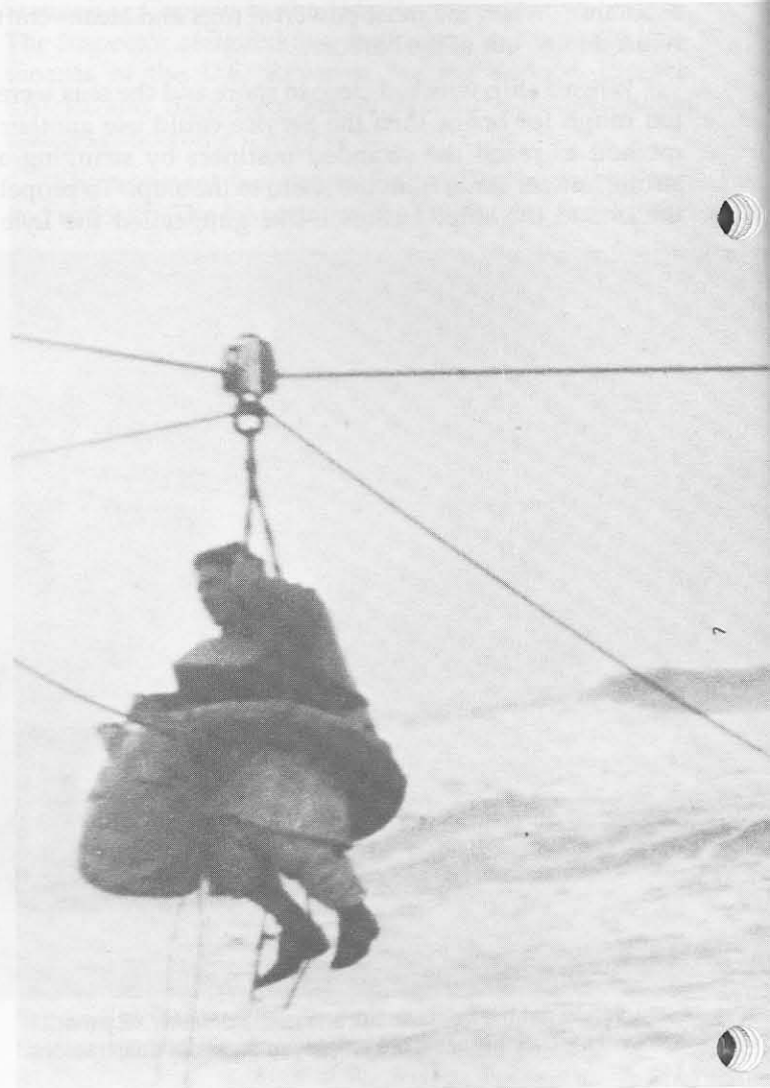


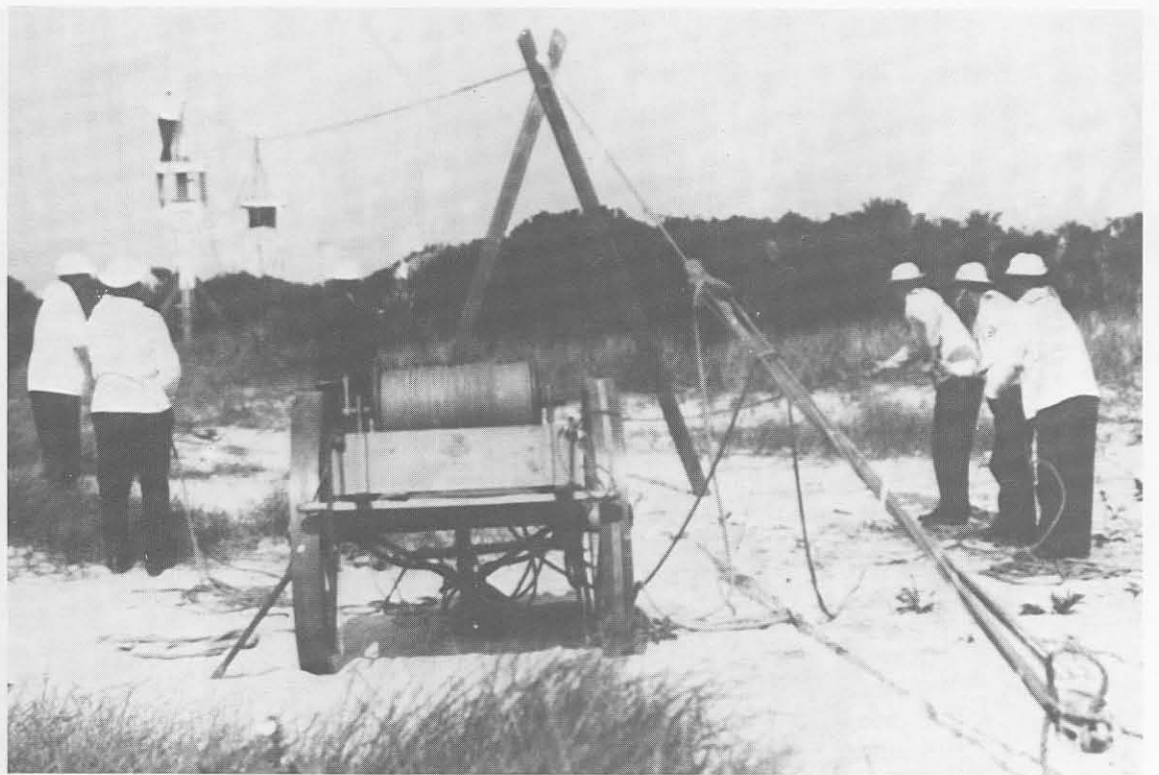
was used to get the boats to the site of the disaster. By the late 19th century horses were employed and later still, tractors.



# The Lyle gun

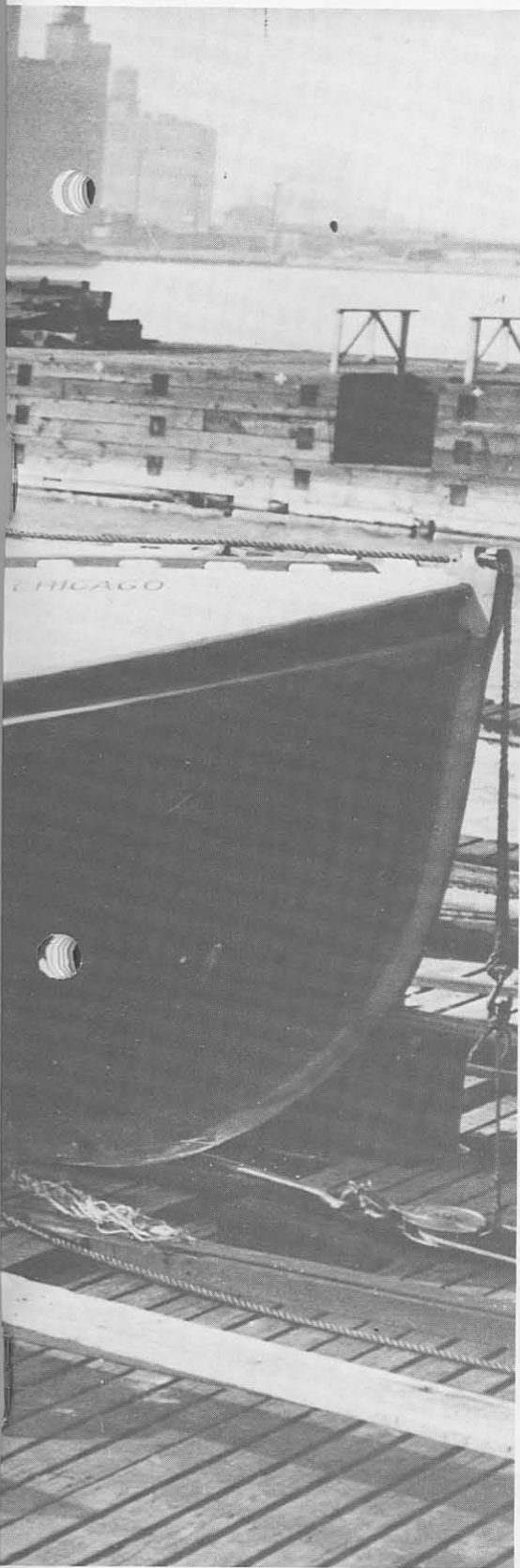
Clockwise from top left: The lifesaving equipment pictured above was developed during a century of use, beginning in the late 1840s. The Lyle gun used to throw the shot to the distressed vessel is to the left of the shovels. To the right of the Lyle gun is the faking box with a readied line in it. When needed for a rescue, the ready faked line was lifted from the peg board (note peg board to the left of the faking box without line and one to the right with line), laid in the box (as shown above), and the end tied to the eye of the projectile fired by the Lyle gun. Faking allowed the line to pay out smoothly with minimum friction and no snarling while being shot to a ship in distress. In the foreground are blocks, pulleys, supporting boards, a heavy hawser, and a breeches buoy. ● Much of the life-saving crew's time was dedicated to drilling. One drill was practicing with the Lyle gun. Above a station member fakes a line. The Lyle gun sits to the right, ready for use. Note the Victorian style of the boathouse. Also, there is a young lady in Sunday dress sitting to the extreme left. Drills, which were regularly scheduled events, attracted on-lookers during good weather. But they took place regardless of the weather. ● Each station had a simulated ship's mast which was the target during line firing exercises. Above, the line has already been fired and the breeches buoy rigged during a drill. ● Reality did not differ from practice as a survivor of a stranded ship is pulled ashore during the 1950s. The photograph well illustrates two important facts. First, peoples' lives were in danger even when the distressed vessel was very close to shore. And second, a technique developed during the late 1840s had application over one hundred years







Another tool of the Life-Saving Service was the self-bailing, self-righting lifeboat. This boat was large and much heavier than the surfboat, thus not suited to all stations. Although this type boat could be launched through the surf, this in fact was not practical. Lifeboats were most commonly found at stations where marine railways could be built.



These were ramps fitted with tracks designed to accommodate the heavier boats. In order to have a marine railway you need access to a launching site with deep water. For this reason, self-bailing, self-righting motor lifeboats were usually employed in harbors and on the Great Lakes and Pacific Coast.

more easily than the heavier life car.

A beach apparatus cart carried all the equipment needed to rig the breeches buoy and could be pulled by the crew or horses to the wreck site.

The boats, beach apparatus, and life cars were only as good as the surfmen who served in the U.S. Life-Saving Service. The man in charge of the station, officially known as the keeper, was called captain by his crew and was an expert in the handling of small boats and men.

Superintendents of the Life-Saving Districts were responsible for the selection of the keepers, who, in turn, were responsible for selecting the crews. Both keepers and crews were examined by a board of inspectors made up of an officer of the Revenue Marine Service, a surgeon of the Marine Hospital Service (later called the U.S. Public Health Service), and an expert surfman to determine their health, character, and skill. Keepers were required to be able bodied, of good character and habits, able to read and write and be under forty-five years of age and a master at handling boats, especially in rough weather.

Most keepers tended to have long experience at fishing, or other maritime occupations, or had worked their way steadily through the ranks of the U.S. Life-Saving Service. Although many of the keepers transferred from station to station, a great many of the men remained at one station, or within a small radius.

The long years of service in one area made the men experts on the weather and surf conditions. Furthermore, because the keepers tended to select men from the local community for their crews, the units of the Service, unlike many government agencies, remained principally a local affair.

The men who made up the crews of the Service were known as surfmen, because those on the East Coast, where the Service began, launched their boats from open beaches into the surf. Surfmen could be no older than forty-five and had to be physically fit and adept at handling an oar. A glance at the muster rolls of the Service shows that most surfmen listed their occupations before entering the Life-Saving Service as "fisherman" or "mariner." The number of men composing a crew was determined by the number of oars needed to pull the largest boat at the station. This meant the crews ranged

from six to eight, but by the turn of the century, some stations were staffed with at least ten men. Because keepers selected the crews, regulations were enacted to prevent nepotism. Many surfmen, like the keepers, remained at one station for long periods of time, but some moved on to other stations in order to be promoted. Surfmen were ranked by order of their experience, with Surfman Number 1 being the most experienced and second in command of a station.

In 1889, the Service became uniformed. The idea grew from stations on the Great Lakes which had adopted a naval uniform. Initially, this did not result in an esprit de corps but instead resulted in a shout of outrage. The surfmen were expected to pay for the uniforms out of their meager salaries.

The rescues performed by the men of the U.S. Life-Saving Service captured the attention of nineteenth century America. Indeed, the sight of a keeper standing erect in the stern of his small boat, grasping his sweep oar, urging on his men at their oars as the boat rose and fell in high surf, could cause a reporter to write exciting copy. Terms such as "soldiers of the surf" and "storm warriors" were used to describe the lifesavers. The men did perform amazing rescues, but by far the largest amount of work for the crews revolved around drilling (practicing) with the rescue equipment, patrol and lookout duty, and general station upkeep.

Each day of the week, except Sunday, the surfmen were expected to drill or clean. On Mondays and Thursdays, for example, the crew practiced with the beach apparatus. The surfmen had to complete the entire procedure of rigging the equipment, including firing the Lyle gun at a practice pole shaped like a ship's mast. When the district inspectors arrived, the entire drill had to be completed within five minutes or the man slowing the operation could be dismissed from the Service.

On Tuesday, the men were expected to practice with their boats. The craft were to be launched and landed through the surf. In order to have the men react automatically in an emergency, the boats would be deliberately capsized and righted. This was a great crowd pleaser, one observer noting that "no sight is more impressive."

The remainder of the week was taken up with practice in signaling and first aid. Saturdays were devoted to cleaning the station. All of the drills, while not overly technical, were constantly hammered into the crew, which, in turn, insured that the men would react quickly



This 1942 photograph clearly illustrates the marine railway at





and automatically during an emergency. This would pay large dividends when the surf was running and danger was high.

There remained one other important duty that took up a large portion of the surfmen's routine, lookout and patrol duties. During the daylight hours, a surfman was assigned to scan the nearby water areas from the lookout tower. No seats were kept in the tower in order to prevent inattention to duty.

At night, or when the weather grew foul, the surfmen performed beach patrols. Originally, the patrol distances were set up so that the beach patrol would meet the patrol from its neighboring station, thus providing a good coverage for isolated shorelines. As more and more of the coast came under the watchful eye of the Service, it became impossible to provide such coverage. In the areas where overlapping patrols could not be maintained, the surfmen patrolled for five miles or more. At the end of his patrol, there would be a stake with a patrol-clock key attached. The key was inserted into the patrol clock and the surfman would be able to prove that he had completed the patrol.

The beaches many times were "clad with ice" and, at best, were "pathless desserts in the night." Often times "the soft sand, bewildering snowfalls, overwhelming winds, and bitter cold," threatened to stop the men.

Surfmen bundled up in oilskins and carried a patrol clock, if patrols did not overlap, and a pouch of coston signals. The coston signal was much like a flare and was used to warn ships that were approaching too close to the beach, or to let grounded ships know that they had been spotted and help was on the way. Mariners were fortunate that beach patrols were run in all weather. In 1899, for example, surfmen burning coston signals warned off 143 ships in danger of running aground. In October of the same year, Surfman Rasmus Midgett, of the Gull Shoals, North Carolina, Station, accomplished the amazing feat of rescuing ten people single-handedly from the wrecked *Priscilla* while on patrol.

The greatest days of the Service covered the ten years from 1871 to 1881. These were the years of its greatest growth and some of its greatest rescues were performed during this period. As the nineteenth century began to edge closer to the twentieth, however, two major problems began to develop for the Service. First, with the advent of steam powered ships, the age of sail was coming to an end. With improved navigational



Fort Point Station at the entrance to San Francisco Bay.



Clockwise from top left: The primary advantage of a self-righting, self-balling lifeboat was that it would operate in the worst imaginable weather. Frequently, these boats were called upon to attempt rescues miles offshore. Initially, they were fitted with sail and later, motors. ● One of the most famous life savers was Joshua James of Massachusetts. He won numerous life-saving medals from the federal and state governments throughout his long career. ● A surfboat served as Joshua James' coffin in 1902 when he died at the age of 75. A funeral cortege formed by family members and the crew of the Point Allerton Life-Saving Station rode in a horse-drawn lifeboat. ● Where geography permitted, stations were built close enough to the water to permit the boats to be launched directly into the water via a ramp leading from the boat house. ● This photograph printed from a broken glass negative reveals the character of the men who served in the Life-Saving Service. The man wearing the double-breasted coat is the keeper.



# Joshua James: A lifesaver





technology, ships were less at the mercy of the wind and were in less danger of being driven into the beach. Secondly, at the turn of the century, the U.S. Life-Saving Service noted the increase of gasoline powered small boats, especially those used for recreational purposes. For example, the amount of cases involving these boats increased fifty-eight percent from 1905 to 1914. The Service was not equipped for this type of work. To be sure, it had experimented with motor lifeboats as early as 1899. Keeper Henry Cleary, of the Marquette, Michigan, Station tested a 34 foot lifeboat equipped with a two cylinder, twelve horsepower Superior engine. By 1905, twelve power boats were in operation. It was, however, too little too late. The Service was essentially set up to move boats, or beach apparatus, by cart to the site of a major shipwreck. The procedures required to do this were fast enough for sailing and steam ships, but not for large numbers of pleasure boats.

Other problems developed. There was no retirement system, nor any compensation for injured crewmen. Salaries became too low to attract new men and, with no

retirement, it became difficult to gain promotion. By 1914 there "were instances of keepers in their seventies manning the customary sweep oar while the strokes were manned by men in their sixties." In 1914, after years of trying to obtain a retirement system, Kimball agreed that a merger of the U.S. Revenue Cutter System and the U.S. Life-Saving Service would be best for both services and the country.

The law which created the U.S. Coast Guard, on 28 January 1915, by combining the two services, also provided for the retirement of Kimball and many of the older keepers and surfmen. The U.S. Life-Saving Service performed nobly over its forty-four years of existence. During this period, "28,121 vessels and 178,741 persons became involved with its services." Only "1,455 individuals lost their lives while exposed within the scope of Life-Saving Service operations.

The legacy of the U.S. Life Saving Service is great. The organization Kimball formed provided the basis for the new U.S. Coast Guard's search and rescue organiza-

# U.S. Coast Guard Small Boat Rescue Stations

Left: This January 1937 photograph shows flood relief work at Evansville, Indiana. The surfboats came from Mackinac Island Station in the Great Lakes and Oak Island Station on Long Island, New York. These boats were carried by rail to the site of the flooding. Below: Although this might appear to be a regatta gathering, in fact during the 1920s and '30s it was common practice to draw motor lifeboats and surfboats from Life-Saving Stations throughout the the United States to use in the Mississippi River valley for flood relief.



tion for years to come. Indeed, one can find little fault with the drills and organization of Kimball's routine. As late as 1959, U.S. Coast Guard Lifeboat Stations on the Great Lakes were still following a modified version of the old Life-Saving Service's schedule for drills. For example, beach apparatus drills were still being held weekly to provide first aid and signaling practice. Further, lookout tower watches were also still in effect. The constant attention to practice with rescue equipment and inspections is still in use today. In short, the good practices of the Life-Saving Service remained in effect.

Kimball's organization also allowed a small crew to perform a large mission. The perception of a small service doing a big job is as true for today's Coast Guard as it was for yesterday's Life-Saving Service. For instance, the average size of many U.S. Coast Guard stations in 1959 was no more than fifteen. Technology, however, has helped the U.S. Coast Guard to perform its mission more efficiently. Better motor lifeboats have increased the range of rescue efforts. Helicopters have greatly increased the ability to help those in distress. In fact, the

combination of better boats and helicopters eventually caused the closure of many stations. In 1915, for example, there were twenty-nine Life Saving Stations on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Today, because of the impact of technology, there are now eight stations in the same area.

The United States Coast Guard, building upon the strong foundation established by the U.S. Life-Saving Service, and adding its own efforts, has become the recognized expert in search and rescue over the water. The development of the 36 and 44 foot motor lifeboats, the establishment of a search and rescue school, and the use of the helicopters have increased the U.S. Coast Guard's reputation as the leading agency for those "in peril upon the seas."

Today, the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard carry on the traditions of service to others established by the crews of the U.S. Life-Saving Service; but with more sophisticated equipment, they are able to surpass the records of their illustrious predecessor.

# U. S. Coast Guard Small Boat Rescue Stations

May 1, 1987

<u>Station</u>	<u>Built</u>	<u>Active</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
<b>ALABAMA</b>			
Mobile		Yes	
<b>ALASKA</b>			
Juneau		Yes	
Nome	1905	No	Discontinued 1949.
<b>CALIFORNIA</b>			
Arena Cove	1902	No	Navy 1958
Bodega		Yes	
Bolinas Bay	1881	No	GSA 1954
Channel Island		Yes	
Fort Point	1877	No	Discontinued 1951
Golden Gate Park Harbor	1877	Yes	
Humbolt Bay		Yes	
Lake Tahoe		Yes	
Los Angeles/Long Beach		Yes	
Mare Island		Yes	
Point Reyes	1889	No	GSA 1969
Point Bonita	1899	No	
Rio Vista		Yes	
San Francisco		Yes	
San Diego		Yes	
Southside	1893	No	War Department. 1945
<b>CONNECTICUT</b>			
New Haven		Yes	
New London		Yes	
<b>DELAWARE</b>			
Bethany Beach		No	Abandoned 1945.
Cape Henlopen	1876	NO	Disestablished 1937.
Fenwick Island	1891	No	GSA 1957
Indian River Inlet	1876	Yes	Building to GSA 1963
Isle of Wright	1897	No	Abandoned 1948
Lewes	1883	No	GSA 1969
Rehoboth Beach		No	Discontinued 1921.
<b>FLORIDA</b>			
Bethel Creek #	1876	No	Now Vero Beach
Biscayne Bay #		No	Destroyed by hurricane 1930.
Cape Malabar #	1886	No	Discontinued 1947
Chester Shoal #		No	Department of Interior 1949
Clearwater		Yes	
Cortez		Yes	
Destin		Yes	
Fort Lauderdale		No	Destroyed by Hurricane 1930.
Fort Lauderdale		Yes	
Fort Meyers Beach		Yes	
Gilbert's Bar #		No	Department of Interior 1952
House of Refuge		Yes	
Indian River #	1876	No	Florida 1940
Indian River Inlet	1885	No	Now Ft. Pierce Station
Islamorada		Yes	
Juniper Inlet		No	Discontinued 1889
Key West		Yes	
Lake Worth Inlet		Yes	
Marathon		Yes	

Merquesas Keys		No	Never commissioned.
Mosquito Lagoon #		No	Now Ponce de Leon Station
Orange Grove #		No	Discontinued 1896.
Panama City		Yes	
Pensacola		Yes	
Ponce De Leon		Yes	
Port Canaveral		Yes	
Santa Rosa	1885	No	Destroyed by hurricane 1906
Smith's Creek #		No	Department of Interior
St. Simons Island		Yes	
St. Petersburg		Yes	
Tybee		Yes	
Yankeetown		Yes	
<b>ILLINOIS</b>			
Calumet Harbor		Yes	
Evanston	1875	No	Now Wilmette Harbor Station
Jackson Park	1892	No	GSA 1963
Old Chicago	1875	No	Discontinued 1968
South Chicago		No	GSA 1956
Wilmette HBR		Yes	
<b>INDIANA</b>			
Michigan City	1888	Yes	
<b>KENTUCKY</b>			
Grand Isle		Yes	
Louisville	1881	No	Discontinued 1963.
New Canal		Yes	
<b>MAINE</b>			
Biddleford Pool	1873	No	GSA 1955
Boothbay Harbor		Yes	
Brownays Island	1874	No	GSA 1964
Bunt Island	1891	No	GSA 1956
Cape Elizabeth	1887	No	GSA 1956
Cranberry Island	1878	No	GSA 1951
Cross Island	1874	No	GSA 1964
Damiscove Island	1887	No	Now Boothday Harbor Station
Eastport		Yes	
Jonesport		Yes	
Kennebec River	1883	No	
Quoddy Head	1873	No	Merged with Southwest Harbor 1946
Rockland		Yes	
White Head	1874	No	GSA 1964
<b>MARYLAND</b>			
Annapolis		Yes	
Curtis Bay		Yes	
Green Run Inlet		No	Discontinued 1939.
North beach		No	GSA 1970
Ocean City	1883	Yes	Building to GSA 1964
St. Ingroes		Yes	
Stillpond		Yes	
Taylor's Island		Yes	
<b>MASSACHUSETTS</b>			
Boston (City Point)	1896	No	Disestablished 1939
Brant Point		Yes	
Brant Rock	1892	No	Sold 1963
Cahoons Hollow	1872	No	Abandoned 1950
Cape Cod Canal	1936	Yes	
Chatham	1873	Yes	Building to GSA 1955
Coskata	1883	No	Abandoned 1953
Cuttuhunk	1889	No	GSA 1954
Davis Neck	1874	No	GSA 1964
Fourth Cliff	1879	No	Destroyed by fire 1919
Gay Head	1895	No	GSA 1955
Gloucester	1899	Yes	
Gurnet	1873	No	GSA 1857
High Head	1882	No	Discontinued 1921.

Highlight	1872	No	GSA 1955
Maddaket	1890	No	GSA 1956
Manomet Point	1874	No	GSA 1955
Menemsha		Yes	
Merrimac River	1882	Yes	
Monomoy	1873	No	Department of Interior 1955
Monomoy Point	1902	No	GSA 1956.
Muskeget	1882	No	Discontinued 1922
Nahant	1899	No	Discontinued 1963
Nauset	1872	No	Abandoned 1948
Newburyport	1882	No	Abandoned 1952. Now Merrimac River.
North Scituate	1885	No	Discontinued 1963
Old Harbor	1897	No	Abandoned 1947
Orleans	1873	No	GSA 1954
Pamet River	1873	No	Discontinued 1938
Peaked Hills Bars	1872	No	Discontinued 1938.
Plum Island	1879	No	Department of Interior 1949
Point Allerton	1889	Yes	
Provincetown		Yes	
Race Point	1873	No	
Salisbury Beach	1897	No	Discontinued 1922
Scituate	1937	Yes	
Surfside	1874	No	Discontinued 1921
Wood End	1896	No	Sold 1960
Woods Hole		Yes	
<b>MICHIGAN</b>			
Barques	1875	No	GSA 1956
Beaver Island	1875	No	Discontinued 1922
Belle Island		Yes	
Bois Blanc	1890	No	GSA 1960
Charlevoix	1899	Yes	GSA 1966
Crisps	1876	No	Department of Interior 1971
Deer Park	1876	No	GSA 1955
Eagle Harbor	1912	No	GSA 1954
Frankfort	1886	Yes	Building to Corps of Engineers
Grand Marais	1999	Yes	Now North Superior Station
Grand Point au Sable	1876	No	GSA 1954
Grand Haven	1875	Yes	
Hammond Bay	1876	No	Department of Interior 1971.
Harbor Beach	1881	No	GSA 1958
Harbor Beach		Yes	
Holland	1885	Yes	
Island	1876	No	Discontinued 1951
Lakeview Beach	1898	No	Abandoned 1946
Ludington	1879	Yes	
Mackinaw		No	
Manistee	1879	Yes	
Marquette	1890	Yes	
Middle Island		No	GSA 1958
Muskegon	1879	Yes	
North Manitou Island	1876	No	Discontinued 1939.
Ottawa Point			
Pentwater	1886	No	GSA 1965
Point Betsie	1875	No	Abandoned 1946
Pointe Aux			
Port Austin	1881	No	Discontinued 1939
Port Huron		Yes	
Saginaw River		Yes	
Saint Joseph	1874	Yes	
Sault Ste. Marie		Yes	
Ship Canal	1884	Yes	Now Portage Station.
Sleeping Bear Point	1901	No	GSA 1955
South Manitou Island	1901	No	GSA 1962
St. Claire Flats		Yes	
St. Clair Shores		Yes	
St. Ignace		Yes	
Sturgeon Point	1876	No	GSA 1960
Tawas	1876	Yes	
Thunder Bay			
Two Heart River	1876	No	Disestablished 1945
Vermillion Point	1876	No	Merged with Crisp PT. LT Station 1940.
White River	1886	No	Abandoned 1947
<b>MINNESOTA</b>			
Duluth	1894	Yes	



**MISSISSIPPI**

Gulfport		Yes	
Pascagoula		Yes	

**NEW JERSEY**

Absecon	1872	No	GSA 1955
Atlantic City	1853	Yes	Present site North side of Clam Creek
Avalon	1894	No	Abandoned 1948
Barneгат	1872	Yes	
Beach Haven	1962	yes	Successor to Bonds Station
Bonds	1849	Yes	Destroyed in 1962 storm
Brigantine	1846	No	Abandoned 1948
Cape May	1849	Yes	
Cedar Creek	1872	No	Discontinued 1939
Chadwick's	1849	No	Abandoned 1939
Cold Spring	1868	No	Abandoned 1952
Coroson's Inlet	1849	No	Discontinued 1964
Deal	1849	No	Abandoned
Forked River	1855	No	Abandoned 1948
Great Egg	1849	No	GSA 1954
Harvey's Cedars	1849	No	Abandoned 1950
Hereford Inlet	1849	No	Discontinued 1946
Island Beach	1849	No	Abandoned 1949
Little Beach	1872	No	Abandoned 1945
Little Egg	1856	No	GSA 1964
Long Beach	1849	No	Abandoned 1946
Long Branch	1849	No	GSA 1954
Loveladies Island	1871	No	Discontinued 1933
Manasquan	1856	No	Now Manasquan Inlet Station
Monmouth Beach	1857	No	GSA 1954
Ocean City	1849	Yes	Called Great Egg since 1965
Peck's Beach	1870	No	Discontinued
Point Pleasant	1856	No	Abandoned 1946
Sandy Hook	1848	Yes	
Sea Isle City	1872	No	Abandoned 1939
Seabright	1871	No	GSA 1954.
Shark River	1871	Yes	Relocated 1885
Ship Bottom	1872	No	GSA 1939
South Brigantine	1872	No	GSA 1955
Spermacetti Cove	1849	No	First Life Saving Station
Spring Lake	1877	No	Abandoned 1947
Stone Harbor	1872	No	Abandoned 1948
Swan Point	1872	No	GSA 1953
Tom's River	1854	No	GSA 1964
Townsend's Inlet	1849	No	Now a SarDet
Turtle Gut	1855	No	Discontinued 1955
Wildwood	1844	No	Discontinued 1966

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Isles of Shoals	1910	No	GSA 1954
Jerry's Point		Yes	Now called Portsmouth Harbor
Wallis Sands		No	Discontinued 1939

**NEW YORK**

Amaganset	1849	No	Disestablished 1937
Bellport	1894	No	Discontinued 1951
Blue Point	1856	No	Abandoned 1946
Brideghampton	1849	No	Abandoned 1950
Coney Island	1856	No	Discontinued 1899
Ditch Plain	1856	No	GSA 1956
East Moriches		Yes	Now named Montauk
Eatons Neck	1849	Yes	
Far Rockaway		No	Destroyed 1892
Fire Island	1849	Yes	
Forge River	1871	No	GSA 1955
Fort Totten		Yes	
Georgica	1856	No	GSA 1955
Gilgo	1853	No	Discontinued 1917
Hither Plain	1871	No	Abandoned 1948
Lone Hill	1855	No	Abandoned 1946
Long Beach	1849	No	Closed 1937
Moriches	1849	No	GSA 1954
Napeague	1855	No	GSA 1955
New York		Yes	
Oak Island	1861	No	GSA 1954
Point Lookout	1872	No	Abandoned 1948

Point of Woods	1856	No	Discontinued 1937
Potunk	1872	No	Discontinued 1937
Quogue	1849	No	Discontinued 1937
Rockaway	1854	No	GSA 1960
Rockaway Point	1856	Yes	Now called Rockaway
Rocky	1896	No	Abandoned 1946
Shinnecock	1855	Yes	
Short Beach	1878	Yes	
Smith Point	1872	No	GSA 1954
South Hampton	1849	No	Abandoned 1946.
Tiana	1871	No	Abandoned 1946
<b>NEW YORK (Great Lakes)</b>			
Big Sandy	1874	No	
Buffalo	1877	Yes	Part of Base Buffalo
Charlotte	1875	Yes	Now Rochester Station
Niagara	1893	Yes	
Oswego	1875	Yes	
Salmon Creek	1877	No	Destroyed by fire 1886
<b>NORTH CAROLINA</b>			
Big Kinnakeet	1878	No	Abandoned 1932
Bodie Island	1878	No	Department of Interior 1953
Bogue Inlet	1904	No	
Caffy's Inlet	1874	No	GSA 1964
Cape Fear	1881	No	Discontinued 1941
Cape Hatteras	1882	Yes	Now Hatteras Sta
Cape Lookout	1887	No	
Chicamicomico	1874	No	Discontinued 1954
Coinjock		Yes	
Core Banks	1894	No	GSA 1964
Creed's Hill	1878	No	Abandoned 1947
Durant's	1879	No	Abandoned 1939
Fort Macon	1904	No	
Gull Shoal	1878	No	Abandoned 1940
Hobucken		Yes	
Kill Devil Hills	1878	No	GSA 1964
Kitty Hawk	1874	No	Abandoned 1949
Little Kinnakeet	1873	No	GSA 1970
Nags Head	1874	No	GSA 1957
New Inlet	1883	No	Discontinued 1916
Oak Island	1889	Yes	
Ocracoke	1882	yes	
Oregon Inlet	1874	Yes	
Paul Gamiel Hill	1878	No	Abandoned 1949
Pea Island	1878	No	Dept of Interior 1949
Portsmouth	1894	No	War Assets Administration 1946
Poyners Hill	1878	No	GSA 1965
Swansboro		Yes	
Whalers Head	1874	No	Abandoned 1945
Wrightsville Beach		Yes	
<b>OHIO</b>			
Ashtabula	1893	Yes	
Cleveland	1875	Yes	Moved to West Pier 1897.
Fairport	1876	Yes	
Lorain	1908	Yes	
Point Marblehead	1875	Yes	Now Marlbehead
Toledo		Yes	
<b>OREGON</b>			
Cape Argo	1878	No	
Chetco River		Yes	
Coquille River	1890	No	Discontinued 1951
Depose Bay	1878	No	
Humbolt Bay		Yes	
Suislaw River		Yes	
Tillamook Bay	1907	Yes	New building in 1946
Umpaqua River	1891	Yes	
Umpaqua River		Yes	
Yaquina Bay	1895	Yes	GSA 1954.
<b>PENNSYLVANIA</b>			
Erie	1876	Yes	

**RHODE ISLAND**

Block Island	1872	Yes	
Brenton Point	1884	No	Abandoned 1946
Fishers Island	1904	No	GSA 1958
Green Hill	1911	No	GSA 1954
Narragansett	1872	No	Discontinued 1939
New Shorham	1874	No	Abandoned 1947
Point Judith	1876	Yes	
Quonocontaug	1891	No	Discontinued 1939
Sandy Point	1898	No	Discontinued 1922
Watch Hill	1879	Yes	Now Castle Hill

**SOUTH CAROLINA**

Georgetown		Yes	
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**TEXAS**

Aransas	1911	Yes	
Brazos	1881	No	Sold 1958. Now Port Isabel
Freeport		Yes	
Galveston	1878	No	GSA 1954. Destroyed during Civil War.
Sabine Pass	1879	No	GSA 1955.
Sabine		Yes	
Saluria	1880	No	War Department 1942. Now Port O'Connor
San Luis	1879	No	Abandoned 1950.
Velasco	1887	No	Storm destroyed in 1914. Now Freeport

**VERMONT**

Burlington		Yes	
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**VIRGINIA**

Assateague Beach	1875	No	
Cape Charles		Yes	
Cape Henry	1873	No	To Navy Department
Chincoteague		Yes	
Cobb Island	1875	No	GSA 1955.
Currituck Inlet	1874	No	Abandoned 1950.
Dam Neck Mills	1881	No	To Army 1938
False Cape	1881	No	Abandoned 1946
Hog Island	1875	No	GSA 1964.
Little Creek		Yes	
Little Island	1878	No	GSA 1964
Metomkin Beach	1888	No	To state 1957
Milford Haven		Yes	
Parramore Beach		Yes	
Parramore Beach	1870	No	Abandoned 1940
Pope's Island	1878	No	
Portsmouth		Yes	
Smith Island	1875	No	GSA 1955.
Virginia Beach	1878	No	To Navy and Post Office
Wachapreague	1875	No	To state 1957
Wallop's Beach	1883	No	
Wash Woods	1878	No	Abandoned 1951

**WASHINGTON**

Bellingham		Yes	
Cape Disappointment	1877	Yes	
Kennewick		Yes	
Klipsan Bay	1891	No	Abandoned 1949
Peterson Point	1897	No	Building to GSA 1971. Now Grays Harbor.
Point Adams	1889	No	Discontinued 1967
Quillayutte River		Yes	
Seattle		Yes	
Waadah Island	1877	Yes	Building moved to Neah Bay
Willapa Bay	1897	No	

**WISCONSIN**

Baileys Harbor	1895	No	Abandoned 1946
Bayfield		Yes	
Canal	1885	Yes	
Kenosha	1879	Yes	
Kewaune	1893	No	GSA 1963
Milwaukee	1875	No	GSA 1970. Now at Group Milwaukee
Plum Island	1896	Yes	
Racine	1875	No	
Sheboygan	1877	Yes	
Sturgeon Bay			
Two Rivers	1875	Yes	

**Back cover:**

In 1906 the Michigan City, Indiana, Station crew practices launching its boat before an enraptured crowd.



UNITED STATES LIFE-SAVING STATION

Launching Life Boat  
Michigan City