



Station Waaddah Island, Washington

(also referred to as Baaddah Point)

USLSS Station # 1, Twelfth District
Coast Guard Station #332

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| Location: | Opposite south end of Waaddah Island, Neah Bay, 7 miles east of Cape Flattery Light; 48-22' 20"N x 124-35' 35"W |
| Date of Conveyance | 1906 |
| Station Built: | 1877 (?) |
| Fate: | Still in operation, now designated Neah Bay |

Keepers:

George W. McAfee was appointed keeper on 9 JAN 1908 and was still serving in 1915.

Remarks (history of the station and an account of the loss of two crewmen, 19 November 1908):

As a result of the 1885 treaty between the United States Government and the Makah Indians, Waddah Island was set aside for military use on 9 June 1868. Previously occupied by three generations of a family; the current resident was Young Doctor, a crippled man who did most of the clearing of the island with modern tools and lived close to the site of the United States Life Saving Service. When he chose to sell the land, his asking price for the work on the island was \$1,200; the government bought it for \$755.

According to sources, the original site of the U.S.L.S.S. station was established somewhere on the reservation, land initially reserved for the Department of the Interior, but was disestablished for reasons unknown. A typed copy of a roster

shows C.L. Willoughby as the keeper, who had experience as a seaman. He was born in California and was 22 years of age, appointed on 3 October 1879, and was eventually discharged. Chas. Kloopman, also a keeper, had experience as a seaman and fisherman and was 38 years old. He was born in Germany, and appointed to his position on 25 September 1882.

This is the only information in the personnel registers of this crew. The names do not appear in later volumes. The station was closed for a short period and I presume this is when these people were let go. Varying accounts say the station was moved to Waddah between 1905 and 1908, and judging by the dates of the newspaper articles covering the incident of 19 November 1908, the station had been opened less than two years.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture had successfully established Tatoosh Island as a weather observatory by this time, and the records for November 19th, 1908 show the temperature of the day to be approximately 56.0 degrees, winds out of the Southeast at 28 knots, with a chance of light rain. Records for the life-saving station on Waddah Island showed a moderate surf for midnight of the previous day, moderate surf conditions for sunrise that morning as well as noon that day. High surf was shown for sunset of that evening. Winds were from the Southeast with rain, and a temperature of 51 degrees.

According to the report of the officer who investigated the accident, it was about 9 A.M., November 19th, 1908 and the power lifeboat included in the equipment of the new station was launched for a trial run with the view of making a report to the Department as to its qualities. A 20 mile run was made up Puget Sound to Clallam, where the crew stopped for dinner. When the crew set out from the station, it was raining, there was a light wind from the southeast and the sea was moderate but increasing. By evening the wind was blowing hard from the southwest and the water had become quite rough.

The following is an account of the death of two Surfmen which occurred that evening, as transcribed in the stations log by George McAfee, station keeper.

"Manned Power Life Boat at 9 A.M. and made a trial trip so as to make a report, running distance about 40 miles. Ran for two hours with the engines door closed, pulled into Clallam [Bay] for dinner, bought supplies for stations mess. Left 330 P. M. 6:20. As it was dark, I would not let all hands go ashore in the dory at one time; five men started ashore in the dory; John Sundstrom, John Jacobsen, Fritz Klintberg, Alfred Rimer, [and] August Mullich were near the launch ways of the station when they were struck by a heavy squall. Fritz Klintberg, who was pulling the port oar, broke it. They lost control of the boat and were carried onto the

rocks and capsized. Before the dory started ashore, I blew the Power Life boat Whistle and No.2 George Heise (who was left at the station) immediately came down on [the] launch ways with a lantern. He saw the boat capsize and immediately ran out on the rocks to render assistance. When near the boat, he noticed a man holding on to the rocks and assisted him out of the water. [The] man proved to be Alfred Rimer.

Both men went to the dory, found it bottom up on the rocks. While they were trying to right the boat, August Mullich came and assisted them. Fritz Klintberg came ashore. G. Heise sent him to station for lanterns and also to let us know in the Power Life Boat of the accident. We immediately weighed anchor and ran near the rocks where the accident occurred; we could not see or hear any one in the water. The men on shore saw nothing of the lost men John Sundstrom and John Jacobsen. After searching with Power Life Boat for more than half [an] hour, we moored it and G. Heise with two men came out and landed us ashore. I then sent the dory (manned with four men) outside to search for the lost men. The balance (with myself) searched with lanterns along the rocks. The men, after a thorough search with the dory, came in. There was a constant watch kept all night. No watch kept on lookout from 8 to 11 P.M. on account of the search for the lost surfmen. No beach apparatus drill on account of trial run with Power Life Boat."

The keeper explains in his testimony that the station launch way runs out between two reefs for a distance of some 300 feet, the reefs being about 50 feet apart. The one on the west side of the ways extends out farther than the other, so that heavy swells coming in from the eastward, striking it, create a strong backlash, which causes a right swirl at the landing. A boat trying to enter at such times must take exercise great care to keep from being thrown upon the rocks.

When the dory came to the offing of the two reefs, a heavy squall caught it. The surfmen succeeded, however, in getting past the first reef and were making their way with great difficulty toward the light held by Heis on the launch way when Klintberg, who with Mullick was rowing, broke an oar. The boat immediately swung around broadside to the seas, and before anything could be done to head it about the wind and the waves swept it across the channel to the opposite reef, against which it was thrown and capsized. Sundstrom and Jacobsen, the men who were lost, were sitting just abaft of the middle of the dory. Under the circumstances each of the survivors had his time and attention fully taken up looking out for himself, and none observed in the darkness anything of the movements of his less fortunate comrades.

As Sundstrom and Jacobsen were excellent swimmers, the keeper was of the opinion that they were stunned by striking the rocks and were drowned while in an

unconscious condition.

More entries from the stations log: "Friday, November 20th, 1908. No drill, on account of searching for bodies of lost Surfmen John Sundstrom and John Jacobsen, bodies found at 4 P.M., washed up on rocks near launch ways. Telegraphed news as soon as possible to Capt. Emery, [the names of three other parties were rendered illegible by difficult hand--TWM]

Saturday, November 21st, 1908. Preparing to bury the bodies of John Sundstrom and John Jacobsen.

Sunday, November 22nd, 1908. Funeral services held over the bodies of John Sundstrom and John Jacobsen at 11 A.M. Miss Helen Clark (Missionary) of Neah Bay, Washington officiating. Buried on station grounds, about 50 ft. north of flagpole." --George McAfee, Keeper.

According to the story which ran in the Friday, November 27th issue of the Olympic Leader: "The men were probably killed instantly by the dory. The sea being high at that the time it was impossible to recover the bodies but a constant watch was kept. Yesterday, a few minutes after 4 o'clock, the sea gave up its dead. Their bodies presented a horrible sight.

John Sundstrom was a member of Golden Gate Aerie No. 61, F.O.E. His home or relatives have not been located at this writing. John Jacobsen has a brother living in Seattle, C.J. Jacobsen, but he has not been heard from. Both men were able bodied seamen and excellent swimmers, but had no chance in the heavy sea, with wind registering from 68 to 74 miles an hour at the time of the accident."

An official report of the United States Life Saving Service from that year stated the station had been completed only within the year, and had been manned by a temporary crew pending the enlistment of a regular compliment of men under civil-service rules. It was moved in 1910 after large waves from the Pacific destroyed its boat rails, and had to retreat again after the storm of December 2, 1967 which badly damaged one rescue boat and swept away parts of the walkway leading to the moorings. The new station, 920 feet west, on less vulnerable land, was operational in 1972.

On 21 June 1983, Congressman Al Swift introduced a bill for Tatoosh and Waddah Islands including approximately 80 acres. Titled HR 3376, the bill declared that the US held certain lands in trust for the Makah Nation of Washington.

Compiled by Thomas McKenzie, USCG.

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Makah Museum, Neah Bay WA.

Photography:

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