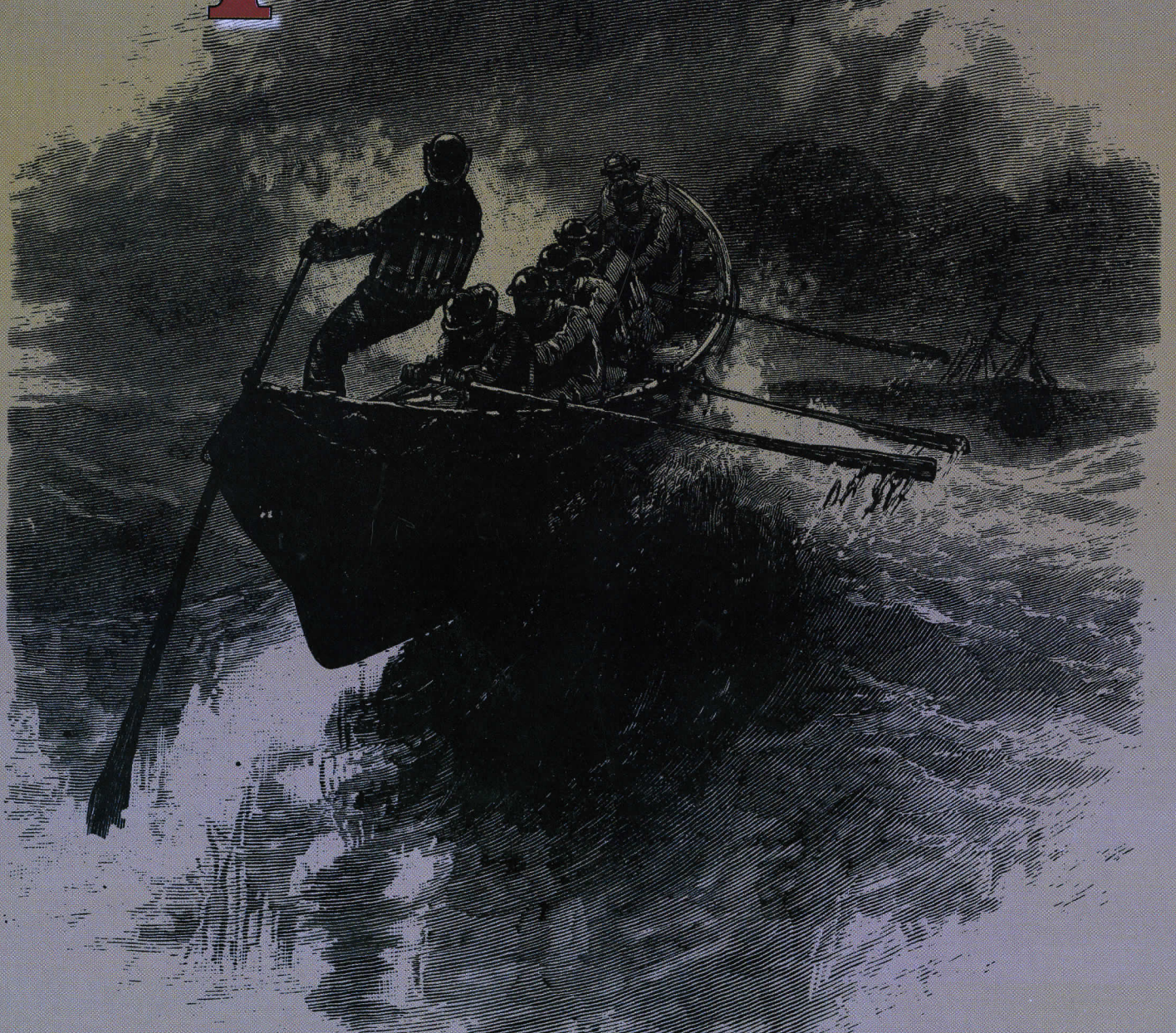


# Sand pounders

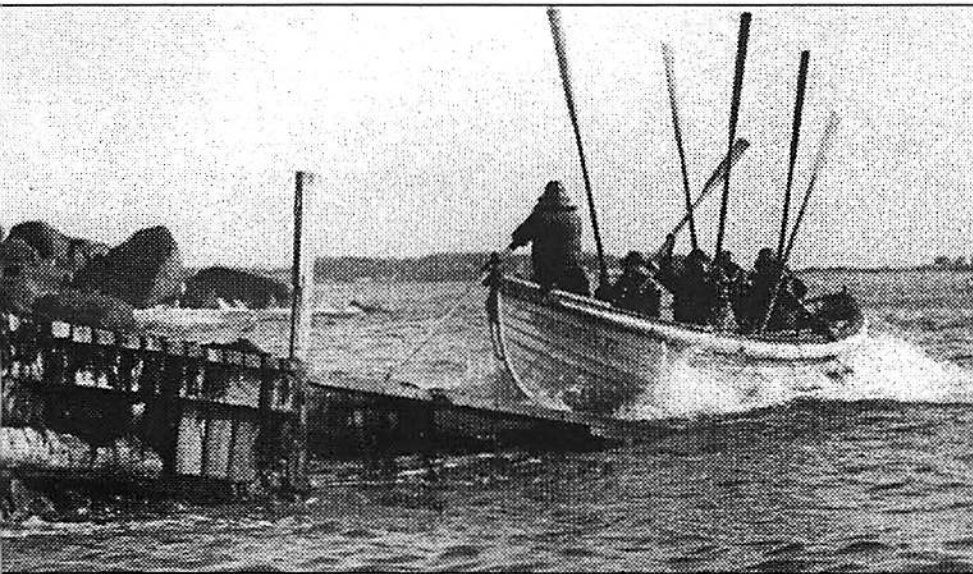


Robert F. Bennett

# Sand pounders

An interpretation of the history  
of the U.S. Life-Saving Service,  
based on its Annual Reports for  
the Years 1870 through 1914.

by Captain Robert F. Bennett, USCG (Ret.)



*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.*

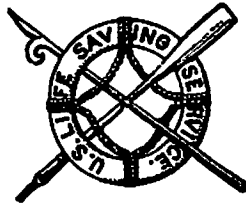
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## *In Memory:*

*This book is in memory of three of my great grandfathers who served as Surfmen, U.S. Life-Saving Service:*

*Charles Alex Bennett, Sandy Hook Station  
Elijah Robbins Chadwick, Bay Head Station  
John Henry Clayton, Bay Head Station*



## *Dedication:*

*This book is dedicated to my wife Barbara, whose love and support have sustained my continuing efforts to tell this story.*

# Sand pounders

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# THE LEGEND

*"You Have To Go Out But You Don't Have To Come Back"*

In 1873, the United States Life-Saving Service published its Regulations and, thereby, gave birth to a legend. The legend, epitomized as an oft-told but unsubstantiated story, summarizes the work of the Life-Saving Service. It remains as a part of Coast Guard lore.

The place was a beach on the Atlantic Coast of the United States. The time frame was the mid-1870's. It was winter. A group of six men wearing cork life preservers over their rain slickers, stood ankle-deep in the wash of the sea waves. The surfmen had taken pre-arranged positions alongside a wooden boat that was about 25 feet in length. The bow of the partially floating craft, called a "surfboat", pointed seaward, bobbing gently to the repeated motions of the spent surf.

Eastward over its bow, and beyond the breakers, the first gray streaks forced an opaque light through the blackness of the scud. In the stern, a seventh, similarly clad man carefully secured the sweep oar in the notch on the top of the boat's transom. Dimly visible on the sloping square stern, below the point

where the sweep oar thrust its blade shoreward, the letters "U. S. L. S. S." arched in a semi-circle identifying the craft as belonging to the United States Life-Saving Service.

A bone chilling wind cut into the bearded face of the steersman. The mixture of sleet rain and snow hurled horizontally had already turned the exposed skin of the seven men beet-red. The steersman, known as "Captain" to the others and officially as "Keeper" to the government, was no stranger to these elements. As a boy and man, he searched for a livelihood on the barren beach. Now, he was entrusted to be the leader of a government rescue station. He and his men earned their wages by applying their special surfmen's skills to save the lives of shipwrecked mariners.



*U.S. Lifesaving Station No. 19, in Salisbury Beach, MA. This station, built in 1897, remained in operation until 1937. (Photo courtesy of the National Archives)*

Scarcely ten years earlier, when the nation was torn by the Civil War, not many persons would have been concerned over a few accidental deaths on the coastal beaches. Times had changed and the conscience of the United States had reawakened to the human toll from shipwrecks.

An hour earlier, the surfman on patrol saw the outline of a schooner stranded on the outer bar about 300 yards off the beach. He fired his Coston Signal alerting the vessel that help was coming. The beach patrolmen then raced to his station house and roused his sleeping comrades. The Keeper had to decide which method of rescue to use. He had two options. The surfboat or the beach apparatus. If the surf was too high the boat could not be launched without incredible risk to its crew. The wreck was beyond the range of the line throwing mortar; he would have no choice but to try the boat. The Keeper knew the bar where the schooner lay. It was 50 yards beyond the range of the mortar. The boat was run out. The site for the launch would be at a "hole", sometimes called a "seapuss," nearest the wreck. This is a natural phenomenon that exists where the water pushed ashore by the surf gouges out a channel to escape seaward across the inner bar. The waves would be slightly suppressed and the outbound current would benefit their launch across the inner bar.

On signal from the Keeper, the crew edged the boat further into the surf. Two of the crew moved to steady the now-active surfboat, one on each side of the stern as the other four clamored aboard to man their oars. The Keeper gazed to seaward measuring the rhythmic approach of the seas. He'd been mentally timing the waves, noting the comparative height and breaking points of the surf, and its relationship to the surf up and down the beach, trying to estimate the end of one series of surf and the beginning of the next. The darkness and weather affected his vision but he detected a predictable slack period, or "slatch" as he called it.

The Keeper looked down at the four oars-

men watching him, then to each side at the stroke oarsmen who were still steadying the boat. To a man they had apprehension written on their faces. This was going to be a risky launch. The slatch signaled a brief lull in the surf. Soon the Keeper would nod and the two stroke men would push off with all their might, leaping aboard to take their oars. The other oars would already be slashing the water. Then the surfboat would race the first wave of the next series to the inner bar, meanwhile meeting the last wave of the previous set. If it met that last wave too soon before it spent its energy, the boat would stop dead and probably ship water. If the first wave of the next series won the race to the inner bar, it would break over the boat, at best again stopping its forward progress, at worst, swamping it. The rescue would take all they had, and they all knew it.

The Keeper had been there before. He needed to bolster the crew. Reaching beneath his life preserver, through the front opening of his slicker, he withdrew a thin book. He held it up for his crew to see. Some say he held it upside down. The Keeper yelled above the roar of surf and wind,

"Boys, these here are the Regulations. Its says here you have to go out, but you don't have to come back."

With that the Keeper looked back at the surf line. A moment later, he gave his customary nod of his head. The launch was successful and all five persons on the schooner returned on the surfboat across the bar to safety.



# INTRODUCTION

## *The Life-Savers "For Those in Peril on the Sea"*

**W**inter was the busy season for the keeper and six surfmen who manned one of the "open beach" lifesaving stations that ranged from Maine to South Carolina in the 1870s. Since there was almost no recreational boating, the victims hauled ashore in surfboat or breeches buoy generally were crews of commercial vessels. By the time the Life Saving Service became part of the Coast Guard in 1915, the lifesavers had added fresh water to their salt water beat, and their winter season had become twelve months long.

Eighty years ago, the coasts of our nation were guarded by the uniformed men of the United States Life-Saving Service. In 1915, the organization joined with the U. S. Revenue-Cutter Service to become the U. S. Coast Guard. The Life-Saving Service, once as popular as the U. S. Cavalry, has long since been forgotten as a part of Americana.

The main reason is that the history of the Life-Saving Service was never properly recorded. In fact, everything of historical value written about that agency during its existence was done under the total supervision of the service's General Superintendent, and he was usually much too busy to give the matter much attention. Unlike the Revenue-Cutter Service, the Navy, and the Marine Corps, this sea service did not require its field unit commanders to submit substantive written accounts and reports of their activities. In fact, most of the lifesavers' local leaders were uneducated. They were authorities in rescue operations, but certainly not authors.

The official accounts of the Life-Saving Service still exist in published Annual Reports submitted to the Congress during the

years from 1876 to 1915. Other than those documents, and some correspondence files preserved in the National Archives, there is no real primary record of the Coast Guard's forerunner in the rescue business.

Between the years 1848 and 1915, the Life-Saving Service developed into a highly specialized organization of personnel expert in coastal rescue operations. Ultimately, some 270 stations extended in a network along the Atlantic, Pacific, Gulf, and Great Lakes coasts; a station was even established in Nome, Alaska. At the time of the creation of the Coast Guard, about 2,200 lifesavers merged with nearly 1,800 officers and men of the Revenue-Cutter Service to form the cadre of the new service. During the existence of the Life-Saving Service, 28,000 vessels and more than 184,000 persons received its services.

Federal efforts at reducing the loss of life at sea were well under way in 1848, but the concept of a network of federal rescue stations was, indeed, something new. Some of these other programs included the funding of light-houses in 1789, the use of naval vessels in 1837 to cruise the coasts during the dangerous seasons, and the implementation of an inspection program for steamboats in 1838. The Coast Survey also contributed to marine safety through its efforts at coastal charting during the first half of the 19th century.

Salvage laws-as practiced in the English colonies- acknowledged the right of the government to assess a portion of any goods or vessels salvaged within its jurisdiction. Carrying along this principle, each of the affected coastal states of the new nation enacted state laws, which provided for the proper administration of salvage operations within



respective jurisdictions. Generally, each state had a system for appointing regional officials to take charge of shipwrecks occurring within their areas of responsibility. These individuals were called, among other things, "commissioners of wrecks," "vendue masters," and "commissioners of vendue." The most popular was "wreckmaster." Usually wreckmasters were charged with establishing and supervising crews of skilled surfmen so that each shipwreck would be attended by an organized and somewhat disciplined group of salvors. While charges of political favoritism surrounded the designations of wreckmasters, most of them were competent and experienced surfmen in their own right and were appointed, not only on the basis of their political loyalties, but on their abilities as well.

Besides the states' interests in shipwrecks, the insurers or underwriters were deeply involved. The absence of rapid land transportation meant that the underwriters necessarily had to appoint men in the coastal localities to represent their economic interests. From the beginning of the 19th century until the time of the Civil War, most foreign trade into U. S. ports was carried in this country's vessels. There was a large probability during those years that any vessel wrecked on the coastal approaches to a major U. S. port would be insured by an U. S. firm. There was thus a need for a good working relationship between the underwriter's agent, the wreckmaster, and the salvors. It was usual for the wreckmaster to have a legal, as well as a moral, obligation to save the lives of the persons on board the wreck. It was the policy of the underwriters to employ that crew, under contract salvage terms, which performed the rescue of the persons on board.

People of the 18th and 19th century United States did not usually choose to live by the side of the turbulent Atlantic unless they had business with it. The immediate coastlines were, at best, only sparsely inhabited by fishermen and part-time salvors. The chances were that local underwriter agents,

wreckmasters, and surfmen would all be well acquainted with each other, if not kinfolk. The likelihood of coordinated, successful rescues was thus enhanced.

Humane organizations were created in the major port cities by citizens of means (usually with shipping or mercantile interests) to further alleviate the miseries of shipwreck victims. Lighthouses were also sponsored or lobbied for. Gold medals and monetary rewards for heroic volunteer lifesaving efforts were awarded by such organizations as motivation for further voluntary acts. Examinations for bar pilots were administered to local navigators. In the port of Boston, the Massachusetts Humane Society was chief among such institutions. The society eventually built huts to provide shelter to the shipwrecked on the outlying coastal approaches to that port. Its huts were equipped with rockets for sending lines to shipwrecked vessels, and the leaders of the society maintained close liaison with counterparts in England in order to keep up with technological developments of others.

Historical dissertations have-except for the relatively readily documented contributions of the Massachusetts Humane Society-neglected any mention of the energies spent by other Americans on behalf of saving lives from shipwreck before the 1870s. It is an unfortunate omission.

In today's marine-oriented world, the expression "shipwreck" frequently conjures up an image of a broken tanker spewing her polluting contents over the ocean. Early American shipwrecks claimed all kinds of vessels: coasting schooners, sloops, whalers, naval vessels, and others. As war and famine-weary Europeans turned their hopes westward to the "emerging nation" across the Atlantic, the name of one port crossed their minds-New York. Immigrant sailing packets, not Yankee Clippers, full of eager humanity, tracked profitable sailing routes to the new land. Besides the ever-present hazards of the North Atlantic, one more peril faced the masters of such vessels before they could finally furl their sails at

an anchorage in New York's Upper Bay. They had to avoid stranding on the southern approach to their destination, the coast of New Jersey. In good weather, the task was easy; in a nor'easter, it was far more difficult to avoid that cursed and desolate lee shore with its off-shore sandbars and nearly invisible, low-lying beaches.

Once stranded on one of New Jersey's outer bars, the only hope of survival, besides swimming, rested with volunteer crews on shore manning a specialized type of pulling boat called a "surfboat." Ships' boats were useless under the surf conditions attending coastal gales. As the immigrant trade accelerated, the toll from shipwrecks increased proportionately. Even the best efforts of the wreckmasters and salvors could not always successfully launch surfboats into the teeth of storm-driven combers. But, unless a storm subsided, any ship unfortunate enough to strand on the outer bar went to pieces in a matter of hours, and few persons could survive a 300-yard swim in 40° storm surf. Survival, indeed, was weighed in terms of the success or failure of surfboat launchings.

William A. Newell, a physician who later was elected to the House of Representatives from New Jersey, had personally witnessed the hopelessness of one such shipwreck when no surfboat launching was possible. Upon his election to Congress, he began enlisting support for a federal remedy to the consequences of shipwrecks. In 1847, \$5,000 had been appropriated to provide lifeboats to lighthouses, but it was never spent. In August 1848, Newell was successful in attaching an amendment to a lighthouse appropriation bill which provided \$10,000 to be spent for "surfboats, rockets, carronnades" and other equipment to save life between Sandy Hook, New Jersey, and Little Egg Inlet, New Jersey, under the direction of an officer of the Revenue Marine. The Congress, intent on recessing, quickly passed the bill with its amendment. It was signed into law on 14 August 1848.

The Secretary of the Treasury was not alto-

gether pleased by this new responsibility for his Revenue Marine. Nevertheless, he detached Captain Douglas Ottinger to work together with the Board of Underwriters of New York and, with their advice, get on with the business of fulfilling the will of Congress. A short while later, in response to a Massachusetts Humane Society request, the Secretary gave them the 1847 appropriation of \$5,000 for the nearby coastline.

Ottinger met with the Board of Underwriters, and then continually with a loose committee of wreckmasters, agents, and surfmen. Eight coastal station locations were chosen, deeds secured, and work began on shelters to hold the yet undetermined equipment. Ottinger, working with Joseph Francis, a skilled lifeboat builder of the Novelty Iron Works in Brooklyn, began to experiment with a small, covered lifeboat design which could be hauled to and from a stranded vessel. Ottinger also accepted the design of a wooden surfboat, which was common to the New Jersey coast and which had been recommended by his committee; he then gave a contract to Novelty to build it. The surfboat was twenty-seven feet long, made of corrugated galvanized iron sides attached to a wooden bottom, had integral air tanks, and weighed about twice as much as the cedar skiffs from which it was copied. The boat was not one of Ottinger's triumphs; when placed in use, the surfmen discovered it had a tendency to sink out from under them.

The captain fared much better with his line-throwing device. While rockets were in use elsewhere, Ottinger decided on a more reliable and accurate means of line-throwing. He followed the lead of a Captain Manley in England who, some thirty years earlier, had developed a mortar-type line-throwing apparatus. The result of Captain Ottinger's experiments was the adaptation of a small "eprouvette" mortar which could hurl a light line more than 300 yards. Wire coils were designed to absorb the energy of the discharged shot without parting the faked shotline.

By May 1849, Ottinger had completed each of the eight stations and had outfitted each with a fully equipped boat on a wagon, a mortar apparatus with its lines, powder and shot, a small covered lifeboat called a "life car," a stove, and fuel. Each building was built on sunken pilings and was strong enough to withstand relocation in case the pounding surf altered the shape of the beachfront. The houses were about fifteen feet high, twenty-nine feet long, covered with cedar shingles on roof and sides, and had large barn-like doors at one end.

Captain Ottinger turned the keys of the first station over to local men whom he had instructed in the use of mortar and life car. These men were members of his committee or were recommended by the membership as being experienced and reputable coastal citizens.

A second congressional lifesaving appropriation was made in 1849. It extended the network of stations to the Long Island coast and completed coverage of the remaining part of the New Jersey coast. On 12 January 1850, the first real test of the system came into being. Wreckmaster John Maxon and his volunteer crew of New Jersey Station No. 4 on Squan Beach fired a shot to the stranded immigrant ship *Ayrshire* in the midst of a snowstorm. In the ensuing operation, the volunteers successfully landed 201 of 202 people on board. Maxon was later rewarded by the New York Life Saving Benevolent Association which had only recently been created by the New York Board of Underwriters to oversee their delegated responsibilities to the federal establishment.

Other Revenue Marine officers besides Captain Ottinger served the Secretary of the Treasury in supervising the construction and inspecting the maintenance of the stations. Each in his turn made a number of recommendations concerning the care of the stations. Usually included was a recommendation that salaried personnel be assigned to man the units instead of the volunteer crews mustered

by the wreckmasters.

In 1854, following two particularly disastrous wrecks, Congress voted additional sums of money for two separate purposes:

—To expand the station network by closing the distances between the existing stations

—To hire one superintendent each for the Long Island and the New Jersey coasts and to hire a "keeper" for each station.

By 1856 the hiring was complete. In 1858 a board was convened to explore the use of lifeboats; it never did find a lifeboat but did settle for a surfboat design not unlike the one proposed by Ottinger's 1849 committee. This time, wooden boats were ordered and supplied to the stations in addition to the existing metal boats.

The Civil War disrupted the efforts of the lifesaving system; the volunteers went to war, and the carnage of the war dulled the humane sensibilities of the nation. All save one of the iron surfboats of the Jersey coast were used by the Union in the Hatteras campaign. That one, to the horror of the inspecting superintendent (an employee of the Novelty Iron Works), was being used to slop hogs. The disposition of the useless iron boats was, perhaps, one of the more positive aspects of the decade of the 1860s.

In 1870, an authorization by Congress provided for paid crews at "alternate" stations on the New Jersey coast. During the 1870-1871 winter season, every other station was somewhat manned. The fact that desolate stations being even-numbered did not get manned while odd-numbered stations in populated areas did, combined with little or no administrative guidance to result in a mediocre performance by the stations.

During the years of the volunteer lifesaving establishment, an official report of the Secretary of the Treasury listed 4,163 lives saved and 512 lives lost within the scope of the network; the cost was about \$280,000 or, if you will, \$67.25 per life.

Sumner Increase Kimball, a young lawyer and politician from the state of Maine, was

appointed by Abraham Lincoln in 1861 to a post in the Treasury Department. In 1871, he became chief of the Treasury's Revenue Marine Division. He was also in charge of the Steamboat Inspectors, the Marine Hospitals, and the lifesaving stations. Shortly after taking over the division, Kimball sent Captain John Faunce, USRM, on an inspection trip of the two coasts. Faunce was no stranger to the lifesaving network, having been temporarily assigned to construction inspection duties in 1854. He submitted a candid and detailed report of what he found; mostly, it consisted of what he found wrong. His report contained a number of recommendations which corroborated many of the same thoughts submitted previously by other inspectors.

This time, the division chief was ready to do something! Sumner Kimball's political know-how succeeded in gaining an appropriation of \$200,000 on 20 April 1871, authorizing the Secretary of the Treasury to employ crews of surfmen wherever they were needed and for as long as they were needed. At that time, there were twenty-eight stations on the New Jersey coast and twenty-six on Long Island. Armed with Captain Faunce's report, Kimball instituted six man boat crews at all stations; built new station houses; drew up a set of regulations which set standards for competence, performance, unit routine, and physical condition; established a continuing board on lifesaving appliances; and interwove the role of the Revenue Marine with that of the Life-Saving Service. Kimball subsequently reported the dismissal of "incompetent and inefficient officers," presumably the existing coastal superintendents and paid keepers, but employment records show that only six of the twenty-eight keeper positions on the New Jersey coast changed, and one of those six moved to a new unit.

Another \$100,000 was appropriated in 1873 with an admonition for the Secretary of the Treasury to report exactly where and how much he intended to spend on extending the network of the service. Also in 1873, the U. S.

Army's Storm Signal Service role was assigned to certain of the existing lifesaving stations. Finally, in 1873, the service expanded with ten new stations on Block Island and Cape Cod.

Siting new stations on the basis of need, however was not easy. Records pertaining to shipwrecks were in existence for the purpose of collecting customs duties on the goods salvaged, but the locations, dates, and causes of the wrecks were not accurately tabulated. The efficient Kimball went to the Congress again. On 20 June 1874, a significant piece of legislation was passed. It provided two noteworthy things:

—That masters of U. S. vessels report to the collectors of customs all groundings, foundering, capsizings, strandings, fires, and explosions that occurred;

—That the Secretary could bestow gold and silver lifesaving medals for specific acts of heroism.

The listing of disasters involving U. S. vessels which followed the implementation of the law provided the justification for the expansion of the service; further, it remains the basis for obtaining reports of marine accidents occurring on all U.S. commercial vessels.

During 1874, the lifesaving station system incorporated the coast of Maine and established ten locations south of Cape Henry, Virginia, including North Carolina's Outer Banks. In 1875 the network was further extended to the Delmarva peninsula, the Great Lakes and the coast of Florida. The Gulf and West Coasts would be included ultimately.

In 1878, the federal lifesaving system was formally organized as a separate agency of the Treasury Department and was named the U. S. Life-Saving Service. Units of the Life-Saving Service fell into three categories: lifesaving stations, lifeboat stations, and houses of refuge. Lifesaving stations were manned by full-time crews during the seasons of the year when wrecks were most likely to occur. On the Atlantic Coast, this was the winter season. The ships wrecked in the 1870s were, for the

most part, coasting vessels, typically schooners. As there was little recreational boating, the service came into being to rescue people on commercial vessels. While the U. S. coastwise trade comprised the major element of its clientele, the most dramatic missions of the reorganized Life-Saving Service continued to be mostly foreign-flagged passenger ships. Lifesaving stations were generally located at fixed intervals along the coast from Maine to South Carolina. They were typically "open beach" stations, with rescues accomplished through the surf by surfboats or over the surf by surfcar or breeches buoy. Lifesaving stations were manned by a keeper and six surfmen. Later, a seventh man was added, and the "winter season" was extended. By the turn of the century, it was twelve months long.

Lifeboat stations were located at or near port cities where deep water, jetties, piers, and other waterfront surroundings allowed the launching of lifeboats. These stations were initially manned by a paid keeper and by designated volunteers on much the same order as a volunteer fire company. Lifeboat stations were prevalent on the Great Lakes, although some lifesaving stations were established at the more remote locations of the lakes' coastlines.

Houses of refuge were spaced on the South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida coasts. These units consisted of buildings that were designed to provide shelter to shipwrecked persons. A paid keeper and a small boat were assigned to each of these units. The role of this type of station did not include active manning and rescue attempts.

A standard surfboat was designated in 1874 by a board on lifesaving appliances. The boat, very similar to the original 1849 design proposed by Captain Ottinger's committee, was the "Jersey" model. About twenty-five feet long, it was lapstrake, generous sheer, was partially flat bottomed, and had a square raked stern looking much like a two-dimensional view of the top half of an hour-glass.

The main advantage of the boat was its light weight. Although there was a standard model surfboat, other designs received regional usage on the basis of local preference and familiarity by the surfmen.

Lifeboats were also standardized. These were basically copies of the model used in Great Britain by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. They were self-righting and self-bailing, but they were heavy too. Lifeboats were usually launched from ramps located at boat houses on protected waters. They could be propelled by sail or oars.

Surfboats and the line-throwing appliances were stored on wagons equipped with patented "sand wheels." The wagons were pulled from the stationhouse by the station crew to a position on the beach near the scene of a wreck. On the occasion of each wreck, the keeper had to decide which method, boat or line-throwing gear, would be employed in the rescue attempt so that the appropriate wagon could be deployed. While horses were eventually sanctioned for use in hauling the boats, surfman also demonstrated their inventiveness by building rough wooden "board walks" over the sand.

The "eprouvette" mortar, adapted by Captain Ottinger, continued in use through most of the 1870s as the principal line-throwing device. Working with the U. S. Army's Ordnance Department, and in particular with Lieutenant David A. Lyle, produced a marked improvement. A small gun, later called the Lyle gun, was developed and expeditiously delivered to the lifesaving stations during 1878. The new gun had a range of more than 400 yards which, in fact, exceeded the distance capability of the breeches buoy and surfcar gear.

The 1870s also brought some architectural masterpieces to American coastlines. The original stations of 1849 were simple, garage-like shingled structures. When the stations were manned in 1872, the original buildings were not big enough to house the equipment and the crews. Kimball at first planned to

enlarge the old buildings, but because so many were dilapidated, he abandoned that idea in favor of building new houses while using whatever was salvageable.

The first manned stations measured forty-two by eighteen feet. They were shingled structures like the first ones with cedar shakes on both roof and sides. Inside were two levels. At the front, behind large double doors on the first level was the "boat room." All the line, equipment, loaded wagons, etc., were stored in that space. At the rear of the first level was the kitchen. Between the boatroom and the kitchen, positioned across, was a narrow stairway to the second level which contained the berthing area. At one end of the second level, a small room was partitioned off for the keeper. At those stations where an Army storm signal observer was assigned, the other end of the second level was partitioned off for his use, and an outside stairway was built so that his routine would not interrupt the surfmen. The "fronts" of these stations were to leeward of the usual gales, thereby facilitating the opening of the double doors and hence the exit of the equipment.

The first stations had red sides and roofs and were logically called "red houses." By 1880 all new stations were bedecked with overhanging eaves, emblazoned with "gingerbread." They were painted with popular colors that would blend well with the cottages starting to comprise seashore resort communities. Some stations built in the 1880s resembled Swiss chalets, had clock towers and gingerbread, and included brick outhouses. By the 1890s the effects of architect A. B. Bibb were realized and the newest stations took the appearance of rambling, two-story beach homes resplendent with lookout towers.

The Life-Saving Service operated under a system whereby coastal district superintendents reported directly to the General Superintendent, Sumner Kimball. The Inspector of lifesaving stations, a Revenue Marine captain, reported directly to Kimball via the second channel. By this means,

Kimball had effectively established a system of "checks and balances." District superintendents handled the administrative matters of the stations under their regional care, including payrolls, supplies, and similar items. The inspector, through assistant inspectors (all lieutenants, USRM) assigned to each district, managed the operational aspects such as drills, inspections, investigations, and the like. The geographic district boundaries were generally devised with regard to coastline and political boundary similarities. From time to time, they were renumbered and renamed as were the stations included within them. The assistant inspectors were the principal innovators in the Life-Saving Service.

The crews were originally employed on the basis of their experience and skills as wreckers and surfmen. The first surfmen were occasionally accused of being hired because they shared similar political persuasions, or because they were related to the keepers who selected them. The surfman's salary of \$40.00 a month in the 1870s was sufficient to prompt jealousy and the accusations that follow unsuccessful applications. The politics referred to were mostly local. Family and friendship ties did exist, but then the original paid surfmen also came from sparsely populated coastal areas where such ties would be a normal occurrence. The keeper was usually older than the surfmen and was either an outstanding surfman in his own right or was most capable in the art of impressing the district superintendent; sometimes he was both. Neither keeper nor surfman was motivated to do much more than keep his job indefinitely. His duty was to react to a wreck.

The lieutenants, being frequently subject to rotational transfers, were not permanent fixtures. They sought efficiency, conducted inspections, carried out physical examinations in company with a doctor of the Marine Hospital Service, sought to improve the equipment, set up watch requirements, enforced regulations, and in general, totally disrupted the status quo. The assistant inspectors made

a lot of sense, as in the area of enforcing the proper execution of beach patrols through the passage of brass checks between the watches assigned to adjacent stations. Sometimes, however, their zeal seemed misguided. For example, the enforcement of physical standards in a particular district saw most of the experienced surfmen, who had only a year earlier won gold lifesaving medals discharged from duty. Another was when an arbitrary order requiring a crew to man a heavy new-type surfboat, instead of a lighter one, to attempt an offshore rescue. The result was that upon their return to the surfline, the totally exhausted crew could not avoid broaching to, and three surfmen died.

The overall record of the military inspectors was one of positive achievement. Motor surfboats were developed and placed into use, and modern communications were employed. The effectiveness of the service, when measured in lives-saved compared with lives-exposed, approached 100%.

In 1889 the service became "uniformed." The idea of a uniformed service generated from a practice on the Great Lakes where crews, by now full-time, of lifeboat and lifesaving stations adopted a naval-type uniform of their own which gave them community status. After much deliberation, uniforms were adopted and prescribed for use by the keepers and surfmen. What would have been an enthusiastic response turned to indignation when it was learned that the surfmen were supposed to pay for the outfit themselves and that their first pay periods of the next winter season would be dedicated to the cost of the uniform in advance of its delivery.

A consequence of being an uniformed service was the ready acquisition of a wartime mission. In 1898 during the Spanish-American War, lifesaving stations filled an important role in coastal defense. The surfmen became sentinels and their communications network would have reported the approach of the Spanish Fleet. While the Spanish never really posed a serious threat,

the population was anxious over the possibility of enemy warships attacking our coastal cities. The life-savers helped to ease those fears.

When the final gong sounded for the U. S. Life Saving Service in 1915, the innovations and discipline brought by the Revenue Cutter Service aided the creation of the Coast Guard.

Perhaps the heyday of the lifesavers was their first decade: 1871-1881. It was then that they experienced their greatest growth and accomplished their greatest rescues. As the 1880s moved into the 1890s, and the century turned, the advent of steamships had long brought to an end the immigrant packets crashing on lee shores. The replacement of sailing vessels resulted in changes for the service. Many reveal an increasing number of accidents involving pleasure craft such as naphtha-powered launches, catboats, and canoes. Occupants either swam ashore or were drowned. There were seemingly few opportunities to employ the crews as they had been in the first decade. Meanwhile, the service's expenses mounted annually with no increase in the number of lives saved.

As the years passed, what was at once a healthy salary for surfmen became less and less attractive to the inhabitants of coastal areas. Descendants of old-time surfmen turned to more profitable work as the beaches became resort centers. Only on the desolate stretches of coast, such as Hatteras, did families continue to pursue lifesaving as a vocation. No longer were numbers of experienced and competent surfmen ready to sign on at the lifesaving stations. It fell to the service to train its own personnel. This proved difficult as many of the old-timers, left behind when progress offered its tempting opportunities, held onto their jobs and there were, as a result, too few new positions to offer to warrant instituting a full-scale recruiting and training program. Civil Service retirement was still a thing of the future and, in 1896, all surfmen had become civil servants, thereby subject to all its rules for employment.

The physical examinations was no longer valid as more and more surfmen and keepers became senior citizens. There were instances of keepers in their seventies manning the customary sweep oar while the strokes were manned by men in their sixties. Kimball tried repeatedly for a surfmen retirement law but never succeeded. When the end came, it was almost a relief. The law which created the Coast Guard and which retired Kimball also retired a large number of the elderly surfmen and keepers.

For forty-four years, Sumner Increase Kimball ran the U. S. Life-Saving Service. He survived the turbulent political times of the last part of the 19th century maintaining his reputation in assuring an honest, efficient, and nonpartisan administration. As a reward, the law which created the Coast Guard in 1915, also provided for Kimball's retirement. If there is a criticism of Kimball, it would have to be that he allowed his organization to age with him. He assumed his post as division chief at the age of thirty-seven; he retired at eighty-one.

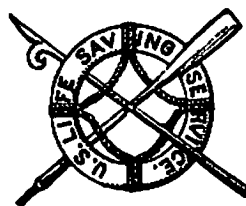
In retrospect, the U. S. Life-Saving Service was a noble institution. From 1871 to 1914, while in incidents involving 28,121 vessels, the USLSS saved 178,741 individuals. And though they lost 1,455, this total is very nearly equaled by the current annual toll on recreational vessels alone.

In his annual report of 1914, Kimball-having lost out in his many bids for a retirement program for his people-endorsed the merger of the Revenue-Cutter and Life Saving Services:

“As the work of the two services is similar, so far as relates to the saving of life and property from shipwrecks and as the personnel of the two bureaus are in constant cooperation in that line of endeavor, the joining of the two services as proposed, and the granting of equal benefits to the officers and employees of each alike, would seem to be a step in the interest of efficient and economical administration and deserving of the favor-

able consideration of Congress.”

The congressional record of the hearings reflects the emphasis that the Congress placed on Kimball's views on the creation of the Coast Guard. Thus, on 28 January 1915, the lifesavers became part of the new United States Coast Guard.





# CHAPTER ONE:

## *When In Doubt, Reorganize*

1849-1870

**A**fter Captain Douglas Ottinger had completed his task of supervising construction on the first boat houses, he turned over the key and a card of instruction on how to use the equipment to those persons in whose charge they were left. He then prepared the expected letter report, dated 21 May 1849, and addressed it to the Secretary of Treasury, W. M. Meredith. The last point Ottinger made in his report was as follows:

“As the efficiency of the apparatus at the Surf Boat Stations depends almost entirely on the projectiles being kept in proper condition and the persons in whose charge they are left receive no compensation and can seldom spare the time necessary to keep them in good order, I would respectfully propose that the Commanders of Revenue vessels within whose cruising limits, the stations are, should visit them once every two months and examine the apparatus-with the person having charge of the same and have the mortar and shot cleaned and the lines recoiled. The individuals in charge of the boat houses and the people generally along the coast, appear to feel much interest in this matter, and I believe will exert themselves to make it useful.”

Thus even before the volunteer system was placed into actual operation, one of its principal proponents advised the office with whom lay the ultimate responsibility for success or failure, that the new equipment needed continual care and inspection in order to remain effective.

Previously, on January 16, 1849, Captain

Ottinger had advised Congressman William A. Newell of his progress implementing the appropriations secured through Newell's effort. In his letter to the Congressman, Ottinger announced his intention of suggesting to the Secretary of Treasury that Commanders of Revenue Vessels visit the stations on a periodic basis and recommended to Newell that future appropriations contain provision in the law for such inspections.

While not of the frequency recommended by Captain Ottinger, inspections of the stations were undertaken. The New York Life Saving and Benevolent Association appears to have taken some early interest in this regard. A reasonably comprehensive inspection report was submitted to that association on November 12, 1853, by Israel I. Merritt, an experienced wrecker. During his inspection, he was accompanied by Captain Ottinger, who discovered that his spiral wires for use in connecting the mortar shot with the shot line were damaged by rust. There are indications that the Association expended their own meager funds during this period to make repairs to the stations and equipment and to pay for Captain Merritt's inspection expenses.

Up until the time of the employment of salaried keepers, the various persons in charge of the stations reported to the New York Life Saving Benevolent Association regarding the various instances of assistance rendered using the government equipment. Whenever damage to the equipment occurred, it was reported so that it might be repaired, and recommendations for improvements in equipment noted.

In 1854, the tentative appointees for dis-

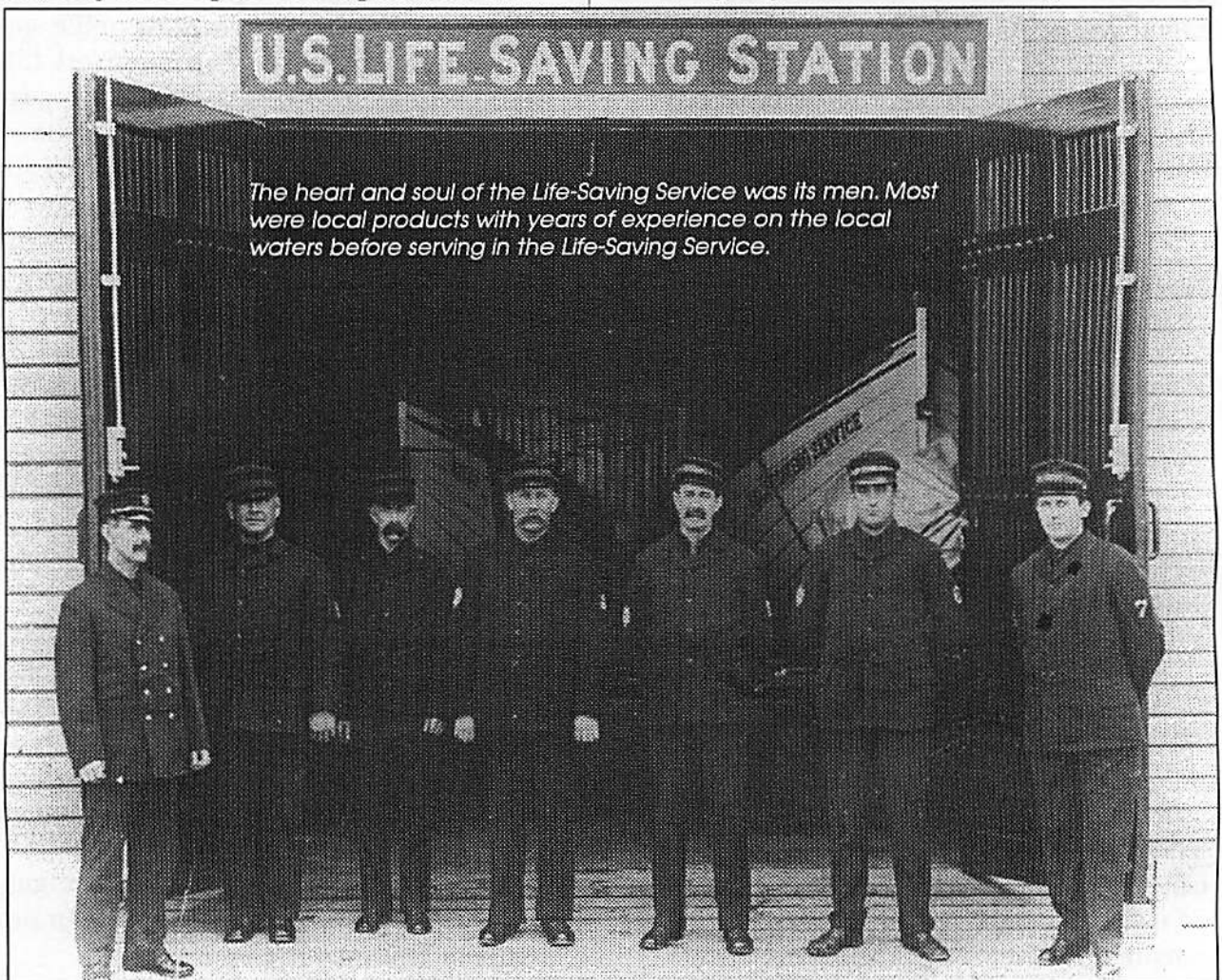
trict superintendent, Col. Samuel C. Dunham of New Jersey and J.N. Shellinger of Long Island, were individually requested to serve as government agents by the Secretary of the Treasury. This required them to conduct inspections of their respective coasts, reporting on the condition of existing stations and recommending sites for the construction of new ones provided for by Congress in August of that year. In April 1855 Captain John Faunce, U.S.R.M., was ordered to inspect the construction of these stations. Faunce's part in the development of the life saving establishment was to be greatly enlarged some sixteen years later.

It was expected that the two district superintendents would not limit themselves to the collection of their pay checks. To a large extent, they lived up to that expectation and

did as creditable a job as could be expected by two such political appointees working under limited direction from the Department of Treasury. They conducted inspections on an intermittent basis when travel expenses became available.

In March 1856 a resolution was adopted by the New Jersey State Legislature which attempted to upgrade the existing federal system. The resolution was then sent to the Chairman of the House of Representatives Committee of Commerce, E.B. Washburne. The recommendations contained in that resolution included the following provisions and estimated annual expenses:

1. "Pay of boats crew (seven in number) at every station house, to be called by the Keeper, as circumstances may require, say thirty days at two dollars a day:



\$5,880.

2. "Coroners bills to be paid to the respective counties, by the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, through the Treasurer of this State, as provided by the laws of this State, estimated at about: \$5,000.

3. "To encourage and reward the brave and heroic efforts of those who jeopardize their lives to save the lives and property of the shipwrecked, to be paid at the discretion of the Secretary of the Treasury, through such medium as his judgement may dictate, say: \$2,000."

Upon reviewing these, Secretary Guthrie wrote Congressman Washburne on May 5th, 1856, and made the following reply:

1. "If provision is made for the pay of the boats crews, for holding inquests, and for reward for risk and exertion, on the Coast of New Jersey, it must also be made for the Coast of New York, for the Coast of Massachusetts and indeed for every place at which there are stations or boats, the expense of all which would be very considerable. I do not recommend provision to pay the crews of boats; because so far, there has not been any necessity for such provision. Whenever there has been occasion, and a boat and apparatus have been at hand, there has been no difficulty in obtaining persons on the spot, accustomed to such business, and ready and willing to manage them; and it is believed that the sentiment of humanity and the prospect of gain to be derived from saving life and property, will be found sufficient motives to secure the requisite service. While to vest authority in the hands of forty or fifty station keepers, to call crews into service at their discretion, could not fail to be attended with great expense and abuse.

2. "I do not recommend provision to defray the expense of inquests on bodies cast ashore, because the living and not the dead are the objects of the law, and because such inquests do not appear to me to be at all necessary. If the law of the State of New Jersey make them necessary, then the expense of inquests should be defrayed by the State, and not by the General Government. To undertake this business, would be an interference of the Federal Government in a subject of State legislation, and if it be commenced in New Jersey, it must be extended to every part of our sea coast, and perhaps of our lakes, [and] principal rivers; calling for the employment of numerous Federal officers or agents-bringing them in collision with the State authorities, and opening a new field of demands and impositions on the federal Treasury.

3. "I am not in favor of providing rewards for extraordinary risk and exertion, believing as before stated that the same services can be procured without them and from other motives and considerations. The administration of such a fund, if provided, would be equally delicate and difficult and besides this fact, I consider the self satisfaction and the applause of the community, which follow an heroic action in the cause of humanity, are stronger incentives and more appropriate rewards than such a fund would afford."

On November 23, 1863, Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase, directed the Long Island Superintendent, J. N. Shellinger, to examine, and report on the conditions of the stations on the Long Island and New Jersey Coast. Shellinger's report was submitted on March 22, 1864, and revealed a number of deficiencies. Besides these, he made two major recommendations:

(1) that the keepers be "good surfmen," and:

(2) that the keepers reside near their stations.

The report further indicates Shellinger's fondness for corrugated iron surf boats which he enthusiastically endorsed. He was enthusiastically opposed to wooden boats. Shellinger also preferred the galvanized iron chimneys common to the Long Island houses over the brick ones found in New Jersey.

On July 14, 1866, William Newell, once again elected as a representative from New Jersey to the 39th Congress, made a speech in support of an amendment offered by Representative O'Neill of Pennsylvania. The amendment provided an additional \$10,000.00 appropriation to a sundry civil appropriation bill for "additional station houses, life boats, and other appliances, etc." In his speech Newell strongly urged the justice of paying the volunteer life saving crews, intending that the crews be paid for actual services rendered but not necessarily on a full-time salary basis. O'Neill's amendment was adopted in the Act of July 28, 1866, but the proposition to pay the crews was not included.

Although no new stations were built, a number of keepers were appointed to fill the gaps of the Civil War. Also, funds were made available to effect urgently needed repairs and to replenish equipment at the existing life saving stations. As a follow-up to the improvements provided by the Congressional appropriations of fiscal year 1867, Captain Frank Barr, U.S.R.M., was detailed to conduct an inspection in 1869 similar to the one made five years earlier by Shellinger.

Captain Barr's findings agreed in general with Shellinger on the need for keepers to live near the stations and for them to be good surfmen. He further recommended that more specific directions and instructions were needed for the keepers; that lighthouse keepers should not be station keepers on a collateral basis; that keepers should not be appointed on a political basis; that a General Supervisor for the service who was acquainted with boats and gunnery and removed from politics be

appointed; that the old-fashioned mortars be replaced and certain useless pieces of equipment be disposed of; that a method of communications for day and night contact with wrecked vessels be devised; and that the boat wagons be improved so they would not damage other boats. Captain Barr stated that: "the houses, equipments, etc., are ... or will be, by the 1st of December (1869) in good order and complete."

Thus the scene in 1869 was set within the Treasury Department to continue its past pattern of maintaining the life-saving equipment; of paying keepers to supervise each station; of appointing superintendents to watch the keepers; and of having periodic inspections by officers detailed by the Secretary to keep a watchful eye on the material condition of the life-saving stations. Newell's urgings of 1866 to provide monetary incentives to surfmen engaged in rescue operations appear to have fallen on deaf ears.

It must be recognized that Congressmen Newell had a political ax to grind for, after all, the employment of certain surfmen at wrecks by keepers could well be attended by opportunities for patronage. As a Lincoln-appointed New Jersey district superintendent in the early 1860s, Newell had many friends along the coastline which also comprised his congressional district. Political considerations notwithstanding, it must be assumed that the surfmen who put the "bug" in Newell's ear for their remuneration did so because they believed it to be justified—since 1847, they had given their services voluntarily and their record for preserving humanity was beyond reproach.

Perhaps the very success of the volunteer life-saving system's accomplishments mitigated against changes in its method of operation. During the decade of the 1860s, the life-saving record of the patrolling cutters of the Revenue Marine averaged but sixteen lives saved per year. The volunteer coastal life-savers averaged no less than 200 lives saved per year. In any event, the legislature of the State of New

Jersey never faltered in its efforts to achieve employment for its surfmen constituency. Its perseverance gained fruition in the summer of 1870.

The Hon. Charles Haight of New Jersey, upon reviewing a resolution of the New Jersey State Legislature, moved an amendment to an appropriations bill to provide for the employment of crews. This amendment failed to secure its adoption. A substitute amendment was proposed by the Hon. S. S. Cox of New York for the alternate station system. It passed and was incorporated in the Act of July 15, 1870. No provision was made for the manning of any Long Island stations.

In giving effect to Congressman Cox's legislation, stations were manned on the New Jersey coast. The unfortunate choice of the word alternate meant that the "odd" numbered stations received a six man crew during December, January and February. Henry W. Sawyer, the New Jersey Superintendent, complained in an inspection report to the Secretary in 1870 that surfmen would be located at stations merely because they had "odd" numbers while remotely "even" numbered stations went vacant. This was especially objectionable to him because most of the larger towns were adjacent to, or actually encompassed, "odd" numbered stations.

During the 1870-1871 winter season a number of severe and fatal shipwrecks occurred on the New Jersey and Long Island coasts with the predictable public and Congressional reaction, especially since some of the wrecks occurred at the very doorsteps of the newly-manned stations. Recriminations and hindsight by the observers, combined with poor leadership and mismanagement on the part of the would-be rescuers, started the press, the public, the Congress, and the Treasury Department, on a quest to root out perceived inefficiency and corruption, and create with whatever amount of money was needed a new organization which would prevent a recurrence of such a disastrous year.

To this end, the Treasury Department, in

the person of the Division of Revenue Marine, fully aware of the mood of Congress by the end of that fateful winter, approached the Congress still in session with three apparent observations:

- 1) employment of surfmen at alternate stations was unsatisfactory.
- 2) additional stations were needed to close the intervals between the existing ones.
- 3) a considerable outlay of money was needed to repair and resupply the existing stations.

On April 20, 1871, Congress appropriated \$200,000 and authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to employ crews of experienced surfmen at such stations and for such periods as he might deem necessary and proper.

This accomplished, the Division of Revenue Marine set about the business of getting its house in order. After determining the exact condition of the prevailing life-saving establishment, they then had to project what improvements could be made notwithstanding all the "satisfactory" reports of inspection received in years past from the superintendents and the assurances expressed by former Division Chief Deveraux in 1869 with regard to the competence of the Superintendents. He said "the superintendents of both coasts are intelligent and faithful officers and neglect nothing to further the purposes meditated by Congress in the organization of those beneficent establishments, "life saving stations" (1869 Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury). It fell upon the Treasury Department to send Capt. John Faunce and Lieut. L. N. Stodder of the U. S. Revenue Marine on an inspection trip.

Captain Faunce was no stranger to the Life Saving establishment, his having been detailed on April 14, 1855, to supervise the construction of the new stations authorized in 1854. Faunce was to have used his "nautical" skills and "confer freely" with the agents appointed for the two Coasts, Samuel C. Dunham of New Jersey and J. N. Shellinger of

Long Island. He was also to expedite the completion and make a report of the condition of the stations under the superintendance of the aforementioned gentlemen. On June 2, 1855, he was told that having completed this duty, he was to proceed to the cutter *Jackson* in Savannah. On the 29th of June not yet having completed his duties, Secretary Guthrie suspended Faunce's traveling expenses and ordered him to proceed in person to Washington. Perhaps Captain Faunce was being a little too thorough in his interpretation of his duties? Or perhaps he conferred a little "too freely?" In any event, it appears that the Department of 1869 had picked the right man for the right job.

Faunce was no stranger to controversy, having been the Commander of the U. S. Revenue Cutter *Harriet Lane* in Charleston Harbor on that fateful day in 1861 when the Confederates opened fire on Fort Sumter. The *Harriet Lane* is credited with firing the first Union shot of that war.

While not quite in the same position of the Confederate leaders at Charleston, the superintendents of both coasts and some of the keepers were soon to feel the blast of Capt. John Faunce's broadside.

Captain Faunce was instructed to carefully examine each building and its equipment, thoroughly testing the latter, and making a schedule for the same stating definitely the condition in which each article was found. He also was to inspect the coasts and determine what changes should be made in the location of existing stations and where new ones might be established.

Having performed his mission, Captain Faunce filed an inspection report, a synopsis of which follows:

#### SYNOPSIS

Of Report of Capt. John Faunce, on Inspection of Life Saving stations on Coasts of Long Island and New Jersey, August 1871.

#### STATION HOUSES

On the coasts both of Long Island and New Jersey the houses, with few exceptions, [are] in a filthy condition, apparatus rusty, and many articles rendered worthless from neglect, many articles missing, of which Keeper could give no account, many houses showed no signs of having been visited by anyone for months. A competent person should always be left in charge.

#### STATIONS

The establishing of the new stations recommended will place the stations on either coast within easy communicating distance one with the other.

A flag-staff to be placed at each station, with a set of flags for use by day and signal lights for use at night, so that in case a wreck came on shore near a station, the two stations adjoining could be summoned to assist in saving her.

A pair of powerful Marine Glasses should be kept at each station.

A large sheet of metal should be suspended from the flag-staff at each station, with the number of the station painted upon it, so that crews of passing vessels could become familiar with the location of the stations.

Coal should be substituted for wood as being more economical for use and convenient for storage and transportation. Iron cots, mattresses and blankets should be provided for each station for the use of the shipwrecked.

A record book should be kept at each station in which should be recorded all wrecks and all other transactions in which keeper and crew are engaged, also, a receipt and expenditure book.

#### SUPERINTENDENTS

Of these there are now two, to-wit, Henry Hunting, for the New York coast, and Henry W. Sawyer, for the coast of New Jersey.

Mr. Hunting accompanied Capt. Faunce on his tour of inspections. He is evidently inexperienced, and unacquainted with the use of

apparatus, but apparently anxious to gain information, and a smart active seaman, and with proper instruction would be a valuable man for the position.

Mr. Sawyer met the inspector at but two stations, although it had been known for months that this inspection was to be made, no preparations had been made for it, and the inspector was obliged to depend for information on the keepers of stations and the residents nearby. "The stations in his District were shamefully filthy, with but three exceptions. At the two stations he (Sawyer) visited with myself, he was totally ignorant of the nature of the apparatus, its requirements or use."

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Coast of Long Island to be divided into two Districts; the East District to extend from Moutauk Point to Smith's Point, and the Western from Smith's Point to Coney Island.

2. The Coast of New Jersey to be divided into two Districts, the Northern District to extend from Sandy Hook to Staten Island, and the Southern thence to Cape May.

3. An experienced and competent surfman to be appointed as Superintendent of each District, to act as Coast Inspector of Customs at every wreck in his District. His compensation to be \$1500 per annum, with \$3.00 per diem added when actually employed inspecting customs. He should reside on the beach within his district, and should be required to pass a professional examination. "The want of practical, competent superintendents is the source of the neglect met with at every station."

#### KEEPERS

There are fifty-four keepers on the two coasts. Of these very few are competent to perform their duties. Some live far from their stations and are not surfmen, some are too old, three are light-house keepers and receive no salary; nearly all know nothing of the use of the apparatus belonging to their stations;

while many are appointed solely on political grounds.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

That none but thorough practical surfmen be appointed, that they be required to reside near the station; that men of courage and decision capable of commanding, and to whom the crew can look up, be selected; that they be required to pass an examination preliminary to appointment, and that they be allowed an annual compensation of \$300 each.

They should be held accountable for all apparatus belonging to their respective stations and for the good order of the crew, and should be required to keep a record-book and the account of receipts and expenditures.

#### CREWS

On the Long Island Coast the crews consist of volunteers and receive no pay. They were generally present at inspection and appeared to good advantage.

On the New Jersey Coast, no crew was present at inspection. The crews at alternate stations on this coast receive pay. This plan works very badly, causing great dissatisfaction at the stations where no pay is received. At some stations where not needed, a crew was paid, while at others where greatly needed, the crew was not paid.

The fault is in the act of Congress, which prescribes "alternate stations." Many of the crews are appointed on political grounds solely. One keeper was told to confer with the Postmaster of the place as to what men should be appointed at his station, and he was not allowed to use his judgment as to whether they were qualified or not. Other similar instances are cited.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The crews to consist of seven men for each station; to be selected from amongst the most competent surfmen residing near the station; experience and capacity to be made the basis

of qualification rather than political or other considerations.

They should receive compensation at the rate of \$10 per month from April 1st to December 1st and from December 1st to April 1st \$25 per month.

During the winter season one station per man should be furnished the crews and they should be kept constantly at their stations. Only one man need be present in summer.

At stations Nos. 1, 18, 20, 22 and 23 on the Long Island Coast, and at Nos. 1, 4, 7, 19, 27 and 28, on the New Jersey Coast, no stations would be required, as these stations are near towns.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

### SUPPLY BOATS FOR STATIONS

The sand-beaches on which stations are located are detached from the mainland and generally approachable only by means of boats. On the score of economy, two boats should be built in which to transport supplies. They should be each 35 ft. long and draw 14 inches of water. Probable cost not over \$1,200.00 or \$1,400.00. Supplies should be brought from New York or Philadelphia.

### GENERAL OFFICE

Recommended to be established in New York City and a Captain of Revenue Marine placed in charge, to be assisted by one Lieutenant and a clerk.

Through this office all reports from Superintendents and keepers should pass. Through the establishment of this office supplies would be more economically provided and the thorough organization of the service effected.

### CONDEMNED APPARATUS

All condemned articles to be gathered at a convenient point and disposed of. The boats if built, could collect the same at a trifling expense.

## RULES AND REGULATIONS

Recommended that Rules and Regulations be drawn up and distributed, specifying duties of Superintendent, Keeper, etc.

## CODE OF SIGNALS

Recommended to be established for signalling from one station to another.

## NEW STATION HOUSES

Recommended to be built are to be 42 x 18 feet, with 14 feet posts.

## RATIONS

Recommended that when commuted, the price be at 25¢ per ration.

## SITES FOR STATIONS

Recommended that the Legislatures of New York and New Jersey be requested to provide for and guarantee the site for Life Saving stations.

## LIFE RAFT

Should it be advisable to place life rafts at some stations, they should be of the most approved models, and the apparatus generally should embrace the improvements that have been made within recent years.

A list of articles required is appended to the Report.

Thus Captain Faunce provided the impetus for the much-needed changes. It must be remembered, however, that ever since the construction of the first eight boat houses was completed in 1849, Faunce's brother Revenue Marine officers, serving as inspectors, had been calling for the changes and recommendations that Captain Faunce vigorously set forth in his report. It does not matter, perhaps, who was to blame for the deterioration of the service to a point where postmasters could bestow political favors by appointing keepers. It should be emphasized that the fault for this state of affairs rested not with the life-saving volunteers nor the keepers themselves for that matter. The situation likely developed from



the manner in which the Department of Treasury itself chose its superintendents, and no doubt their selection was stimulated by political favors requested by or gratuitously bestowed upon Congressmen or other powerful interests from New York and New Jersey. In any event, Faunce, maybe naively, but more likely with full deliberation, aired the whole matter before the Congress when he presented his report which, in response to a resolution by the Senate, was transmitted to that body on January 22, 1872.

The principal outcome of Faunce's inspection report was the almost total adoption of his recommendations for improvement. It was reported in the Secretary of the Treasury's Annual Report of 1872 that immediately following the receipt of Faunce's report by Congress, "incompetent and inefficient officers were at once removed and more suitable persons were appointed in their places." Alas, poor Henry Sawyer, who had even predicted the 1870-71 winter disasters, was among the first to go.

Curiously, only six of the twenty-eight keepers on the New Jersey Coast were replaced during the period 1870 through 1873. One of those six was reassigned to a new station and the cause for the changes in the other five can not be documented but at least one of those five enjoyed a reputation of being an extremely competent wrecker and surfer. It is difficult to perceive that those remaining 22 keepers would have been retained were they as "incompetent and inefficient" as the report related. Nor is there any reason to believe that the keepers on the Long Island Coast were any less competent than their New Jersey counterparts. Apparently, the reference to incompetence and inefficiency was intended to apply to the two men who were the superintendents of both coasts, both of whom had been appointed by a previous Secretary of the Treasury.

The employment of six man crews at each of the existing stations as well as the construction and manning of intermediate

stations represented the earliest benefit of the reorganization. The development of an extremely comprehensive set of Regulations for governing the service and their promulgation on January 11, 1873, marked the second major change in the service. Through the instrumentality of regulation was laid the basis of the Life-Saving Service's organization. Standards of competence as a prerequisite for employment, both physical and professional, were established, and heavy emphasis was placed against the employment of persons solely as political reward, although that practice unfortunately continued to some degree.

The concept of convening a board of competent persons to determine the equipment needs of the service was not new, as the life saving establishment preceded the development of a model for the original government surf boat in 1848. As noted earlier, another such board was convened in 1858. In any event, an outgrowth of the Faunce report and the reorganization was the ultimate appointing on August 16, 1873, of a somewhat permanent Board to examine life saving apparatus on a continuing basis.

The most subtle, but perhaps most far-reaching change to the organization was the interweaving, on a permanent basis, of the officers of the Revenue Marine and the surfmen of the Life Saving Service. The passage of the Act of June 10, 1872, prescribing the appointment of two Revenue Marine Officers as "Superintendents of Construction," and the subsequent Regulation establishing the Office of Inspector of Life-Saving Stations, were the implementing authorizations for this integration of skills. Captain Faunce and Capt. J. H. Merryman were designated as the superintendents of construction. As soon as the Regulations were promulgated in 1873, Captain Merryman was designated as Inspector with his office being located in New York.

The subsequent physical expansion of the service led to the appointment of other

Revenue Marine Officers as assistant inspector of their respective geographic districts. The gradual interposition of authority by the inspector and his assistants led to the creation of a rather delicate dual chain of command. The flow from the Chief of the Division of Revenue Marine went down to the Inspector and from there to his assistant inspectors and finally to the keepers. A second flow from the Chief of the Division went to the civilian Superintendents of the life-saving districts; from those men, it continued on down to the keepers, and lastly to the crews.

The Revenue Marine Officers, acting as inspectors, chiefly concerned themselves with the operations of the individual units, the drills, the competence of the crews, the investigation of deaths occurring within the scope of the service., etc. The district superintendents handled routine administrative matters such as employment payrolls, solicitation of contracts for fuel, repairs, etc. A rather clever organization of "checks and balances" was created within this framework for the day-to-day operation and administration of the service. It is also significant that all major expenditures of construction money was removed from the local scene and placed in the hands of two relatively senior, hand-picked Revenue Marine Captains.

None of these improvements could have been achieved without the valuable assistance of certain Senators and Members of the House of Representatives who saw to it that not only the requisite funds were made available, but that the necessary legislative authority was granted.

The \$200,000 appropriation of April 20, 1871, was followed by another \$100,000 on March 3, 1873. Some \$30,000 to extend the U. S. Army Storm Signal Service to the Life Saving Stations was appropriated at the same time. The initial broad authority of the 1871 Act allowing the Secretary of The Treasury to employ crews at such places and for such periods as he deemed necessary and proper enabled the Service to escape the traditional

boundaries of the coasts of Long Island and New Jersey. The subsequent legislation of March 1873, however, required the Secretary "to report to the House at the next session of Congress the points on the sea and lake coasts of the United States at which the establishment of life saving stations would best subserve the interests of commerce and humanity with a detailed estimate of the cost of such stations."

Not that this seemed to be a difficult problem; local knowledge of these areas regarding the location of previous wrecks coupled with a seaman's knowledge of potential trouble areas could provide the answer to this requirement. But the analytical Kimball was not satisfied with this "rule of thumb" method for establishing stations. What he needed were statistics; something that he could use and then lay on the table for the world to see. It stood to reason that since all shipwrecked goods from foreign sources landed on the coasts were subject to duty, the various collectors of customs could provide him with the historical statistics of shipwrecks occurring within their respective districts. These records did exist but were in many instances inaccurate with regard to exact location, lives lost, etc., all of which were important facts when it came to determining life-saving needs. All available sources of wreck information were canvassed for the desired data, including superintendents of life-saving, wreckmasters, underwriters, light house keepers, etc. The result was the tabulation of reasonably accurate marine accident statistics from the period of about 1863 to 1873.

With the continuing need for such statistical information, the Chief of the Division of Revenue Marine prevailed, through the Secretary of the Treasury, to obtain passage of the Act of June 20, 1874, a law which required, among other things, that Masters report to Collectors of Customs all marine disasters occurring to U. S. vessels, according to the specific definition of the word "disaster." Commencing with the Annual Report of the

Secretary of Treasury of 1875 and continuing in the various Annual Reports of the Life-Saving Service through 1914, these reports of marine disasters were tabulated and published annually; they were also compared against the reports of assistance rendered, or wreck reports, submitted by the keepers of Life-Saving Stations, which were similarly tabulated and published in the Annual Reports.

Following various recodifications, the Act of June 20, 1874, later reflected in 33 U.S.C. 361, 362, 363, and 365; and now in 46 USC 6101. The present use of marine accident reports by the Coast Guard parallels the original intent, that of preventing death. Rather than providing more sites for rescue stations, however, the present emphasis is on developing, preventative measures through the enforcement of safety regulations and, where they fail, through the providing of modern rescue assistance.

Immediately following the Civil War, there was a temporary lull in shipping but that was soon to change.

For its immediate ten-year future, the newly reorganized U. S. Life Saving Service was to face the honest challenge of an ever increasing work-load caused by an expanding fleet of commercial vessels; particularly vessels enrolled in coastwise trade.

Without attempting to analyze the economics of the U. S. Merchant Marine, U.S. foreign trade (registered vessels) steadily declined while domestic trade expanded at a rapid rate until 1873. Development of steam propulsion on U.S. vessels engaged in foreign trade never really got off the ground, while in the later years vessels propelled by machinery in the Coastwise trade increased significantly.

Finally, we should consider that characteristic of U. S. foreign trade

shipping which shows the percentages of imports and exports carried in U. S. bottoms. The table below indicates this at five-year intervals commencing in 1825 and continuing through 1910; it can be readily seen that the bulk of all foreign trade after the Civil War was carried in foreign ships while the bulk of U.S. hulls, under protection of the the cabotage laws, engaged in domestic trade.

It is fairly obvious that where the principal potential foreign voyage shipwreck "customers" before the Civil War were U. S. vessels, after that war the foreign trade emphasis had decidedly swung to foreign hulls. As the foreign fleets shifted from sail to steam, the risk of shipwreck on a lee shore diminished considerably, particularly for the foreign steamers sailing rhumb lines to the major ports of New York and Norfolk.

The consequence of this shift in foreign trade shipping patterns, both in nationality and in means of propulsion, was to decrease

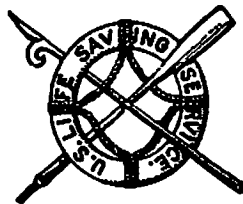
**Foreign Trade in U. S. Bottoms (Imports and Exports)**

Year	% Dollar Value	% Tonnage
1825	92.3	91
1830	89.9	88
1835	84.5	68
1840	82.9	69
1845	81.7	69
1850	72.5	60
1855	75.6	65
1860	66.5	71
1865	27.7	47
1870	35.6	38
1875	26.1	30
1880	17.4	19
1885	15.3	21
1890	12.9	23
1895	11.7	23
1900	9.3	22
1905	12.1	23
1910	8.7	22

the exposure of larger, foreign trade vessels and to center it upon the rapidly increasing coastal U.S. sailing fleet.

By the end of 1874, through his own efforts and ingenuity, and largely assisted by his staff of Revenue Marine officers, Kimball had created a well organized, or should we say "reorganized," federal service endowed with the following attributes:

1. An enforceable set of regulations and a prescribed organization.
2. Experienced and competent personnel.
3. A means of obtaining data from which performance would be measured and continuing appropriations justified.



# CHAPTER TWO:

## *The First Ten Years Are the Hardest*

### *Part One: 1871-1873*

**T**he year 1871 brought to the nation the willingness of a Congress to tackle the problem of shipwreck head-on. To that end, the establishment of new stations, refurbishment of the existing ones, and the employment of experienced crews, was simultaneously authorized. Captain John Faunce made his inspection report during that year and the necessary refurbishments and repairs recommended by him were in hand by the Secretary of the Treasury and his Revenue Marine Division.

During the 1870-71 winter season when men had been employed in New Jersey at the "odd" numbered stations, there is no evidence that any efforts were made to rehabilitate the existing stationhouses. In all probability, the men continued to live in their respective homes where their homes were located near the stations. At the other more remote stations, make-shift alterations were, in all likelihood, effected and the surfmen "roughed it." In "roughing it" however, the men would not have suffered much greater discomfort in the existing government houses than they would in their typical coastal houses of the day.

If, however, men were expected to reside in the existing station houses on a regular basis and perform the functions intended in the reorganized service, plans had to be developed to make those previously unmanned boat-garages habitable. The new 42' x 18' station houses recommended by Faunce also needed to be designed and then constructed at the desired sites. And leases or deeds had to be acquired for those new sites. Experienced surfmen needed to be processed and employed for each of the new stations—all the existing Long Island stations, as well as the alternately

unmanned "even" numbered stations of New Jersey. Existing models of equipment needed to be examined and new designs tested. What was needed for the winter season of 1871-72 was a combination of mild weather, fewer than usual storms, and a generous quantity of good luck to carry the service through the transition period.

With the \$200,000 appropriated in April of 1871 and the sites identified by Captain Faunce in his report the following August, the fall of 1871 saw the construction of new houses at twelve new sites in New Jersey and six in Long Island.

The new government houses measured 42 feet by 18 feet, just as Captain Faunce had recommended. Each house had 14 foot posts on the sides. The peak of the roof was about 22 feet above the ground. As with the construction of the earlier houses, the 1871 houses were built on pilings sunk into the ground. In this case 28, six foot long, six inch diameter red cedar or locust piles were prescribed. Sunk 4-1/2 feet into the sand, the 1-1/2 feet of the piling which protruded formed the foundation for 4" oak planking which was run the length and width of the house. Upon these planks, the upright posts were fastened with locust pins. The lower story ceiling was 9-1/2 feet above the floor, the upper story having a headroom of about 8 feet under the peak. The entire outer structure was enclosed with boards to which were nailed cedar or cypress shingles to form, on the outside walls, a shingled surface 10 inches to the weather and, on the roof, 7-1/2 inches to weather. The inside of each house was also closed on the uprights of both outer walls and the partitions, as well as the ceiling, the material being 7/8" white pine boards not over 6" in width. Six windows about 2-1/2 feet wide by 4 feet high; a hinged door on the front of the house opening

9 feet wide and 9-1/2 feet high; and 2 smaller side doors each 2-3/4' x 7' formed the openings for light and access to the buildings. An inside partition was placed on the lower story of the house 29 feet from the front end; the 29 foot room housed the boat and apparatus and the after part, the mess room and galley. The upper story formed the accommodations for the crew and keeper.

Ultimately, each of these rather plain structures was completely painted a barn red and, logically enough, became known as "red houses."

While bids were being received during the late summer of 1871 to construct the eighteen new houses, estimates were similarly received for rehabilitating the existing houses which had been originally authorized back in 1848-49, 1850 and 1854. The '48-'49-'50 houses were each to be enlarged by the addition to their lengths of another 12 feet; their roofs were to be raised 3-1/2 feet. The larger '54 houses were to receive an addition of about 9 feet in length with no raised roofs. Many of these old houses required moving to new locations, while several had been buried in the sand and required raising.

In the early spring of 1872, work started on the old houses east of Fire Island, Long Island, to effect the recommended alterations. Upon further consideration of the bids received for the work on the other remaining old stations, the decision was made to go ahead and construct new ones in their place. The approximate cost for construction of new houses was about \$1,300.00, for altering the '54 houses \$750.00, and for the '48-'49 houses \$860.00. Fitting of new stations cost about \$2,300.00 and refitting the old ones about \$1,575.00.

New stations were constructed at the following locations:

- Long Island (6)
- Hither Plain
- Tiana
- Forge River
- Jones Beach

- Short Beach
- Far Rockaway

- New Jersey (12)
- Sea Bright
- Shark River
- Mantoloking
- Cedar Creek
- Loveladies Island
- Long Beach
- Little Beach
- South Brigantine
- Absecon
- Pecks Beach
- Sea Island City
- Holly Beach

Since their construction in 1849 and 1850, stations at Eatons Neck (Long Island), and Fishers Island and Watch Hill (Connecticut) had ceased to be included within the scope of the Life-Saving establishment. Because of their proximity to lighthouses and because they were not considered as being within the statutory definition embracing the "coast lines" of Long Island and New Jersey, these stations were never included in the 1854 legislation appointing keepers and consequently were excluded from subsequent appropriations. Their existence can be concluded to have been limited to the years 1850 to 1854. By 1870, there were a total of twenty-six stations on the Long Island Coast and twenty-eight on the Jersey Coast.

During the evaluation of the fifty-four existing stations and their usefulness, Captain Faunce recommended the discontinuance of the original Coney Island station, thus bringing the total of old stations on the Long Island Coast down to twenty-five.

When December 1, 1872, rolled around and the surfmen crews were again to be engaged for duty, all seventy-one stations of the original two life-saving districts had been either built or rebuilt, and they were mostly fitted out; the factor of "good luck," so necessary one year before for the continuation of the

makeshift service, had been eliminated. The Life-Saving Service on those coasts would have to stand or fall on its own merits.

Captain Merryman, accompanied by a marine hospital service doctor, conducted an inspection of each of the stations shortly after the winter season started. They found that a few crews were not yet at their stations due to a delay in delivery of stoves, but for the most part the stations were manned with "very good and able-bodied men." Curiously, the Inspector noted in his report that a few men "proved to be beyond the age prescribed by the Department," but they were well able to pull an oar and handle a boat in the surf.

With regard to the equipment and facilities, Merryman was well pleased, noting with some satisfaction that the new houses had "admirably withstood" a recent snow storm "which in many cases almost filled the old houses." The Captain made a recommendation that the wooden surfboats at the old stations, now approaching their 14th year of age, be replaced by the "Herbert boat," a design which will be discussed later in this chapter in connection with the recommendations of a commission to select new apparatus. He suggested that the houses be painted inside and out by the crews, which led to the introduction of red paint on the outside of the "red houses" in the spring of 1873, and the use of the crews in performing maintenance chores.

Captain Merryman can also be credited with another recommendation: that of locating life boats, as opposed to surfboats, at various inlets on the New Jersey Coast, where they could be easily launched in the quieter and deeper waters inside the inlets.

The first printed volume of regulations was promulgated on January 11, 1873, and was appropriately entitled: *Regulations for the Government of the Life-Saving Service of the United States*.

All totalled this book contained some 105 numbered regulations encompassing the following general categories:

Organization	1-7
Examination	8-12
Duties of Officers	
Inspectors	13-16
Superintendent	17-25
keeper	26-51
Surfmen	52-61
Fiscal Management	62-70
Bills and Vouchers	71-74
Repairs	75-79
General Instructions	80-100
Drill and Exercise	101-105

Appendices to the regulations included a section on signals, mortar and rocket apparatus drills, handling surf boats, rescue by swimming, artificial respiration, and a list of Forms. As comprehensive as these regulations were, it became necessary in subsequent years to issue amendments and, at periodic intervals, new volumes of regulations were printed and distributed to the stations. Of all the regulations, probably those which governed the duties of surfmen are most indicative of the service as a whole.

### Surfmen

52. Upon employment, Surfmen will be required to sign articles, in accordance with Form 2, binding themselves to a faithful performance of the duties required of them.
53. Implicit obedience to all lawful orders from superiors will be exacted of them.
54. No Surfman will absent himself from the station to which he belongs, during the winter months, without permission of the keeper, which will only be granted in extreme cases, such as sickness.
55. As the efficiency of a life-saving station depends upon the good training and discipline of the crew, the strictest attention must be paid by the members thereof to the directions of the keeper on all occasions.

56. During the winter months the beach will be regularly patrolled by the Surfmen every night.

57. The patrol will consist of two men from each station, one to follow the beach towards the next station to the right, and the other to proceed towards the next station to the left, and each will continue his walk until the patrol from the adjacent station is met, when the continuity of the beach will permit.

58. Each patrolmen will carry a beach-lantern, also a red Coston hand-light; and, when an inlet separates the stations, on reaching the shore of the same, he will exchange signals with the patrolman on the opposite side, unless the distance be too great.

59. On the discovery of a wreck or vessel in distress, the patrolman will immediately burn his red Coston handlight, both to alarm the stations and give notice to the wreck that succor is near at hand, and return to his station to assist in the preparation of the apparatus.

60. During the day-time, on those portions of the coast where two adjacent houses cannot be seen from each other, the beach will be sufficiently patrolled to bring them in sight at least three times daily.

61. The Surfmen at each station will take regular turns as patrolmen.

Although the Secretary of the Treasury could, since April 20, 1871, employ crews without regard for specific geographic limitations, it was a special appropriations Act of March 3, 1871, which authorized establishment of stations at Narragansett Pier and Block Island. The Act of June 10, 1872, authorized the establishment of stations on Cape Cod.

The Narragansett Station was completed

by December 1872, conforming with the general specifications of the 1871 Long Island and New Jersey Stations except that its exterior was deemed to present a "very creditable appearance" having been "excellently adapted for the purpose for which it was intended." Some tongue-in-check humor might have been intended by this particular language for it is obvious that the specific appropriation, in advance by some month and a half of the overall enabling appropriation, was the particular whim of a powerful member of the government.

Sites were selected on Cape Cod and Block Island and the terms of the contract with the builders specified that these stations be completed by December 1, 1872. They were completed nearly on time and their equipment was delivered in January 1873. Unfortunately, it was not anticipated that these stations would be constructed by the 1872-73 winter season and consequently funds were not available for the employment of keepers and crews. By the time that the stations were completed and equipped, however, the necessary funds had been found so that by the end of January, all were in operation.

The specification for these stations followed in general those of the original 18 houses. As with the Narragansett Pier house, some external "improvements" in the form of overhanging eaves, different window arrangements, gingerbread, etc, were made. To the eye of the author, which is at least sympathetic to the quest of some architects in reviving authentic colonial and early American construction style, the plain shingle "red houses" have more appeal than the "improved" models which followed.

In any event, ten new stations rose on the following sites on Block Island and Cape Cod:

Block Island  
Cahoons Hollow  
Chatham  
Highland  
Monomoy



Nauset  
 Orleans  
 Peaked Hill Bars  
 Pamet River  
 Race Point

A new Life Saving District was created for the Coast of Cape Cod and included all but Narragansett Pier and Block Island which were included in the Long Island District. Of course it became necessary to renumber the districts which to that time had been "Coast of Long Island-No. 1" and "Coast of New Jersey-No. 2." The renumbering of districts and of stations within the districts, caused by the addition of new stations and coupled with the change of names of the sites, has tended to give an air of confusion to the whole developing process of the USLSS.

With the introduction of the U. S. Life-Saving Service to Cape Cod, the Massachusetts Humane Society was relieved of its burden on that coast. It was a burden which had always been carried out with the best intent and effort, but even so, the Society was unable to establish adequate protection on that shore. The absorption of this hostile coast under the guardianship of the Federal Government enabled the Massachusetts Humane Society to concentrate its energies at other localities on the coast of that State. Similarly, the creation of an efficient federal service recaptured federal responsibility for life-saving, which had been delegated in 1849 to the New York Life Saving Benevolent Association and, which for so many years, had been beyond the capability of the restricted resources of that Association. That organization did not, however, terminate its efforts in the cause of maritime safety; its contributions in recent years include the purchase of radar and electronic simulators for use in the training and qualification of today's Merchant Marine Officers.

With the construction of new and necessary stations, the promulgation of the regulations as discussed in the previous chapter, and the passage of the enabling statutes, it

remained to introduce the best possible equipment that the technology of the day could create.

To this end, a commission consisting of RAdm. Charles S. Boggs, U. S. Navy; Capt. C. P. Patterson, U. S. Coast Survey; Captains William Gaskill and Charles W. Maxson, practical and experienced surfmen; and J. H. Sayville, Chairman, had been ordered by the Secretary of the Treasury on May 17, 1872.

The report submitted by the Commission continued the opinion concerning the use of the English style lifeboat upon the beaches essentially unchanged from the 1858 Board. The surf boat which received the Commission's approval was the same basic model of the cedar surf boat in general use on the New Jersey coast. Subsequent to the report of the commission, Mr. J. V. Herbert of Manasquan, New Jersey, received the contract to furnish that boat for general service. A consequence of this choice led to the common appellation for this model surf boat as the "Squan Boat."

The specifications for that boat are as follows:

#### Dimensions

Length over all	26 feet 2-1/2 inches
Greatest breadth on outside planks	6 feet 9 inches
Least depth of hold	2 feet 2-1/2 inches

#### Bottom Piece

Bottom piece of Jersey pine, planks 1-1/2 inches thick, and 2 feet 4-1/2 inches wide amidships on top edge, and 2 feet wide on lower edge; made of two pieces, which are fastened together on forward and after ends with oak pins, and battened across the top of every 30 inches with battens 2-1/2 inches wide and 1-1/4 inches thick, of white oak, with six galvanized rivets of 3/16 inch diameter in each batten.

### **Frames**

Frames of best white oak, got out to shape in natural growth; to be single frames, 15 inches from centre to centre, siding 1 inch, moulding 1-1/2 inches on floor and 1-1/4 inches at gunwale and 2 inches at bilge. On the bottom piece they will lap each other 14 inches; to be fastened to bottom piece by three galvanized rivets of 3/16 inch diameter in each floor.

### **Footlings and Risers**

On each side, 1 strake 3-3/4 inches wide and 3/4 inch thick, of white cedar, and fastened to every timber with two galvanized 4-penny nails.

### **Thwarts**

Six, of white oak, 9 inches wide by 1-1/4 inches thick, let into risers 1/2 inch. The four middle thwarts to be fastened to inside of planking by two knees of white oak on each end and side, 1 inch thick, lapping the thwarts 1 foot 6 inches and rising to top of inside gunwale, each fastened by three 10-penny galvanized nails to the thwarts, and by one 3/16 inch galvanized rivet through the lap of first and second strake from top; each of these fast thwarts to be supported below by a stanchion 6 inches wide by 3/4 inch thick, resting between cleats 3/4 inch by 3/4 inch above and below, and fastened to bottom piece by two 4penny nails. Forward of forward thwart to have a seat 3/4 inch white cedar; the after seat of 3/4 inch white cedar to rest its forward end on a sleeper of Jersey pine 1-1/2 inches thick x 3-1/2 inches wide to be on an extra riser, and protected on its forward end by white oak knees, joined in centre and running up to top of gunwale, siding 1 inch and 2 inches deep amidships.

### **Stern**

Stern of 1-1/4 inch Jersey pine; the different parts fastened together by 1/2 inch

dowels 8 inches long. Post of white oak, 1-5/8 inches square on top, forming a knee at base, lapping the upper side of bottom piece 19 inches.

### **Stem**

Stem of white oak, siding 1-3/4 inches and moulding 5 inches, forming a knee to lap bottom piece 17 inches.

### **Outside Planks**

Outside planks of white cedar 5/8 inch thick, lapstraked with seven strakes, 7-1/2 inches wide, lapping each other 1-3/8 inches, fastened through lap to each timber by one 3/16 inch galvanized rivet, with butt on inside of frame. At the laps, to be fastened every 4 inches apart by clinch nails of 4-penny galvanized malleable iron.

### **Outer Gunwale**

Outer gunwale to be 3/4 inch thick and 2 inches deep, of white oak, rounded off on lower edge.

### **Inner Gunwale**

Inner gunwale of white oak, 5/8 inch thick and 1-3/4 inches deep. Both gunwales to be fastened through each timber by one 3/16 inch galvanized rivet, and clinched on burrs on inside.

### **Breasthooks**

Breasthooks, of white oak, 1-3/4 inches deep; the forward one made in two pieces, bolted across and clinched, forming a knee with 8-inch throat, and arms 2 feet 3 inches long; the after ones butting the stern post, 1-5/8 inches wide, 5-1/4 inches in throat, and arms 2 feet long.

### **Forward Bench**

Forward bench, at height of gunwale, of white oak, 11/2 inches thick, 9 inches wide in centre, and fastened to sides of boat, on after end, by white-oak knees 11/2 inches thick, with 10-inch arms. Through the middle of bench, to have a post of

white oak 4-3/4 inches in diameter, 6-1/2 inches above the bench and reduced below bench from 4 inches square to 2-3/4 inches square on bottom, where it steps into the stem knee.

#### **RingBolts**

On the forward and after end, passing through stem and stern, to have a ring-bolt of 5/8 inch galvanized iron and a ring of 3 inches inside diameter. Two inches below the after breasthooks, to have on each side of stern port, 4 inches apart, a 3/4 inch hole for the reception of the bucket rope.

#### **Rowlocks**

The gunwales are to be fitted to receive iron rowlocks, which will be furnished by the Department.

#### **Paint**

The gunwale to be covered with two coats of good oil paint, of such color as the superintendent may require.

#### **Material**

All of the materials to be of the first quality; all the wood-work to be of well-seasoned stuff, clear and free from sap, and the workmanship to be first class in every respect-all subject to the approval of the officer designated to inspect the work and materials.

Of no less importance than providing adequate housing and refurbished equipment to the reorganized Life-Saving Service during its first season of operation, the matter of selecting and employing competent and skilled surfmen had to be resolved. Where men at alternate stations had been employed on the Jersey Coast during the 1870-71 season, they were reemployed almost to a man except that, by and large, they redistributed themselves so as to man the stations nearest their homes. In most instances, as we have learned, the keepers were not particularly affected by the reor-

ganization. Being local men in what were, mostly, small communities, the keepers could choose from personal knowledge of past volunteer performances, the best surfmen available in their respective areas.

Unfortunately, local politics occasionally entered the picture, but that did not necessarily result in the selection of unfit men; it merely assured the employment of good surfmen who saw eye-to-eye with the keeper.

Early in the first winter season, Captains Faunce and Merryman determined to ensure timely detection of wrecked vessels, instituted a guard system of beach patrols. Surfmen from the manned stations would be required to walk, at periodic intervals, a prescribed route along the coast. Should they find a vessel aground, they were to signal it so that the men on board would know they had been found and then, according to their instructions, the patrolling surfmen were to return to their respective stations and give the alarm rousing assistance. These patrols were to be made at night and during periods of low visibility. While not usually productive and resulting in many hours of boring and tiresome sand-pounding, these patrols were about as effective a method as has ever been instituted for discovering vessels aground on a sea coast.

The record of the coast guard was enviable that first year of the service: not a single life was lost within its scope of operations from shipwrecks.

While the "Reconstruction" of the Life-Saving Service was relatively painless when compared with the Reconstruction of the South, following the Civil War, it was nonetheless significant. The course of the United States towards a federal life-saving organization which would stand peerless among nations, was directed during those first months following a theoretical and untried reorganization of the service. That the "course" was correct and true hinged upon the wisdom and practical skills of its "helmsmen" in the Revenue Marine. But the princi-



*Sumner Increase Kimball*

ple credit belongs to the "Navigator" of that Division of the Treasury Department, Sumner Increase Kimball.

Kimball was born in the town of Lebanon, York County, Maine, on September 2, 1834. Graduating from Bowdoin College in 1855, he studied law under his father and was admitted to the bar in 1858. He began his practice of law at North Berwick, Maine. In 1859, Mr. Kimball was elected to the State Legislature, where despite being the youngest member, he took an active part in the proceedings.

As a member of the legislature, he served on the Committee on the Judiciary. In January

1861, President Abraham Lincoln appointed him a clerk in the Treasury Department in Washington, D.C. He rose to the position of Chief Clerk in the Second Auditor's office and, in 1871, replaced N. Broughton Devereux as Chief of the Division of the Revenue Marine.

The various changes brought about by the 1871 reorganization have been discussed previously and there can be little doubt that the changes were necessary and long overdue. Not limited to the Life-Saving Service, Kimball made a number of significant administrative decisions which materially affected and streamlined the Revenue Marine Service. One of the most significant of these was the compulsory examination of Revenue Marine Officers to determine their competency. Officers failing the exam were dismissed from the service.

Collateral with his duties as Chief of the Division of Revenue Marine, Kimball served during 1876-1877 under Secretary of Treasury, Lot M. Morrill, as Chief Clerk of the Treasury. In 1878, he effectively smoothed the transfer of the Life-Saving Service from the Revenue

Marine when the former organized as a separate bureau.

The post of General Superintendent was created to head this new bureau: Sumner I. Kimball became its first incumbent. He was also its only incumbent! For forty-four years, Kimball served as General Superintendent of the U. S. Life-Saving Service. To discuss the individual accomplishments of the General Superintendent would be nearly the same as relating all the many successes and failures of the Life-Saving Service itself. He was personally and deeply involved with the Service, its equipment, its personnel, its problems and its many achievements and its few shortcomings.

The annual reports of the Life-Saving Service contain from year to year the comments and recommendations of the General Superintendent regarding his service. Nearly everything written about the Life-Saving Service came from his own pen or was cleared through him. This is true for the annual reports, and it is true for the various pieces of government literature and commentary which relate to the activities and organization of the Service. In fact, nearly everything on paper concerning the Life-Saving Service was, in essence, written by Mr. Kimball or was based upon material disseminated at an earlier date by the General Superintendent.

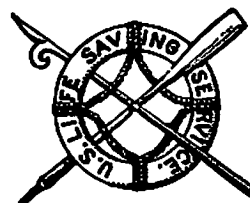
The General Superintendent abhorred political influence at the operating level of his organization. Captain Faunce's 1871 Report concerning political pressures on appointments apparently had a profound effect upon Kimball, and he made great efforts in denouncing such practices. Although his distaste for political influences was a well-known characteristic of the General Superintendent, it is obvious that no man could have kept his government post through the politically tumultuous post-Civil War years and have retained it for a period of over four decades unless he was, in fact, an extremely astute politician. He had a political background, he had friends in Congress, he was dedicated, and he was honest. These things combined to spell not only personal success for Mr. Kimball, but success for the Life-Saving Service as well.

The General Superintendent had a great regard for Revenue Marine officers. It is apparent that his request for the professional judgment of those officers played an important part in the development of the lifesaving methods, training and qualifications, and equipment of the Life-Saving Service.

Though Kimball created the Life-Saving Service in 1878 as a bureau independent of the Revenue Marine, his testimony before Congress in May of 1914 in favor of the merger of the Revenue Cutter and Life-Saving Services

was, perhaps, the key to the success of the merger attempt.

Thus Sumner I. Kimball had created a modern governmental machine and he had done it almost single-handedly through his outstanding administrative talents. Familiarization with this one man's capability is a must, for he was the key player in the entire reorganization/reconstruction scenario.



# CHAPTER THREE:

## *The First Ten Years Are the Hardest*

### *Part Two: 1873-1877*

The winter seasons of 1871-72 and 1872-73 were amazingly successful. As the former witnessed no losses of life from shipwreck, the latter season provided the USLSS with its first loss of life since the reorganization. That singular instance was the loss of one man on November 30, 1872, when the American schooner *Albert Middleton Jr.*, stranded near the Point of Woods Station, Long Island.

A happy combination of good luck and good management had laid the groundwork of a fine national institution. Moreover the willingness of Congress to appropriate funds allowed the service's expansion to new coast lines and hence to additional successful rescue operations.

On August 16, 1873, Captain J. H. Merryman, the Inspector of the Life-Saving Service was authorized to conduct a number of experiments at Narragansett Pier in the use of a life boat and rocket apparatus which had recently been received from England. Merryman used the Revenue Steamer *Grant* as well as some of its crew since the regular Life-Saving crew was not then employed. The following excerpt from his report speaks for the results of those experiments:

The experiments with the English rocket apparatus at Narragansett developed its value as a means of establishing communication with wrecked vessels far beyond any line rocket ever before used in this country; but no greater range was obtained than has also been effected by the 5-inch mortar in use on our coasts, which is not only much more simple in its parts, and consequently more easily handled, but

also a cheaper method—the Boxer rocket apparatus costing \$635, while the cost of the mortar, with the necessary balls, ammunition, lines, etc., will hardly exceed \$550. The mortar is always ready for use, and in practicing the crews the balls can be recovered, while the rocket is expended altogether, in actual service or in drill. As the Boxer rockets cannot be manufactured in this country, and their merits do not exceed the mortar apparatus sufficiently to justify their importation, they are not recommended for use on our coasts. In my opinion, the mortar and balls now in use will meet the wants of the service until some better device is obtained. I propose, however, as an addition to the mortar apparatus, a light hand-cart, for transporting the mortar, balls, lines, etc., along the beaches.

I had conveyed to Narragansett, also by the *Grant*, the life-boat lately received from the Royal National Life-boat Institution of Great Britain. At no time during my stay at the station was an opportunity presented to test the boat in a heavy sea, but several trials were made with her in smooth water. She was found to pull easily under eight oars, double-banked, answered her helm readily and displayed most excellent qualities for a surf-boat. She was capsized after considerable effort on the part of ten men aided by tackles, but righted instantly, full of water, freeing herself entirely within twenty-five seconds. The boat is built of two courses of mahogany boards one inch thick, fastened together diagonally. Her length is 30 feet, with extreme beam of 7 feet 1 inch, and a depth of 3 feet 6 inches. There are four thwarts for eight rowers, double-banked, and the deck upon which

their feet rest is 3.75 inches above the water line, with a full crew and all the gear on board.... Although the model of this boat seemed almost perfect for the purpose intended, she was found to be too heavy (weighing nearly 4,000 pounds) for use on our flat beaches by the light crews at present attached to the stations. It is thought, however, that boats of smaller dimensions, say 26 feet long, and properly proportioned, similar in design to the Royal National Life-boats, would be found very useful at points on our coasts, including the great lakes, where they could be launched at once into deep water, and pulled out of harbors or from behind piers. A transportation carriage was sent with the life-boat from England. It is altogether too heavy for use in this country, but is admirably contrived for launching purposes.

There seems to be no doubt that the life-saving institutions of Europe, particularly those of England, France, and Germany, have perfected boats and many other appliances for rescuing shipwrecked persons, far superior to our own; and it is respectfully submitted for the consideration of the Department, whether the interests of the Life-Saving Service may not be advanced by an examination of all the foreign systems, either by personal inspection of a commission sent for the purpose, or through the agents of the United States abroad.

Congress had, on March 3, 1873, appropriated \$100,000.00 "for the establishment of new life-saving stations upon the coast of the United States." By the commencement of the 1873-74 winter season contracts had been let for the construction of new stations at the following points:

Quoddy Head, Maine  
Cross Island, Maine  
Crumple Island, Maine

Whitehead, Maine  
Fletchers Neck, Maine  
Rye Beach, New Hampshire  
Plum Island, Massachusetts  
Davis Neck, Massachusetts  
Gurnet, Massachusetts  
Manomet Point, Massachusetts  
Surfside, Massachusetts  
Cape Henry, Virginia  
Dam Neck Mills, Virginia  
False Cape, North Carolina  
Currituck Inlet, North Carolina  
Caffeys Inlet, North Carolina  
Kitty Hawk, North Carolina  
Nags Head, North Carolina  
Oregon Inlet, North Carolina  
Chicamacomico, North Carolina  
Little Kinnakeet, North Carolina

In addition to the sites listed, arrangements were underway by the Fall of 1873 to construct other stations at:

New Shoreham on Block Island  
Whales Head, North Carolina

The construction of these new stations during the 1873-74 season meant that once again new Life-Saving Districts would need to be established to maintain the organization of the service. Ultimately these would become two districts, the first encompassing the "Coast of Maine and New Hampshire," and the second new one the "Coast of Virginia and North Carolina" (from Cape Henry to Cape Hatteras).

With \$30,000.00 being appropriated in March 1873 for the purpose of connecting the U. S. Army Storm Signal System with the Life-Saving Stations, work was underway in the summer of 1873 to place this system in effect by the start of the winter season. Because of the difficulties encountered in obtaining title to properties and rights-of-way, this was not accomplished until after the 1873-74 season was over. At the start of the 1874-75 season, however, the system was

placed in commission at the following stations on the New Jersey coast:

Sandy Hook  
Monmouth Beach  
Squan Beach  
Barnegat  
Atlantic City  
Peck's Beach  
Cape May

The system installation was effected under the direction of General Albert J. Myer, the Chief Signal Officer of the Army. It consisted of direct telegraphic communication between the various Army storm signal stations and their headquarters and represented an early effective use of military technology in pursuit of peacetime and humanitarian objectives. The Morse telegraph was introduced to public acclaim in 1844, and the Army's telegraph system of course played an important role during the Civil War. The telegraph was a significant piece of equipment as well both in the military operations during the Indian campaigns and in opening the West for civilian settlers and commercial development.

It seemed obvious, then, to combine the effective government communications system already in existence known as the "Storm Signal Service" with the new "Life-Saving Service." Wires were run to the various stations which were selected for inclusion in the system and, of course, a terminal was provided for the Treasury Department in Washington, D.C. Army personnel were assigned to reside at the several stations involved and to operate the equipment and display the appropriate storm signals from masts which could be seen from passing vessels at sea. Although several soldiers were occasionally assigned to this duty, usually one man, a sergeant, was assigned to be the "observer."

The early extension of the signal service to the new stations on the North Carolina coast considerably expanded the scope of this communications system within the Life-Saving

Service. Eventually other stations would be included and while the immense benefits of the system were not to be discounted, some difficulties arose. The addition of a storm signal observer and his equipment to station house, which had been designed for the most rudimentary and economical use four months of the year, strained the physical capacity of the houses to their limit.

Almost immediately following the inauguration of the system, a matter arose which required some serious attention. A section of the upper story of the affected station houses was partitioned off for the use of the observers, but there was only one stairway to the ground floor and that was in the other section encompassing the surfmen's living quarters. The observers had to pass through the surfmen's area to get downstairs for instrument readings, coal for their stove, etc. They apparently did this at frequent intervals during the night thus disturbing the sleeping surfmen who were not on patrol. This complaint led to the recommendation and adoption of a plan to construct an outside stairway from the observer's quarters to the ground.

All of the relationships between the surfmen and the signal observers were not those of difficult accommodations. A somewhat humorous instance culminated in the eventual Court-Martial of an Army Sergeant observer. It appears as if the surfmen and the observer were housed at a station at the end of a long barren sandy peninsula, the closest population being in a town, a mile or so across the bay separating the beach and the mainland. The sergeant had fallen in with the company of a local lady of disrepute from that town and successfully induced her to cohabit his small "suite" at the Life-Saving Station. The Sergeant and his lady friend must surely have livened up the mess room of that otherwise dreary outpost. With no one on the mainland the wiser, especially the keepers and surfmen's wives, the sergeant made his tour of duty at the station most convivial, if somewhat illegal. Of course, he was found out during a routine,





*The Avalon, New Jersey life-saving station, with its unique, yet functional, look-out tower typical of the late Nineteenth Century stations.*

but obviously unexpected, visit by one of his superiors. And in the wake of the charges leading to the Court-Martial, it was necessary that the Inspector of the Life-Saving Service conduct a full investigation into the circumstances.

The first question was, why did the keeper tolerate such an illegal and immoral situation. The second was, if he could not correct it, why did he not report it?

The keeper reasoned, in reply, that since he had no jurisdiction over Army personnel pursuant to the "Regulations for the

Government of the Life-Saving Service of the United States," he was powerless to correct the situation. On the other hand, he did not report the situation for although it disturbed him and his crew, he was of the opinion that it was none of his business and was fearful that the Sergeant may react unfavorably to such a report. The Captain who conducted the investigation reported that although the keeper's explanation might sound unbelievable to more worldly men, coming from one of the wholly uncomplicated and honest breed of men who dedicated themselves selflessly to

helping their fellow man, it was probably truthful. While it is certain that not a few tongues were thrust into the cheeks of the sophisticated officials of the Treasury Department, it is probably every bit as certain that not a few "hee haws" echoed amidst the bare walls of that Life-Saving Station. The explanation of the keeper was accepted and no

further action was taken.

Within the period of months following the Court Martial, one of the surfmen of the Life-Saving Station crew married the same young lady and apparently proceeded to make an honest woman of her. A sad epilogue was written to this otherwise amusing story when several years after the marriage, the husband

perished while on beach patrol in the midst of a severe snowstorm.

One of the provisions of the March 1873 Act, aside from the appropriations, was the previously mentioned requirement for a report from the Secretary of the Treasury to the House with regard to where the service could be expanded. The consequence of that provision of the law was the convening by the Secretary, on March 24, 1873, of a commission consisting of S. I. Kimball and Captains John Faunce and J. H. Merryman. The purpose was to identify new places for expansion and to obtain a cost estimate of the needed stations in accordance with the requirement placed on the Secretary. This commission researched all known sources for shipwreck information. This effort led to the previously discussed reorganization process where the passage of the Act of June 20, 1874, required Masters of vessels to report certain marine casualties to the Collectors of Customs.

The report of the commission was transmitted by the Secretary of the Treasury to the House of Representatives on January 29, 1874. The results of the commission in locating previous marine casualties was published in the 1874 Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury.

The Commissioners recom-



*Burning a signal.*

mended the establishment of three classes of stations:

- Life-Saving Stations
- Life-Boat Stations
- Houses of Refuge

Life-Saving Stations were determined to be the stations needed at exposed points on the coast where volunteer crews could not readily be gathered because of the sparseness of population, and also for the flat beaches with out-laying bars. The existing stations fell into this category.

Each of this class of station was to be outfitted with surf-boats, rocket, and mortar apparatus, life cars, and other appliances of like nature. These stations were to be constructed to accommodate their crews along with any shipwrecked persons that were temporarily detained in them. This class of Life-Saving Stations were recommended to be established on the Coast between Cape Henlopen, Delaware, and Cape Charles, Virginia, and upon the Great Lakes and Pacific Coasts where the degree of protection they afforded was required.

Since a large number of disasters on the Great Lakes and Pacific Coast occurred near the entrances to ports, in narrow channels, and near piers, the second class "Life-Boat Stations" were to be established. As such places to be protected by a Life-Boat Station were in populated areas, local aid could be readily summoned. Facilities, in the form of a bulkheaded waterfront and deep water close to shore also existed so that self-bailing and self-righting life boats built on the English model could be readily launched from a ramp.

Because the locality was populated it was not necessary for the size of the station to be such so as to accommodate the shipwrecked persons, nor were extra blankets and cooking utensils needed for that purpose. Extra rooms were to be provided only when Signal Service personnel were to be assigned. The commission also recommended that these stations be manned by volunteer crews who would be

paid whenever their services were needed.

The third class of station-Houses of Refuge-were to be placed exclusively on the coast of Florida.

Beaches on that coast were reasonably steep so that grounding usually took place close to shore. The water and air temperatures were such that exposure to the elements was not a major concern. The most important thing to provide on the Florida coast was shelter and a means of subsistence. The commission recommended that these Houses of Refuge, built to accommodate twenty-five persons with sufficient provisions for ten days during the hurricane season, be equipped with a light surf-boat supplied with oars and sail, and be placed in the care of responsible keepers who would reside with their families at the house.

The estimated cost of each of these stations, fully equipped, was put at:

Life-Saving Station	\$5,302.15
Life-Boat Station	\$4,790.00
House of Refuge	\$2,995.00

The House Committee on Commerce, upon receiving the Secretary's Report, shortly reported out a Bill based on the Commission's recommendations. The Bill became law on June 20, 1874. Apart from the section on the reporting of marine casualties, the law included authorization for the establishment of several classes of stations as follows:

### **8 Life-Saving Stations (Cape Henlopen to Cape Charles)**

- Cape Henlopen, Delaware
- Indian River Inlet, Delaware
- Green Run Inlet, Maryland
- Assateague Beach, Virginia
- Wachapreague, Virginia
- Hog Island, Virginia
- Cobbs Island, Virginia
- Smith Island, Virginia

### **3 Life-Saving Stations (Lakes Erie and**

## Ontario)

Big Sandy, New York (Ontario)  
Salmon Creek, New York (Ontario)  
Presque Isle, Pennsylvania (Erie)

### 8 Life-Saving Stations (Lakes Huron and Superior)

Point Aux Barques, Michigan (Lake Huron)  
Ottawa Point, Michigan (Lake Huron)  
Sturgeon Point, Michigan (Lake Huron)  
Hammonds Bay, Michigan (Lake Huron)  
Vermillion Point, Michigan (Lake Superior)  
Crisps, Michigan (Lake Superior)  
Two Heart River, Michigan (Lake Superior)  
Muskallonge Lake, Michigan (Lake Superior)

### 3 Life-Saving Stations on Lake Michigan

Point Betsey, Michigan  
Grande Point an Sable, Michigan  
Evanston, Illinois

### 8 Manned Life Boat Stations on Pacific Coast

Neah Bay, Washington  
Shoalwater Bay, Washington  
Cape Disappointment, Washington  
Cape Arago, Oregon  
Humboldt Bay, California  
Point Reyes, California  
Golden Gate Park, California  
Point Conception, California

### 6 Unmanned Life Boat Stations on Lakes Ontario and Erie

Oswego, New York (Lake Ontario)  
Charlotte, New York (Lake Ontario)  
Buffalo, New York (Lake Erie)  
Fairpost, Ohio (Lake Erie)  
Cleveland, Ohio (Lake Erie)  
Point Marblehead, Ohio (Lake Erie)

### 1 Unmanned Life Boat Station on Lake Huron

Thunder Bay Island, Michigan

### 9 Unmanned Life Boat Stations on Lake Michigan

Beaver Island, Michigan  
North Manitou Island, Michigan  
Grand Haven, Michigan  
Saint Joseph, Michigan  
Chicago, Illinois  
Milwaukee, Michigan  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin  
Two Rivers, Wisconsin

### 5 Houses of Refuge on the Coast of Florida

Bethel Creek  
Gilberts Bar  
Orange Grove  
Fort Lauderdale  
Biscayne Bay

The Act of June 20, 1874 further included the appointment of a superintendent for the coasts of Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, one for the coast of Florida, one for the coast of Lakes Erie and Ontario, one for the Coast of Lakes Huron and Superior, and one for the Coast of Lake Michigan, creating a total of ten Districts not counting the Pacific Coast, which had not yet been authorized a superintendent. Each superintendent was to receive an annual salary of \$1000.00, keepers received \$200.00 except for those at the Houses of Refuge which received \$40.00 per month. Surfmen were to be employed at the new Life-Saving Stations and Pacific Coast Life Boat Stations at the usual rate of \$40.00 per month. Volunteer crews at the other Life Boat Stations were entitled to receive up to \$10.00 for each occasion assistance was rendered.

A final provision of the law was to establish two classes of life-saving medals to be awarded to persons who endangered their lives in saving or trying to save the lives of other persons endangered by the sea within the United States or upon any American ves-

sel. These medals eventually became known as the Gold Life Saving Medal and the Silver Life Saving Medal, the former being awarded in instances of heroism more extreme than those for which the Silver Medal was awarded.

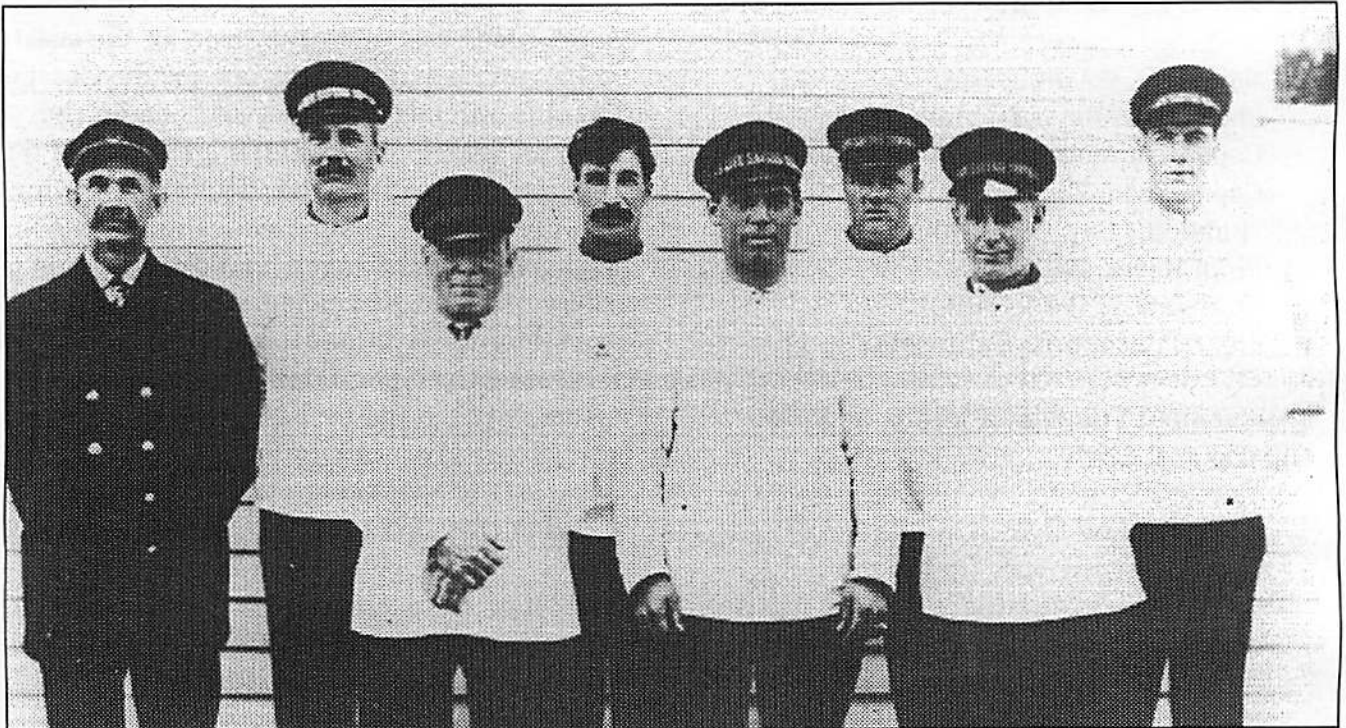
During the winter of 1874-75, a national competition was held among the artists of the country for a design for the new medals authorized the previous June. One rendition was authorized the previous June. One rendition was chosen and was used for both gold and silver medals. Dies were made under the superintendence of the Director of the Mint and upon their completion, a commission was designated to examine the various recommendations and claims for the award of these medals, and to report their findings to the Secretary of the Treasury. The members of this special commission consisted of:

The Chief of the Revenue Marine Division  
The Chief of the Navigation Division  
The Supervising Inspector-General of

## Steamboats

None of the new stations authorized in June 1874 were completed and placed in operation during the 1874-75 season. The six Life-Saving Stations on the Maryland and Virginia coasts were the first of this group completed and were subsequently placed in operation during the 1875-76 winter season. The other two located in Delaware were completed by January 1st, 1876. The stations on Lakes Ontario, Erie, Huron and Michigan, were in a state of construction during 1875 as were the Houses of Refuge. The stations on Lake Superior and the Pacific Coast were delayed because of difficulties in gaining title to the lands. The three classes of stations were appropriately equipped with the necessary appliances for rescue operations as well as normal "house-keeping."

On the 3rd of March 1875 an appropriation was made for the construction of stations at Point Judith, Rhode Island and Eatons Neck on Long Island Sound; contracts were let



*"They had to go out, but they did not have to come in" was the legendary motto of the surfmen. Regulations required that life-saving crews had to go out no matter what the weather and there was no guarantee they would make it back.*

almost immediately and construction started. It will be remembered perhaps that one of the 1849 stations on Long Island was located similarly at Eatons Neck but then was abandoned at a later date. Both of these stations were completed and were manned by the 1876-77 winter season.

March 3, 1875, was a portentous date for the U. S. Life-Saving Service, not only because of the appropriations bill enacted, but because it marked the first day of a terrible three day storm that struck the coast of Cape Cod causing the first disaster attended by a marked loss of life since the service was reorganized in 1871.

The Italian Bark *Giovanni* with fifteen persons on board grounded between the Peaked Hill Bar and Highlands Stations with the resultant loss of 14 of those on board.

Captain J. H. Merryman proceeded amidst charges of mismanagement and ineffectiveness to investigate the disaster. He concluded that "the crews of the stations had zealously kept the required watchfulness, and were indefatigable in their efforts to get the necessary apparatus upon the ground....

"Fires were lighted, around which the surfmen gathered shivering in their wet clothing, while they burned signal-lights to encourage the shipwrecked people. By the glare of the burning signals the wreck could be occasionally faintly discerned rolling helplessly in the breakers. About midnight, portions of the wreck and cargo began to come ashore, and gave token to the watchers that the vessel was breaking up. Daybreak was anxiously awaited, and when at last it came the bark's foremast alone was standing, and in its top were gathered the survivors. The wreck had now beaten in to within perhaps 400 yards of the shore and lay rolling heavily. The distance between the wreck and the beach was variously estimated by the life-saving men and by the bystanders. No estimate was less than 300 yards, while the greater

number judged her at 400 and upward. That she must have been at least 400 yards off is evident from the fact that the unfortunate people in the foretop of the bark were so indistinctly seen from the shore that opinions varied as to their number, some placing them at five and other at seven or eight. The tide was nearly full. The mortar apparatus was placed in position directly opposite the wreck, and as near the water as possible, and the first shot fired. Its aim was directly at the wreck and right in the wind's eye (north-east). The shot fell short. The gale had slightly abated, but still offered very great resistance, as was indicated by the bowing of the line upward far above the trajectory of the ball. A second shot was fired, carrying out ... 275 yards of line, and a third with no better success. During the firing, the foremast was swaying frightfully to and fro, and the unfortunate mariners, no longer able to maintain their grasp, were flung, one by one, from the foretop into the sea; and just after the third shot the last man disappeared...

"It is evident that during the whole time the vessel was beyond the reach of any life-saving apparatus yet invented. If she had been provided with any one of the various life-rafts, it is more than possible that all hands might have reached the shore in safety. Her boats were destroyed by the huge seas that were seen to sweep her decks.

"No portion of Cape Cod is so dangerous as that lying between the Highland Light and the Race. Its outlying shoals extend seaward in some places nearly a mile from the beach, and upon them numerous melancholy disasters have occurred. A light-ship and fog-horn on Stellwagen's Bank would be an important aid to navigation, and largely divest the shoals off the bend of the cape of their terrors."

While it can be observed that there was no

question of negligence on the part of members of the Life-Saving Service, still the system had experienced its first, albeit justifiable, failure.

The loss of the *Giovanni* marked the end of the service's charmed existence and the beginning of a long series of unfortunate events.

During the same season, two other lives were lost in separate instances:

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>John Rommel Jr.</i>	Schooner	2/12/1875	1	1-1/2 miles east of Race Point, Cape Cod
<i>Vicksburg</i>	Steamer	2/26/1875	1	1 mile west of Lone Hill Station, Long Island

The crewman from the *John Rommel Jr.* who was lost was in fact rescued but died of exposure after reaching the beach.

The season of 1875-76 witnessed the continued construction of stations authorized in June 1874. No new construction appropriations were made but a number of efforts were made to shape the existing service into a more efficient organization.

The term of service for surfmen in the six active districts for that winter was as follows:

**District No. 1 - Coast of Maine and New Hampshire**

November 1, 1875 to May 1, 1876

**District No. 2 - Coast of Massachusetts**

10 stations: November 1, 1875 to April 15, 1876

4 stations: November 1, 1875 to May 1, 1876

**District No. 3 - Coasts of Rhode Island and Long Island**

28 stations: November 15, 1875 to April 1, 1876

6 stations: November 15, 1875 to April 15,

1876

**District No. 4 - Coasts of New Jersey**

32 stations: November 1, 1875 to April 1, 1876

6 stations: November 15, 1875 to April 15, 1876.

**District No. 5 - Coasts of Delaware, Maryland and Virginia**

December 1, 1875 to April 1, 1876

**District No. 6 - Coasts of Virginia and North Carolina**

December 1, 1875 to April 1, 1876.

Inspections were maintained at the additional districts with the augmentation to the Inspector's Office of two additional Revenue Marine Officers.

A new relief boat house was placed on a donated site between the Peaked Hill Bar and Highlands Stations on Cape Cod, the scene of the *Giovanni* disaster. The house was equipped with a surf-boat, a mortar, life car, and other equipment in the belief that should another wreck occur in the same place, the previously experienced difficulties and delays in moving the needed apparatus would be greatly reduced.

An exhibit of a "sample" Life-Saving Station was located at the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia. The 1876 Annual Report commented that "the station was visited by a multitude of people, whom its unique devices greatly interested." Perhaps this marked the first conscientious attempt at informing the taxpayers of the efforts being made on their behalf by the Federal government to save lives imperiled at sea; if so, this would be a significant historic occasion for present day Coast Guardsmen involved in the function of "Public Affairs."

In any event, the always-frugal Life-Saving Service did not discard the station it had erected for temporary exhibition at Philadelphia, it simply moved it to a perma-

ment location at Cape May, New Jersey.

The year 1876 also marked a public benevolence to the men of the Life-Saving Service. A number of organizations and individuals made substantial donations of books, essays, and other literary works so that a rather small library was established at each of the stations. There was a heavy religious influence in this literature but, of course, some of the principal contributors were religious organizations. In reporting these "most memorable and gratifying donations" Mr. Kimball rendered in the 1876 Annual Report the most picturesque description ever written of the day-to-day existence at a Life-Saving Station:

"When it is recollected that for the most part these stations are at isolated locations on the beach, selected solely on account of the frequency of wrecks in their vicinity; that the main part of life of the crews who inhabit them is made up of long seasons of irksome and weary waiting indoors, and they must while away this dreary monotony as best they can, it is easy to imagine how welcome these little libraries will be to the hermit groups of lifesavers, and how eagerly they will be seized upon for relief from the dull routine of existence to which they are condemned."

Kimball's words, and were they a complete presentation of life at the stations, there is little doubt that most of the stations would have gone unmanned. One of the most popular pastimes of the life-saving crews was fishing, not only for pleasure or to supplement their table (seafood contributed significantly to their diet thus reducing their "mess bills") but for sale on the commercial market. This was a particularly prevalent occupation during the first years of the service and continued until pressure from local commercial fishermen was brought to bear and the inevitable ruling was made that the life-savers could not sell what they caught. Since wrecks usually did not

occur during the pleasanter days of the year when fishing was at its best, there was little conflict of interest between life saving and fishing.

One case did arise that cost a keeper his job. He had travelled away some fifty miles from his station with a wagon load of clams at the same time as a wreck occurred. His crew performed creditably but someone complained of his absence and he "resigned" in the aftermath.

Hunting for water fowl and other game also provided leisure time sport for the life-saving crews. Again they ran into difficulties only when their pursuits intruded into someone else's pocket book or privacy. Complaints by private gun clubs were registered during the latter part of the 19th century that the lifesavers were becoming bothersome. Because of the political weight of some of the wealthy members of these clubs, pressure was again brought to bear on the activities of the surfmen. Many owners of property adjacent to the stations, however, invited the use of their lands and marshes by the lifesavers. And further away from metropolitan centers, no one knew nor cared what the life-savers did with their spare time on the lands and beaches near the stations.

Not infrequently, particularly during the first ten years, the owners of property near the stations and the life-savers were synonymous. In these instances, the surfmen, though required by regulation to live at the station, actually lived and took their meals at home. Because of their nearness to the station, no difficulties were ever encountered regarding the performance of patrols or their availability at wrecks.

One particularly enterprising pair of brothers, Keeper William P. Chadwick, of the Chadwicks, N.J., station, with a long and heroic record extending back into the volunteer years, the other, Surfman Elijah R. Chadwick, of Bar Head station, with no less a record for years of dedicated volunteer and paid service, operated a thriving resort business. The keep-



er owned and operated an inn a few hundred yards from his station that he had inherited from his father-in-law, John Maxon, a famous wreckmaster and one of the first paid keepers of a government boat house. Several miles away and at the head of the sandy peninsula, his surfman brother operated a boat livery which ferried hunting and fishing parties to and from the inn. The men who frequented the inn included some of the most influential names of the day, one Theodore Roosevelt among them. All this was accomplished on "spare time" and without any noticeable loss of effectiveness to the service.

While the average surfmen were not in a position to mix business with business, many of those during the first ten years were able to apply their monthly earnings as life-savers, which were not small compared with the typical wages of the 1870's, to the purchase of coastal property which they used in later years as private citizens when the property values of these previously worthless sandy tracks soared with the development of coastal resorts.

Others applied their earnings to the purchase of business property and equipment which was employed in the construction of buildings which attended the growth of the resorts. The ever-present regulations and the increasing restrictions placed on the surfmen and their private activities were as instrumental in causing the turnover of personnel in the service as were the "medical rejections."

The first decade surfmen employed by the government were in the general category of



*Apparently some local politicians had represented themselves to be conveying Sumner Kimball's wishes when they selected certain men and presented their names to the honest but naive District Superintendent. In fear of his own hide, he went along with the appointments. The situation was not unlike one occurring in the 6th District the year before, and which had been corrected. In discussing this matter in the Annual Report of 1877, Mr. Kimball in his usual invective exonerated the Superintendent of the 6th District and at the same time blasted the politicians.*

being "middle aged"; the next decade of the Life-Saving Service was to witness the employment of younger men in their 20's, whose purposes were to "get a start" in life rather than to augment their already chosen profession as had been the case of their fathers in 1871.

One more point in this regard deserves mentioning. Before the Civil War, the bulk of

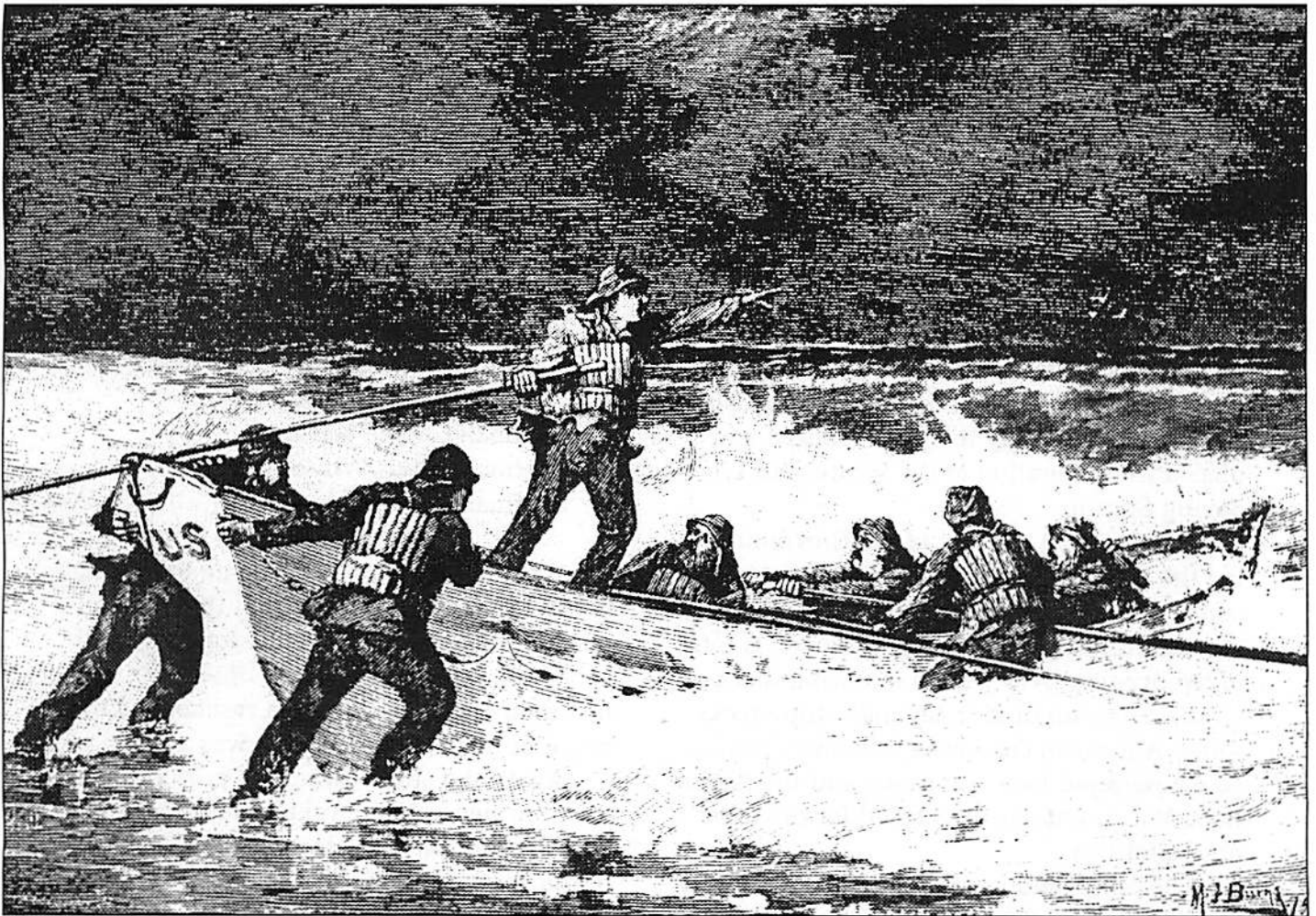
the surfmen were both fishermen and wreckers. Following the war, a number of private wrecking companies were created replacing the "freelance" character of the salvage profession under the wreckmasters. Men skilled in boat handling were employed by the wrecking companies but this way of life was not as palatable to the family men of the coast as was employment at the local Life-Saving Stations.

Consequently, two separate schools of surfmen developed, the government life-saver and the professional salvager. Ultimately professional salvagers manned steamers owned by the salvage companies which proceeded to the scene of a wreck usually after all the survivors had been removed by the Life-Saving Station

crews.

Contracts were then either already in writing at the time the wrecking vessel was dispatched, or were locally negotiated between the underwriters' agents and the salvage company; if local talent was needed, it was hired, but usually the wrecking crew of the steamer was adequate. This system of salvage eventually removed the wreckmaster from prominence, and the states from the business of salvaging vessels known to be underwritten by recognized insurers.

During the 1875-76 season, efforts continued in the direction of obtaining a design for a line throwing appliance that would be of sufficient range and portability so as to eliminate disasters like the *Giovanni*. Captain Douglas



Launching the Surf-boat according to this signed engraving by M. J. Burns and dated 1879.

Ottinger of the Revenue Marine conducted a number of experiments during the summer of 1875 at the West Point Foundry, Cold Spring, New York, on an improved mortar not unlike the eprouvette model already in existence. During the Fall of 1875, Ottinger reported successfully testing a gun of less weight than his mortar, designed by Robert P. Parrott of the Foundry, to a distance of 631 yards. This device was somewhat cumbersome and required horses or some other contrivance to adequately haul it to the scene of a wreck, nevertheless two of these guns were purchased and were placed where it was felt they were most needed.

Meanwhile Capt. Merryman and the Board of Experimental Gunnery of the Army Ordnance Corps continued their efforts paying special attention to the development of an adequate rocket apparatus.

The problem of developing a satisfactory life boat, light enough to be handled without sacrificing strength, was partially solved by Capt. John M. Richardson, Superintendent of the First Life-Saving District. Richardson's boat under-weighed the smallest English self-righting and self-bailing boat of 4000 lbs., by 400 pounds, and shaved four inches off the English boat's draft of 22 inches. The performance of this new life boat was very satisfactory and accordingly it was purchased and placed into operation at the Whitehead Life-Saving Station.

Triggered by the loss of the *Giovanni* during the 1874-75 season, the winter of 1875-76 continued to produce fatal disasters to plague the record of the Life-Saving Service. A total of twenty-two lives were lost during that year on the occasion of four separate shipwrecks. Three American coastwise schooners provided a combined loss of thirteen and the Italian Bark *Nuova Ottavia* accounted for the other nine fatalities.

The table below reflects those four specific disasters which occurred within the scope of operations of the life-Saving Service:

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives Lost	Place
<i>Idabella</i>	Schooner	4/4/1876	1	2 miles south of Parmet River Station, Cape Cod
<i>Helen G. Holway</i>	Schooner	4/4/1876	6	Near Lone Hill Station, Long Island
<i>Maggie M. Weaver</i>	Schooner	3/20/1876	6	1-1/2 miles south of Sandy Hook Station, New Jersey
<i>Nuova Ottavia</i>	Bark(It.)	3/1/1876	9	1/4 mile south of Jones Hill Station, North Carolina

The loss of the *Nuova Ottavia* also cost the Life-Saving Service its first casualties as the keeper of the Jones Hill, North Carolina station and six of his boat crew perished in their rescue attempt. To be listed as the Service's first losses in a rescue attempt are:

Keeper John G. Gale  
 Surfman Spencer Gray  
 Surfman Malachi Brumsey  
 Surfman George Wilson  
 Surfman Lewis White  
 Surfman J. Munden

While it may not be germane to the subject of the Life-Saving Service and its record of performance, it is of some historical significance that of the first seven life-savers who lost their lives attempting a rescue, one of that brave number, Lewis White, was a black man.

Again the storm clouds of criticism gathered but never fully broke. Following the investigation into the loss of life attending one of the schooners, Lieut. Thomas D. Walker of the U. S. Revenue Marine concluded in his reports:

"From personal observation, I am convinced that the duties of a surfman are esteemed far too lightly by many of the men, employment at the stations being regarded as an easy way of passing the winter season under pay; and it is, in many localities, provocative of petty jealousies, which find vent, in obscure local newspapers, in a manner anything but flattering to so noble a service."

Lieutenant Walker was right in one respect, there was much petty jealousy involved in the employment of crews, particularly those of stations located near populated areas. Whether the crews took the job of surfman merely to find "easy" winter's work is conjecture. Certainly at the isolated stations, night patrols on the winter beaches were not easy and every bit as difficult at those stations near towns. The attitude of men performing a routine and boring task is difficult to assess. Even under the best leadership, it is likely to be carried out in a perfunctory manner. Lacking any recognition other than their pay, it is unlikely that such men would admit to anything other than an "it's a job, isn't it?" attitude. It is also equally unlikely that these men would give anything but their best efforts when called upon.

The failure, Lieut. Walker concluded, had been one of inadequate leadership accompanied by extreme weather, not lack of exertion on the collective parts of the crews involved. Whenever a wreck occurred in the vicinity of a populated area, a throng of persons would appear on the beach, particularly when the weather had moderated. Among those would be the men who had served as volunteer surfmen during the bygone days, also those who may have been found unfit for further service in the U.S.L.S.S. and, of course, those who had some ax to grind, either politically or economically, with the keeper of the Station and the Life-Saving Service in general.

These persons were always ready to offer

their "expert" opinions for publication regarding the conduct of rescue operations, also to discuss the personal character of each man in the station crew-also for publication. Local newspapers, and some not so local, were always willing to get a "big story" on why it took "too long" for the life-savers to arrive at the scene, or why they should have launched the boat even though the seas were too high, or why the keeper didn't know as much as "so and so" (who was "fired" two years ago for being drunk on duty), etc., etc.

The Annual Report of 1876 of the U. S. Life-Saving Service marked the first time that that part of the Treasury Department had published with its own separate Annual Report volume. Subsequent U. S. L. S. S. Annual Reports through the year 1914 depict very accurately the activities of that Service. These reports were prepared by the staff of S. I. Kimball and for their entire span bore his signature and received his personal attention.

Mr. William D. O'Connor was Kimball's assistant for a number of years until his death in 1889. O'Connor possessed no particular nautical knowledge but, briefed by the Officers of the Revenue Marine, prepared extremely interesting and easily read accounts of the year's activities. He particularly excelled in rewriting the stale and factual accounts of the wreck reports submitted by the keepers into rather vivid and thrilling narratives. So good were they, that they have been subsequently "borrowed" by many less talented writers from their "uncopyrighted" abode in the volumes of the Annual Reports published by the Government Printing Office.

The 1876 Annual Report has been widely used as a reference source on the creation of the Life-Saving Service; it should be, it was well written, though a bit "flowery," and minced few words when it came to attacking that arch enemy of Sumner Kimball, political influence. In reporting the continuation of the annual examination of the keepers and crews by the Examining Board, which consisted of two Revenue Cutter Service Officers and a

Medical Officer of the Marine Hospital Service, the 1876 volume was explicit in describing the individuals rejected; not by name, of course, but in such terms that anyone familiar with the particular district being discussed could identify the individuals mentioned.

For example in describing a group of five rejected surfmen in the 6th District (North Carolina and Virginia), Kimball reported that "Four of the five belonged to the Station, the keeper of which was a teacher, there being but two competent persons in the entire crew." In the Second District, in describing a total of seven rejects, two were "physically disqualified," one was "the son of the keeper," two were "deficient in experience and skill as surfmen," one was "of bad character," and the last one was "insubordinate." The terms "general worthlessness," "neglect of duty," "deficiency of skill" were also applied with vigor throughout that part of the text. Of some 396 prospective keepers and surfmen examined that year, seventeen keepers and fifty surfmen (approximately 17%) were rejected by the Board for one reason or another.

The season of 1876-77 generally paralleled the previous year. Surfmen were employed for the same periods as during the previous winter except for some very minor changes. The principal change was that the Great Lakes Stations had for the most part been completed and had been placed in service during the period between September 1876 and June 1877. Again for the second year in a row, four shipwrecks occurred which resulted in loss of life within the scope of operations of the Service. These wrecks are shown in the table below.

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives Lost	Place
<i>Massachusetts</i>	Schooner	1/2/1877	1	3/4 mile from Peaked Hill Bar Station, Mass.

<i>Circassian</i>	Ship (Br.)	12/29/1876	28	Near Bridgehampton Station, Long Island
<i>Amerique</i>	Steamer (Fr.)	1/7/1877	3	Near Sea Bright Station, New Jersey
<i>Margaret and Lucy</i>	Schooner	3/2/1877	7	1-1/4 miles north of Toms River Station, New Jersey

Thus the toll of lives mounted. It must also be mentioned, however, that 189 persons from the *Amerique* were successfully rescued. A month later on the 2nd of March, a few miles south of Sea Bright at Long Branch, 198 persons were rescued from the Belgian Steamer *Rusland* with no loss of life. Twenty-seven more persons were rescued on March 22 from the British Ship *Winchester* near Cape Henry, Virginia, and, of course, many other instances of rescue occurred that season involving craft with fewer persons on board, bringing the grand total of 1,461 persons successfully assisted by the U.S.L.S.S. during fiscal year 1877.

One of the difficulties, of course, in citing "lives saved" statistics is that it is only a matter of judgment as to whether all those assisted would have perished had not the Life-Saving Service been present and effective. Going back to the instance of the March 1846 storm, before the days of the government boathouses, approximately 58% of the persons on board the vessels wrecked on the Jersey Coast were saved, through both their own exertions and through the unequipped exertions of those on shore.

Applying even that standard to our grand total of 1,500 for 1877, we would have to conclude that over 600 persons were, in fact, rescued from death by the men of the Life-Saving Service.

The principal disaster of the 1876-1877

season was the loss of 28 men on board the ship *Circassian*. It was one of the most ridiculous and saddest events ever encountered by the Life-Saving Service.

The *Circassian* was a full rigged ship constructed of iron about 1857 and was 280 feet in length. Originally the ship was a steamer owned in England, and operated as a blockade runner during the Civil War when it was captured and sold. Running aground a short time afterward on Sable Island and being refloated, the *Circassian* ran aground again on Squan Beach, New Jersey, in 1869. Once again it was refloated then laid up for nearly three years until it was sold to a British firm and converted to sail.

Her final shipwreck occurred about 11:00 pm on the 11th of December 1876 while the ship was on her maiden voyage from Liverpool to New York. She stranded in a gale on a sand bar about 400 yards off the Long Island shore near Bridgehampton. The size of the vessel and her near 20 foot draft caused her to ground beyond the outer bar and beyond the normal range of a mortar.

The Life-Saving crew of the Bridgehampton Station, assisted by the crews from the neighboring stations at Georgica and Southampton, successfully landed a shot line from their mortar at that extreme range by taking advantage of the combination of low tide, the fact that the ship had driven further on shore, and wind. By morning, however, the storm had let up and surf-boats were used to land the 49 persons on board instead of the life-car. There were no losses of life.

The Coast Wrecking Company of New York was awarded the salvage contract and commenced operations. Besides four supervisors on the wreck, the Company employed a dozen Indians from the nearby village of Shinnecock. The members of that tribe were principally engaged in the business of whaling and wrecking. In addition to the wreckers, sixteen of the regular ship's company remained on board making a total of thirty-two persons on board.

Within two weeks of the grounding, the

vessel had been moved offshore, by lightening the vessel and hauling on the heavy anchors placed to seaward. On the 26th of December 1876 a developing storm threatened the salvage operations. Counting on the strength of ship to withstand the elements of wind and sea, and the action of those elements to free the vessel from the bottom, the wrecking agents decided to take a calculated risk and keep the wrecking crew on board. The life-savers made repeated offers to keep a line attached to the Ship from the shore but these were rejected by the Company representatives on the fear that the wreckers might become afraid during the height of the storm, just when they were needed most, and abandon the wreck.

By the 29th the storm hit in all its fury with sleet and snow and to observers on shore, it appeared as if the hope of getting the wreck floated had been given up; in fact, the hawsers to the anchors had been slacked in an apparent attempt to let the *Circassian* drift on to the beach. Night fell with no let-up in the storm; by this time the surf was sweeping over the flat beaches and pouring into the spaces between the sand dunes. The plight of the ship became apparent and once again the crews of the three stations were summoned to the scene. Unlike the previously successful firing of the line at low tide, the only place the eprouvette mortar could be placed was back up on the beach, nearly to the base of the sand dunes. The added distance over the beach, and the distance of the wreck off shore, was too great for the feeble mortar; this, notwithstanding the force of the east southeast gale and the fact that the gale was hurling sand in their faces, made it all but impossible to get a line to the *Circassian*.

Just as the mortar was about to be fired, the gale shifted to the west southwest causing an immediate increase in the height of the seas. The ensuing waves crashed even further up on the beach and cut through the dunes; the *Circassian* was engulfed by the seas, the men onboard had long since taken to the rig-

ging. The mortar had to be moved to a new location to escape the encroaching surf and after some difficulties was fired without success. Helpless to do anything further, the would-be rescuers waited until dawn in hopes that something might be accomplished in daylight, or that the storm might subside. It did not. At midnight the tide fell and lights were seen on deck—the hull was intact. By two o'clock in the morning, the watchers saw that the men had left the foremast and had taken to the mizzen, the main mast having long since fallen carrying with it the mizzen top mast.

At 3:30 am, the hull was seen to have broken in two. At four o'clock, the iron mizzen mast started to careen to port, a half hour later it slowly dipped and settled into the furious sea carrying with it the men clinging to its shrouds.

The life-savers searched the shore by the light of lanterns in the faint possibility that some one might have made it to shore; they were rewarded for their efforts when they discovered the ship's first officer, second officer, carpenter and one of the wrecking crew hanging onto a makeshift cork float. Somehow, under the leadership of the first officer, they had made it to shore, the only survivors.

Had a line been placed on board, as urged by the lifesavers, it would have been possible to make a rescue. In the face of gale warnings, the refusal of the wrecking company representative to maintain such communication with shore was termed "murder" by the enraged press; indeed, it might have been! But the Life-Saving Service escaped any serious accusations of guilt for the loss of the *Circassian's* wrecking crew.

After such disasters, the service continued its search for a means of increasing the range from shore at which a wrecked vessel could be reached by a shot line, while limiting the weight of the apparatus. The weight factor alone was of prime importance. The eprouvette mortar, five shot, shot line, hauling lines, hawser crotch, sand anchor, and life car weighed nearly 1700 pounds. It must be

remembered that this gear wasn't hauled on smooth, hard roads—which would be bad enough—but was instead pushed, shoved, and probably cussed at, every foot of the way through soft yielding sand.

Since the largest number of vessels being shipwrecked were of the small coastwise variety, a five to ten man crew and no passengers, it was decided that a breeches buoy might be used instead of a life car thus eliminating not only the car's weight, but the weight of the heavy cordage needed to support the car and its passengers—a total of 550 pounds.

Research on the use of rockets as a substitute for the mortar continued but more and more it was concluded that for the expense and portability, as well as dependability and accuracy, the primary line throwing appliance would remain a mortar or gun. Parrott and Captain Ottinger continued their efforts at the West Point Foundry and came up with a wooden carriage. This gun fired a cylindrical projectile, fifteen inches long and weighing twenty-two pounds. One end of the projectile was round and fitted the bore closely. The other end protruded from the muzzle three to four inches and had a hole in it to which was attached one end of the faked shot line.

On discharge of the gun, the projectile rotated end-for-end in flight with the holed end and the attached line following in trajectory. This gun required less elevation and hence was more accurate; the wooden carriage absorbed the recoil and was harder to overturn on soft sand than the metal base of the mortar; wire spirals connecting the shot line and shot were obviated; it weighed eighty-seven pounds less than the mortar; and when tried, reached a range of 473 yards.

As during the previous year, Capt. Merryman and the Army's Board of Ordnance continued their efforts concurrent with the West Point Foundry. It was soon recognized that the full time efforts of one man were required and at the suggestion of the Treasury Department, the Chief of Ordnance detailed Lieut. David A. Lyle for special service.

Lyle, working with Parrott's 3" rifled mortar, obtained ranges of 504 and 604 yards depending on the size of shot line used. Using a smaller line and a gun eleven pounds less than Parrott's, he obtained a range of over 630 yards. More experimentation with a yet lighter gun, and Lieutenant Lyle achieved a range of 694-2/3 yards.

Kimball, in the Annual Report for 1877, recommended that ships outfit themselves with such line throwing guns since it would be easier to fire a line in the general direction of a lee shore from a vessel than to try and aim a line against the wind to a grounded ship. Parrott's gun and equipment cost a total of \$182, while the eprouvette mortar and twelve balls only \$147.

These years of 1877-78 were also a time when the Life-Saving Service needed some material improvements. And while the efforts were already underway for improvements were continuing, it was necessary to undertake new programs as well. One problem area involved the few old 1849-1854 buildings which had been altered rather than rebuilt east of Fire Island, New York. Kimball wanted them rebuilt and requested funds in his 1877 Annual Report. Although other old stations on New Jersey coast were reported to have all been replaced by new stations in 1872, the 1877 report alludes to several which hadn't. Another problem entailed the difficulties encountered in securing titles to lands on the Pacific Coast for the stations authorized on 20 June 1874. Related to this was the matter of getting Congress to authorize a station at Bolinas Bay rather than Point Reyes, as originally provided in the law.

One of the principal dangers in coastal life-saving was the inherent risks accompanying the attempt by shipwrecked crews to land their own boats through the surf. Attendant to this was the problem of communication between ships and shore, particularly where the vessel was foreign. To alleviate these sources of danger and confusion, the Life-Saving Service devised a code of signals using

the existing International Code and adding necessary new ones. The U. S. Navy Department afforded it cooperation in this effort by publishing this new code as an appendix to the International Code. Collectors of Customs also participated by distributing inexpensive pamphlets containing the code to Masters entering or clearing their vessels.

The code included signals for identifying the Life-Saving District and each station within it. This would enable passing vessels using new Coast Survey charts which showed the location of the stations to determine their positions. The code, of course, also included signals for use during shipwreck and for warning vessels standing into danger. The success of this code depended upon the use given it by not only the life-savers but the Masters of vessels as well.

It became apparent during the years following the issuance of the Regulations in January 1873 that a revision was needed. During 1877 this was accomplished and a new updated version promulgated. It contained a section on the new signal code to ensure that the stations were familiar with it.

Another major change was the addition of a new revised section on the subject of artificial respiration. In line with the improvements made in the "medical art" of artificial respiration, Dr. H.W. Sawtelle of Marine Hospital Service devised a standard medicine chest containing a "quantity of restorative medicines and applications and instruments used in resuscitation of the apparently drowned."

While these relatively minor improvement programs were in underway, Kimball pointed his finger to several other areas of real concern.

The first was the matter of relying on volunteer life-boat crews on the Great Lakes. The law which provided for their pay was defective in that the volunteers received no pay for their efforts, no matter how strenuous or heroic, if the vessel once relieved of its human burden should happen to survive the storm.



The interpretation being made that since the ship survived, there was no danger to its occupants hence no valid call for the life-saving efforts. On the other hand, the law did not provide for the saving of property by the volunteers.

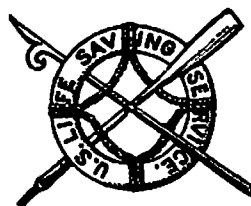
Moral pressure, of course, did put a burden on the volunteer life-savers to rescue property from shipwreck even though they were not paid for it. Not only were they not paid for this volunteer effort, they lost wages from their usual occupations when so engaged, and they were, at the same time, prevented from seeking private gain from salvaging since they were, in fact, using government equipment.

Kimball asked the Congress to remedy this situation by broadening the terms under which compensation could be paid for voluntary services.

The second major point was the inadequate compensation paid to keepers. Where as a lighthouse keeper averaged \$600 per year for making sure the wick was lit, the Life-Saving Station keeper received only \$200 per year and was required to risk his neck. In fact, the surfmen on the Maine Coast worked six months a year at \$40.00 per month made more during his half year of service than did their "boss" who worked a whole year.

The third, and almost prophetic, recommendation was for the establishment of additional stations. Four were called for on the Texas Coast near Galveston; on Lake Michigan at Sleeping Bear Point, Bayley's Harbor, Kenosha, and Muskegon; on Lake Huron at old Point Aux Barques, near Port Austin, Middle Island, and Sand Beach; at Cranberry Isles, Maine, and Watch Hill, Rhode Island; at intermediate points between the existing stations on the Coast of Virginia and North Carolina, and five more from the southernmost of these to Cape Fear, North Carolina.

The scope and responsibilities of the service continued to grow.



# CHAPTER FOUR:

## *The First Ten Years Are the Hardest*

### *Part Three: 1878*

The operating season of 1877-78 commenced in the same manner as it had during the previous two years. Surfmen were employed at the various districts for periods of different lengths depending on the need and also upon the availability of funds for salaries. In some districts, and at some stations, it was necessary to provide employment for only partial crews at certain selected stations during the beginning or ending two weeks of the season; in other districts, it was necessary to shorten the operating season at all stations by lopping off several weeks to a month. Once again, all the necessary funds requested through the usual Congressional appropriations were not provided.

The relationship between the Revenue Marine Officers and the Life-Saving Service was especially harmonious because, of course, Sumner Kimball was Chief of the Treasury Department's Revenue Marine Division, an organization he preferred to call a "Bureau." Kimball had every reason to command the loyalty and respect of those officers. With the advice of his select staff composed of Revenue Marine Officers, he had examined and tossed out a considerable number of incompetent officers some of whom had received their commissions as political rewards during the Civil War. He had thus streamlined the Revenue Marine and under his guidance, his remaining officers gained new respect as members of an elite corps.

In 1876 Kimball obtained passage of legislation to establish a training school ship for the purpose of developing Revenue Marine

officers. This undertaking, with the cooperation, of course, of the Secretary of the Treasury and the staff of Revenue Marine officers, convened a unique service school of instruction which one day was to become the United States Coast Guard Academy. The post-Civil War Navy also faced the problem caused by its similarly swollen officer ranks and cast about for solutions. As a result, new fields of naval endeavor were sought in peacetime-oriented activities.

One such activity involved the armed U. S. Naval Steamer *Huron*. The *Huron* was a 541 ton barkentine rigged-screw steamer built in 1875. Her hull of 5/8 inch iron plate earned her the reputation of being "the strongest hull in the Atlantic waters." Under the Command of Cmdr George P. Ryan, USN, the *Huron* with sixteen officers and 115 crewmen on board departed Norfolk, Virginia, in the face of storm warnings, on Friday, November 23, 1877. She was bound for a pleasant peacetime survey expedition to Key West, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean.

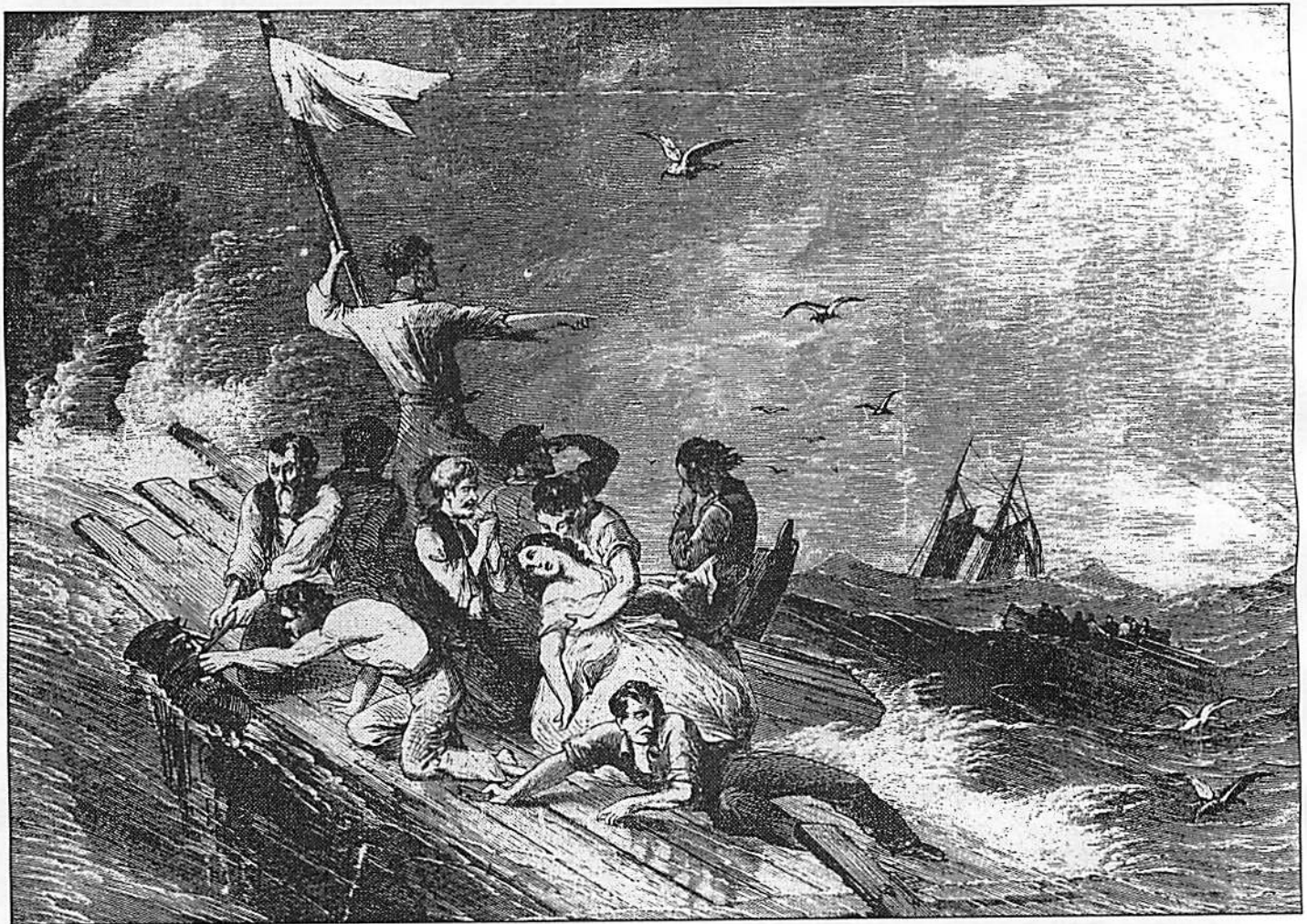
Choosing not to fight the northerly surge of the Gulf Stream, Captain Ryan, once clear of Cape Henry, decided to proceed on an alternate course southward hugging the coast. A third route, discarded by Ryan, was to direct his course seaward to the east of the Gulf Stream and then south. The choice to hug the shoreline may have worked out, even in the moderate gale that was pushing on the port quarter, had the *Huron's* navigation been adequate. But it was not. About 10:30 am on the 24th, the *Huron* struck the leeward North Carolina beach, 2-1/4 miles North of Nags Head. Signals were fired from the wreck in an attempt to alert those on shore to the plight of the *Huron*.

As a result of the shortage of operating funds, the Nags Head station (in fact, all those on the Virginia-North Carolina coast) was not scheduled to open until December 1st, six days away. There was no patrol on the beach, of course, and there was no reason for any other person to be on the beach at that hour of the morning and in that kind of weather. Some of the inhabitants of Nags Head somehow heard the sound of the distress rockets above the surf and gale and a few finally reached the beach. No boats were available and the nearest government station was 2-1/2 miles down the coast.

The keeper of that station, at his home on Roanoke Island, was completely unaware of the situation on the beach. The would-be rescuers arriving at the station being fearful of the

Government, were afraid to break into the station and run out the apparatus. And had they done so few, if any, knew how to use the mortar.

Meanwhile, on the *Huron*, the lifeboats were soon battered useless by the seas which swept the ship. By dawn, not one was left. One life raft did miraculously remain and was successfully launched by a Navy Ensign named Young and by a seaman named Williams. Intending at first to carry a line to shore with the raft, the line unfortunately had to be cut and the raft bearing the two men drifted to the beach where the Ensign and the seaman distinguished themselves by their exertions on behalf of their shipmates. The final toll of the *Huron* disaster was 98 lives lost, almost 75% of those on board.



Wreck survivors, with the "sandpounders" on sight, thankful for a quick rescue.

While the loss of lives was, in fact, a failure of the life-saving system, it was not a failure on the part of Kimball or his personnel but rather a failure on the part of Congress to appropriate the funds necessary to meet the employment level Kimball had requested.

The events of the 25th of November, the day after the shipwreck, added further to the calamity. The Superintendent of the District, Capt. J. J. Guthrie, himself a former Navy officer, rushed to the scene of the *Huron* disaster on the wrecking steamer *B & J Baker*, which had been engaged in Norfolk by the Navy to salvage the wreck. Deciding to land from seaward, Guthrie and a crew launched one of the *Baker's* boats. About halfway to shore, the boat broached-to when hit by the second of a series of large breakers, resulting in the drowning of Captain Guthrie and four of the boat's crew.

No sooner had the loss of the *Huron* settled down in the minds of the men of the Life-Saving Service and the press, when a second major marine disaster occurred on the North Carolina beach.

Just before dawn on the 31st of January, 1878 the 878-ton wooden steamer *Metropolis* bound from Philadelphia to Brazil with 245 persons on board lost its fight with a leak it had sprung two days before. The steamer was deliberately run ashore by its Master, 4-1/2 miles south of the Jones Hill, North Carolina, (Currituck Beach/Whales Head) station and 7-1/2 miles north of the Caffey's Inlet, North Carolina, station.

During the course of the day, 45 persons on board lost their lives as the vessel went to pieces. Despite almost impossible conditions the mortar apparatus was pushed and hauled some 4-1/2 miles through the sand from the nearest station, arriving shortly after noon. Shots were fired on the life-saving crew's arrival and, in fact, the second one fell across the wreck but was lost as the people on board delayed in properly pulling the line on board and attaching it to a spar. All those on board the *Metropolis* who were capable of handling

such a line struck out for shore early in the day, while those remaining were pitifully weakened by exposure to the elements and their fruitless efforts of the morning.

The keeper of the station exerted himself to heroic proportions by personally pulling persons from the surf, and by administering medicines from the chest strapped on his back. In his hurry to get to the wreck, however, he forgot to fill his powder flask. In using gun powder borrowed from a local source, the third and remaining shots repeatedly parted the shot line, leaving the life-savers standing quite helplessly, with no shot nor shot lines left on the beach. The life-saving crew, like the keeper, did not quit and rendered yeoman service in rescuing those unfortunates from the *Metropolis* as they were washed ashore in the surf, the last survivors being recovered after nightfall.

The first reports of the wreck reached the outside world about 8:00 pm the night of the 31st, in a terse telegraph message sent out by the Signal Service operator at Kitty Hawk:

"At 6:50 am Steamship *Metropolis* struck on Currituck Beach, three miles south of Currituck Light. 248 persons were on board; 50 swam ashore. No assistance from Life-Saving Stations."

While this inaccurate report represented the conditions existing about noon on the day of the wreck, it nonetheless captured headlines in the newspapers and created the immediate, but false, impression that the Life-Saving Service was a waste of time and money. With a few exceptions, the Life-Saving Service continued to take it on the chin in the days that followed even though the actual situation on the beach was available to reporters arriving later at the scene. Gradually, recognition was made that federal funding for sufficient stations and crews was inadequate. Moreover, the owners of the *Metropolis* (Benjamin P. Lunt, George D. Lunt, and John Hegeman, Jr., of New York) were accused of

“criminal negligence” for sending the unseaworthy *Metropolis* on a foreign voyage with passengers on board. But the damage to the reputation of the Life-Saving Service had already been done.

Criticism of the Life-Saving Service arising from the *Huron* and *Metropolis* disasters afforded the Navy an opportunity for its into much needed expansion into another peacetime-oriented function. The Navy, of course, was not without Congressional supporters. Amid charges of “amateurism” on the part of the existing management of the Life-Saving Service, a bill was introduced in the Senate which would place the Life-Saving Service under the U.S. Navy. The District Superintendents would be replaced by Naval officers on shore duty as would the Revenue Marine Inspector and assistant inspectors. Enlisted men of the Navy would be assigned to Life-Saving Stations to fill existing vacancies and the present surfmen would be incorporated into the enlisted ranks of the Navy, to be assigned to men-of-war (if that were necessary) during national emergency.

Kimball, being a cautious man, had covered the Life-Saving Service very well in the Annual Reports of 1876 and 1877, when he pointed out the great distances between the stations on the North Carolina coast. He had also wanted to increase the operating season at the stations on the coast. Both recommendations more or less fell on deaf congressional ears; when the time came for the extra dollars to be appropriated to give effect to them, none were forthcoming.

Armed with these prophetic recommendations, Kimball’s congressional friends were well-equipped to defend the Life-Saving Service against charges of “amateurism” and incompetence. Following the disclosure that the cause of the *Huron* disaster was the result of poor navigation, it was the Navy whose “professionalism” came into question. In any event, a bill counter to the one sponsored by Navy supporters was introduced and drew tremendous support from the marine industry

as well as from the population of the seaboard.

In a memorable and eloquent speech on June 4, 1878, before the House of Representatives, in support of this “bill to organize the Life-Saving Service,” the Hon. S. S. Cox of New York quite literally raked the U. S. Navy over the coals—along with a few of its Congressional supporters, particularly those from inland states. Cox, of course, was the same man who had long since befriended the Life-Saving Service and who had achieved the original compromise provision for paid crews and alternate stations on the New Jersey Coast back in 1870. The Congressman from New York gave thirteen arguments on why Navy Officers should not be employed in the Life-Saving Service in place of civilians or Revenue Cutter Officers. And while it must be recognized that his rhetoric was intended only to prove a case, it must have certainly reflected the views of Cox’s friend, and probable author of much of the speech, Sumner Kimball.

The bill passed with the unanimous vote of both Houses of Congress on 18 June 1878, and rescued the U.S.L.S.S. from what appeared to be a stormy and rough voyage; in fact, the new law left the Life-Saving Service in a far better position than could ever have been imagined.

The Act of 18 June 1878, provided five important organizational features:

1. The service was placed in the status of a separate establishment, no longer part of the Revenue Marine, in charge of a General Superintendent whose competency was ensured through a number of statutory qualifications (met, of course, in total by Kimball).
2. The stations of the service were to be manned from September 1st to May 1st of each year on the seacoast, and on the Great Lakes from the opening of ice-free navigation to its close, except where it

could be shortened at the discretion of the Secretary of the Treasury.

3. The pay of keepers was raised from \$240 per year to \$400 per year in an attempt to secure the services of the best men. Keepers were also assigned the functions of Inspectors of Customs.

4. The provision for employment of volunteer life boat crews on the Great Lakes was liberally amended to include \$3.00 per day pay for drills and exercise, saving and guarding imperiled property, and a sum of not more than \$10.00 for each occasion of actual and deserving service at shipwrecks.

5. The continued detail of Revenue Marine Officers as Inspectors of the Stations was ensured by statutory language, and the law authorized formal investigations into cases of shipwreck resulting in loss of life within the scope of U.S.L.S.S. operations.

Beyond the reorganizational aspects of the law, the Act of June 18, 1878, provided funds for the establishment of thirty-seven new stations including the creation of a new district in the Gulf of Mexico. It also provided that funds received from the sale of old stations and materiel condemned by Boards of Survey could be used to rebuild, improve, or equip other stations. The Act also extended the conditions when the Silver Life-Saving Medal could be awarded.

The thirty-seven new stations authorized were as follows:

Cranberry Island, Maine  
Fourth Cliff, Massachusetts  
Watch Hill, Rhode Island  
Rehoboth Beach, Delaware  
Ocean City, Maryland  
Popes Island, Virginia  
Virginia Beach, Virginia (Seatack)

Little Island, Virginia  
Wash Woods, North Carolina  
Currituck Inlet, North Carolina  
Poyners Hill, North Carolina  
Paul Gamiels Hill, North Carolina  
Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina  
Bodie Island, North Carolina  
Pea Island, North Carolina.  
Gull Shoal, North Carolina  
Big Kinnakeet, North Carolina  
Creeds Hill, North Carolina  
Durants, North Carolina  
Cape Lookout, North Carolina  
Cape Fear, North Carolina  
Sand Beach, Michigan  
Grindstone City, Michigan  
Middle Island, Michigan  
Ship-Canal, Michigan  
Sleeping Fear Point, Michigan  
Manistee, Michigan  
Ludington, Michigan  
Muskegon, Michigan  
Kenosha , Michigan  
Bailey Harbor, Wisconsin  
Sabine Pass, Texas  
Galveston, Texas  
San Luis, Texas  
Saluria, Texas  
Aransas, Texas  
Brazos, Texas

Also, authority to construct a station at Bolinas Bay, California, in lieu of Point Reyes, California, was finally granted, having been requested annually since 1876.

As it can be seen, the North Carolina Coast quite expectedly received a lion's share of the new construction. In furtherance of the efficiency of those stations in that district, the War Department, in the season of 1877-78, completed connecting the telegraph line from Cape Henry to Cape Hatteras and the Chief Signal Officer prepared to install telephones between Cape Henry and Kitty Hawk. Self-bailing, self-righting life boats and facilities for housing those craft were constructed near the life-saving stations at Orleans, Massachusetts,

Fire Island Inlet, New York, Absecon Inlet, New Jersey, and Townsends Inlet, New Jersey, during the season of 1877-78.

Construction had continued on the stations on the Pacific Coast through the summer and fall of 1877. Several of these were placed in operation while others were not manned until the following summer because of the scarcity of suitable persons willing to serve as keepers for the ridiculously low wages allowed by law. In the meantime, five stations on Long Island, of the early 1849-54 vintage, were found to be beyond repair and were completely rebuilt. Two old stations on the Jersey coast were contracted for similar rebuilding on the old sites at Long Branch and Spring Lake.

In connection with the material condition of the existing stations, four stations had to be moved to keep them from washing out to sea by the encroaching action of the Atlantic; others suffering severe damage from the storms of that year were repaired.

Lieut. David A. Lyle continued his efforts into the season of 1877-78, the separate activities of Captains Ottinger and Merryman at their respective experiments having been terminated. The outcome of Lyle's work was the development of two similar bronze guns, one weighing 202 pounds (counting the gun, its bed and a shot) and the other 102 pounds. The heavier gun test-fired a line 695 yards and the smaller 477 yards. Although the maximum distance that the life car or breeches buoy could be effectively used was something less than 400 yards, communications by line with a vessel in excess of that distance would still afford alternative methods of rescue. Kimball urged that the larger gun be provided as soon as possible to all stations where the smaller gun was not sufficient. He further urged expeditious delivery of these artillery pieces which from then were to be known as "Lyle guns." Perhaps had Lyle's device been part of the equipment allowance at the Currituck Beach station, the shot line might have successfully been placed aboard the *Metropolis* and the horrible loss of life at that

wreck been avoided.

The season of 1877-78 not only witnessed the losses of the *Huron* and *Metropolis* attended with fatalities but also saw a great number of other wrecks which ended in death for some of the persons on board them. It must be noted however that the increasing number of shipwrecks accompanied with loss of life was not necessarily the result of a failure of the life-saving system or a result of particularly heavy winter storms. A factor is the increase in such instances may well have been the increase in scope of Life-Saving Service operations coupled with an improved collection of accident reports.

#### Season of 1877-78: Fatal Shipwrecks

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>John Clark</i>	Ship	5-5-78	2	2-1/2 miles East of Cross Island Me., Station
<i>Addie P. Avery</i>	Schooner	1-3-78	6	1/2 mile North of Parnet River, Mass., Station
<i>Pow-Wow</i>	Schooner	1-3-78	5	1/3 mile South of Parnet River, Mass., Station
<i>J. G. Babcock</i>	Schooner	1-3-78	7	2 miles North of Orleans, Mass., Station
Unnamed	Fishing	4-16-78	1	Opposite Nauset, Mass., Station
<i>Frank Jameson</i>	Schooner	11-25-77	5	Opposite Smith Island, Va., Station

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Ossipee</i>	Brig	11-25-77	7	7-1/2 miles from Assateague Beach, Va., Station at Ragged Point
<i>Huron</i>	Steamer	11-24-77	98	2-1/4 miles North of Nags Head, N. C., Station
<i>Metropolis</i>	Steamer	1-31-78	85	4-1/2 miles South of Currituck Beach, N. C. Station
<i>Lake Forest</i>	Steamer	10-10-77	9	1 mile South of North Point, Lake Michigan, near Thunder Bay Island, Michigan, Station
<i>Berlin</i>	Schooner	10-10-77	4	At Burnt Cabin Point Reef, Michigan, near Point Aux Barques, Mich., Station
<i>Magellan</i>	Schooner	11-9-77	8	Near Two Rivers, Wis., Station
Unnamed	Fish boat	3-23-78	1	3 miles west of Grande Point au Sable, Mich., Station
<i>Minnie Corlett</i>	Schooner	3-24-78	1	2 miles from

Chicago, Ill.  
Station, east  
side of  
Round House

Regarding the loss of life statistics, the Annual Report for 1878 carefully pointed out that 108 out of 226 persons lost, died at wrecks occurring when the stations were not open for service; 89 others were lost at wrecks occurring at remote distances from the stations which essentially rendered the government equipment useless. Curiously, were an "effectiveness" computed for those persons saved without the use of government equipment as we did in a previous chapter dealing with the accomplishments of the volunteer service, we arrive at an effectiveness of 53.6%; not unlike the 58% effectiveness computed from the February 1846 storm.

Indeed, the season of 1877-78 encountered some pretty rough going; nevertheless the Life-Saving Service weathered the storm and, thanks to the political acuity of Kimball, came out of it well. Of course, Kimball was a Republican, as were the Secretary of the Treasury, and the President; those were Republican years. Perhaps, then, it could be said that the success of the service in meeting its obstacles was due to the power of partisan politics. There is every evidence, however, that partisan politics was successfully kept out of the operation of the U.S.L.S.S.

Witness an interesting piece of correspondence addressed several years later to United States Senator William J. Sewell, a Republican from the State of New Jersey:

"To Hon. Wm. J. Sewell,  
Dear Sir:

We the Undersigned Citizens of Cape May County, do beg leave to represent, that the United States Life-Saving Service under the present Management, is exceedingly detrimental to the interests of the Republican Party of Said county and in the

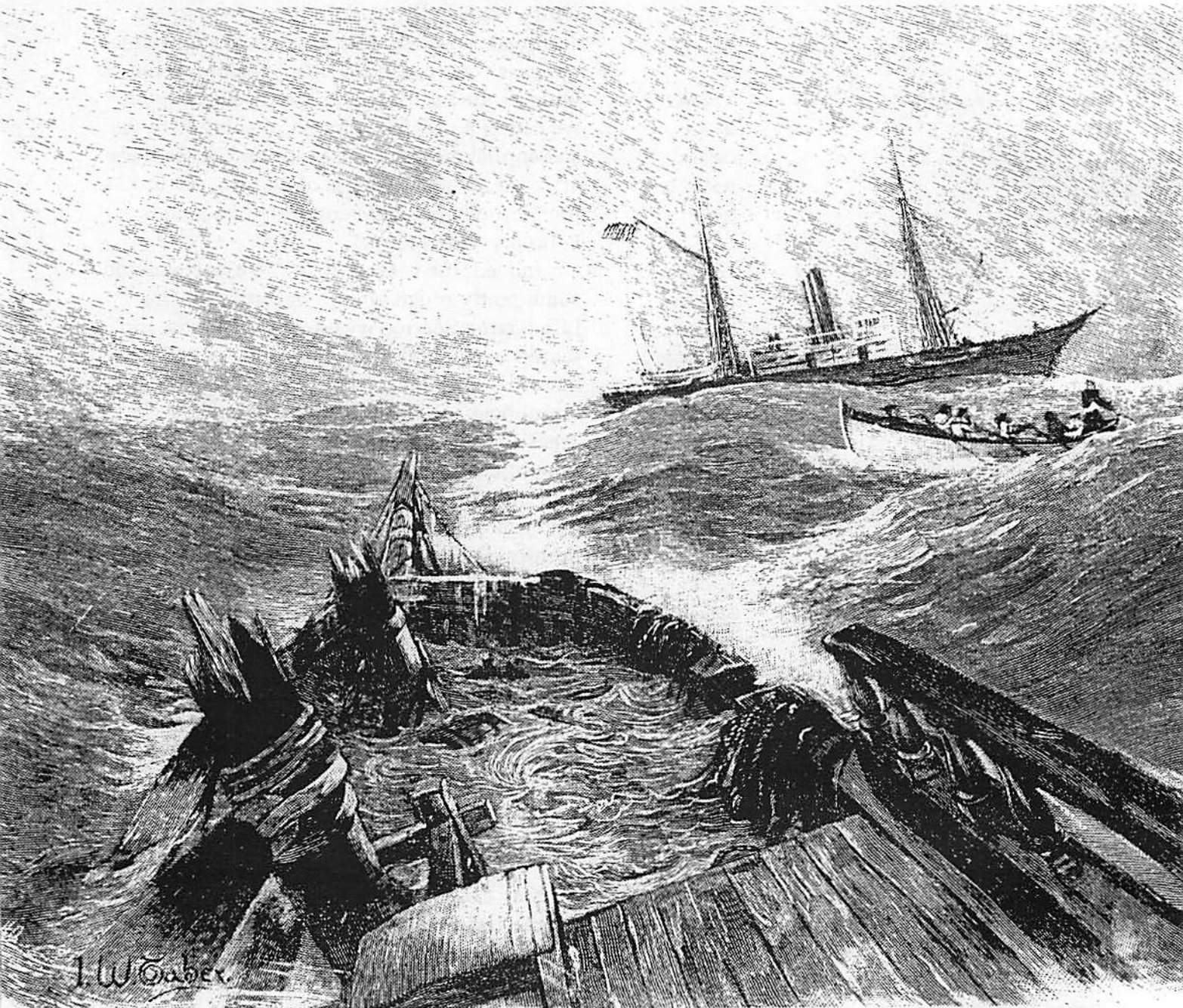


past three years the party in this County has cost, at least 150 votes from this cause alone.

Republican keepers of Stations, good and efficient men, have been removed when what appears to be the slightest pretext, and without being allowed to know what charges, if any have been preferred against them, or given the least opportunity to make a defense, and Democrats and renegade Republicans with less experience

and less ability, have been put in their places.

In a number of Stations, Democrats of the most malignant type, have been selected as Surfmen, in preference to Republicans said to be equally as good/and able-bodied, simply because those selected were especial favorites or friends of those in power, thereby causing feelings of bitterness and ill will of the rejected Republican applicants and their



J. W. Taber.

relatives and friends, which has worked great injury to the party. In Dennis township alone a loss of at least Seventy Republican votes, is chargeable to this cause, and in Middle and Lower townships the party has suffered to nearly the same extent from the same cause. A large portion of this condition of affairs we believe to be chargeable to the "don't-care" policy of the Coast Superintendent, who holds his position as a Republican, but gives, but little vitality or help to the cause of the party in Cape May County in the selection, etc. of his forces. We therefore as working Republicans of the Said County of Cape May, do protest against the control and management of a department under a Republican Administration to be allowed to be practically run for the benefit of the Democratic party. And in conclusion will say, that if it is to be continued to be run in this line, the sooner the Service is transferred to the Navy Department, or to some other Department that takes it out of politics, the better it will be for the Republican party of Cape May County.

March 17th, 1883

Very Respectfully and Truly Yours,

M. V. L. Seyman  
 Thos. H. Williamson  
 T. H. Smith  
 John S. Bennett  
 F. L. Richardson  
 Ware S. Eldredge"

The good Senator was disturbed by this letter and referred it in turn to the Honorable John Sherman, Secretary of the Treasury. Sherman in turn referred the letter to Kimball, who in the usual course of events referred the letter to the appointed Superintendent of the Coast of New Jersey, John George Washington Havens. Havens, a good Republican himself, replied, as to the politics of the keepers and

crews of his district, that for the most part he did not know what they were. In that mostly Republican state, he had appointed three Democrats as keepers and had countenanced a Republican keeper who had balked the party. In the case of two energetic keepers who were Democrats, he allowed them to cart their men to the polls on election day, but he stated that were these keepers Republicans, he would have reprimanded them for being so involved. Apparently, Havens was ready to help the minority exercise their rights, even though it could cost him his job-or perhaps he merely envisioned a day when the party in power would change. The entire matter was dropped by the Life-Saving Service. It was this kind of non-involvement with partisan politics, at least for the record, which sustained Kimball (and Havens alike) through subsequent changes of political administrations, and which earned the Life-Saving Service a reputation for being above the intrigues of the political system of the day.



# CHAPTER FIVE:

## *The First Ten Years Are the Hardest*

### *Part Four: A Bright Future*

With the advantage of being a separate agency under the direction of a General Superintendent, the U. S. Life-Saving Service in 1878-79 set out anew to eradicate the losses of life from shipwreck experienced the year before, and to restore the halo of earlier and more successful seasons.

To a large degree, the 1878-79 season saw the fulfillment of those goals. Where in the previous year fourteen fatal shipwrecks resulted in some 226 deaths and total of 1557 lives had been imperiled from all of the 171 wrecks of that year, the 1878-79 season-witnessing some 219 wrecks, with 2,105 persons on board-experienced the same number of fatal wrecks but reduced the number of lives lost to fifty-six.

A summary of wrecks attended by loss of life during the 1878-79 season follows:

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Zina</i>	Schooner	5-6-79	1	Eastern Egg Rock, Me. near Crumple Island Station
<i>Wm. D. Cargill</i>	Schooner	4-4-79	2	Two miles west of Peaked Hill Bars Mass. Station
<i>Nellie Walker</i>	Sailboat	6-6-79	2	1/4 mile south of Grunet Light, Mass.

<i>James A. Putter</i>	Schooner	12-22-78	1	3/4 mile east of Amagansett N.Y. Station
<i>Sarah Clark</i>	Schooner	10-23-69	2	Pecks Beach, N.J. 1 mile east of Pecks Beach Station
<i>H. F. Potter</i>	Schooner	10-23-69	2	1 mile south of Hereford Shoals, New Jersey
<i>David H. Tolck</i>	Schooner	2-26-79	5	1/2 mile north of Harvey Cedars, New Jersey, Station
<i>A. S. Davis</i>	Ship	10-23-78	19	1-1/7 miles north of Dam Neck Mills, Va., Station
<i>Alexander Nickels</i>	Bark	9-7-78	1	1-1/2 miles south of New River, Fla.
<i>Sevre</i>	Brig	9-11-78	1	16 miles north of Bethel Creek, Fla. House of Refuge
Unnamed	Rowboat	5-26-78	1	Near pier at Cleveland, Ohio
<i>L. C. Woodruff</i>	Bark	11-1-78	3	3/4 mile north of White Lake Harbor, Michigan

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>Australia</i>	Schooner	11-1-78	1	Near north pier, Grand Haven, Mich.
<i>Great Republic</i>	Steamer	4-19-79	14	Lower end of Sand Island, 2 miles southeast of Cape Disappointment, Wash., Station.

Before the season started, every U.S.L.S.S. Station was equipped with a Lyle gun to the unqualified satisfaction of the crews. During the 1878-79 season work of course was in progress on most of the stations authorized by the Act of June 18, 1878.

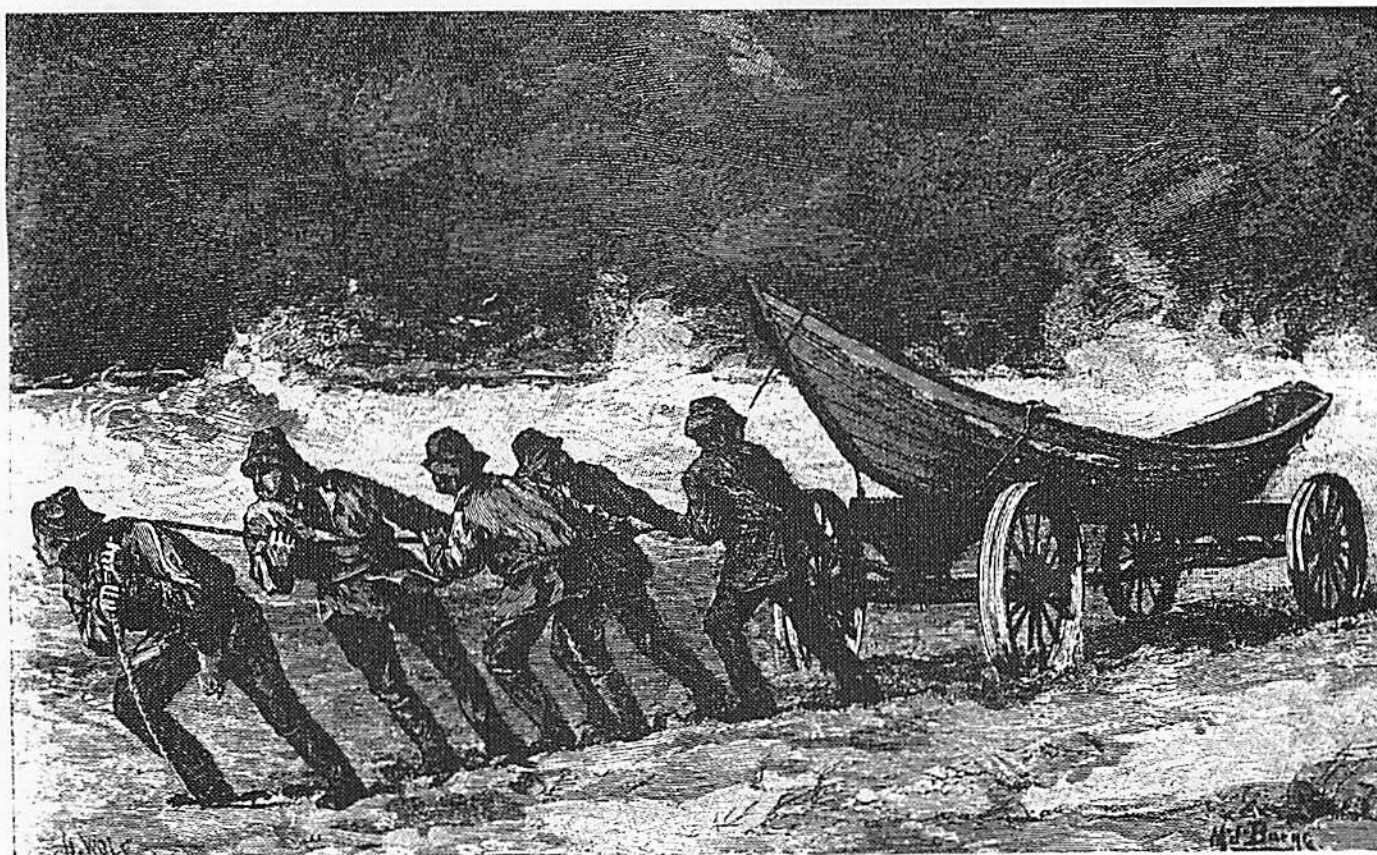
The three stations at Rehoboth Beach, Delaware; Ocean City, Maryland; and Popes

Island, Virginia, were in operation during December, 1878. Two in the Virginia-North Carolina district were similarly completed during December, seven were manned in January, two in February, and two in March 1879.

Three other stations in New England were finished by the start of the next season as were three of four of those authorized on the shores of Lake Michigan; Ludington being delayed somewhat. The 1878-79 season ended with the business of acquiring sites, construction of stations, and manning still in progress for the remaining stations authorized by the action of Congress the previous June.

The most outstanding accomplishment outside of the reduction in lives lost over the previous year and the distribution of Lyle guns was the creation within the U.S.L.S.S. of two special and continuing boards.

The first, the "Board for the Examination of Plans, Devices, and Inventions (Except



Off to a wreck.



Wreck-Ordnance and Signals),” was presided over by Robert B. Forbes of Massachusetts Humane Society fame and included two Revenue Marine officers, Capt. George W. Moore and Lieut. Charles F. Shoemaker; as well as the 2nd District Superintendent Benjamin C. Sparrow and Keeper Franklin C. Jessup of Station No. 17, Long Island, New York.

This board was intended to do exactly as its title described and, at the first meeting, Forbes thought that it would be appropriate to discuss the old subject of surf-boats, something which had recently caused somewhat of a stir as a result of the U.S.L.S.S. attempting to prescribe to surfmen of one locale the use of a surf-boat designed by and in general use in another. The Board adopted a resolution, following some discussion, which decreed that such boats as were needed in the life-saving districts should be in general accordance with the expressed preference of the best surfmen

of the respective localities.

While this common sense conclusion seemed to decide, once and for all, the matter of surfboat standardization (or lack thereof), it certainly did not set any precedents; it was basically the same decision reached in 1848, 1858, and 1871. Further, the Board’s action did not stimulate any continuing efforts in the direction of designing a better model boat than those used in the various districts; whether those efforts were necessary remained to be seen.

The second board was similarly assigned a superb title, or at least a long one: “Board for the Examination of Devices, and Inventions Relating to Wreck-Ordnance.” This Board was presided over by the U.S.L.S.S. Inspector, Capt. Merryman, USRM, and consisted of Lieut. David A. Lyle, U. S. Army; Lieut. T. D. Walker, USRM; the Superintendent of the Ninth Life-Saving District, David P. Dobbins; and keeper John C. Patterson, keeper of the

Sandy Hook, New Jersey Station.

As with the "Boat" Board, the "Ordnance" Board adapted a set of rules and regulations to govern its activity. Both sets of rules and regulations as they were published bore the following asterisked notation:

*\*Inventors will take notice that the duties of this board do not include action upon any life-saving plans, devices, or inventions to be used or carried on shipboard, the examination of these being the province of the Board of Supervising Inspectors of Steam-Vessels.*

Some of the various plans and inventions subsequently submitted to these Boards were beyond belief. Nevertheless, they were published in *Annexes to the Annual Reports*, resplendent with drawings. The most successful inventors seemed to be those who confined their submissions to improvements of existing equipment. Among this group were numbered several Revenue Marine officers serving as Inspectors, as well as District Superintendents, keepers and surfmen.

Whereas the 1878-79 season marked a step forward, the year of 1879-80 was characterized by disappointment. With regard to loss of life, however, the 1879-80 season record was almost phenomenal. Of 1,989 persons on board some 300 shipwrecks, only nine lost their lives in four separate fatal instances:

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>George Taulane</i>	Schooner	2-3-80	2	1-1/2 miles south of Chadwicks, N.J. Station
Unnamed	Open boat	10-13-79	2	New Inlet Bar, 1/2 mile north of Wachapreague, Va., Station

<i>M &amp; E Henderson</i>	Schooner	11-30-79	4	North point of New Inlet, 2 miles south of Pea Island, N.C., Station
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<i>Henry Roney</i>	Brigantine	10-24-79	1	Lake Ontario, 3 miles east of Charlotte, N.Y.
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And while the number of lives lost on wrecked vessels was at a minimum, for the third time in the eight year history of the service, the Life-Saving Service committed more of its own to a watery death.

On April 23, 1880, at the Point aux Barques, Michigan, Station, Keeper Kiah was at the sweep oar, having launched his boat to proceed to the scene of a distressed schooner, the *J. H. Magruder*, which had stranded on a reef just off the station. A sea broke upon the boat, capsizing it and sending Kiah and his six man crew into the cold waters of Lake Huron. Only the keeper survived. The other men of that crew who perished in the disaster were:

Surfman William J. Sayers  
 Surfman Robert Morrison  
 Surfman James Pottenger  
 Surfman Dennis Deegan  
 Surfman James Nantau  
 Surfman Walter Petherbridge

The loss of the Point aux Barques crewmen revealed that, once again, the level of Congressional appropriations had fallen off. It became necessary to cancel the usual examination of keepers and crews because there was insufficient travel money. Only six stations of those authorized in June 1878, and which remained to be built, were completed during the 1879-80 season. The reasons given in the 1880 Annual Report were "difficulties in procuring titles to the sites selected in some cases and the necessary rejection of bids deemed excessive in others."

If fortune seemed to be against the U.S.L.S.S. during the 1879-80 season, the total destruction by fire of the Cobbs Island, Virginia, station in August 1879, and Pea Island, North Carolina station in May 1880, under the suspicion of arson, did nothing to restore the government's optimism.

To cap the year off, a bill introduced by the Honorable S. S. Cox "to promote the efficiency of the Life-Saving Service and to encourage the saving of life from shipwreck" failed to be acted upon before the adjournment of Congress. This bill would have authorized additional stations, extended pension benefits to widows and orphans of life-savers who died in rescue operations, specified that appointment and employment of all officers and crews was without regard for political affiliation, and provided increased pay to district superintendents, some of whom, Kimball noted in the Annual Report of 1880, received "less pay than the clerk of the lowest grade."

The bright spot of the whole year was, of course, the excellent performance turned in by the crews which contributed immeasurably to the minimal number of lives lost that season. This might be best exemplified by the activities of the stations in the Fourth Life-Saving District, Coast of New Jersey, during the terrific storm of February 3, 1880, which swept that section of the Atlantic seaboard. Six vessels came ashore during the height of that gale with a total of forty-seven persons on board. With the exception of the two persons lost on the schooner *George Taulane* all reached shore safely. In 1881, all the surviving members of the *George Taulane* rescue party, paid surfmen and volunteer alike, received the gold life-saving medal.

While the 1879-80 season ended under a cloud of disappointment, there was no apparent effect of this dismay upon the work of the Life-Saving Service in the following season of 1880-81.

Work on the new stations progressed at its usual slow pace. The two stations burned down were completed for occupancy during

the worst part of the winter. Four stations in the Gulf of Mexico district were similarly in operation. A station was placed in operation at Louisville, Kentucky, at the scene of a dangerous section of the Ohio River known as the Falls of the Ohio. Three other stations were placed in operation in Michigan at Sand Beach Harbor, Port Austin, and Middle Island. Two stations in the old Long Island and New Jersey districts were rebuilt at Amagansett and Sea Bright, respectively.

Several innovations appeared during the 1880-81 season which were noteworthy. A small breast pocket-size manual was prepared on the subject of life-saving and was designed for use by Masters of vessels. It was illustrated with woodcuts showing how to rig a hawser and hauling line to a spar on board a vessel and contained various information concerning signals, patrols, locations, methods, and equipment relating to the U.S.L.S.S. This hand-book was distributed to Masters through the custom houses and received wide distribution.

The second innovation was one which was met with by an immediate uproar from the surfmen; it was the institution of a system requiring the exchanging of "patrol checks," which were small brass tokens identified with number of the station, and surfman's oar number. Passed at night between the patrolmen from adjoining stations, they were returned during the next day to the original station where again that night the procedures was repeated.

The uproar stemmed from the apparent indication of mistrust of the surfmen that the system of checks implied. It was not an unreasonable complaint, perhaps, because the passing of checks from the patrolmen of one station to his opposite number from an adjoining station meant that the men had to walk all the way to the extreme end of their route, not only within visual sight of it. The placing of posts at the boundaries of the patrol routes obviated the need for the actual passing of checks from hand to hand, and of course it

was not possible to pass checks across the many inlets and bodies of water which invariably separated the various jurisdictions of stations located near them. To anyone who has ever walked on a beach fully dressed and shod can appreciate the discomfort felt by the surfmen whose usual "beat" was three miles a watch, at night, in foul weather as well as fair. Small wonder then that the name "Sandpounder" was applied to the surfmen.

Add the failure of Congress to appropriate justly deserved salary increases and, further, the faintly disguised accusation that the life-savers needed small brass checks to prevent them from "cheating," and the wave of resentment which arose from the enraged surfmen was understandable. That too many of them "cheated" was undeniable, particularly on clear, calm nights when the patrol boundaries could be observed from the dunes in front of the station. In fact, it seems ludicrous that men were actually required to walk their patrols under those conditions for those were not the kind of nights when vessels wrecked. There is every reason to believe that the more practical keepers felt that way too and so even more resentment was aroused by this new requirement to pass checks.

Like most new impositions from higher authority, the immediate furor settles down, and men adjust to their new requirements; the surfmen were no exceptions.

Mr. Kimball's Annual Report of 1881 discusses the new "patrol check" system and reflects the official view that the checks were designed to protect the surfmen from charges of "neglect of duty" levied by disaffected towns-people and shipwrecked mariners. It was, therefore in the "best interests" of the surfmen. Whether this opinion of the patrol checks really reflected the views of the life-savers is questionable, nevertheless the system "worked" and remained in force.

The employment of surfman for the 1880-81 season was the widest yet experienced and, while not matching the fantastic record of the previous season, the 1880-81 season-with but

twenty-four fatalities-surpassed the average experienced by the U.S.L.S.S. over the years since the beginning of the paid service. Shipwrecks attended by loss of life for the 1880-81 season were:

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Josie T. Marshall</i>	Bark	1-7-81	1	West End of Oak Island, Long Island, New York
<i>Ajace</i>	Bark	3-4-81	13	Eastern part of Rockaway Shoals, New York
<i>A. B. Goodman</i>	Schooner-	4-4-81	1	Outer edge of inner shoal, Cape Hatteras, N.C.
<i>Daniel Goos</i>	Schooner	1-26-81	3	3 miles south west of light house, Matagorda Island, Texas
<i>Falmouth</i>	Schooner	11-22-80	1	New Breakwater, Buffalo, New York
<i>J. H. Hartzell</i>	Schooner	10-16-80	1	One mile south of Frankfort Harbor, Michigan
<i>Granada</i>	Schooner	10-17-80	2	Two miles north of Grand Haven, Mich., Station
<i>Eduard Parice</i>	Schooner	10-28-80	2	Humboldt Bay, California



Although the record for the year was a good one, the season was again marked by the loss of the keeper and two of his men. At the Peaked Hill Bar station, on November 30, 1880, at the wreck of the grounded sloop *C. E. Turnbull*. The sloop's boom unexpectedly swung 'round, striking the government surf boat and capsizing it. All six men on the sloop were eventually rescued. The names of the the lost life-savers were:

Keeper David H. Atkins  
 Surfman Elisha M. Taylor  
 Surfman Stephen F. Mayo

As the first ten years of the U. S. Life-Saving Service drew to a close, Mr. Kimball was continuing his fight, started the year before, to attain higher pay for his men, and more stations at particularly dangerous locations. His proposals were grounded in results. The record of the service over those ten years was outstanding.

From November 1, 1871, which began the first season of 1871-72, to the end of fiscal year 1881, the activities of the U.S.L.S.S. can be summarized as follows:

Number of disasters:	1,347
Value of vessels:	\$16,083,320
Value of cargoes:	\$8,429,167
Value of property saved:	\$14,958,895
Value of property lost:	\$12,259
Number of persons assisted:	11,864*
Number of persons lost:	395**

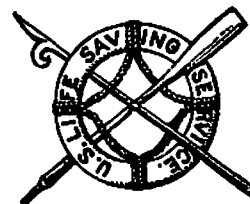
\* Includes sixteen persons rescued not on board vessels.

\*\* Includes 183 at *Huron-Metropolis* disasters.

In turn the government had expended \$2,656,410 in order to accomplish this; or a cost of about \$2,000 per wreck, or \$225.00 per life. The efficiency of the life-saving effort (i.e., lives saved/lives imperiled) was roughly 97%.

The first ten years were, to be certain, eminently successful. The next season began a new age for the life-saving service.

New equipment was provided, new appropriations made, old stations were rebuilt, and all the while the coast-wise activity of sailing craft remained at an all time high.



# CHAPTER SIX:

## *The Golden Age*

### *Part One: 1882-1885*

**F**or the period 1881 to 1893, the bulk of the number of vessels and tonnage of the American Merchant Marine in the span of those years was sail propelled. But we must also note that as sail vessels decreased in numbers by about 13%, attended by a similar decrease in tonnage from the 1878 level-power driven vessels increased in numbers by nearly 45% and in tonnage by over 180% during the same period. By 1893, the tonnage differential, hence the cargo carrying capacity of the two classes of vessels, had been reduced to a mere 200,000 tons. In the years to come, this shifting emphasis in method of propulsion was to become most important.

While the first decade of the U. S. Life-Saving Service experienced the great and hectic expansion in coastwise trade, the period 1882 through 1893 experienced the comfortably stable condition of no particular change in the total numbers of vessels exposed. This stability enabled the U. S. Life-Saving Service to enjoy a climate in which it could rebuild, ascend to self-improvement, and become an established organization within the bureaucracy of the Federal Government. It gradually joined the club of agencies who did things because they had "always been done" rather than because they were essential and necessary. But by and large, its frivolities were few and it earned a world-wide reputation for its outstanding performance. September 1881 to June 1893 can almost be thought of as a "Golden Age" for the U. S. Life-Saving Service.

The season of 1881-82 began dismally, as had all the recent operating years for the

U.S.L.S.S. Crews signed on as usual and the last remnants of the stations authorized by the June 1878 Act, which had not yet been constructed were, one-by-one, placed in operation. Funds were short and it was growing more and more difficult to obtain qualified surfmen and keepers willing to work for the salaries being offered them. Many of the middle-aged men who had formed the nucleus of the early paid surfman cadre ten years before were nearing the age when their services would be terminated. The economic development of the coastlines, spurred by the railroads, was bringing added incentives for the younger experienced surfmen to leave, or never enter, the Life-Saving Service.

A noted and distinguished friend of Marine safety efforts since the 1840's, Capt. R. B. Forbes, resigned his recently appointed position as Chairman of the Board on Life-Saving apparatus by reason of his advanced age.

Moreover, the season had barely gotten underway on the North Carolina Coast when on the 5th of October the Schooner *Thomas J. Lancaster* with thirteen persons on board stranded 3-1/2 miles north of the Chicamicomico Station resulting in the loss of seven lives. About a month before, on September 4th, two men had perished at Muskegon, Michigan, when their schooner rigged scow *Nellie* capsized.

On a more positive note, however, it came to pass that the season 1881-82 was a most successful year for Life-Saving Service operations.

Beyond the early losses of the *Lancaster* and *Nellie* only three other persons lost their lives. The fatal wrecks for that season are summarized below:

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>W. J. Stairs</i>	Bark	3-2-82	1	One mile north of Long Branch, New Jersey, Station
<i>Dauntless</i>	Sloop	2-21-82	2	Fox Shoal, 3-1/2 miles west of Assateague Beach, Va., Station
<i>Thomas J. Lancaster</i>	Schooner	10-5-81	7	3-1/2 miles north of Chicamiconico, North Carolina Station
<i>Nellie</i>	Scow	10-4-81	2	1/4 mile WSW of Muskegon, Michigan Station

Not only did the record of fatal shipwrecks improve as the year wore on, but a number of other events occurred to mark the first season of the Golden Age.

As a result of the advances made in such areas as the development of the Lyle Gun, Kimball decided that it was unnecessary to maintain two separate boards for the determination of life-saving equipment. The result was the creation of a single Board on Life-Saving Appliances. True to his usual methods, a set of rules and regulations was forthcoming and was published in the annual report of 1882.

Just before the end of the fiscal year 1882, the President of the Board, Garrison, was killed in a railroad train accident. Capt. Frank R. Baby of New York was named to replace him. Mr. Garrison did, however, preside over

two meetings of the Board which occurred earlier during that year.

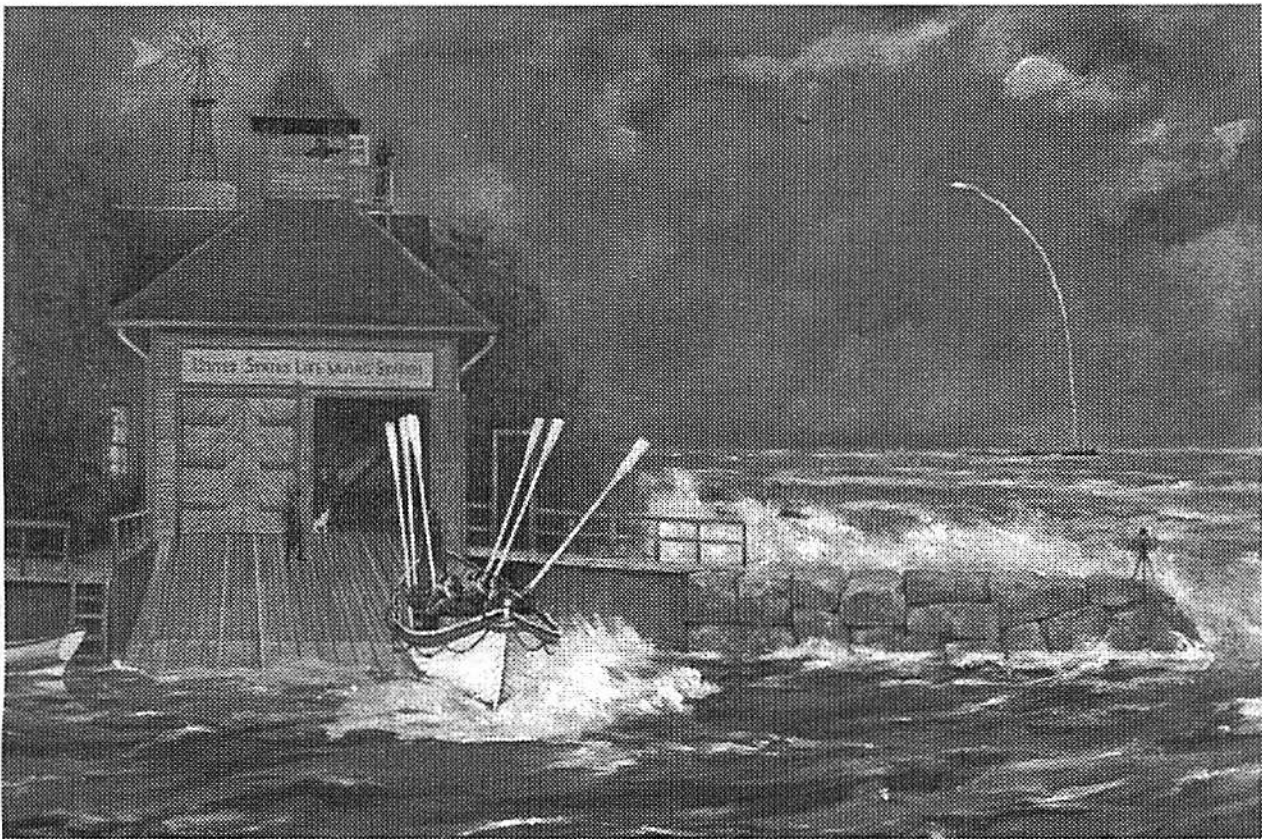
One of the most unusual, and perhaps most comedic, devices ever submitted before the Board was presented in 1882, "Fox's "Vacuum Gun of 1882"". A picture and description of that device were appended to the Annual Report. Whether the Board and Kimball publicized the invention seriously or as tongue-in-check humor is unknown.

Needless to say this particular appliance was never adopted by the Board.

Notwithstanding the submission of Fox's device to the Life-Saving Appliance Board, the most important event of the 1881-82 season was the passage of the Act of May 4, 1882. Kimball received at long last the provisions of law the service needed so badly-increased pay, survivor benefits for families of surfmen who died in the line of duty, authority to construct new stations at points of danger to shipping and, finally, formal exemption by statute of the district officers, keepers and crews from political control.

Stations authorized by the Act of May 4, 1882, were located at:

Hunniwells Beach, Maine  
 Cape Elizabeth, Maine  
 Jerry's Point, New Hampshire  
 North Scituate, Massachusetts  
 High Head, Massachusetts  
 Coskata, Massachusetts  
 Muskeget, Massachusetts  
 Brentons Point, Rhode Island  
 Lewes, Delaware  
 North Beach, Maryland  
 Wallops Beach, Virginia  
 Paramores Beach, Virginia  
 New Inlet, North Carolina  
 Cape Hatteras, North Carolina  
 Ocracoke, North Carolina  
 Smiths Creek, Florida  
 Mosquito Lagoon, Florida  
 Chester Shoal, Florida  
 Cape Malabar, Florida  
 Indian River Inlet, Florida



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 through the pounding breakers—rarely did a ship wreck in good weather. Next you had to rescue those in distress without becoming entangled 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.

Jupiter Inlet, Florida  
 Key West, Florida  
 Santa Rosa, Florida  
 Velasco, Texas  
 Frankfort, Michigan  
 Pentwater, Michigan  
 White River, Michigan  
 Holland, Michigan  
 Michigan City, Indiana  
 Sturgeon Bay Canal, Wisconsin  
 Braces Cove, Maine  
 Wood End, Massachusetts  
 Grand Marais, Michigan  
 Morris Island, South Carolina  
 Damiscove Island, Maine  
 Georgetown, South Carolina  
 Myrtle Island, Virginia

While these stations were authorized by the 1882 legislation, it must be pointed out

that none were completed that year. A few sites, however, were selected and several stations on the North Carolina Coast were in a state of construction by the start of the next season. The immediate availability of funds in May 1882 did, however, enable the alteration to and reconstruction of a number of old stations on coasts of Long Island and New Jersey, as well as permits repairs to the five Florida Houses of Refuge and allow several station relocations occasioned by the encroachment of the Atlantic.

While the station houses constructed along the lines of the later 1870 style were bedecked with overhanging eaves and gingerbread, they remained essentially the same plan as the original 1872 stations. Crew, keeper, and the occasional Army signal service operator lived on the second story of average type building while below, the accommodations on the first

floor consisted of the boat room in the front and the kitchen in the rear.

In the early 1880s this style of construction yielded to a new "Chalet" style house. Several stations of this model were constructed to replace the original houses on the Jersey and Long Island beaches where the ground areas were somewhat limited. Of such stations, possibly the first of that design was built at Deal, New Jersey, during the 1882 season.

Of some interest is the fact that these stations of more "modern" taste were well accepted by the communities in which they were located. In almost every case, those same coastal communities were marked by the influx of wealthy and politically prominent citizens who had constructed summer cottages near the beach in the "Queen Anne" architectural style of the day. The ten-year-old red houses, appearing to be of a seemingly endless expanse of shingles broken by a few small windows, did not, of course, blend well with their new surroundings. One utilitarian life-saving structure in such a community was termed to be "little more than a boat house ... extremely incommodious and ... dilapidated..." by the General Superintendent and, not surprisingly, was replaced.

Other coastal communities did not necessarily fare so well as their elite cousins but, as they too developed into prominent resort towns, their "red houses" were similarly found to be needing replacement. At a few locations where the prominence of the citizens was not such as to result in an appropriate condemnation of the old station house, the 1871 red houses remained through the years of the U.S.L.S.S. basically unchanged in appearance. Several still remain standing on private or state-owned dwellings, in isolated, natural surroundings of dune and bayberry, despite the 1882 report of the "dilapidated" condition of their sister red houses and the long-since demolition of their "chalet" successors.

Spurred by the appropriation of new funds the previous May, the 1882-83 season started with a long overdue physical examination of

the keepers and surfmen. This vital part of the service routine had been neglected in previous years owing to the shortage of travel funds. The medical examinations were undertaken with complete sincerity as were the professional examinations conducted by the Assistant Inspectors for their respective Life-Saving districts.

Indicative of the effect of those visits are the following excerpts from letters addressed to the General Superintendent by Lieut. C. H. McLellan:

"We have found two men ... who were so near-sighted that they could not see vessels a little distance at sea and those near shore, they could not tell their class or anything about them. It is plain that a vessel off their station in distress while they were on patrol or watch would not be discovered."

"I think it a great pity that Mr. Havens [the District Superintendent] should have renominated Valentine of 4, Truex of 11, and Chadwick of 12. Neither [sic] of them can read or write, two of them are advanced in age, and well-to-do, and do not need the position..." (Note: Both keepers Chadwick and Truex were awarded gold medals for their efforts in February 1880 at the wreck of the George Taulane.)

"I have always asked the man on my examination heretofore if they could read; this time I require them to read a line or two of plain matter, and I find they have deceived me, as larger numbers cannot read or write than I was aware of. I think those men should be gradually worked out of the service as equally good men can be obtained without that drawback."

"The doctor has about fifteen scalps hanging at his belt, quite a number for ruptures but one man has refused to be examined and he was a boy and did not know better."

"I think the keepers in selecting their men have been influenced a great deal by

the men's condition in life, giving the places to those who needed it most, making a sort of charity institution of the service."

"I would like to have a quiet talk with you about this district if you can have me ordered [by Captain Merryman] on after the inspection."

In speaking of one of the new buildings near a large resort, the same assistant inspector reported:

"Station No. 6 [new] is a fine building in every particular, in fact it is too fine for that crew as I fear from the way they have cared for the old building that the new will suffer."

Whether or not it was necessary to have surfmen capable of reading and writing is subject to argument, nevertheless the apparent concern for the educational attributes of the crews, in addition to their capabilities as qualified surfman, represents the comfortable aura which surrounded the Life-Saving Service of the golden age. The new salary scale, of course, allowed the service greater selectivity in its employment of surfmen, the economic spectrum of "have" and "have-not" surfman candidates only further exemplifies this widening of employment selection.

Since the distribution of the new surf boats in 1871-72 to the older districts, the allocation of new boats at the new stations as they were built and the assignment of self-bailing, self-righting life boats at certain others, a gradual accumulation of old boats occurred to the point where most stations had two boats and some had more than two. This in itself was not particularly novel since back in the days of the volunteer service, each station had been assigned one of Francis iron surf-boats as well as a smaller wooden one.

In the late 1870s and early 1880s it became a practice to locate one of the older excess boats on the beach near ocean inlets particularly where the nearest stations were a mile or

so down the beach from the inlet. These boats were then launched on the protected waters inside the inlet and used for communicating across the inlet with the adjacent station as well as for assisting sailing vessels which frequently grounded trying to negotiate the shifting sandy shoals of the tidal inlets.

Thus, the good practice of having two boats at inlet stations gradually became an established procedure at all stations. Usually at "open beach" (non-inlet) stations, the second boat was smaller and was intended for particular use at off-season mishaps involving small numbers of persons. During these times, the keeper would have been hard-pressed to assemble a full six-man volunteer crew, but it was not so difficult to find two or three other capable surfmen from the beach. This reduced crew would be sufficient to launch and man a small four-oar skiff. Regardless of the number of boats kept at a station, only one full crew was employed during the operating season either to serve as either a boat crew or to man the Lyle gun and breeches buoy apparatus.

Probably as a result of the continual commissioning of new stations and the resultant renumbering of the remaining stations in the district, the season of 1882-83 marked the abolishment of the system of identifying stations by number. Commencing in fiscal year 1883, all stations were referred to by name which in most instances reflected the name of the nearest town. Stations at more isolated locations were named for the island on which they were located. Others were named for rivers, creeks, points of land, towns, etc. opposite and across the inland bays and sounds from the sandy barrier beaches on which the stations stood. While this new system of names had decided advantages over the old numbers, some confusion still appeared in instances where names had been changed, or where two or three stations in different districts had the same name or where several new stations had been erected on the same geographical entity for which an earlier station

had already been named.

By and large the system of naming stations was merely recognition of local practice and was well accepted by all concerned. From the official roster of stations came such picturesque names as:

- Kill Devil Hills
- Crumple Island
- Wash Woods
- Ditch Plain
- Cold Spring
- Loveladies Island
- Georgica
- Tiana
- Vermillion
- Point Grand Point Su Sable
- Point Aux Barques
- Brigantine
- Ship Bottom
- Seatack
- Bond's
- Durant's
- Tatham's
- Bodie's Island
- Harvey's Cedars
- Eaton's Neck
- Cahoon's Hollow
- Paul Gamiel's Hill
- Zack's Inlet
- Turtle Gut

Neither were native American names forgotten:

- Muskeget
- Muskegon
- Muskallonge Lake
- Nauset
- Watchapreaque
- Chicamicomico
- Kinnakeet (Big and Little)

The operating season of 1882-83 nearly repeated the performance of the previous year: fatal wrecks resulting in nineteen lives lost occurred as follows:

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Fannie A. Bailey</i>	Schooner	6-4-83	4	North Bar of Hereford Inlet 2 miles east of Hereford Inlet, N.J., Station
<i>Albert Dailey</i>	Schooner	1-7-83	2	3 miles NE of Smith's Island, Va., Station
<i>Sallie W. Kay</i>	Schooner	1-10-83	1	5-1/2 miles North of Ocean City, Md., Station
Unnamed	Skiff	8-10-82	1	1 mile North of Louisville, Ky., Station, on Indiana Side of the Falls of the Ohio
<i>George D. Sandford</i>	Schooner	10-4-82	1	1/2 mile West of Manistee, Mich., Station
<i>J. O. Moss</i>	Schooner	11-24-82	1	4 miles north of Grand Point au Sable, Mich., Station
<i>Eclipse</i>	Schooner	11-24-82	1	9 miles North of Grand Point au Sable, Mich., Station
<i>Hessie Martin</i>	Schooner	11-30-82	1	1 mile WSW of Grand Haven Mich., Station
<i>Jenny Lind</i>	Schooner	5-21-83	4	2-1/2 miles south of Chicago, Ill., Station

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
Unnamed	Yawl	5-21-83	3	1/2 mile SE of Milwaukee, Wis. Station

Following the pattern set in the preceding years, the 1883-84 season once again was marked with relatively few fatal shipwrecks. While a total of twenty persons lost their lives, thirteen deaths resulted from the losses of two vessels on the New Jersey coast alone.

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>Elmina</i>	Barkentine	1-8-84	8	3/4 mile south of Long Beach, N. J., Station
<i>L and A Babcock</i>	Schooner	6-26-84	5	1 mile north of Forked River, N.J., Station
<i>Protection</i>	Stearn Tug	11-14-83	1	1/2 mile south of Saugatuck, Michigan
Unnamed	Skiff	1-28-83	2	Watch Hill Cove, R.I.
<i>Augusta</i>	Brig	2-2-84	2	1/8 mile NNW of Block Island Station
Unnamed	Fish boat	5-5-84	1	Two miles east of Cape Dis-appoint-ment, Wash., Station
Unnamed	Fish boat	5-5-84	1	Two miles east of Cape Dis-appoint-ment, Wash., Station

Both the instances of the *Elmina* and the *L. and A. Babcock* were especially sad because the fatalities could have been averted by those

on board.

The *Elmina*, a British vessel, stranded during a severe gale about 200 yards off shore about 11:00 pm. The wreck was discovered almost as it happened and assistance was rushed to the scene. After striking the bar, the crew had immediately taken to the rigging to await rescue as tons of water from the storm surf crashed on the *Elmina's* deck below. It took several shots from the Lyle gun at the obscure outline of the wreck in order to successfully get a shot line aboard. A cheer was heard by those on the beach as the line was received by the crew in the rigging; the rescuers then paid out the whip line as the men on the *Elmina* hauled the shot line thereby pulling the attached hauling block towards the stranded vessel.

After what seemed to be an unusually long period of time to the life-savers, and not receiving any signal through the darkness, the men on shore assumed that the tail of the hauling block had been secured to the wreck. Thereupon they hauled on one part of the elliptical whip to send the hawser out from shore. After taking up the slack, the whip suddenly stopped hard and refused to move. The life-saving crew on the beach exerted all their energies to free the hauling tackle but couldn't budge it. Helplessly, they watched on shore as the faint outline of the wreck disappeared beneath the mountainous surf. All that remained for them to do was to wait on the flooded beach and assist any person fortunate enough to reach the beach alive—none did.

During the course of their gruesome ordeal, the Life-Saving Service men were amazed that the stranded vessel under the pounding it was receiving had not been swept over the bar and up on into closer proximity of the beach where rescue would have been relatively easy. It was reasoned that the crew of the *Elmina*, sensing disaster shortly before they grounded, had let go their anchor and that it was the anchor which held the wreck fast on the outer bar. But what of the frozen



whip line—had it become entangled in some manner? The answer to this was discovered several days after the disaster during a search of the debris cast ashore. To the amazement of the lifesavers, the hauling block was found and both parts of the whip and the block were wrapped around a yard and tied twice.

Why sailors so familiar with sailing ship rigging and deck tackle had not secured the moving parts of the whip to the yard instead of the tail remained unanswered. The crew, upon receiving the hauling block on board, must have tried to hand-over-hand their way ashore along the whip. Had they but made the tail fast, they would have been off the ship in minutes in the breeches buoy.

The second disaster was equally as senseless. The *L. and A. Babcock* was a rotten hulk commanded by an incompetent master. Upon discovering that his ship had sprung a leak off Shinnecock, Long Island, in a NE squall, and further realizing that the flooding was gaining, the master wisely attempted to run before the wind and head for Sandy Hook. The squall turned to a gale, and the flooding continued to gain unchecked. While passing a steamer, the Mate pleaded with the Master to signal distress and abandon the sinking schooner, but the Master refused, on the grounds that he would only abandon his vessel on the beach where he might save his cargo of coal. The *L. and A. Babcock* plunged on towards the southwest. There, from the lee shore some thirty miles south of Sandy Hook, two keepers at the same moment observed the spectacle of a vessel driving head-on towards the shores under their feet.

Although the Life-Saving Stations had been closed for the summer, the keepers gathered a group of volunteers, a team of horses, and the wreck apparatus, and headed on the run for the scene of the grounding even before the vessel smashed onto the outer bar.

The rotten hulk had no sooner touched bottom when it fell apart; the stern literally disintegrated, the main mast fell, and the Master, the Mate and his wife, and four crew-

men scrambled into the fore rigging. A line was fired to the wreck but, owing to the inability of those in the rigging to pull the whip line through the lateral current sweeping parallel along the beach, rescue by breeches buoy soon appeared impossible. Five of the men on board stripped to the waist and tried swimming ashore, leaving the Mate and his wife in the fore rigging. One of the five made it and was hauled from the surf; the others drowned. The Mate then attempted to attach the shot line to his wife and have the men on shore haul her through the surf, but as he worked to do this, the gaff on the foremast loosened and swung, striking the poor woman on the head and knocking her senseless into the surf, where she disappeared.

Moments later the surf swept through the rigging, washing the Mate into the surf but somehow he managed to survive until he was hauled nearly lifeless from the breakers. For a full hour, artificial respiration was administered; he was subsequently restored and remained at the nearest station under the watchful care of the keeper and the keeper's wife. Within two hours after the wreck, not a vestige of the original hull remained; instead, the beach was strewn with a mass of rotten fragments from the ill-fated *L. and A. Babcock*.

Notwithstanding the successes in relieving shipwrecked mariners, the Life-Saving crews from Louisville, Ky., and Cleveland, Ohio, in the spring of 1883 and again in 1884 performed remarkable services at the scenes of floods then rampaging on the western rivers. This role was to be repeated many times in years to come, and would eventually be a well-recognized and greatly appreciated duty of the U. S. Coast Guard.

The season of 1883-84 brought the realization that the year's appropriations were sufficient to rebuild several of the stations in the older districts and to effect repairs and improvements to a number of others. Four stations on the New Jersey coast and five in the Cape Henlopen to Cape Charles coast were

rebuilt, twenty-two others (red houses) on the New Jersey coast were enlarged and improved.

Moreover, fiscal year 1884 marked the promulgation of a new set of revised regulations for the government of the Service. Not unlike the previous Regulations, the new ones included a number of items required as a result of the services expansion and which also reflected the latest in personnel employment restrictions.

During the year 1884-85 the Life-Saving Service once again experienced an excellent operating season with a minimal number of lives lost from shipwreck.

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>Charlie Hickman</i>	Bark	12-22-84	1	1/2 mile east of Forge River, New York, Station
<i>Lena</i>	Bark	12-27-84	8	Southeast bar of Hog Island, Virginia
<i>F and P.M. No. 1</i>	Steamer	12-31,84	1	Entrance to Ludington Harbor, Michigan
Unnamed	Steam Yacht	5-10-85	1	60 yards north of Chicago, Illinois, Station

The wreck of the *Lena* was, of course, the worst loss of the season. The *Lena* was a Norwegian bark bound from Natal, Brazil, to Philadelphia, with a cargo of sugar and a crew of ten men. Striking the shoals off Hog Island, Virginia, the vessel became a total wreck and it was only through the heroic exertions of the Hog Island Station crew that the two survivors were rescued.

Aside from the record of successful rescues, the year 1884-85 was marked by no par-

ticularly significant event. Stations which were in the stages of construction and rebuilding were completed and were put into use during the year.

While Charles H. McLellan was a Second Lieutenant in the Revenue Cutter Service, his experience as an assistant inspector of the Life-Saving Service in the Long Island and later the New Jersey coasts stood him in good stead as an authority on rescue apparatus, boats and drills. He did not hesitate to proclaim his capabilities either to his immediate supervisor, the Inspector of Life-Saving Stations, Captain Merrymen, or to his apparent friend, the General Superintendent, Kimball.

In 1884, he had designed and received approval for the McLellan Beach Apparatus from the Board on Life-Saving Appliances. This was an excellent concept in beach gear which mobilized and compacted the Lyle gun and its wreck apparatus on a four wheel/two part wagon.

The development of rescue boats had been left pretty much up to chance by the boards organized to approved life-saving appliances, on the basis that the experienced surfmen at each location knew more what they needed for the particular surf conditions than anyone else. Moreover, these same surfmen would be reluctant to use anything but the familiar boats of their coast and to require them to do so was senseless, both politically, from the complaints which would be forthcoming, and morally, since it was the surfmen who were risking their lives, they should at least choose a boat whose design they trusted and one which they were familiar with. Even so, the surfmen throughout the service more or less adopted the Squan model surf-boat because of its general acceptance in the older districts. In 1877, official surf-boat specifications had been drawn along the lines of the New Jersey (or Squan) model boat.

These boats were bid-on and manufactured at various locations subject to the district superintendent' approval. A requirement of those specifications was that the interior of the

boats would be white and the exterior red except for the sheer strake which was to be black. Thus the boats built according to the 1877 specifications were termed "red boats." Surf-boats, regardless of the most carefully written specifications, were built by practical men often with very little supervision by the local Superintendent and the use of a lot of "rules-of-thumb."

The practice of awarding contracts on the basis of low bids did not enhance the construction of these 1877 boats, because the rule of the practical thumb in those instances meant thumbing through government greenbacks, with the result that the "redboats" thus became as infamous with the surfmen as had the old Francis iron surf-boats. They weighed close to 1,800 pounds each, they trimmed by the bow, and were considered as worthless. In many instances, the "red-boats" had become the "second boat," to be left outside the station while the number one boat was locally built boat, of no specific design except those dictated by experience and local practice. Consequently, some had keels, some were double-ended, some rowed a double bank of oars, some were carver planked, etc.

Life-boats were a different matter altogether. As discussed earlier, Superintendent Richardson of the First District had successfully adapted the "English model" life-boat. While that boat had sacrificed some freeboard in the name of weight reduction, it was generally satisfactory.

Superintendent David P. Dobbins of the Ninth District and Buffalo, New York, also experimented in the design of the self-righting, self-bailing life-boats. Anxious to sell his design and no less convinced of his life-boat's worth, Mr. Dobbins placed his craft at various stations in his district. Life-boats as such had been placed at a number of both in coastal districts and on the Great Lakes.

It will be remembered that an entire class of facility, termed a Life Boat Station, had been created. Lifeboats all bore one similarity, they required a reasonably deep and sheltered

body of water for launching. On the sea coast this requirement for launching caused lifeboats to be placed at a number of inlet stations; on the Great Lakes, lifeboat stations were located inside of harbor breakwaters and cribs. The most expedient way of launching a lifeboat was on an inclined ramp with the crew at their positions during the launching. Once waterborne, these craft handled well and were extremely seaworthy and valuable as a rescue craft.

One pitfall with lifeboats was that their designers would often try to adapt those heavy craft for use on the flat sandy beaches which dominated the coast line. Superintendent Dobbins was no exception. After arguing that his "improved" lifeboat could be placed on the beaches to advantage, the General Superintendent ordered one of the Dobbins' boats shipped for testing on a flat sandy beach by keeper John C. Patterson, then of the Shark River Station, and a member of the Board on Life-Saving Appliances.

The boat arrived at Shark River in February 1884, and was tested in mid-April of that year. No report of the test was submitted, however, which prompted Dobbins to complain to Lieut. McLellan, the District Assistant Inspector, who had oversight of the Shark River Station. McLellan replied that the boat would be given a fair and thorough testing.

By a letter to Kimball dated October 1st, 1884, keeper Patterson finally reported on the Dobbins' life-boat regarding the tests he carried out the previous April, which tended to support the almost fore-drawn conclusion that the life boat was unsatisfactory for a flat, sandy beach.

"I then decided to get the exact weight of the boat before placing it in the water. I attempted to load [on the boat wagon] boat as we usually load the boat now at the station but found that myself and crew could not do it. I then procured a pole and rigged a derrick and with block and fall succeeded in loading it. I took it to the

scales ... found the boat to weigh 1730 lbs.

On the 21st day of April 1884, we launched the Dobbin's surf-boat, there being but little surf at the time, found by this trial that she is heavy and unwieldy and that in case of a bad sea, each man would of necessity have to take his position at his oar, so as to insure headway at a critical time before she was well clear from the sand with her sharp and almost perpendicular stern. The steersman would also have to take his position before the boat is given the final shove (as is the way with our common surf-boats) thus losing his help at the most critical time of launching during the short slatches [slackening periods] ) in a bad surf and from a flat beach. It would be almost impossible for the steersman to get over her high stern after being shoved in the surf. I gave the boat other trials at different times with about the same results.

Taking into account the great weight of this boat, it can readily be seen that on that account and with no other objection, she is entirely unfitted for launching from our beach with the present crews employed. The crews being forced to spring for their positions at the oar before the boat's stern is fairly loosed from the sand in launching, is a serious objection, and another objection is the steersman having to take his position (to be sure of it) before the boat is afloat. This boat is no doubt a good boat in her proper place."

Thus Keeper Patterson, despite the administrative delay and the rambling phraseology, points a most accurate description of the practical difficulties in launching a 1,730 pound lifeboat from a flat sandy beach.

On November 6, 1884, Superintendent Dobbins fired off a strongly worded letter to Kimball regarding his boat and the lapse of time since he had submitted the boat for trials and his yet apparent non-receipt of a report on

the trials. This particular correspondence triggered a number of similar letters which characterized Lieutenant McLellan and Superintendent Dobbins at odds with one another over the value of the Dobbin life-boat.

In retrospect, it is curious that while Dobbin's boat was probably not all he claimed it to be, McLellan was at the very time the dispute was fermenting involved with Frederick C. Beebe of Greenport, Long Island, in the development of the double-ended Beebe boat, which was already destined, in McLellan's mind, at least, to become the "official" U. S. Life-Saving, Service surfboat.

Beebe's boat was further destined in 1887 to be redesigned by McLellan to be a self-bailing, self-righting rescue boat and be called the Beebe-McLellan surf-boat. While it could be charged that Lieut. McLellan's interests may have conflicted somewhat with his official duties, particularly with regard to the delay in reporting and the actual results of Dobbin's boat tests, there is little question that the Dobbin's boat was generally unsuited for service on coastal beaches, nor is it likely that the ultimate result would have been any different were the tests carried out in a district other than McLellan's.

Following the complaint by Dobbin over the care given his "elegant" lifeboat, the boat was ordered repaired and was sent to an inlet station within the same district for use in the intended, typical life-boat manner. Meanwhile, McLellan feverishly continued his work with Beebe to construct the "perfect surf-boat," work which carried into the next operating season of 1885-1886.



# CHAPTER SEVEN:

## *The Golden Age*

### *Part Two: 1886-1889*

While the previous seasons for a number of years had been marked by the absence of a substantial loss of life, the season of 1885-1886 with twenty-nine fatalities nearly doubled the average loss (fifteen) over the past four years. In consideration of the storms of that winter, and of the number of wrecks that resulted, it was providential that the toll was not worse.

A substantial number of wrecks occurred during the 1885-86 season which involved ships carrying large numbers of persons, thus inflating and perhaps misrepresenting the "lives saved" statistics beyond the usual five to ten men crews rescued from coastal sailing vessels. For example, grounded passenger steamers on the Great Lakes were usually refloated with minimal damage. So it is difficult to credit the life savers with "rescuing all the persons on board," even though those numbers appeared in the annual statistics as "persons saved," a practice that continues to this day.

Before touching further on some of these larger disasters, let us tabulate the fatal wrecks of the year.

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Myrtle Purdy</i>	Schooner	1-9-86	1	Basin Bar, Quoddy Bay, Maine
<i>T. B. Witherspoon</i>	Schooner	1-10-86	7	1-1/2 miles SW of Surfside, Mass., Station

<i>Beta</i>	Schooner	4-6-86	3	Off Plum Island, 4-1/2 miles south of Station, Mass.
<i>Clio Chilcott</i>	Schooner	1-9-86	1	1-3/4 miles NE of Watch Hill R.I. Station
<i>Mary B. Farr</i>	Schooner	1-8-86	2	300 yards North of Spring Lake, N.J., Station
<i>Kraljevica</i>	Bark	2-11-86	8	Barnegat Shoals, New Jersey
Unnamed	Skiff	3-15-86	1	1/4 mile south of Deal, N.J., Station
<i>Malta</i>	Ship	11-24-85	1	3/4 mile south of Shark River, N.J. Station
<i>J. H. Lane</i>	Brigantine	4-19-86	1	5-1/2 miles southeast of Gilbert's Bar, Florida, Station
<i>George B. Sloan</i>	Schooner	10-30-85	1	1/4 mile NW of Oswego, N.Y., Station
<i>R. B. King</i>	Schooner	11-7-85	2	400 yards SW of Muskegon, Michigan, Station

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
Unnamed	Rowboat	4-16-86	1	1/2 mile SE of Chicago, Illinois, Station

The tragic loss of the *T. B. Witherspoon* with seven of the nine persons on board was an instance of supreme frustration for the LifeSavers of the Surfside Station. The vessel stranded during one of a series of severe winter storms which struck the coastline between Cape Hatteras and Maine between the 8th and 10th of January and which caused no fewer than twenty-seven shipwrecks.

The rescuers from the Surfside station began their fight to save the vessel at 8:00 in the morning knowing that they must race against the clock; not only was the high pounding surf their enemy but the freezing temperatures as well. The first shot line to reach the *Witherspoon* became tangled and parted when a crewman on board attempted to free it. The mishap also resulted in the sailor falling over the side and drowning. Another shot line reached the vessel and the whip and hawser were hauled on board only to have the breeches buoy become snagged in the debris surrounding the wreck.

Attempts were made to launch a life-saving raft but the raft was heaved back on the shore by the breakers, nearly killing the two men manning it. Another breeches buoy was rigged and by evening two men, the Mate and one of the crew, were successfully rescued. From them it was learned the fate of the others on board. The Mate's wife and child had frozen to death during the late morning in the cabin as had a sailor and the steward. The Master and a sailor who had taken to the rigging similarly had frozen, the Master's body had fallen into the sea while the other, grotesquely coated in ice, remained in the rigging until its recovery the following day.

No less sad than the *Witherspoon* disaster was the loss of the British Schooner *Beta*. The *Beta*, bound for Boston from Cheverie, Nova

Scotia, with fourteen persons on board (six crewmen and eight passengers, including two women and four children) encountered an increasing easterly gale. Believing his vessel had weathered Cape Ann, the Master headed for land intending to reach a harbor. When a landfall was made, it was discovered that the *Beta* was in the bight between Plum Island, Massachusetts, and Halibut Point, north of the Cape. The vessel was immediately hauled to the wind in an attempt to beat offshore but the force of the gale and heavy seas prevented any such maneuver. Both anchors were let go as a last resort but the strain was greater than the anchors could stand in their sandy bed. The ill-fated *Beta* dragged onto the bar, 250 yards from the safety of the Plum Island shore.

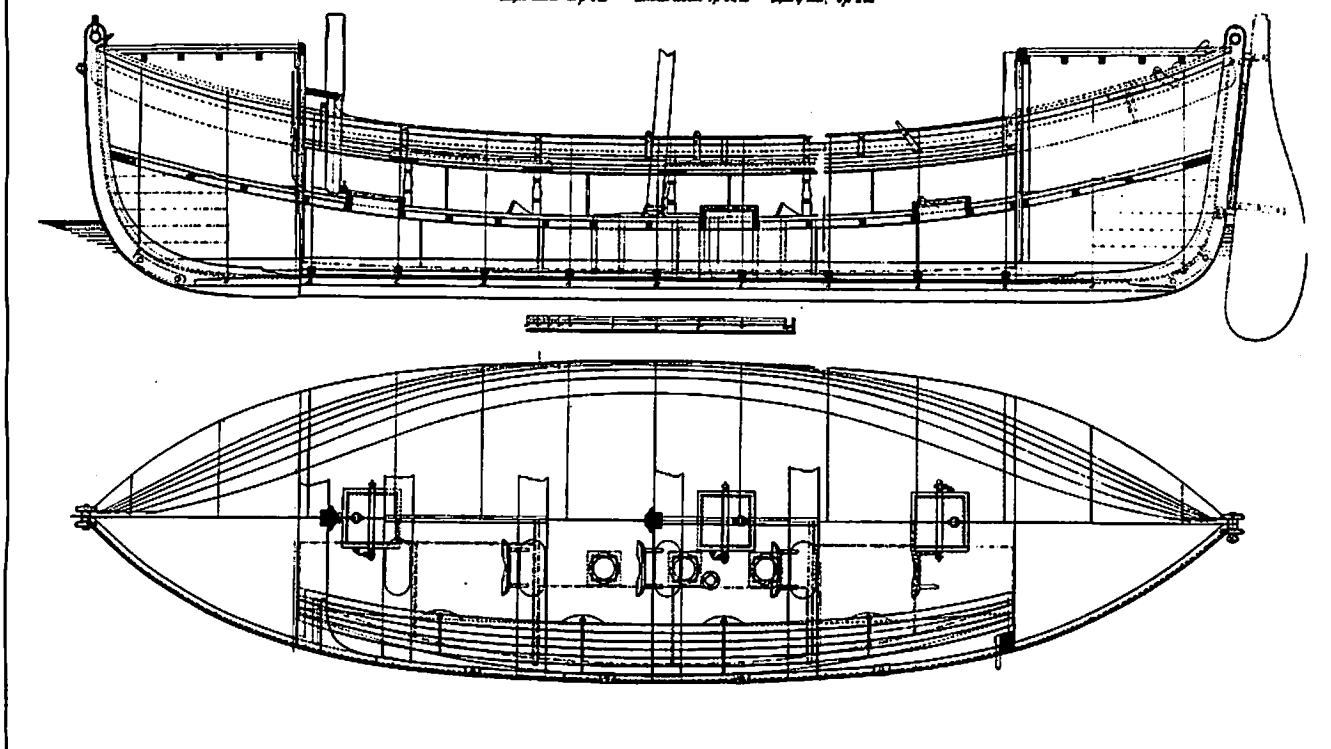
Had the anchor cables held there on the bar, it is a certainty that the vessel would have gone to pieces with the loss of all on board. Fortunately the cables parted, and the schooner was driven on the beach bow first. The persons on board had gathered in the after cabin while the vessel's anchors were holding the *Beta's* head to the wind and sea.

Upon grounding, they found that they must retreat to the safety of the forward house. It was during this maneuver that the first fatalities occurred. As the two male passengers scrambled forward over the rainswept deck, each carrying a child, a large sea broke over the deck wrenching the children from their grasp and washing the youngsters over the side, drowning them. The steward, being the last to leave the after cabin, became the final fatality on the *Beta* as he too was swept overboard. The survivors huddled in the comparative safety of the forward house, waiting out the night. By morning's light, they found that they were close enough to reach shore on their own, which they did.

Notwithstanding the losses of the three children passengers from the wrecks of the *T. B. Witherspoon* and the *Beta*, the worst wreck of the year was that of the Austrian bark *Kraljevica*. This 719-ton bark bound for New York from Marseilles, France with a cargo of

### PLAN OF A WOODEN SELF-RIGHTING LIFE-BOAT

*Length 30 ft. Beam 10 ft. Depth 4 ft.*



The wooden self-righting life-boat plan. Photo courtesy of the author.

bulk salt, had a crew of fourteen men including the Master. At the time of her grounding, she was running with all sails set before a strong northeast wind in a dense fog. The vessel struck the south side of the Barnegat shoals at about 1:30 A.M. tearing out the bottom. Although a watch was set on deck, even the brilliance of the Barnegat Light evidently did not penetrate the fog. The Master and crew rather leisurely readied their long boat and abandoned ship about an hour later. The sea was moderate and the crew made no immediate attempt to land, instead drifting for several hours with the wind and current towards the beach and southward along it. By dawn, the grey outline of shore became visible and the sailors struck out for it. Everything went well until they reached the bar and the surf breaking upon it. The long boat broached and rolled, dumping the hapless survivors into the sea; eight drowned while the Captain and five

others, half alive, were fortunate in reaching the beach, arriving there about 8:30 AM. They landed some nine miles south of the wreck about one mile south of the Ship Bottom Station, but the fog hanging on the beach obscured the station from view.

The 6 men wandering on this strange shore managed to find an empty gunner's hut behind the sand dunes in which they found food, made a fire and, having eaten, slept off the horrifying experience of the night.

The wreck of the *Kraljevica* had occurred slightly south and east of the Barnegat Station. As the dim outline of the square-rigged vessel became evident through the grey dawn, the Barnegat crew immediately swung into action. News of the wreck was passed by the recently completed telephone line to the next station south at Loveladies. One of the new Beebe boats had been recently provided the Barnegat Station by Lieutenant McLellan. This gave

the Keeper with the opportunity of trying his new surfboat and its much heralded capabilities.

Although a high sea was tumbling in from the northeast, Keeper Joel H. Ridgway, with every confidence in boat and in consideration of the low tide of the hour, decided against the apparatus. With the Keeper at the sweep oar and a crew of surfmen including John I. Soper, Solomon Soper, William C. Inman, Samuel F. Perrine, Cornelius D. Thompson and Henry Reeves, the boat put off for the wreck. After launching in a space relatively protected in the lee of the shoals, the crew soon encountered a much higher sea running than they had expected. Almost exhausted after fighting the heightening seas, the surfboat pulled within fifty feet of the abandoned wreck. Realizing not a soul was on board, Keeper Ridgway prepared for the perilous return to shore. The surfboat had returned about 250 yards, or half way to shore, having been repeatedly half-swamped by the following seas, when to the horror of their brother lifesavers on shore, a very large wave crested astern of the boat and too hollow for the boat to rise to it.

The wave crashed down on the boat, turned it broad side and rolled it over and over. The surfmen were flung in all directions. Buoyed up by their cork life preservers, Keeper Ridgway and Surfman Thompson were the first to reach the beach and were able to walk back to the station. Surfmen Reeves and Inman came ashore further south, Reeves was quickly revived but Inman had to be carried to the station. The remaining members of the crew were dead by the time they were taken from the water. To the names of the other men of the Life-Saving Service lost during rescue attempts, we must add the names of the Barnegat Station's dead:

Surfman John I. Soper  
 Surfman Solomon Soper  
 Surfman Samuel F. Perrine

The name *Kraljevica* will go down with

that of the *Nuova Ottavia* (1876) at Jones Hill, N.C., the *Huron* (1878) at Nags Head, N.C., the *J. H. Magruder* (1880) at Point Aux Barques, Michigan, and the *C. E. Turnbull* (1880) at Peaked Hill Bar, Massachusetts.

The wreck of the *Malta* is deserving of passing mention for while one person died from this vessel when he frantically attempted to swim ashore, twenty-three other persons were successfully rescued by breeches buoy during the height of a furious northeaster and under the most miserable of conditions.

Not attended by a loss of life, the following successful rescues involving vessels which were substantially damaged and which were carrying over twelve persons:

Schooner <i>Nimble</i> at Peaked Hill Bars, Mass.	19 persons
Schooner <i>Lizzie H. Haskell</i> at Plum Island, Mass.	16 persons
Steamship <i>Europa</i> at Quoque, Long Island	27 persons
Steamship <i>Miranda</i> at Point Judith, Rhode Island	70 persons
Ship <i>Tsermogora</i> at Spring Lake, New Jersey	19 persons
Ship <i>Adolphus</i> at Lewes, Delaware	21 persons
Steamship <i>Tonowanda</i> at Ocean City, Maryland	19 persons
Schooner <i>Eureka</i> at Lewes, Delaware	14 persons
Bark <i>Harkaway</i> at Caffey's Inlet, North Carolina	14 persons
Steamship <i>Enchantress</i> at Cape Fear, North Carolina	23 persons
Steamer <i>William T. Graves</i>	
at North Manitou Island, Michigan	17 persons
Steamer <i>Alex Duncan</i> at Golden Gate Park, Calif.	20 persons

Of course, there were many more dramatic rescues involving small schooners and other similar craft.

No sooner had the disastrous wreck of the *Kraljevica* occurred when McLellan's "friend," Superintendent Dobbins of the Ninth District, sent a personal letter to the General Superintendent urging that the Life-Saving Service adopt the Dobbins life boat design, and argued that had his boat been placed at Barnegat and were it used by the Barnegat crew, the loss of part of that crew wouldn't have occurred. As may be imagined, Lieutenant McLellan rose to the occasion, and an angry exchange of correspondence was again targeted at Kimball's office. McLellan



had his share of troubles in 1886. He had experienced an especially difficult time earlier in the season in attempting to obtain permission to travel to Greenport, Long Island, to inspect the Beebe boats under construction. His insistence to do this understandably irritated the 3rd District Superintendent, Arthur Dominy, who according to practice was to supervise the construction of boats in his district. Dominy mildly protested this intrusion and drew, in return, a familiar McLellan rebuttal. Wrote McLellan: "I would rather trust Mr. Beebe to built the boat without any supervision than to have him interfered with by too much...."

Assistant Inspector McLellan encountered other problems as well, in the form of criticism by his superior, Captain Merryman, for the issuance of regulations which were presumed to be the prerogative of the General Superintendent alone. Moreover, McLellan's written instructions on how to launch the Beebe surfboat were overruled by Washington. This drew a personal letter from McLellan to Kimball as well as a telegram urging reconsideration of the ruling.

McLellan also drew a storm of protest when he ordered the men at stations in his district not to hunt or fish any place further than ten minutes from their respective stations, such imposition, on the heels of his increased drilling requirements, did not make him the most popular man on the Jersey coast.

Lieutenant McLellan rallied the support of the crews behind him, however, when he argued against a service ruling that books recently donated to the Life-Saving Service and known as "Astor Libraries" need not be carried between the stations every month because the men would not appreciate the donation if it became a burden for them. Besides, he said, "If every man in a crew commenced at sunrise and read until sunset every day without attending to any of the duties of the station, they would not be able to read a library through in a month for the reason that but about one half of the men have the educa-

tion to care for that description of reading. I regret to say that my men (sic.: note the expression used by military commanding officers, "my men") are not so studious as the donor by imposing such conditions, (re: monthly moving of books) seems to imagine." Partly through Lieut. McLellan's efforts, each station received a daily newspaper and two weeklies, some received more.

This insight into Lieut. McLellan's correspondence and methods reveals a real attempt at leadership by him; in this he was not unlike the various other assistant inspectors of the other districts who similarly were waging their own small internal battles. McLellan's criticisms of the district superintendents were not limited to Dobbins and Dominy.

Superintendent Rich, who had criticized one of McLellan's published boat drills, was the subject of another rebuttal by the erstwhile Lieutenant addressed to the General Superintendent:

"The suggestion of Supt. Rich to lay the blades of the oars in aft I cannot agree to, that will be going backward instead of forward.

When it blows so hard that the oars cannot be used as I have directed in the drill, the boat will not go afloat. I have sent *the drill to the crews* (italics mine) with the object of finding its defects, actual practice will do that."

Of the superintendent of his own district, McLellan said little officially, but it was Superintendent Havens who informed Kimball that a telephone lineman had told him that McLellan's crews were complaining over the increased drills and fishing and hunting restrictions. Havens seldom became involved in the operations in his district, administrative duties occupying most of his time. At the end of each year, however, he managed to send a letter to Kimball urging clerical assistance, fearing for his own health, etc. and with a habit off closing his letters

with such cloying epithets as "expecting a severe rebuke from a lenient superior" and "I am yours most obediently," and so on.

Beset with persons who did not appreciate his enthusiasm, the last thing Charles McLellan needed was the loss of a new Beebe boat and part of its crew. Nevertheless McLellan remained steadfast in support of the new surf-boat and at least succeeded in receiving favorable treatment for the boat in the section of the Annual Report of 1886 which spoke of the *Kraljevica* disaster.

Superintendent Dobbins, no novice to the business of using small boats, persisted in support of placing his boats on the coast; the Barnegat disaster provided him with the incentive to keep plugging and, as he plugged away, his letters were referred to McLellan for comment. Thus the argument that had started the previous year continued into the late winter of 1886.

McLellan finally best summed up his view point to Kimball in a letter dated February 21, 1886:

"It has been said to me that Superintendent Dobbins considers that I am his enemy, because I have not been favorable to his boat. I am not his enemy and appreciate his worth to the service in the fullest, neither am I opposed to the boat because it is Dobbins' boat."

As might be expected the entire matter cooled down and Lieutenant McLellan continued to situate Beebe surfboats along the seaboard, and Superintendent Dobbins did not succeed in convincing McLellan nor the Board of Life-Saving appliances nor the General Superintendent of the worth of his lifeboat.

The entire controversy points up a peculiar relationship wherein a single Revenue Cutter Officer had become within the span of a few years an expert in the design and use of rescue boats; he was considered so much of an authority that despite qualified criticism

from all quarters on a number of subjects, and the tragic loss of a boat of the design he espoused so dearly, that same officer emerged the apparent victor and no less the worse for wear. McLellan and the other Revenue Cutter Lieutenants had seized control of the operations of the districts and Kimball most decidedly let them do it; in McLellan's case, he had almost encouraged it. The military system of management was gradually becoming ingrained in the methods of the Life-Saving Service. "Liberty" restrictions, uniformity in drills, and the day-to-day management of the stations, evolved into a regimented system. The effect of the nautical Revenue Cutter Service officers on the stations may be seen in such things as the standard drill procedures promulgated by McLellan for the Fire Bill.

The year 1885-1886 continued to bask in the aura of the Golden Years. Appropriations were sufficient to rebuilt the Ocean City, New Jersey, station as well as to reconstruct and enlarge those at Block Island, Rhode Island, and Ditch Plain and Georgica on Long Island. Contracts were let for the repair and enlargement of nine stations on the Coast of Massachusetts and twenty on the Coast of Long Island; a similar contract was awarded for the rebuilding of the stations at Shark River and Townsends Inlet, New Jersey. A Keeper's dwelling was constructed at Shoalwater Bay in the State of Washington. Shortly before the employment of crews on the Great Lakes in March of 1886, a fire of suspicious origin swept the Salmon Creek, New York, Life-Saving Station totally destroying the structure and the equipment inside.

One final event occurred during the 1885-1886 season which would eventually be a source of difficulties within the service. For obvious reasons, the Maritime Exchange, New York City, which represented the interests of the marine underwriters, was extremely desirous of being advised of the occurrence of shipwrecks at the earliest possible hour. For a number of years, the U. S. Army's Storm Signal Service had provided this service.

In 1885, the Storm Signal Service discontinued the manning of certain Life-Saving Stations with observers. The effect of this on lifesaving operations was not particularly noticeable because of the timely installation of a U.S.L.S.S. telephone circuit which linked the stations and replaced the Army's telegraph line. The Maritime Exchange, however, was left in many areas without a means of receiving wreck information. As commercial telegraph agencies served much of the coast line, it seemed expedient to the Exchange that the desired information be passed at their expense over commercial wires by the personnel of the Life-Saving Service.

To that end, Kimball was approached by the Maritime Exchange and, as a result, Kimball promulgated an order requiring station keepers to transmit, "as soon as possible after the occurrence of a wreck within your precinct ... to the Maritime Exchange, New York City, all essential particulars, such as name and rig of vessel, nature of cargo, condition of wreck, number of lives lost or saved," and similar related data.

Kimball, it will be noted, left within the Keeper's discretion his determination of when he could conveniently depart the scene of the wreck and send the desired wire. As time passed, this "escape clause" served well to answer the charges and complaints that the wreck information was not sent soon enough.

At the last hour, almost, of the fiscal year ending 30 June 1886, Congress saw fit to appropriate additional funds which authorized the construction of new stations at the following locations:

Port Allerton, Massachusetts  
 Old Harbor, Massachusetts  
 Cuttyhunk, Massachusetts  
 Quonochontaug, Rhode Island  
 Sandy Point, Rhode Island  
 Fishers Island, New York  
 Oak Island, North Carolina  
 Fort Macon, North Carolina  
 Niagara, New York

Bois Blanc, Michigan  
 South Manitou Island, Michigan  
 South Chicago, Illinois  
 Plum Island, Wisconsin  
 Duluth, Minn.  
 Fort Point, California  
 Point Reyes, California  
 Point Adams, Oregon

Additionally, sites were authorized at Cape Page, Martha's Vineyard, and Fisherman's Island, North Carolina. As usual, it would be a number of years before many of the stations at the above places would be constructed.

If the losses of life during fiscal year 1886 were considered to represent a departure from previous fine record, then the season of 1886-1887 was horrendous. Fifty-eight persons perished in shipwrecks that year, and eight lifesavers lost their lives in rescue attempts. An average of thirty persons were rescued from peril per station, representing the highest average ever rescued in one season by the men of the U.S.L.S.S.

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>James Watson</i>	Schooner	3-12-87	1	1 mile North of Coskata, Mass., Station
<i>J. H. Eells</i>	Schooner	3-15-87	2	1-1/2 miles south of Nauset, Mass., Station
Pilot yawl from <i>Francis Perkins</i>	Yawl	1-24-87	2	Barnegat Shoals, N.J.
<i>Elizabeth</i>	Ship	1-8-87	22	3 miles north of Little Island, Va., Station
<i>Ariadne</i>	Schooner	12-2-86	3	5-1/2 miles north of Big Sandy, N.Y., Station



*The self-righting life-boat under sail.*

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Atlantic</i>	Bark	12-17-86	27	1/4 mile south of Golden Gate Park, Calif., Station
Unnamed	Fishing	5-13-87	1	Sand grit 2 miles East Smack of Cape Disappointment Washington Station

The total losses, of course, reflect the two major wrecks of the year, the *Atlantic* and the *Elizabeth*, which together accounted for forty-nine of the lives lost. The *Elizabeth* also

claimed the lives of five men of the Life-Saving Service who were attempting to render assistance.

The first of these two disasters occurred to the whaling bark *Atlantic* of New Bedford, Massachusetts, outbound from San Francisco on a whaling voyage. The vessel grounded a short distance from the Golden Gate Park Station with thirty-eight persons on board. The whalers lowered their boats and attempted to land in their own boats through the surf. The Station crew, responding to the scene before them, launched their surfboat and proceeded out. While transferring the occupants of one of the overloaded whale boats to the government surfboat, both craft capsized

resulting in the loss of twenty-two of the members of the *Atlantic's* crew.

The other major wreck of the year was that of the German ship *Elizabeth* en route from Hamburg, Germany, to Baltimore, Maryland. The *Elizabeth* stranded in the midst of a January snowstorm between the Dam Neck Mills and Little Island Stations. Crews from both stations assembled to lend assistance. It was decided to launch a surf-boat manned by a mixed crew from both stations. While the rescue attempt was in progress, the *Elizabeth* went to pieces and by the time the boat reached the scene only one man, a passenger, remained alive in the water. He was hauled aboard and the surf-boat headed back to shore on the most dangerous part of the rescue trip. As had happened on fatal instances before, a following breaker capsized the surfboat, dumping all hands into the churning Atlantic. The result was the loss of the passenger as well as five surfmen. The names of those who gave their lives in this heroic rescue effort were:

Keeper Abel Belanga  
Little Island Station

Surfman George W. Stone  
Little Island Station

Surfman John H. Land  
Little Island Station

Surfman James E. Belanga  
Dam Neck Mills Station

Surfman Joseph Spratley  
Dam Neck Mills Station

One other disaster occurred to claim the lives of three more life-savers that year. While attempting to go to the assistance of the schooner *A. J. Dewey* which was flying the flag of distress on November 29, 1886, the surf-boat of the Grande Pointe au Sable Station

capsized resulting in the loss of the following men:

Keeper James Flynn  
Surfman Oren Hatch  
Surfman John Smith

The season of 1886-1887 witnessed the completion of new stations authorized several years before at North Scituate, Massachusetts; Frankfort, Pentwater, White River, and South Haven, Michigan; Cape Elizabeth, Maine; and Cape Lookout, North Carolina. The stations which were being rebuilt from the year before were completed in 1887, as were the repairs and enlargements to the Long Island Stations of Hither Plain, Shinnecock, Tiana, Quoque, Petunk, Moriches, Fire Island, Forge River, Smith's Point, Bellport, Blue Point, Lone Hill, and Point of Woods.

The Stations at Holly Point (Wildwood), New Jersey, and Indian River, Florida, were relocated to better sites and were enlarged as well. The Aransas Saluria and San Luis, Texas; Fairport, Ohio; Erie, Pennsylvania; and Charlotte, New York, stations were enlarged and repaired. Contracts for similar work were let to repair stations at Race Point, Peaked Hill Bars, Highland, Parmet River, Cahoon's, Nanset, Orleans, Chatham and Monomoy, Massachusetts; Oak Island, Gilgo, Jones Beach, Zack's Inlet, Point Lookout, Rockaway and Rockaway Point, Long Island; and the Keeper's dwelling at North Manitou, Michigan.

The season of 1887-1888 began with the participation of the U. S. Life-Saving Service in the "Centennial Celebration of the Promulgation of the Constitution of the United States" at Philadelphia. None other than Lieutenant McLellan was named to head the delegation; his ambition had undoubtedly paid dividends and his friendship with Kimball was on solid ground.

One of the first difficulties to be overcome by McLellan was disposing of Captain Douglass

Ottinger's unofficial life-saving float in the opening parade. For the first time, the records of the Life-Saving Service reveal an animosity surrounding the old Captain, long since removed from all official contact with the service. The text of a letter from McLellan to Kimball explaining this problem is quite candid:

"September 5, 1887

Dear Mr. Kimball:

It seems as though I were to be Captain Ottinger's evil genius whether I will or no. This morning while in Col. Snowden's [Chairman of the Committee and parade marshal] office making arrangements for our display, I accidentally overheard a letter being dictated to Capt. Ottinger which led to my making some inquiry. I was shown a letter from him to the management wherein he asks for a float and a position in the parade for his life car which had saved 200 lives and which he had placed at stations on the coast etc. I informed the Col. how matters stood and he said if you would furnish him anything to go on, he would throw him out. I told him I should report the matter to you. I am en route to Brigantine Beach will be back in Toms River Wednesday evening.

Very truly etc.

C. H. McLellan  
Philadelphia, Sept. 5, 1887"

Two days later, Colonel Snowden replied to the General Superintendent's letter, a copy of which is unobtainable, stating his amusement and amazement at Kimball's remark, and after requesting the mortar and shot used at the *Ayrshire* for the Life-Saving Service float, assured Mr. Kimball that Captain Ottinger's exhibit would not be placed in connection with his.

The official entries consisted of a float with the 1872 apparatus, a wagon and one of the oldest boats, the new McLellan apparatus carriage with a crew in each side, and last came a Beebe boat manned by life-jacketed lifesavers, each section well marked by descriptive signs. The Cape May and Toms River crews provided the manpower. Presumably Captain Ottinger was also there with his float despite the "evil genius" of McLellan. A postscript note of light-hearted friendliness appeared in the last piece of correspondence relating to the parade sent by Lieutenant McLellan to the General Superintendent when he admonished his boss, "you had better run over as it will be a big show."

The efforts undertaken the previous years to accommodate the Maritime Exchange of New York by advising of shipwrecks became the subject of complaints by that organization on the lack of reliability of the telephoned information they desired. Alas, modern technology notwithstanding, the gentlemen of the Exchange reported that the Life-Saving Services telephone circuit could rarely be depended upon and thereby they were forced to rely on the telegraph which was not much better than the mail.

While Lieutenant McLellan was in the midst of his other activities, he had continued, with Kimball's support, the development of a self-bailing, self-righting surf-boat. By the time November, 1887, rolled around, Beebe had completed construction of two boats (one 27' and 1,345 lbs, the other 25' and 1175 lbs.) both of which would right themselves with water ballast in them and which would free themselves of water.

Beebe, unfortunately, could not get either boat to right itself without water ballast in them. In order to add the ballast, a valve had to be installed and operated by hand once the boat was waterborne otherwise the ballast would make the boat too heavy to handle. The following May, McLellan requested permission to have a special self-ballasting valve

made and installed in these boats. The two boats were ready to be tested by the Board on Life-Saving Appliances by mid-June, the new valves having eradicated the former difficulty. It is to McLellan's credibility that he requested the tests be conducted at Sea Isle City, New Jersey, where a far more difficult surf condition would be likely encountered than at the usual testing grounds at Sea Bright, where there existed a rather steep beach. Nevertheless, the tests were ordered for Sea Bright.

In a letter to the General Superintendent dated June 16, 1888, Lieutenant McLellan described the new boat:

"These boats are more properly life boats than surf-boats and as they have been built on the Beebe boat model I have thought their proper designation be "Beebe-McLellan Life Boat." Their description is as follows:

Model	Whaleboat
Build	Clinker
Length	27 feet
Beam	7 feet
Depth	2 feet 4-6/8 in.
Depth to deck	1 foot 5-5/8 in
Sheer	1 foot 11-6/7 in.
Thwarts from deck	8-6/8 in.
No. of relieving valves	28
Size of relieving valves	2-1/4 x 4-3/4 in.
Size of timbers	1 x 1 in.
Dist. of timbers	7 in.
Material of timbers	White oak, bent
Greatest width of keel	9-3/8 inches
Thickness of keel	2
Material of keel	white oak
Shoe	white oak
Thickness of shoe	1 inch
Camber of keel	5 inches
Size of end air tanks	4 feet
Planking	white cedar, 1/2 inch
Stem higher than stern	4 inches
Deck	white cedar 5/8 inch

Water ballast tank, copper	40 lbs.
Capacity of ballast tank	44 gals.
Weight of boat	1275 lbs.

The second boat is 25 feet in length with four thwarts, all dimensions being the same as in the first described boat, making the weight 1178 lbs. The boats weighed as above before launching. After their trial they were left afloat the greater part of the rainy month of May, a portion of the time, through an oversight, with their hatches open; they consequently soaked a great deal of water, and are now considerably heavier than when built. The 25 foot boat can be built to weigh not over 1100 lbs. Any Beebe boat in the service can at a small expense be made self-bailing, and self-righting. The boat is not patented. They can be furnished at a cost of \$350.00 and \$335.00, respectively, perhaps a little less."

A voucher for general expenses was submitted the same date as his letter by McLellan to pay Beebe for \$876.00 for both boats. This rather peculiar arrangement of paying for a boat prior to its acceptance by the Board on Life-Saving Appliances not only contradicted the regulations for governing the Board but placed the Life-Saving Service in the testing and development business.

While the year 1888 weatherwise conjures up in many minds the reported horrors of the "Blizzard of '88," the operations of the Life-Saving Service for that year were marked only by a return to the level of fatal shipwrecks of 1885. Shipwrecks during the season of 1887-88 which were attended by the lost of life were as follows:

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
Unnamed boat from Steamer				
<i>Tomawanda</i>	Yawl	1-1-88	2	Brigantine Beach, N.J

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Sail Boat No. 2</i>	Sloop	2-26-88	2	North Bar, Townsend Inlet, N.J.
<i>Carrara</i>	Bark	6-28-88	1	North side of shoals, Manasquan Inlet, N.J.
<i>Allie H. Belden</i>	Schooner	3-12-88	2	800 yards NE of Lewes, Del., Station
<i>William G. Barlett</i>	Schooner	3-12-88	1	3 miles NNW of Cape Henlopen, Del., Station
<i>Manantico</i>	Schooner	10-87	2	1-1/4 miles North of Seatack, Va., Station
Unnamed	Skiff	9-9-87	1	400 yards NW of Oswego, N.Y. Station
<i>City of Green Bay</i>	Schooner	10-3-87	6	3 miles south of South Haven, Michigan, Station

The year 1888 was a busy one for the General Superintendent as he not only prepared a big legislative push for both more pay for his people, but for retirement pensions and pensions for widows and orphans of men who died in the line of duty.

The Annual Report for 1888 contains excerpts from letters from the Secretaries of the Treasury and Kimball which would lend support for such legislation. Kimball's main contention was to liken the men of the Life-Saving Stations to soldiers for whom such pensions were afforded and to cite the case of the wife of District Superintendent Guthrie, who it will be remembered in 1878 lost his life landing through the surf at the scene of the *Huron* disaster. Mrs. Guthrie was awarded by a special act of Congress a pension equal to that of a widow of a deceased Navy Captain.

In likening a surfman to a soldier, the

General Superintendent phrased the surfman's employment as an "enlistment" like a soldier's for a term of one year and "reenlistment" from year to year thereafter. Kimball further characterized surfmen as "storm-soldiers" and of course cited their bravery and the continuing threat of death inherent in their work.

The General Superintendent submitted a summation of those men who had lost their lives either in actual rescue attempts or those who died as a result of injuries or illness inflicted upon them while performing their routine duties. He summed his feelings up very well in the following paragraph taken from that Annual Report.

The nature of the service calls for men of steady nerve, of strong arm, of cool heads, of brave hearts, and of daring and courageous natures that know no faltering. The soldier's perilous duties come but at long intervals; to him the periods of war are followed by longer periods of peace, when no demand is made for special exhibition of courage. To the enlisted man in the Life-Saving Service there is an ever-impending call for duty on behalf of humanity.

A Bill, HR 1634, was introduced into the House of Representatives that would provide these desired benefits to "employees" of the Life-Saving Service. Because the word "employee" encompassed clerks and other persons employed by the Service who did not necessarily risk their lives, it was necessary to recommend setting aside HR 1634 and to submit in its place a reworded Bill which would be more explicit.

While the Keepers and men of the Life-Saving Service had always been considered more civilian than military, this rather striking piece of proposed legislation seemed likely to portend a change in their status; the fact that the legislative attempt to equate a military rank with that of a U.S.L.S.S. position, albeit only for pension purposes, emanated from the



civilian management of the service is most significant.

On 19 March 1888, the U.S.L.S.S. lost a staunch friend with the sudden death of Captain Frank Baby, President of Board on Life-Saving Appliances. Captain Baby had held that post since 1882 when he was appointed to fill the vacancy occasioned by the accidental death of William Garrison who, for only a brief time, had served as first President of that Board. In 1889, the Presidency of the Board would go to Edward Burgess of Boston.

The windfall in the form of increased pay and pensions never materialized; the attempt at legislation failed as it had done on earlier occasions. In three separate acts, on the 1st, the 13th and 18th of October 1888, authorization was made to construct the last large block of stations in the United States.

These sites included:

Portsmouth, Maine  
 Wallis Sand, N. H.  
 Maddaket, Mass.  
 Fenwick Island, Delaware  
 Core Bank, N.C.  
 Ashtabula, Ohio  
 Kewaunee, Wisconsin  
 Marquette, Michigan  
 Southside, California  
 Umpqua River, Oregon  
 Yaquina Bay, Oregon  
 Grays Harbor, Washington  
 Klipsun Leach, Washington  
 Lynhaven Inlet  
 Loomis Plan, Washington, near Grays Harbor

On February 23rd and March 1st, 1889, additional stations were respectively authorized at:

Burnt Island, Maine  
 Coquille River, Oregon

In addition to these authorizations for new

stations, the usual progress was made in construction previously authorized stations and rebuilding repairing and improving existing ones. The new stations at Metomkin Inlet, Virginia; Galveston, Texas; Michigan City, Indiana; and Oak Island, North Carolina, were completed while new buildings at the old station sites at Point Judith, Rhode Island; Napeaque, Long Island; Great Egg, New Jersey; and Hereford Inlet, New Jersey, were erected. The stations at Hunniwell's Beach, Maine; Far Rockaway, Long Island; Brigantine, New Jersey; and Hog Island, Virginia, were threatened with being washed into the sea and had to be moved to safer ground.

The fatalities of the season of 1888-89 were centered mostly on the Virginia-North Carolina coast, where twenty-seven of the thirty-nine losses of life took place. The total losses for the year are reflected in the usual tabulation below:

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Oliver Dyer</i>	Schooner	11-26-88	1	1/8 mile east of Jerry's Point, Me., Station
<i>H. C. Higginson</i>	Schooner	11-26-88	3	Nantasket Beach, Mass.
<i>Josie Troop</i>	Bark	2-22-89	11	3/4 miles SE of Chicamico-mico, N.C. Station
<i>Agnes Barton</i>	Brig	3-14-89	6	1/4 mile North of Dam Neck Mills, Va., Station
<i>Northampton</i>	Schooner	4-7-89	3	2-1/4 miles South of Seatack, Va., Station
<i>John Shay</i>	Schooner	5-11-89	6	3 miles NE of Cape Hatteras, N.C.,

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Station Place
Boat from schooner <i>Mary S. Bradshaw</i>	Yawl	6-1-89	1	500 yards from Creeds Hill, N.C., Station
<i>Collingwood</i>	Schooner	8-10-88	1	700 yards NNE of Yacht Charlotte, Michigan, Station
<i>St. Clair</i>	Schooner	10-1-88	5	1-1/3 miles SE of Sand Beach, Michigan, Station
<i>Reed Chase</i>	Schooner	11-1-88	1	5 miles North of Ship Canal, Michigan, Station
<i>Mendocino</i>	Steamer	12-23-88	1	South spit of Humboldt Bar, 2 miles SW of Humboldt Bay, Calif., Station

Fiscal year 1889 was an exercise in mediocrity. Pensions, which were of great importance to the service, were neglected by the Congress while, on the other hand, authority was given to build a considerable number of new stations. The record of fatal shipwrecks was not good, but the efforts of the life savers had been above reproach. There were no scandals nor wild charges to damage the service, but neither had there been any real enhancing of its image.

During the course of the year, the usual forces had been at work. The first Beebe-McLellan surfboat was placed at Barnegat Station, the scene of the tragic *Kraljevica* disaster in 1886. Captain J. H. Merryman terminated his long years of service as Inspector with a disability and retirement from the Revenue Marine and it fell upon the Secretary of the Treasury to appoint a successor. A

number of recommendations were submitted to Secretary William Windom from prominent persons on behalf of Capt. Charles A. Abbey, then Commanding Officer of the Revenue Steamer *Gallatin* at Boston, Massachusetts. Captain Abbey, desiring that duty, decided to advise the General Superintendent that his hat was in the ring and wrote Kimball a letter which reflects perhaps the view of Life-Saving Service duty held by contemporary Revenue Marine officers:

"*Gallatin*" June 9, 89  
My dear Mr. Kimball:

You are as well aware of my desire for the appointment as Inspector of Life-Saving Service as if I wrote a ream about it, and you know of course why I want it! I need it, both for the slight increase of pay and that I may be near my family which is large and requires my presence greatly.

From all your conversation with me I judge that you are not adverse to my holding the place, and I am quite sure that you can obtain no one who will endeavor to carry out your policy more zealously or who will give his best energy to the work more willingly.

I have many friends who are anxious to see me appointed, and some have already seen yourself, as well as the Secretary-I have now served on shipboard almost twenty-five years in the Service, and have never had any special duty.

I hope that you will think that is now my turn?

Yours very truly,  
C. A. Abbey"

Needless to say, the Captain was appointed as Inspector and relieved Captain Merryman on the 9th of July 1889.

Kimball had other things on his mind as the year wound to an end. He was preparing to serve as the United States Representative to the

International Marine Conference in November, 1889, being held in Washington, D. C.

But probably the biggest thing in the wind at the end of the 1888-89 season was the plan to require uniforms for the Keepers and Surfmen of the Life-Saving Service. Kimball's project officer for this move was none other than Lieutenant McLellan. Starting in March, 1889, Kimball and McLellan exchanged correspondence and conferred on the matter of obtaining a practical and inexpensive uniform for use throughout the Service. In several districts, permission had been granted by the Department allowing the lifesavers to purchase and wear uniforms-at their own expense, of course.

There was some logic in requiring uniforms beyond that of achieving aesthetic harmony in the mess rooms of the station houses. In the Annual Report of 1889, written as usual in November of the following fiscal year, the General Superintendent gave a few of his reasons for the then, already announced, policy change.

1. When crews were first employed, the coast was so sparsely settled that there was no question as to which persons were the life-savers. As the population grew more dense, it had become difficult at the scene of a wreck to identify the government men from the many others wearing similar fishermen's clothing.

2. It would serve to identify to the persons on wrecked vessels, the surfmen, as bonafide rescuers and not as "beachcombers" or "moon-cussers." Similarly it would cloak the surfmen with the appearance of authority when they had taken protective charge of wrecked goods on the beach and thus discourage those who would otherwise plunder that which was salvaged.

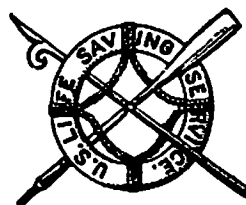
3. Occasionally, surfmen were accused of misbehavior by persons outside the service but because of faulty identification seldom anything was accomplished except a slander on

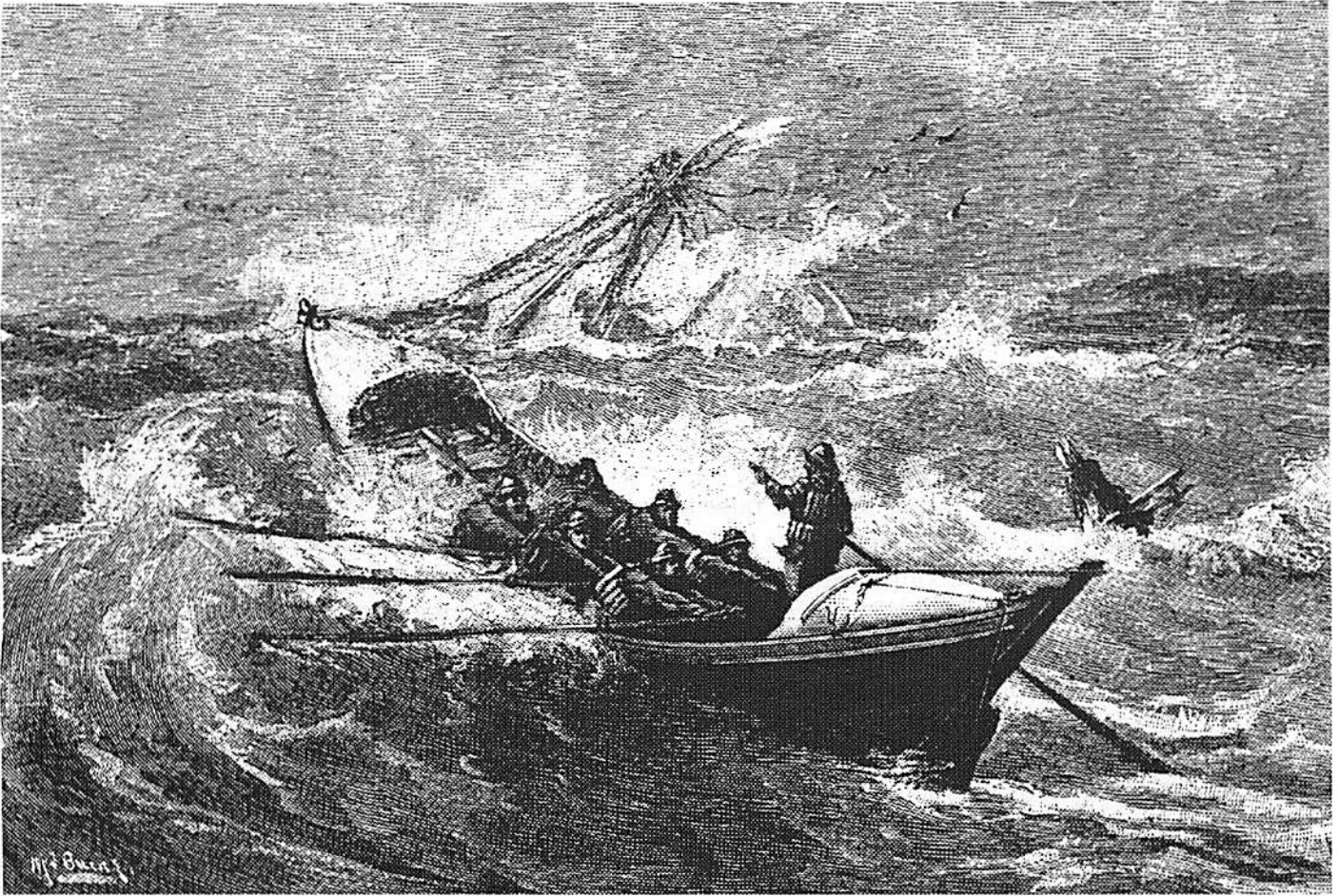
the service. Uniforms would serve to protect the surfmen from unjust accusations.

4. Kimball cited other federal services already uniformed as examples for uniforming the U.S.L.S.S., specifically "the Naval, Revenue Marine, Marine-Hospital, Light House, Customs and Postal Services."

5. It was allowed that since the men would provide their own uniforms, it would be well for the pay raise he had asked for in 1888 be approved so as to alleviate the financial hardship on the men.

Thus the season of 1888-89 ended, with not too much accomplished, but with a promise of many new things to come.





## CHAPTER EIGHT:

### *The Golden Age*

#### *Part Three: 1890-1893*

**O**n 5 August 1889, Treasury Department Circular No. 80, which prescribed uniforms for Keepers and Surfmen, became effective. Almost immediately the reaction to this directive was felt by the General Superintendent's office. As may be expected, the District Assistant Inspectors endorsed the move, and while some raised administrative questions concerning its implementation, most were enthusiastic.

Lieutenant Charles F. Shoemaker, USRM,

summed up the general feelings of his contemporary officers in the following less-than-overjoyed personal note he appended to a list of such questions, which he raised to the General Superintendent:

“Office of Asst. Inspector of Third U. S.  
Life-Saving District  
Center Moriches, N.Y.  
Aug. 20, 1889

Dear Mr. Kimball:

Don't think me captious in asking the information set forth in enclosed-

I am very glad the uniform has been prescribed; it is on many, very many accounts an admirable step-and it will be no fault of mine if my crews are not in regalia as soon as possible.

There will be some growling doubtless some refusals to comply; but such as do refuse must be dealt with, with a firm hand-Plenty of men for every one who may refuse.

Sincerely,

Shoemaker”

The greatest administrative problem raised by Shoemaker as well as by Lieut. Oscar O. Hamlet of the First and Second Districts, and Lieut. John F. Wild of the Fifth District, involved the availability of a clothing house which would carry the required uniforms. Lieutenant McLellan, in planning the implementation of the regulations in his district, had conferred with Wanamaker and Brown of Philadelphia with the consequence that the crews under McLellan had a ready (and willing) supplier available.

In the Eleventh District, under Lieutenant Henry B. Rogers, uniforms had been in voluntary existence for several years. While the required uniform varied slightly from that on hand, the only major difference was that all the surfmen had obtained keeper-style, double-breasted gilt-buttoned coats. The crews were more than willing to purchase the distinctive surfman's outfit and in return were allowed the special privilege of wearing their "Keeper's" coats on liberty.

Lieutenant Shoemaker's appraisal that most of the men would be in favor of the uniforms was correct. It was not without a sense of pride that the life-savers deliberately remained in uniform on their one day of liberty a week. Had the uniforms been provided by the government or had an extra uniform allowance been provided in their pay, it is certain that the requirements of Treasury Department Circular No. 80 would have met

universal acceptance.

The unfortunate part of the uniform issue was that the Life-Saving Service placed the burden of funding the cost of uniforms squarely on the lifesavers, to be paid from their wages received in the quarter that uniforms were delivered. Since the life-savers were not paid for two months of the summer quarter ending on September 30th, the full burden would fall either on the reduced wages earned in September or be carried as a result of late delivery into the next quarter. If delivery were late, the men would not have the needed new season's clothing until the season was well underway; few, if any, lifesavers could afford to outfit themselves twice in a winter season, or so the argument went.

Congressman James Buchanon of the 2nd Congressional District of New Jersey, Dr. William Newell's old stamping grounds, wrote several very critical letters to the General Superintendent on the matter of the cost of uniforms and questioned the authority of Kimball to promulgate such regulations. The following is from Buchanon's letter of November 12, 1889, to the General Superintendent:

“Permit me to express the hope that you will upon reflection see that there is room to doubt also the expediency of the regulation. It requires the wearing of the uniform by the 'surfmen' 'Whenever they are on duty.' As the uniform has considerable of 'brass and bullion' about it, it may add to the picturesqueness of the effect produced in the balmy days of September by some crew stationed at some fashionable watering place where 'Youth and Beauty' still linger ere the last fond adieu is spoken, but the hardy surfman who all night long, in December's sleet and January's snow patrols the lonely 'stretch of sand hills along our coast will hardly feel like having his meagre pay reduced to supply himself with 'uniforms' 'gilt buttons' and 'cap ribbons.'”

While the minor storm of controversy ruffled over the uniform question, another storm of a different source struck at the coast line of the northeastern United States on September 10, 11, and 12, 1889. This hurricane resulted in the grounding of at least sixteen vessels in the Fourth District and twenty-two in the Fifth. Moreover, the storm caused extensive damage to the life-saving stations and threatened not only the safety of the station buildings and apparatus, but of the crews as well. One dutiful keeper on a low-lying island station wrote down the events as they occurred and reported them in a letter to the District Superintendent:

"Sept. 10.

4 AM. Wind NE blowing a hurricane tide coming over the beach.

9 AM. Water on boat room and mess room floors 9 inches deep moved all light articles up stairs. A splendid view but a bad looking prospect ahead.

12 Noon. Water fallen off lower floors. Sea busted through hills opposite station so it is making a breach rite through for the house. As good generalship lies in forming a retreat before going in to battle so we are preparing to retreat in case we have to. Have an anchor and cable to a hill about 40 yards from the house and brought end into chamber window in case we have to leave the old ship.

8 PM. Water on floors 6 inches deep again. Took boat off the wagon, put in compass, lights, etc. She is lying afloat in boat room.

8:30. Wind suddenly hauling to the North stopped the tide. Our situation was a very unpleasant one, beach all torn to pieces. Every high water coming into house. Surfman ... is sick abed. All hands with

bad colds as we have not had a dry floor down stairs since Monday night. We saved all government property. Private property lost among crew in boats, sails, etc., about \$100.00 worth...

Sept. 11. Still blowing a gale and storming. Tide not coming quite so high.

Sept. 12. Still blowing very hard. It has been the worst gale of wind I ever experienced on land or sea and the highest tide. It caught all hands at this station in very bad shape regarding storm clothing as they had ordered suits to conform with the Regulations and they could not well afford to get an extra suit... Entirely out of coal and wood. All we have is what drift stuff we pick up."

Repairs to the storm damage were expeditiously handled and the uniform controversy waned to be revived only occasionally as assistant inspectors found stations deficient in uniformed surfmen.

Capt. Charles Abbey took control of his new position as Inspector with vigor. One of his first functions was to inspect the various districts under his charge. In each case, a most comprehensive report was submitted to the General Superintendent and recommendations were made for improvements. Abbey exemplified the typically conscientious and competent Revenue Marine Officer. His written remarks were direct, and not self-serving, and reflected considerable knowledge of the various coastal regions and particularly the boats in use at the Life-Saving Stations. The ailing Capt. Merryman had similarly endowed the Service with the fruits of his wisdom but his contributions were more on the practical political line so necessary in the early days of the service. Capt. Abbey made a good successor and one to whom the increasingly dominant Revenue Marine Officers could relate.

David Lyle, now having been promoted to Captain, U. S. Army, served during the season

of 1889-90 as aide-de-camp to the U. S. Commissioner-General at the Universal Exposition of 1889 in Paris, France. Thus he was able to act in Kimball's behalf in matters concerning international maritime safety, and certainly aided the General Superintendent in the presentation of his paper entitled "Organization and Methods of the United States Life-Saving Service" on 22 November 1889. This thirty-nine page paper, up-dated in 1912, represents the basic reference text on the Life-Saving Service. The various Annual Reports of the U.S.L.S.S., especially that of 1876, provide an additional historic insight of the service, although it must continually be borne in mind that these reports, honest as

they appear, were written with a purpose to serve as official propaganda.

Captain Lyle was a valuable member of the American lifesaving effort and the fact of his military presence was accepted as wholly appropriate to the Life-Saving Service's General Superintendent and to the military Revenue Marine Officers as well. He represented but one more involvement of the United States military establishment with the business of maritime safety. Such involvements had been traditional within the framework of Treasury Department's marine transportation functions, and included the inspectors of the Life-Saving Service, major marine casualty investigators with the Steamboat



*The 36-foot motor life-boat, capable of sail or gasoline power and used by stations all over the country.*

Inspection Service; participants in the Coast Survey; managers of the Light-House Board and engineers facilitating commerce and aiding navigation on the nation's waterways under the board's cognizance; and, of course, the very existence of the officer corps in the Revenue Marine.

Interplay between the various marine safety agencies of the federal government was, unfortunately, somewhat limited except on the purely humanitarian level such as the board for awarding lifesaving medals. The Life-Saving Service being only concerned with safety after the fact (i.e., rescue operations) enjoyed a privileged status somewhat above that of the Steamboat Inspection and Light House Services, whose safety functions were preventative in nature. The latter service had of its very nature become subservient to the needs of maritime commerce, for not only did it serve the interests of safety and the marine underwriters, it provided needed aids to navigation to facilitate the ever increasing volume of waterborne traffic.

The Steamboat Inspectors, on the other hand, were severely limited by the various federal statutes which categorized by class, propulsion, and service of vessel, exactly what they were allowed to regulate. Investigations of disasters to regulated vessels were conducted mainly to determine if the regulatory effort was adequate, or properly enforced, and whether there was any evidence of negligence, misconduct, violation of law, etc, on the part of the vessel's owners or crew.

The Board of Supervising Inspectors of the Steamboat Inspection Service had been removed from the auspices of the Treasury Department and were housed within the Commerce Department along with the Light-House Service and the Bureau of Navigation. Within such an Executive Department, dedicated to the furtherance and promotion of commerce, it is highly unlikely that any significant efforts to increase the scope of regulation, (hence the expense to shipowners) through statutory changes, would be tolerated,

let alone encouraged. Consequently little initiative towards the pursuit of a substantial safety effort to prevent marine accidents through regulations was evidenced by the activity of the Steamboat Inspectors.

Moreover the vast information on wrecks received by Collectors of Customs and passed to the Office of the General Superintendent of the U.S.L.S.S., though published annually, was not analyzed by Kimball's staff with a view towards preventing accidents before-the-fact but solely for the purpose of locating new after-the-fact rescue stations.

The division within the government of these marine safety agencies did not enhance the national effort to save lives, and probably contributed to countless deaths that might otherwise have been prevented.

One of the recommendations, dating to England's Lieutenant Bell of the late 1700's, was that vessels be equipped with line throwing devices. The value of such equipment on a vessel aground, especially on a lee shore, is obvious. A brief recollection of the previous accounts of fatal shipwrecks lends our immediate recognition to a number of instances where the shore rescue effort failed solely because the distance between wreck and shore was too great for a shot into the wind, or where the shot wire was expended in a futile attempt to hit the dim target on the outer bar. Ultimately, Congress recognized this need for line throwing guns on board vessels, and moved where neither the Life-Saving Service nor the Steamboat Inspectors had acted effectively. A law was passed which required appliances for throwing life lines on all passenger steamers of one hundred gross tons and over. As an illustration of the apparent isolation that existed between the two government services, regarding the matter of line throwing appliances, the following letter, written some twelve years after the Lyle gun had first been placed at Life-Saving Stations, and sent from an address only a block or so away from Captain Abbey's New York office, is repeated:



“Office of U. S. Local Inspectors of Steam-  
Vessels  
New York City  
February 21, 1890

Sumner I. Kimball, Esq.; General  
Superintendent  
Treasury Department  
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

Will you please furnish this office with the information where the Lyle gun, for throwing Life Lines, can be purchased. We have many inquiries on this subject, as the Law now requires suitable appliances for throwing life lines on all Passenger Steamers of 100 gross tons & over..

Respectfully yours,

Sam'l G. Fairchild  
Thomas H. Barrett  
U. S. Local Inspectors”

Perhaps it could be said that the lack of communication was deliberate, triggered by interservice jealousy, or that the benumbed Steamboat Inspectors, like many regulatory bodies, were in the pocket of the ship-owners they regulated. Both situations might have prevailed, but it might also be suspected that the Life-Saving Service did not necessarily want to prevent accidents through regulation for such regulation, if totally successful, would put themselves out of business. Along the same line of conjecture, shipowners were more interested in preventing losses, while marine insurance brokers and salvage companies made their living out of the continuing threat of shipwreck.

The Life-Saving Service was, at least to some degree, affiliated with those latter interest, as evidenced by the information its stations transmitted to the Marine Exchange concerning wrecks, and their “hands-off”

approach concerning salvage.

In all fairness to both agencies, there is no reason to lay suspicion of dark motivation at either doorstep; the problem lay squarely on the matter of administrative organization. Happily, today, the Federal Government-within the marine safety functions of the Coast Guard-pursues the complete safety cycle, involving search and rescue followed by analysis of marine accidents; and rescue assistance information followed by unrestrained proposals for corrective measures, be they regulatory and preventative, or in the nature of improved rescue facilities.

The fiscal year 1890 witnessed the loss of forty-eight lives through fatal shipwrecks in one of the more disastrous seasons for the service:

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
Unnamed	Fishboat	10-22-89	1	1/2 mile west of Cape May, New Jersey, Station
<i>Germania</i>	Bark	11-27-89	10	3/4 mile North of Long Branch, New Jersey, Station
Unnamed (2)	Fishboats	9-8-89	2	1/4 mile South of Ocean City, Maryland, Station
<i>Henry P. Simmons</i>	Schooner	10-26-89	7	1-1/2 miles NE of Wash Woods, N.C., Station
<i>Francis E. Waters</i>	Schooner	10-31-89	6	2-3/4 miles NNW of Nags Head, N.C., Station
<i>Lizzie S. Haynes</i>	Schooner	10-31-89	5	1-3/4 miles North of Pea Island, N.C., Station

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>St. John's</i>	Schooner	3-17-90	1	600 yards ESE of Durante, N.C., Station
<i>Mears</i>	Schooner	11-27-89	1	2 miles North of Ottawa Pt., Michigan, Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	7-20-89	2	1/2 mile SE of Kenosha, Wisconsin, Station
Unnamed	Skiff	8-20-89	2	500 yards NW of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Station
Unnamed	Skiff	10-20-89	2	400 yards Nd of Frankfort, Michigan, Station
Unnamed	Skiff	6-20-89	1	2-1/2 miles sw of Manistee, Michigan, Station
<i>Fidelity</i>	Schooner	11-10-89	8	4 miles SW of Humboldt, Bay, California, Station

Sumner Kimball concluded the Annual Report for 1890 with a plea for increased pay for the Life-Saving crews and pointing out the dissatisfaction manifest among the crews. "Considerable embarrassment has been caused by the resignation of some of the oldest and best keepers and surfmen, who, in many instances, to provide adequately for the support of their families, are leaving the Service to accept more lucrative employment elsewhere. Especial difficulty in this regard has been experienced in the Great Lakes, where more than 30 percent of the force have left the stations on this account, whose places it has been well nigh impossible to fill with other than inexperienced, and, in this regard, inferior men."

At this juncture, it may be well to note

that in 1889, Kimball celebrated his 55th birthday—the magic age that he had established some years before as the cut-off point for determining usefulness to the Life-Saving Service. In addressing the matter of the "oldest and best," perhaps the General Superintendent had come to harbor some misgivings over his policy concerning the usefulness of men who had passed their 55th year.

"There are several old men in the crews of this district who should not be reenlisted." So exclaimed an Assistant Inspector as his opening sentence to the General Superintendent in a letter written little more than a month before the Annual Report of 1890 was dated for submission. Had he known of Kimball's apparent change of heart concerning the "oldest and best," the Lieutenant undoubtedly would have rephrased his words. Nevertheless, the Assistant Inspector was probably correct in his appraisal; and as he pursued his point, he actually was asking for a determination to be made that the old men's health had been "impaired" to the point that they should be discharged and given two years pay under the provisions of the May 4, 1882, law.

Despite the age factor, the record of the Life-Saving Service was not to be blemished by any failure as a result of over-aged keepers and surfmen. The operating season ending on June 30, 1891, witnessed the total loss of sixty-two vessels out of 491 of those imperiled; fifty persons perished that year in fatal wrecks out of some 3,491 persons placed in danger.

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Gondola</i>	Schooner	12-4-90	1	Saquin Ledges near Hunniwells Beach, Maine
Unnamed	Fishboat	11-3-90	1	1/4 mile SE of Southampton, L.I., Station

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>A. H. Hurlburt</i>	Schooner	12-26-90	3	2-3/4 miles South of Narragansett Pier, R.I., Station
<i>Otter</i>	Schooner	1-13-91	2	1-1/4 mile East of Bellport, L.I., Station
<i>Joseph Banigan</i>	Brig	3-24-91	1	1/4 mile North of Long Branch, N.J., Station
<i>George Henry</i>	Schooner	6-18-91	1	9 miles NNW of Lewes, Del., Station
<i>Joseph H. Neff</i>	Schooner	12-17-90	1	2-1/2 miles West of Oak Island, N.C., Station
<i>Nathaniel Link</i>	Schooner	1-22-91	1	3-1/2 miles NxE of Gull Shoal, N.C., Station
<i>Cragside</i>	Steamship	2-20-91	1	1 mile South of Ocracoke, N.C., Station
<i>Strathairly</i>	Steamship	3-24-91	19	1-1/4 mile South of Chicomicomico, N.C., Station
<i>Dictator</i>	Bark	3-27-91	7	1 mile North of Seatack, Va., Station
<i>Fanny L. Jones</i>	Schooner	8-11-90	1	2 miles W of Cleveland, Ohio, Station
<i>Wannapitae</i>	Schooner	10-26-90	1	1/2 mile NNW of Cleveland, Ohio, Station
<i>Tempest</i>	Schooner	4-4-91	3	5/8 mile North of Cleveland, Ohio, Station

Unnamed	Skiff	4-19-91	1	Wing Dam, Falls of the Ohio River
Unnamed from				
Sc. <i>Atlanta</i>	Smallboat	5-4-91	5	Off Crips, Michigan, Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	7-13-90	1	1/4 mile SSW of St. Josephs, Mich., Station

Undoubtedly, the worst wreck of the year involved the British vessel, *Strathairly*, a schooner rigged, screw steamer of 1,236 tons register bound from Santiago, Cuba, to Baltimore, Maryland, with a cargo of iron ore and a crew of twenty-six men. The deeply laden vessel ran ashore at 4:40 am in darkness and in the midst of a heavy fog grounding about 400 to 500 yards from the beach. A fresh Nor'easter was blowing and a heavy surf was breaking.

Immediately after grounding, the vessel sounded a distress signal with its steam whistle and within ten minutes or so was answered by the red glare of a patrolling surfman's Coston. The patrol immediately returned to Chicomicomico Station to summon aid whereupon the keeper notified the Gull Shoal keeper by telephone that a wreck had occurred between their respective stations. The method of telephone communications of those days involved using a call signal to be heard by all stations and conforming to a specified number of rings for each station; hearing this signal and listening in on the line, the keeper of the New Inlet Station summoned his crew also. The result was that three Life-Saving Service crews converged on the scene along with the District Inspector who was in the vicinity making his tour of inspection from his vessel, the Revenue Cutter *Alert*, anchored in Pamlico Sound.

With such an assemblage of rescuers, it would seem apparent that a successful operation would follow. That, unfortunately, was not the case. The extreme distance offshore coupled with the exceedingly high surf, which

prevent launching a boat, would make matters difficult, if not impossible, even under favorable visibility. The fog which shrouded the scene at the moment of grounding so completely shut out the vessel from sight that it was, in fact, virtually impossible to fire a line to the ill-fated *Strathairly*.

As the hours wore on, the thick fog condition failed to improve and the numbing effects of the cold on the exhausted crew in the rigging exacted its toll, so that when visibility conditions improved enough to attempt a rescue, the exposed vessel's crew could not effectively cooperate with their would be rescuers; as a result, nineteen men perished while only seven survived.

The season of 1890-91 saw the usual completion of stations authorized in previous years, as well as the added authorization of new stations at Brant Rock, Massachusetts, and Point Oxford. Additional funding was provided for extensive repairs and improvements to twenty-six stations on the Virginia-North

Carolina Coast and on several stations in the Delaware-Maryland-Virginia District. New buildings at Ocean City, Maryland; and Sandy Hook, Sea Bright and Cold Spring, New Jersey, were similarly completed during the year.

The Annual Reports in 1891 ended their previous narrative summaries of each year's shipwrecks not actually attended with loss of life. Kimball addressed this deletion with no less than two full pages of explanation. In concluding his report, he once again urged a pay raise for his men.

The social problem of drunkenness was attacked with fervor by groups of well intending citizens under the auspices of religious guidance in the last decade or so of the 19th century. These groups succeeded, in 1919, in seeing the passage of the 23rd Amendment to the Constitution, which was enforced by the provisions of the Volstead Act passed in 1921.

The Prohibition of the 1920s and 1930s was no friend of surfmen to be sure, but the first confrontation of their organization and



*The lookout watch at North Manitou Island. (Coast Guard photo)*

the action of temperance groups occurred nearly thirty years before, in September, 1891. The source of this initial thrust was in the form of a petition sent to the General Superintendent from the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Monroe County, New York. This document was signed by the President of the County organization, several local Chapter presidents, some clergymen, and the keeper of the Life-Saving Station at Charlotte, New York. The gist of the petition was an attack on alcohol and tobacco and a request that the General Superintendent: "Require of all keepers and their men employed in the U. S. Life-Saving Service-total abstinence from all intoxicating liquor as a beverage, including Beer and Cider. Also total abstinence from Tobacco. Moreover that they shall not enter any Saloon or place where a bar is kept and intoxicants sold, during the period of said service, unless duty calls, and such call is regularly reported by their keepers."

This requirement was to be subject to the wishes of a majority of keepers. The petition was covered by a pleasant letter from the Charlotte keeper's oldest sister, who implied in her letter that she had already planned how, after Kimball approved of her petition, that the national organization would send similar printed petitions, with the General Superintendent's endorsement, to all the keepers so they could express their views. Pending acceptance by a majority of keepers or even "a good number," Kimball could then issue an order giving effect to the request in the petition. She closed her letter by stating that the Charlotte Station "here looks very nice inside since the walls and ceilings were painted, woodwork varnished, and everything so much improved," a piece of information no doubt attributable to her loyalty for her brother, who apparently was not astute enough to keep himself clear of the whole matter.

The General Superintendent, in making his reply on September 5, 1891, pointed out the Regulations which required no intoxicants

be allowed on the station premises and that no person under the influence be permitted to enter the station house or remain on the premises. He added that intoxication is punished by instant removal from the Service and he was considering a new regulation which would prohibit the visiting of saloons or places where intoxicants were sold. Kimball related that the restrictions governing the employment and conduct of keepers and crews in the U.S.L.S.S. were "probably more stringent than those affecting any other class of men in the public service."

In changing his tone somewhat, he remarked on the impracticality of prohibiting tobacco "on account of the low wages allowed, it is now found difficult to secure well-qualified surfmen for the station crews, and it is believed that a prohibition of the use of tobacco would make it nearly or quite impossible to man the stations at all." The General Superintendent closed his letter by stating: "during the twenty years of the existence of the present system, not a life has been lost that is in the remotest degree chargeable to the use of intoxicants or tobacco by our keepers or surfmen."

It must be concluded that Kimball's position stood its ground. The wave of the temperance movement had not reached the point where serious political pressure could be brought to bear such as it did in later years when liquor was ruled out of Navy wardrooms and the rum ration eliminated.

Over the ten years following the identification of stations by name and the discontinuance of station numbers, many coastal resort towns had adopted new, more pleasant sounding names than the original geographic description of their places. In other instances, particular edifices such as hotels and clubs had been built near the Life-Saving stations. The extension of coastal railroad spurs naturally incorporated a number of stops at those places giving rise to depots named for hotels, etc. The post offices located in such places also bore the new name of the resort town or,

if located in a building, the name of that structure. This accommodation by postal authorities thus helped create an air of official confusion.

District Superintendents and Assistant Inspectors sifted through these local name changes as they occurred and, in turn, recommended the changing of station names where there was sufficient reason for doing so. Quite naturally there might be great incentive to a hotel owner to have an adjacent Life-Saving station called by the same name as his place of business, the post office within, and the local railroad depot. Since the name of the station was written on the surfmen's uniforms across the chest, the presence of surfmen about the premises would indicate that the hotel had its own life-saving corps, not to mention the advertising value as the government men went about their business off station.

The differences between the station names and the locality in which they were sited has caused no end of frustration for persons attempting to locate the scenes of earlier disasters and, thus, has inhibited anything but local histories concerning the Life-Saving Service. When the stations were first named, doubtless some confusion existed, particularly in the older districts, where the number system had been altered several times. Even today, the names of many stations as they appeared listed in the final 1914 Life-Saving Service roster would be foreign to the present inhabitants of those localities.

In connection with name changes recommended by Assistant Inspectors, came a letter written by the redoubtable Lieutenant McLellan to the General Superintendent dated November 5th, 1891, a part of which is quoted below:

"I respectfully call your attention to the necessity of changing the name of the Turtle Gut Station. The men of that station are made a great deal of sport of they appear at their homes, or on the train going to and from their homes, with the

legend "Turtle Gut" on their breasts. They would like to wear their uniforms, when away from their stations but do not in many instances on account of the remarks occasioned by that name. The newspapers even print funny items about it, until the men feel they are being ridiculed."

Needless to say, the name "Turtle Gut" eventually disappeared from the roster and in its place appeared "Two Mile Beach."

Indeed, civilization had effected great changes to the formerly isolated beaches. Administrative difficulties and questions arose which were beyond the humble powers of the local district superintendents and which had to be resolved by the General Superintendent and the Treasury Department.

In reply to such a question-in this case regarding the exemption of surfmen from jury duty-the Solicitor of the Treasury determined on November 20th, 1891 that:

"Persons employed in the Life-Saving Service of the United States are not, by reason of such employment, exempt under the laws of the United States from service as jurors...

Doubtless in any given case, upon good cause shown, as for instance, that the needs of the service required the presence of the person at his station, such person would be excused from duty as a juror; but that would be a matter for the determination of the proper officer or Court."

Another such instance of decision-making during fiscal year 1892 involved the matter of paying for the services of crews in the "off season," after the crews had been discharged. In this case a schooner stranded near a station, and was discovered by the keeper. He summoned a crew and proceeded to the scene of the wreck. Before they arrived, however, a crew of fishermen operating in the vicinity of the wreck assisted the persons on the distressed vessel in landing. The question was

raised whether the fishermen were entitled to be paid along with the volunteer crew secured by the keeper. Perhaps contrary to the principles of marine safety, the General Superintendent ruled that since the keeper had not employed the fishermen, they had no claim for services they rendered, but the crew engaged by the keeper was entitled to be paid, even though it accomplished nothing.

The season of 1891-92 witnessed the construction of new stations at Burnt Island, Maine; Quonochotaug, Rhode Island; Fenwick Island, Delaware; and Ilwaco Beach, Washington.

The old Chicago station was to be replaced by a new station erected on the grounds of the World's Colombian Exposition and which would be used as an exhibit during the Fair. Fifteen stations on the coast of Maryland and Virginia and several on the coast of Massachusetts; as well as the Lewes, Delaware; Golden Gate Park, California; and Crumple Island, Maine, stations, were all subject to extensive repairs and improvements during the year.

Along the lines of material and equipment, it should be mentioned that Professor Cecil Peabody of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, an expert in Naval architecture, assumed the Presidency of the Board of Life-Saving Appliances formerly held by Edward Burgess.

Lives lost during the 1892 season occurred as follows:

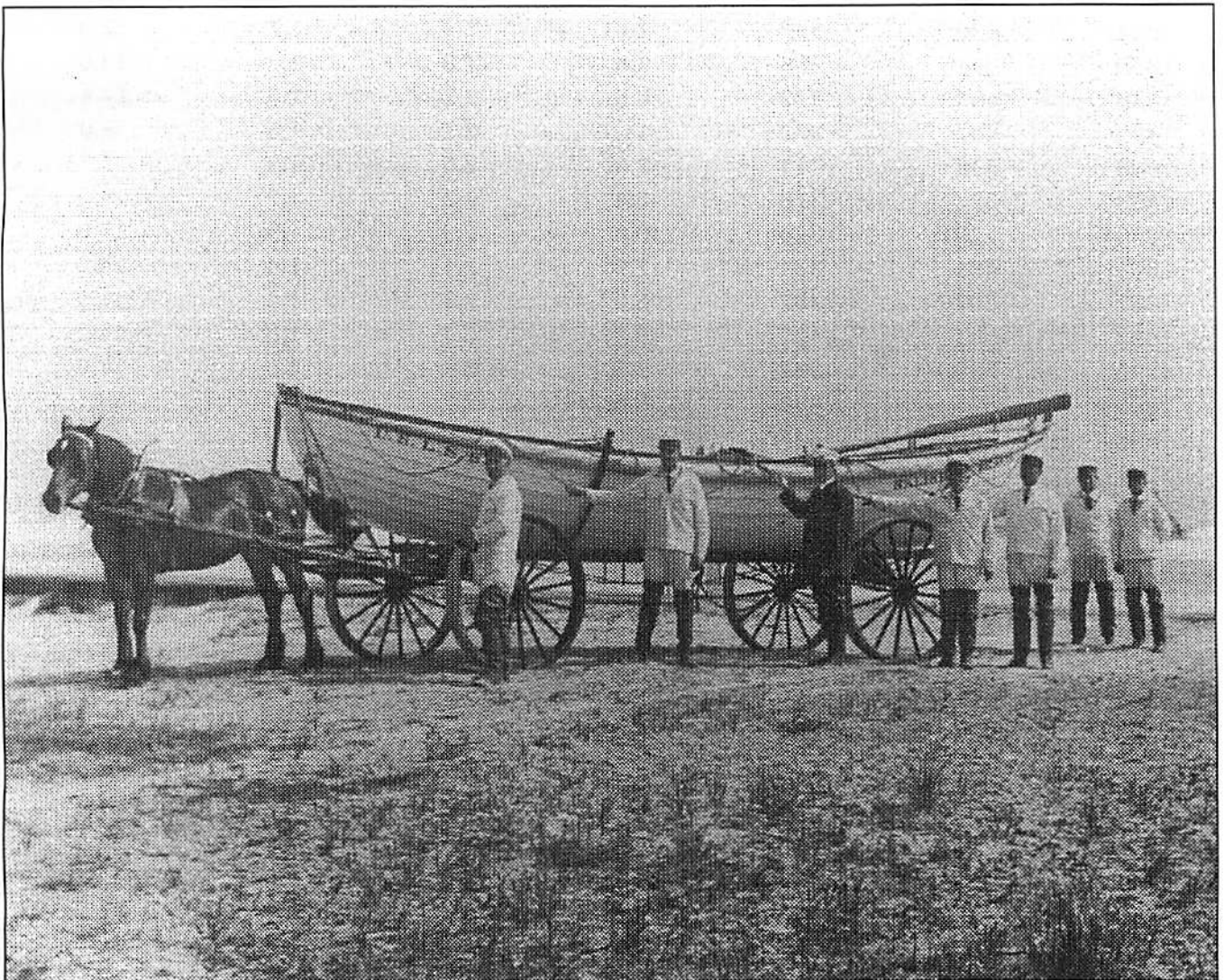
<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Rob and Harry</i>	Schooner	3-11-92	1	1-7/8 miles W&S of Cuttyhunk, Mass., Station
<i>Emma Jane</i>	Schooner	11-17-91	1	3 miles NW of Eatons Neck, New York, Station

<i>Red Wing</i>	Schooner	10-22-91	6	3-1/2 miles SE of Indian River Inlet, Delaware, Station
<i>Mary Rogers</i>	Schooner	1-19-92	1	2 miles NE of Lewes, Delaware, Station
<i>San Albano</i>	Steamship	2-2-92	1	6 miles N&E of Hog Island, Virginia, Station
<i>Annie L. Pierce</i>	Schooner	2-22-92	1	2-1/4 miles South of Little Kinnakeet, North Carolina, Station
Unnamed	Skiff	7-12-91	1	1-1/2 miles ESE of Charlotte, New York, Station
Unnamed	Row boat	5-29-92	1	400 yards North of Fairport, Ohio, Station
Unnamed	Skiff	6-25-92	2	1/6 mile SW of Charlotte, New York, Station
Unnamed	Row boat	9-12-91	1	1/3 miles from Grand Haven, Michigan, Station
<i>Hattie A. Estell</i>	Schooner	11-17-91	3	1/3 SW of Manistee, Michigan, Station
<i>Stratblane</i>	Steamer	11-3-91	6	11-1/2 miles North of Cape Disappointment Washington, Station
Unnamed	Sailboat	3-27-92	2	1-1/2 miles NNW of Fort Point, California, Station

Twenty-seven lives were lost in these shipwrecks during the operating season of 1891-92; a substantial number of them can be seen attended the capsizing of small unnamed skiffs. While the loss of life from small craft was no less tragic than from larger, documented, commercial craft, the percentage of the small boat incidents out of the total number of wrecks occurring had nearly doubled from 17% in 1882 to 33% in 1892. This trend was to continue in future years; 44% by 1897,

47% by 1900; 54% by 1905; 71% by 1910; and 73% by 1914.

As these percentages were changing so also was the increasing incidence of shipwrecks; the number of commercial craft wrecked each year, however, remained more or less constant through the turn of the century. It can be deduced, then, that the change in emphasis towards the small boat mishap was attributable to the increasing number of small craft accidents.



*The Hobbins life-boat, a lightweight surfboat used by crews, primarily on the West Coast and the Great Lakes.*



*The following table reflects some of these trends from the start of the Golden Age in 1882 through 1892 and on past the turn of the century:*

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Total Number Wrecks</b>	<b>Number of Documented Vessels Wrecked</b>	<b>Average Persons On Board</b>	<b>Average Vessels Ashore per Station</b>	<b>Average # Documented Vessels Ashore per Station</b>	<b>Average # of Persons Assisted per Station</b>
1882	345	287	6.6	1.8	1.5	11.9
1883	416	300	9.7	2.2	1.5	20.7
1884	439	337	10.1	2.2	1.7	22.0
1885	371	256	6.6	1.8	1.3	12.0
1886	467	322	6.6	2.2	1.5	14.4
1887	467	332	14.1	2.1	1.5	30.0
1888	544	411	7.6	2.5	1.9	17.7
1889	527	378	6.4	2.3	1.7	15.0
1890	529	384	6.6	2.3	1.6	15.0
1891	491	331	7.1	2.1	1.4	14.4
1092	507	337	5.8	2.5	1.4	11.9
1893	581	427	6.7	2.4	1.8	15.9
1894	596	382	7.5	2.4	1.5	17.9
1895	675	483	8.6	2.7	1.9	23.1
1896	680	437	7.9	2.7	1.9	20.3
1897	699	394	6.4	2.7	1.5	17.0
1898	767	402	5.2	2.9	1.5	15.0
1899	722	428	6.3	2.7	1.6	17.0
1900	693	364	5.0	2.2	1.4	12.2
1901	770	377	4.9	2.9	1.4	13.9
1902	746	434	5.7	2.7	1.6	15.4
1903	697	346	6.2	2.5	1.3	15.8
1904	770	359	4.3	2.8	1.3	12.1
1905	785	365	6.4	2.8	1.3	18.1
1906	848	357	6.3	3.1	1.3	19.0
1907	838	347	6.1	3.0	1.2	18.2
1908	1094	386	5.2	3.9	1.4	20.3
1909	1376	459	6.5	4.9	1.6	31.4
1910	1463	417	4.6	5.2	1.4	23.5
1911	1461	397	6.1	5.2	1.4	31.1
1912	1730	455	4.2	6.1	1.6	25.3
1913	1743	552	5.2	6.1	1.9	31.4
1914	1937	522	4.8	6.8	1.8	32.5

By the end of fiscal year 1892, the United States Life-Saving Service had been in existence for twenty-two years as a well-administered organization consisting of skilled, professional surfmen whose sole purpose was the saving of life from shipwreck. For forty-four years, it had been in existence as a federally funded establishment. Since the beginning of the Golden Age in 1882 to the close of Fiscal Year 1892, the following statistics may be used to reflect the accomplishments of the service:

Number of disasters:	5,103
Value of vessels:	\$55,284,530
Value of cargoes:	\$24,913,302
Value of property saved:	\$63,862,562
Value of property lost:	\$16,335,270
Number of persons on board vessels:	40,667
Number of persons assisted:	40,435
Number of persons lost:	232

The price tag for these accomplishments over those same years was a total of \$9,121,480. As expected, the Service was exceedingly efficient (99-43/100%); the cost per shipwreck, at \$1,790, remained close to the 1881 level representing the end of the first ten years; the cost per person rescued at \$225, similarly remained the same. These values seem to indicate a completely acceptable level of Federal involvement.

In consideration of inflationary trends, it would appear that the real cost of the Golden Age decreased over the previous eleven years while at the same time the efficiency improved two percentage points and a decimal or two. One way, perhaps, to circumvent the measurement of the fluctuating value of the dollar would be to compare the dollar value of property saved with the dollar expenditures of the Service for that eleven year period. By dividing the former sum by the latter, i.e.:

\$63,862,563	(property saved)
\$ 9,121,480	(U.S.L.S.S. expenses)

we arrive at a numerical value, which we will call a "Salvage Index," of 7.00.

For the first eleven year period of the Service, our calculations would reveal a "Salvage Index" of

$$\begin{array}{r} \$14,959,000 \\ \$ 2,656,610 \end{array} = 5.63$$

It would not seem inappropriate to deduce from the increase in our Salvage Index, that from the dollar standpoint, the period 1882 through 1892 was indeed a Golden Age.



# CHAPTER NINE:

## *The Mature Years*

### *Part One: 1892-1897*

**F**ollowing the Golden Age, which indeed reflected the finest performance thus achieved by the Life-Saving Service, as well as being eleven years significantly marked by administrative smoothness, availability of skilled manpower, and developing materiel facilities, a new period in the life cycle of the Service began.

Changes were occurring in the nation, evidenced in the economic growth of the coastlines, in the increasing social-political awareness of its citizens, and in technological advances. The character of the vessels subject to shipwreck changed as well, not only in size but in manner of propulsion. In order to meet these changes, the Life-Saving Service would have to change; whether it could or not would rest the ultimate fate of the service.

By and large, the eleven years following the Golden Age were characterized by: personnel problems, particularly those of enlistment; no particular enthusiasm for making technological advances; a brief but tolerable war; an increase in service costs; a shifting emphasis in commercial shipping towards mechanically propelled vessels; and an apparent overall increase in workload which surprisingly was more than adequately met by the competent, graying men of an aging, experienced, but static organization. These mellowing years in the life of the U.S.L.S.S., between 1892 and 1904, might best be compared to "middle age" in a human being. For this reason, I have termed these "The Mature Years."

Fiscal year 1893 opened most fortunately for the surfmen. On the 22nd of July 1892, Congress finally heeded the pleas of the

General Superintendent and increased the pay of surfmen from \$50.00 per month to \$65.00 per month. As a result, able-bodied and experienced applicants were not lacking at the opening of the 1892-93 operating season.

With the exception of the stations on the Great Lakes, which were manned during the eight months or so that the Lakes were open to navigation (free of ice), and the few stations on the Pacific Coast allowed by statute to be open all year if necessary, the regular authorized operating season opened as usual on the 1st of September 1892 and continued through the 30th of April 1893.

For the most part, the Atlantic and Gulf Stations started the season with six surfmen, excluding the Keeper, and from the 1st of December on to the end of April, added a seventh. A very few of those in the 5th and 6th Districts were manned with eight surfmen all year, and most in the 7th and 8th Districts were manned with six. The Lakes and West Coast Stations were manned with seven or eight surfmen during the periods they were in operation.

The payroll alone for the Life-Saving Service was large; its capital investment in terms of coastal property was tremendous, even in the 1890s. Nevertheless, each year a few new stations were authorized at new sites. A station was authorized at Jackson Park Chicago, at the site of the World's Colombian Exposition of 1893. In January 1893, a station was authorized at Gay Head, Massachusetts. And as usual, improvements, repairs, or complete rebuilding was undertaken at existing station sites during the season, at the Surfside, Coskata and Fourth Cliff Stations in Massachusetts, and the Short Beach and Coney Island Stations on Long Island.

The season of 1892-93 claimed the lives of

four more surfmen as they attempted to rescue two men from drowning from an overturned skiff at the Cleveland, Ohio, Station on May 17, 1893. Added to the list of men who died during a rescue effort are:

Surfman John Johnson  
 Surfman Symonds  
 Surfman Nicholas Servas  
 Surfman Albert Carriber

Beyond the loss of these surfmen, the year was a reasonably successful one; the largest single fatal incident being the wreck of the Schooner *Reliance* of Block Island with her entire five man crew. Fatal Shipwrecks 1892-93:

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>Brave</i>	Schooner	5-4-93	4	Off Knobs Beach, Massachusetts, Station
<i>Reliance</i>	Schooner	2-20-93	5	1/4 miles SxW of Block Island, R. I., Station
<i>Sallie and Eliza</i>	Sloop	8-20-92	1	2-1/2 miles SE Ocean City, N.J., Station
<i>Alice</i>	Bark	2-6-93	4	1-3/4 miles NE of Long Beach, N.J., Station
<i>Thomas W. Haven</i>	Schooner	6-26-93	2	1-3/4 miles South of Monmouth Beach, N.J., Station
<i>Magellan</i>	Schooner	12-20-92	1	Ship Shoals, 8 miles NE of Smith's Island, Va., Station
<i>Edith Berwind</i>	Schooner	1-1-93	1	6 miles South of Smith's Island, Va., Station

<i>Nathan Esterbrook</i>	Schooner	2-20-93	1	2-1/2 miles North of Little Kinnakeet, N.C., Station
<i>John Burt</i>	Schooner	9-26-92	2	3-1/2 miles South of Big Sandy, N.Y., Station
Unnamed	Skiff	4-23-93	2	2/3 mile North of Cleveland, Ohio, Station
Unnamed	Skiff	5-17-93	2	1/2 mile North of Cleveland, Ohio, Station
<i>Zach Chandler</i>	Schooner	10-29-92	1	3 miles east of Muskalonge Lake, Mich., Station
<i>Nellie Hammond</i>	Schooner	10-28-92	1	2/7 mile SW of Muskegon, Mich., Station
Unnamed	Fish Boat	5-29-93	2	1-3/4 mile SE of Cape Disappointment Washi..., Station

The rescue efforts in the cases of most of the fatal wrecks were successful in saving most of persons on board. For example, the *Alice* had a crew of sixteen, twelve were rescued. Four were rescued from the *Haven*, five from the *Magellan*, eight from the *Berwind*, eight from the *Esterbrook*, five from the *Burt*, and seven from the *Chandler*.

Pure statistics are misleading for in many instances the tables in the Annual Reports list a hundred or so persons on board a grounded vessel; in the tabulation, this hundred became part of the total "lives imperiled" figure, even though the grounding may have been of no consequence. For example, the mishap might have occurred to a coastal passenger steamer in calm waters near or in a harbor during month of July.



In 1906, the Michigan City, Indiana, Station crew practices launching its surfboat before an enraptured crowd. The station opened in 1888.

On the other hand, a schooner manned by seven men which may have grounded on the shoals off the Virginia beach in January and from which six men were rescued only after hours of perilous effort by a surf-boat crew, merely shows up statistically as "7 imperiled," six saved, one lost." Such statistics, of course, prove nothing, but during each year the Annual Reports carefully summed up its various columns of numbers and created a rather distorted picture of the year's shipwrecks.

Fiscal year 1893 was no exception. The Annual Report for that year tabulated 125 "lives saved" from the steam yacht *Oclemena* of Buffalo, which grounded on September 2nd on a reef just off the Buffalo harbor entrance. At the same time, the annual statistics carried eight "lives saved" from the schooner *Berwind* by the Smith Island, Virginia, crew on January 1st, from a surf-pounded shoal several miles off shore in the winter Atlantic.

Kimball recognized the fallacy in placing

too much emphasis on statistical data and made detailed and lengthy analysis concerning the wrecks of each year, carefully pointing out the greatest successes at shipwrecks. In 1893, however, it was not the administration of wreck reports which gave the General Superintendent problems, it was the reports of wrecking services performed by his lifesavers.

The Regulations of the Service had long since prohibited the government life-savers any entitlement to salvage. However, it was not uncommon practice for some of the keepers and crews to accept donations made by the persons they rescued by the ship owners and underwriters' agents for lending a hand. On occasion, goods that were salvaged were sold to the surfmen for considerably less than their real value by the wreckmasters. Some crews performed ferry services with the government boat for which they accepted money. Any number of offers were made by wrecking companies to keepers for notifying them of

disasters occurring near their stations, some of these offers were undoubtedly accepted. Sometimes assistance was rendered to the Army Corps of Engineers in the taking of soundings and providing transportation, and the men were occasionally paid for their efforts. Vessels which grounded undamaged on sand bars were frequently towed off by station crews and in many instances these favors were rewarded.

Gratuities to station crews could come in many forms. It could be a hard cash fee at a rate established and solicited by the crew, or it could be an unspecified sum left by the generosity of the donor, to be spent in any way the crew wished. At one station in Michigan, the crew received 5 cents a head for every fisherman they ferried across a nearby river in the government boat. The keeper explained his view of this practice:

"I consider it a very good employment in spare hours for the men as it helps to kill the monotony of station life, encourages activity, ambition and sociability, and discourages idleness."

Nor did the rewards have to be in the form of cash; since the men provided their own mess, gifts in the form of foodstuffs and beverages could be donated to the station by grateful recipients of the crew's services. Before the 30% increase in pay provided by the Act of July 22, 1892, these extra amounts of compensation, while frowned-on perhaps, were more or less overlooked, except in cases where the solicitation was abusive. The management of the Service had perhaps even encouraged this receipt of gratuities by accepting at the Federal government level substantial donations made to specific crews by the heads of foreign governments whose citizens the life-savers had rescued. If the donations of European powers could be accepted, why, reasoned the surfmen, could they not accept gifts from equally appreciative American owners and underwriters? With the pay raise herald-

ed in the press with all hoopla and satisfaction, such gifts were no longer palatable, legal or not, to either the donors or the management of the Life-Saving Service.

An event occurred in December 1892, which possibly may have been the straw that broke the camel's back. The beaches along the Delaware, Maryland and Virginia coast, the "Delmarva" peninsula, are a pleasant summer attraction to the men and women who hold government jobs in the District of Columbia, including elected, appointed, and civil servants. Cape May, New Jersey, has been included in this same category. The more influential, and hence more affluent, individuals of the Washington set have always been attracted to exclusive resorts and private clubs. One such club in the Fifth District of 1892-93 was presided over by a gentleman who owned most of the land on one of the islands along the Virginia coast. Whether Kimball was a club member is unknown but it is a certainty that several members of Washington's officialdom were. The gentleman had been disposed, at the extension of the service into his fiefdom, to donate some of his land for the Life-Saving Station. He also selected the surfmen from the station and used the station's service phone to transmit private messages; and, of course, the keeper and crew were more than sensitive to the gentleman's wishes. In return, the surfmen were allowed to patrol across his beaches and he availed his horses and men whenever they were needed at a shipwreck.

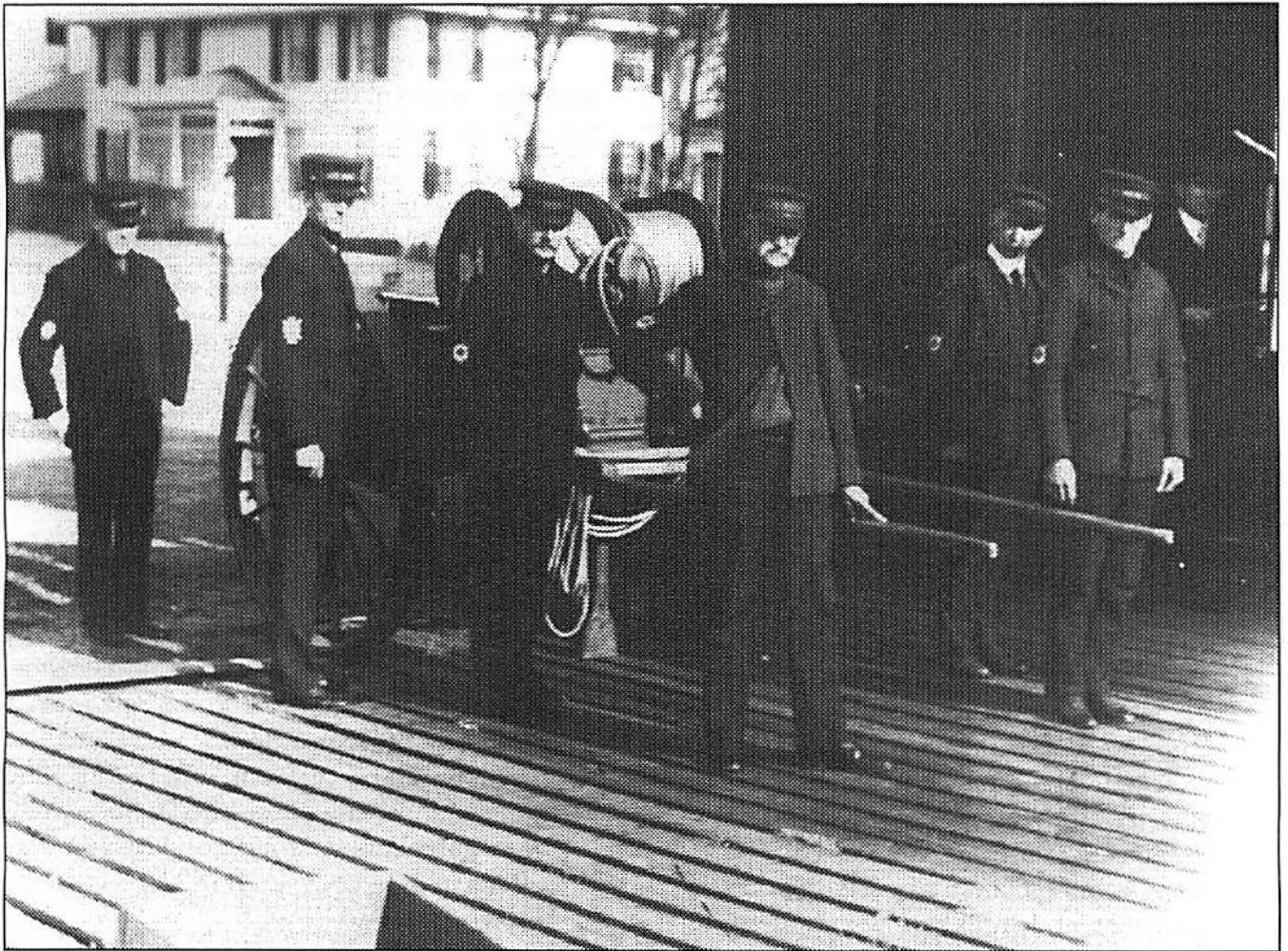
The Virginia law of the day was fairly specific concerning the ownership of property drifting ashore. With the exception of the owner of the drift property, the owner of the beach could claim the property. The owner of the drift, however, could recover his property provided he paid the beach owner any expenses incident to saving, storing or removing the property from the beach.

On 20 December 1892, the schooner *A. P. Newell* was totally wrecked on a bar about 1-1/2 miles from the island, and all six men on the wreck were saved. Following the wreck

and during the time a wreckmaster was engaged in salvaging what remained, he advised the keeper of the station that if the crew would help him saw some of the booms on the vessel he, the wreckmaster, would sell them at a fair price (\$5) to the surfmen. The gentlemen land owner from the island similarly purchased \$200 worth of spars and rigging from the wreckmaster. As soon as the wrecking company had left the *A. P. Newell*, the club president took charge of the vessel, even though it remained a mile and a half from the beach, and removed all that his men could land ashore. The underwriters' agent, who had not yet attended the wreck, wrote the keeper to take charge of what remained until the agent could arrive to dispose of the hulk. Dutifully, the keeper informed the gentlemen

land-owner of the underwriters intentions by giving him a copy of the letter. Apparently this imposition of the keeper into his private affairs, coupled with the sale of \$5 worth of sawed booms to the crew, infuriated the gentleman-club president and owner.

Less than a month later, Mr. Kimball had a caller in his office in the form of the club president. In what the General Superintendent described as an "earnest inquiry," he "drew" from the man a reasonably one-sided version of his difficulties with the station keeper and an accusation that the keeper and his crew were appropriating items that were washing up on the land-owner's beach. Moreover, some allegations were leveled concerning the crew's practice of seeding oysters near the station, which interfered with



*The beach cart is ready to travel. Pulling the cart through sand dunes could be very tedious.*

the livelihoods of the other inhabitants of the island.

In one of the most unusual instances in the files of the Service, Mr. Kimball, in an apparent state of rage, directed a most sarcastic and patronizing rebuke to the keeper. There was no investigation, there was not even a referral to the keeper for an explanation, instead the General Superintendent merely believed, or politically accepted, the word of a man regarded in Washington to be a "gentleman," because he was a club president and owned part of an island. Seen in this light, perhaps the credibility of all the praise and recognition heaped upon the brave but poorly educated lifesavers in Mr. Kimball's Annual Reports could be challenged and exposed as sheer demagoguery by a bureaucratic snob. On the other hand, Kimball may have only had a bad day and, caught in the pressure of daily business by his powerfully endowed visitor, "flew off the handle."

Excerpts from that letter follow which, though taken out of context, still are indicative of the the General Superintendent's mood:

"...representations made to me that the rights of the owners of the land upon which drift property is deposited in relation to such drift property are disputed by the members of your station, creating trouble and unfriendly feeling where peace and friendliness should exist and producing demoralizing effects in the crew..."

"... and [I] drew from him information which satisfies me that certain discreditable practices exist there [at the keeper's station], tending to bring the service into disrepute and which must be stopped once and for all. For instance, the captain of a wrecked vessel does not usually have ownership of the vessel or its belongings, nor of the cargo, and therefore has no right to dispose of any such property to you or your men and if he had, you are forbidden by the regulations from soliciting it. This means not only that you are prohibited

from directly asking for it, but from intimating a desire for it, or in any way 'making long arms' for it. The colorable or ostensible purchase of it for inadequate or trifling consideration also comes under this prohibition, and any such acquisition, by yourself or any of your crew, of wreckage or other property from the vessel, coming to my knowledge will subject the offender to summary treatment. Your dealings with the Captain and crew of a wrecked vessel should be limited to your best efforts to save their lives and the shipwrecked property and to afford them such shelter, food, and clothing from the supplies of the Woman's National Relief Association with such kind and courteous treatment as is proper and their necessities require."

It must be remembered, the keeper dealt with the "wreckmaster," not the "Master" of the *A. P. Newell*.

"I am inclined to believe that if less attention were bestowed upon oyster culture and other occupations, it would inure to the benefit of the Service. You and your men now receive good compensation which places you on a much better footing pecuniarily than most of your neighbors and they think that you ought to feel pretty well satisfied with your lot without meddling with any of the outside business upon which they largely rely for their subsistence. It seems to me that such attention to the duties of the men at the station as should be required, with a proper time to rest, would not leave much room for the pursuit of other business.

It should be your aim and that of your crew, to cultivate peace and harmony with your neighbors, and not conduct yourselves in a manner tending to provoke antagonism and ill-will.

He [the land owner] speaks of your bravery and your professional skill and



qualifications in the highest terms, and entertains a sincere wish that none but the most friendly relations shall exist between you, and I shall expect you to exert every proper means to promote such relations.

You must know that the presence of these people [the gentlemen and his Club] on the island and their introduction of improvements and facilities are beneficial to all the islanders as well as the Life-Saving Service. Your attitude toward them for your own sake as well as for the sake of the Service should be one of encouragement instead of discouragement.

Let me hear nothing but good reports of you and your crew in the future.

Respectfully yours,  
S. I. Kimball  
General Superintendent"

Kimball then distributed a circular letter to each station in Virginia enclosing copies of the various sections of Virginia law relating to drift property, and including the section of U. S. law dealing with the plunder of shipwrecked vessels. The keeper, a "gutsy" man whose crew had rescued thirteen men from three wrecked schooners that season, replied to the General Superintendent and presented a straight-forward, if slightly misspelled, explanation, and in so doing related the receipt of one "not a very polite" letter from the club president, the manner in which the gentleman appropriated everything whether on his property or not, the fact that it was the wreckmaster he dealt with, the position of the vessel during salvage, that he performed favors for the gentleman, that he only had "planted enough oysters for the crew's own use," and that it was the club president who was at odds with the islanders for taking what did not belong to him, and not his crew. No apology to the keeper appears in the record, nor was any further investigation made.

The following April 21st, a Treasury

Department circular (No. 61) appeared, amending the paragraph of the Regulations which applied to entitlement to salvage. The amendment included the prohibition for soliciting or receiving any other compensation for the performance of their duties other than their salaries.

Fiscal year 1893 experienced a number of serious shipwrecks during the "off" season; indeed, three of them resulted in seven of the twenty-nine lives lost that year. Journalists and others concerned over this increasing trend, began to stimulate interest in changing the law which restricted the Atlantic and Gulf Coast seasons from 1 September through 30 April.

August hurricanes had been prevalent in recent years and their destruction of shipping was not less threatening than now. Unfortunately in such gales and mountainous seas as accompany the dangerous part of a hurricane, little could be done to relieve any vessel tossed on the beach. The best solution to those wrecks was avoidance of such storms. Many of the summer wrecks were those occurring to steam yachts, sailboats, and skiffs usually occupied by persons engaged in recreation or commercial fishing. When such vessels became distressed, it was usually during daylight hours. The nature of their accident was capsizing as a result of overloading, or being overturned by a sudden gust of wind, or getting caught in the surf. In each case, rescue, if it were to be effective, had to be immediately at hand. Such marine accidents were not matters where a cargo-laden sailing vessel of some inherent size and strength stranded on an outer sand bar, to be discovered by the patrol, and eventually to become conducive to a surf-boat or breeches buoy rescue.

Unless boat crews stood poised on the shore watching each small boat that might stand into danger, there was little that the professionally-drilled, Beebe-McLellan equipped, Life-Saving Station crews could quickly do in the event of summer small boat accidents. In many instances, however, the keepers watch-

ing from their station towers, even though they were without a crew, managed to arrive at the scene of such accidents with volunteers and successfully launch their light-weight "second boats" and rescue the hapless occupants of capsized boats.

Nevertheless the pressure for extending the season mounted and it was not unreasonable to consider doing so, for at least part of the offseason, say, August and May. Edward R. Sharwood of the Philadelphia Marine Exchange was one such proponent of an extended season and on June 28th, 1893, offered Kimball his services to act in that regard.

The season of 1893-94 was one of the most severe that the Life-Saving Service had ever encountered. Particularly tumultuous weather had been inflicted upon the coasts of the Great Lakes. Sixty-eight lives were lost from shipwreck during fiscal year 1894, tabulated below:

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Jason</i>	Ship	12-5-93	24	1/2 mile NW of Parnet River, Mass., Station
<i>Fortuna</i>	Schooner	2-12-94	2	Peaked Hill Bars, Mass.
<i>Belmont</i>	Bark	4-9-94	6	Peaked Hill Bars, Mass.
<i>Martha P. Tucker</i>	Bark	8-29-93	1	1 mile West of Pt. Lookout, L.I., Station
<i>Mary F. Kelly</i>	Schooner	8-24-93	4	3/4 mile South of Deal, N.J., Station
<i>Kate Markee</i>	Schooner	4-12-94	7	1-1/2 miles South of Spermaceti Cove, N.J., Station

Unnamed	Sailboat	10-9-93	2	4 miles East of Hog Island, Virginia, Station
Unnamed boat from				
<i>Harry Stiles</i>	Schooner	10-9-93	1	1-1/4 miles North of Jupiter Inlet, Florida, Station
<i>Eliza J. Redford</i>	Schooner	11-15-93	1	100 yards North of Oswego, N. Y., Station
<i>Lottie Cooper</i>	Schooner	4-9-94	1	1-1/2 miles East of Sheboygan, Wis., Station
Unnamed	Boat	5-1-94	1	2-1/2 miles NE of Racine, Wis., Station
<i>Jack Thompson</i>	Schooner	5-18-94	1	4-3/4 miles North of Chicago, Illinois, Station
<i>Myrtle</i>	Schooner	5-18-94	7	3-1/2 miles South of Chicago, Illinois, Station
<i>M. J. Cummings</i>	Schooner	5-18-94	6	3/4 mile SE of Milwaukee, Wis., Station
Unnamed	Fish boat	7-17-93	2	Republic Spit, near Cape Disappointment Washington, Station
<i>Emily</i>	Steamer	7-17-93	1	Coos Bay Bar, Oregon
Unnamed	Skiff	8-15-93	1	3/4 mile SW of Golden Gate Park, Calif., Station

Clearly, the worst wreck of the year in terms of lives lost was that of the Scottish ship *Jason* with twenty-five persons on board, all but one of whom were lost. The wreck of the American bark *Belmont*, with nine persons, six of whom died, was strikingly similar to the *Jason*. In both cases, the wrecked vessels went to pieces within fifteen minutes of striking, thus precluding any chance of a successful rescue operation. In both instances every possible effort was made by the men of the Service to save the lives of those on board and in the case of the *Belmont*, a surf boat launched almost immediately did succeed in fishing three men out of the breakers who would have otherwise perished.

Of the fatal wrecks, perhaps that of the three-masted schooner *Kate Markee* was the most frustrating. The troubled vessel, under surveillance and followed down the beach by the Life-Saving crew, was assured of successful rescue the moment it struck the bottom, or so it seemed. The Lyle gun was fired. On the second try, the shot line fell within easy reach of one of two men who had sought refuge in the mizzen rigging and not too far from those in the fore, but there it lay! One man in the mizzen finally descended the rigging, apparently to retrieve the shot line. He carefully stepped towards the line, then over it, as he moved forward along the deck, apparently to join his comrades. Another shot was fired landing just abaft the fore rigging, but again no effort was made by the crew to take it up. Shortly after, the pounding surf brought down the mizzen mast sending the remaining man over the side into eternity. The mainmast went next, followed by the fore moments later, thus taking the rest of the crew with it. The lifesavers waited helplessly on the beach to provide what little assistance they might to any survivor reaching their grasp. Because of the short time that elapsed from the stranding of the ship until its dismasting, it is probable that even had the apparatus been rigged, there would not have been time to effect a rescue.

Nevertheless, the discouragement and anguish by the would-be rescuers on shore would surely be never forgotten.

The most successful wreck of the year, if one should apply that term to a disaster, was that of the American steamer *Emily*, with fifty-six persons on board, she grounded on the treacherous Coos Bay Bar. The *Emily* stranded during foggy weather in the early morning hours. The Cape Arago crew responded to the wreck and successfully transferred fifty-five persons from the *Emily* to the tugs *Gen. H. G. Wright* and *Hunter* which were standing by. The Life-Saving Service life boat under capable Keeper H. E. Wilcox made four trips between the wreck and the tugs through a heavy and dangerous sea. During the second trip, one of the passengers who had been removed from the *Emily* fell over the side of the life boat while the boat was passing through the breakers on the bar. It was impossible to turn the life boat back to find the man without risking all the lives on board or without delaying the rescue of those remaining on the *Emily*. During the return passage to the wreck, no sign of the passenger was found. Moments after the fourth life boat trip had started on its return to shore with the remainder of the *Emily's* company on board, the steamer rolled over and went to pieces.

No less than seventy-four wrecks occurred on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts during the "off" season of May 1st through 31 August during the fiscal year 1894. Two of those resulted in loss of life. Since this record number of vessels wrecked during four summer months was worse than the cumulative record for fiscal years 1872 and 1873, upon which statistics the expansion of the Service to new coast lines was justified, it was only logical to expect some impetus for legislation which would extend the operating season for several additional months, if not for the whole year. That impetus had become considerable during May and June of 1893 and was only reinforced during the wrecks of the following July and August.

On September 7, 1893, a bill (S-869) was introduced in the U. S. Senate which would achieve the desired results; a companion bill (H.R. 2795) was introduced in the House of Representatives. Sharwood of the Philadelphia Maritime Exchange notified Kimball on the 6th of December that the Board of Directors was lending their full support to the measure. With such support for extending the operating season of the service, it seemed a certainty that the legislation would pass easily both houses of the Congress.

Aside from the concern with shipping disasters of the year 1894, the usual progress was made with the construction of new stations. The stations at the new sites Ashtabula, Ohio; Southside, California; Duluth, Minnesota; and Portsmouth, North Carolina were constructed that year. A new station authorized for Avalon, New Jersey, was under construction, as was one at Sullivans Island, South Carolina, which would replace the station authorized but not built on Morris Island. The Life-Saving Stations at Cahoons Hollow on Cape Cod (which had burned in 1893) and at Spermaceti Cove, New Jersey, were replaced with new buildings. The building at Metomkin Inlet, Virginia, was removed some 300 yards to prevent it from washing away.

With the construction of the new building at Duluth, came a new style of architecture to the service. Designed by A. B. Bibb, stations of this particular model became known as the "Duluth" stations. Many of those old station houses are in existence today.

The orderly progress of material improvements in the U.S.L.S.S. reached its summit in 1894. The Beebe-McLellan surf-boat had become recognized by keepers through-out the service as a desirable commodity. Numerous requests for these boats were received and the boats were supplied within the limitations of the appropriated funds.

Curiously, Lieut. McLellan found himself in trouble with the General Superintendent by not modifying the plans for "his" surf-boat when he was told to do so. A minor difficulty

of sand finding its way into the ballast tanks required a method of removing the sand. McLellan devised such a method but was delinquent in amending the plans and specifications to show it. As a result, all orders for McLellan surfboats were held up for a short while until the revised plan was submitted. In retrospect, the maneuver by Kimball seems somewhat peculiar. If the boat was all it was supposed to be, then the mere absence of an amended drawing should not have been cause for denying this heralded piece of life-saving equipment to the stations in the field. Kimball's action almost seemed to be a "punishment" for McLellan. But a punishment in what way? Was McLellan allowed to make personal monetary gain from the purchase of the surf-boats by the government? Perhaps Kimball was only trying to stall the purchase of the surfboats until the next fiscal year's appropriations were made, but if that was the case, why did he not tell McLellan? In any event, the boats were not delayed for very long and Lieutenant McLellan was relieved as assistant inspector of the Fourth Life-Saving District; Lieut. Walter S. Howland became his successor.

The epitome of material achievement in the year 1894 was not represented solely by the acceptance of the self-bailing, self righting surfboat. Over 650 miles had, by that year, been spanned by the telephone communications system connecting the various Life-Saving stations. This network, begun in 1879, was gradually being extended through the service. Where stations were contiguous, they were connected to each other, and where they were isolated, the stations were connected to the nearest commercial exchange. Furthermore, all telephone lines of the Service running along the coast were either connected with the general telegraph system of the nation or their terminals were within the immediate neighborhood of telegraph offices. Thus, telephone information between stations could be converted to telegraphed messages and sent to any desired part of the country.

The obvious advantages of having such a communications hook-up were demonstrated on numerous occasions of shipwreck, some of those have been retold on the preceding pages. Further, this telephone-telegraph interconnection aligned the Army's Storm Signal Service with the Life-Saving Service, thus creating a communication capability that had not existed at U.S.L.S.S. stations which were no longer, or had never been, part of the Storm Signal network. As we know, the various private shipowners and marine insurance interests had long sought, and in most instances, enjoyed, the advantages of the government telegraph and telephone wires with regard to the timely notification of shipwreck. In fact, several wrecking companies were given access to wreck information received over the Life-Saving Service communications system.

While the bulk of the the telephone-telegraph system was established during the eleven years of the Golden Age (1882-1892), its acknowledgement as a completed implement was made in the Annual Report of 1894. Responding on January 20, 1894, to an inquiry from H. Hozier, the Secretary of Lloyd's in London, Kimball detailed the extension of the communications system in the United States, paying particular attention to the arrangement for telephoning information of marine casualties to vessels. Here is what he said:

"The arrangement for telephoning casualties to vessels so that prompt assistance, if needed, may reach them requires the keeper of the station in whose vicinity a disaster occurs to telephone the fact along the line until it reaches a station having connection with the general telegraphic system-whence the assistance of tugs or revenue cutters may be summoned from the nearest available port. Information of all disasters occurring in the second district [coast of Massachusetts] is sent immediately to the Chamber of Commerce in Boston and by that body to the Maritime Exchanges of Boston and New York, by

mutual arrangement between these organizations.

"Information of disasters in the third and fourth districts, [coasts of Long Island and New Jersey respectively] is sent to the New York Maritime Exchange and thence forwarded to organizations in other cities interested.

"Information of disasters occurring in fifth district [coasts of Del., Md., and Va.] is sent to the branch office of the Philadelphia Maritime Exchange at Lewes Delaware, and thence to other places, and information of disasters in the sixth district [coast of North Carolina] is sent to the Philadelphia Maritime Exchange and thence forwarded to other cities, as above stated."

Kimball had not considered shipwrecks south of Cape Fear, North Carolina, of frequent enough occurrence to warrant government lines to the few scattered stations on the rest of the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. Some government and other telegraph wires, however, did interconnect with a few of the stations. On the Great Lakes no extended telephone service was provided, although several stations were connected with local telephone exchanges. Because of the great distances between the stations on the Pacific coast, only the two at the entrance to the harbor at San Francisco were connected.

The U. S. Life-Saving Service had, by the 1890s, become a recognized creature of the Federal government. Locally along the coast line and to interested members of the marine industry, it had always attracted attention. Exhibits at the various Centennials and World Expositions had brought it closer to the general public to be sure. Articles written in the periodicals of the late 19th century drew further attention to Kimball's service, although not a few of those literary attempts were considered to be "irresponsible," to contain "gross inaccuracies" and to ascribe "credit where it was not due, both as regards the

advancement of the service and the inventorship of its devices" by the General Superintendent. As he put it to one aspiring author:

"Of course you will agree with me that the interest of historical truth requires the exercise of the greatest care for the avoidance of such defects. I have, therefore, whenever I have been requested, been willing to confidentially examine the manuscript and point out any such errors of fact and shall be glad to do so in this instance, if desired."

To a large extent, Kimball was concerned with the embarrassing Joseph Francis-Douglas Ottinger lifecar feud, which never seemed to die down. He also was disturbed over the political attempts following the 1893 presidential election of Democrat Grover Cleveland to replace him as General Superintendent. Since Kimball was more or less indispensable to the Service, not through any lack of omission or commission on his part, it was all the more important that the image of the service be a good one. If the General Superintendent could direct the publication of that image somewhat, the effect on the public would be consistently good and free of tempting footholds for opportunistic politicians and enemies of the service. Kimball thereupon took willingly on his shoulders the job of reviewing manuscripts and other articles concerning the organization under his charge. Suffice it to say, few articles were critical, and for those that were, little could be expected in the nature of insight into that tight-lipped service except for the Annual Reports published nearly a year following the close of the fiscal year they concerned. Wreck information was nearly always favorable except in those instances where disgruntled ex-surfmens complained of this or that decision made at the scene of the disaster.

Few others in 1890 possessed the knowledge of rescue procedures or methods being used except those who served in the U.S.L.S.S.

Wreckers, of course were knowledgeable, but they depended upon the friendship of the service for their existence, and as the turn of the century approached, the quality within their ranks was on the wane. Disappointed politicians occasionally grumbled and threatened but they were invariably the "out" group, even among members of the loyal opposition in Washington.

Quite naturally, all those who went to the General Superintendent wanting information which would enhance the service came away pleased. Those, if any, who wanted the other kind never realized their objectives. Among those who came to the Life-Saving Service desiring assistance in 1894 were the Milton Bradley Company which specialized in "Home Amusements" and school and kindergarten material. That company wanted some pictures of the wreck apparatus "to introduce," possibly for use in a home game or in the class room. Kimball obliged, sending copies of the "Beach Apparatus Drill," and his pamphlet "Organization and Methods of the United States Life-Saving Service." He then related that there was no official publication which contained pictures of the apparatus but he referred the company to the following articles:

Scribner's Magazine - January 1880

Harpers New Monthly Magazine -

February 1882

Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly - February

1878

The New England Magazine - April 1890

Demarest's Family Magazine - May 1891

The Scientific American - February 6, 1892

Once a Week - February 10, 1894

Appletons Annual Cyclopedia - 1878

From the other end of the spectrum came a request from the scenic artist of the Herald Square Theatre in New York City to be allowed to sketch the Sandy Hook Station and the surroundings so as to make a scene for a play to be presented on the New York stage. Free tickets

were offered to Kimball for the play and the General Superintendent, in granting permission to make the sketches, said he would be pleased to accept the invitation if he were in New York when the play was presented.

The signs were auspicious for a successful fiscal year 1895. The fatality rate had reached its highest point in years during the previous season and was due for a downward slide. The service enjoyed an untouchable reputation and legislation which had been submitted in both houses of Congress to extend the operating season seemed certain of passage.

Shortly before the House bill was brought before that body for a vote, an amendment was added by a Congressman from Texas which contained a proviso, ostensibly for economic reasons, that any surfman working more than the eight months previously allowed by law should be limited to a salary of \$60 per month for the entire season. The July 22, 1892 pay bill had, as we remember, increased the monthly pay of surfmen to \$65. Even though this decrease in pay was included, the legislation to extend the operating season to ten months passed and was signed into law as the Act of August 3, 1894.

The immediate effects of the legislation were disastrous to the morale of the service. Interpretations of the law necessarily meant that beyond the fact of a monthly pay decrease for all surfmen serving a full season of over eight months, a myriad of inequities within the service arose. For example, the extra seventh man employed at Atlantic stations on the 1st of December for the rest of the season made \$65 per month while his six mess mates made \$60. Stations on the Great Lakes whose season was dictated by the close of navigation often worked a few days longer than eight months; those few days at the end of the season were within the most perilous of the year yet if the stations remained open the men stood to lose about three weeks pay. Moreover, replacements serving less than eight months made \$65 per month while the men they replaced may have been entitled to only

\$60. Surfmen on the Pacific Coast who had been working twelve months a year at \$65 a month were judged to fall under the provisions of the new law and they lost \$60 a year in wages as a result. Widows and orphans of men losing their lives lost the benefit of part of their pensions should their provider be a man who had been employed for the full season, even though he may actually have worked less than eight months.

Needless to say, the frivolity of the Congress in passing the proviso—probably to hasten their adjournment in August—was indeed detrimental to the well-being of the Life-Saving Service and effectively undid all the gains in personnel recruitment and reenlistment made as a result of the pay raise in 1892. Immediately Kimball set about to restore the original pay of \$65 per month he had obtained after years of effort, but his efforts for the next several years would be fruitless in that regard. Congress, however, did alleviate the situation on the Lakes by enacting in the service's appropriation law that men working up to eight and a half months were entitled to \$65 monthly pay. Their generosity with the men on the Great Lakes only aggravated the situation on the other coasts as now Lake men made more than their counterparts at sea coast stations.

Local newspapers rallied to the defense of their surfmen. One particularly vituperative journalist from Maine commented:

“...A Congressman from Texas, who probably had never seen salt water in his life, succeeded in having the wages of the life-savers reduced from \$65.00 to \$60.00 a month not long ago, and I should say that a perfectly just reward for the gentlemen would be to find himself in a boat on the Seguin ledges of the coast of Maine on a January night with nothing to sustain him but his own wretched conscience.”

Another New England columnist, no less indignant, wrote:

“Since the Texas patriot in Congress succeeded in getting the pay of the life-saving crews reduced from \$65.00 to \$60.00 per month, some of the best men are resigning, I hear, and their places are being filled with an inferior lot, many of them foreigners... But a statesman with the odor of manure on his boots and with hayseed powdered on his collarless shirt is able to get up in Congress and get the pay of these men reduced. And they can be swindled by Contractors that supply them with their uniforms. Ours is a great country and a great Government. I take off my hat to the whole scheme. Long may the triumphant flag wave above us, and long may Texas statesmen trim down the pay of the coast-guard. It might be a good idea to make the coastguard pay the Texas statesmen’s salaries. Why should these men that idle along the beach at midnight in December snowstorms continue to live on champagne and ortolans? Tax them! They are not paying enough for their flannel caps.”

Somehow, as usual, the Life-Saving Service survived the onslaught of a faintly economy-minded Congress and the slings and arrows of outraged journalists tilting at favorite local targets. Note that a considerable gap of political power separated Republican Maine from Democrat, Texas, but in the middle was poor Democrat Grover Cleveland stuck with a non-too-sympathetic Republican Congress, and with him in the same peculiar kettle, was Kimball-who could not even shut down the Texas stations.

The rate of fatalities from shipwreck in fiscal year 1895 predictably dropped to a normal level of twenty-six (consistent with previous chapters:)

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Seth Low</i>	Barge	1-14-95	2	3/4 mile SW of Zack’s Inlet, L.I., Station

<i>Louis V. Place</i>	Schooner	2-8-95	6	1/8 mile East of Lone Hill, L.I., Station
<i>Rodman R. Nickerson</i>	Schooner	12-22-94	1	1-1/2 mile South of Tathams, N.J., Station
<i>Frisky</i>	Fish boat	11-24-94	2	2 miles North of Oregon Inlet, N.C., Station
<i>Richards S. Spofford</i>	Schooner	12-27-94	1	14 miles SW of Ocracoke, N.C., Station
Unnamed	Sailboat	8-20-94	2	3/4 mile NxW of Fort Niagara, N.Y., Station
<i>Eli Shriver Jr.</i>	Steamer	6-11-95	1	Horseshoe Reef, Buffalo, N.Y.
<i>Myrtle M. Rass</i>	Steamer	7-10-94	4	70 yds. South of South Haven, Mich., Station
<i>Antelope</i>	Schooner	11-15-94	3	3/4 miles WxS of Grand Haven, Mich., Station
<i>Sampson</i>	Schooner	1-4-95	3	1/2 mile NxE of Point Bonita, Calif.
Unnamed	Fishboat	5-8-95	1	Peacock Spit, Cape Disappointment, Wash.

During the course of fiscal year 1895, two new stations were authorized. One was at Rocky Point, Long Island, the other at City Point, Massachusetts. The old station at Chicago was converted to a fully equipped Life-Saving station, in addition to the new station constructed for the Exposition at Jackson Park. Other new stations were constructed at



Gay Head, Massachusetts; Core Bank, North Carolina; Baileys Harbor and Plum Island, Wisconsin; and Yaquina, Oregon. At City Point, Boston Harbor it was decided to construct a floating station rather than erect the usual shore unit. As usual and certainly needed, new buildings were erected at existing station sites. The style of architecture was as always determined with consideration of the size of the plot of land and the character of nearby dwellings. During 1894 such new buildings were constructed at Monmouth Beach, Spring Lake and Tathams, New Jersey. Extensive improvements and repairs were also completed on existing buildings in the Massachusetts, Long Island and Virginia-North Carolina Coastal Districts.

Thus another operating season drew to a close. It certainly had its share of difficulties, but it was not without its usual successes. One final note: the Inspector of Life-Saving Station post held by Captain Abbey was relieved and Capt. Abbey was replaced by Capt. Thomas D. Walker. In 1895 Capt. L. G. Shepard, who had held the position as Chief of the Revenue Marine Division since 1889, was relieved by Capt. Charles F. Shoemaker, one time assistant inspector of the Third Life-Saving District (Long Island). During Capt. Shoemaker's tour as Chief of the Division, the term "U. S. Revenue Cutter Service" came into general usage. Whether Capt. Abbey's relief was stimulated by Capt. Shoemaker's assignment is conjecture. In all probability, Abbey was needed for a special assignment elsewhere where his long years of seagoing experience were required.

If the season of 1894-1895 was a return to normalcy with regard to fatal shipwrecks, then the year 1896 was a return to that era of finer statistics, the early 1880s. Twenty lives were lost as a result of shipwreck during fiscal year 1896, but only seven of those occurred on documented commercial vessels. Coastal lifesaving districts conspicuously without their usual share of fatal disasters included the Coast of Maine and the entire Eastern and Gulf

Seaboard from Sandy Hook, New Jersey, to the Mexican border. If the loss in pay had affected the performance of the life-savers in those districts, it didn't show: 281 vessels had wrecked on those beaches, on board which were some 2,136 persons, and thirty-two of those wrecks were considered as "total losses."

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Alianza</i>	Schooner	2-9-96	3	3/4 mile South of Plum Island, Mass., Station
<i>Kate Scranton</i>	Schooner	3-11-96	2	3/4 mile East of Eatons Neck, L.I., Station
Unnamed	Skiff	8-18-95	2	1/4 mile WNW of Buffalo, N.Y., Station
<i>Rung Brothers</i>	Steam Yacht	8-20-95	6	3/4 mile WSW of Buffalo, N.Y., Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	5-6-96	1	1/4 mile South of Fairport, Ohio, Station
<i>Pathfinder</i>	Steamer	9-1-95	1	2/3 mile WNW of Duluth, Minn., Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	8-6-95	1	2 miles SW of Humboldt Bay, Calif., Station
Unnamed	Small boat	8-25-95	3	1 mile East of Humboldt Bay, Calif., Station
<i>Bandorille</i>	Steamer	11-21-95	1	3-1/2 miles south of Umpqua River, Oregon

While the losses of life dipped down the

lowest figure in years, the service witnessed the continuing addition of new rescue stations authorized by a more benevolent Congress several years before.

In 1896 stations at Wood End on Cape Cod, Rocky Point on Long Island Sound, and a floating station at City Point in Boston Harbor were completed. Old buildings at the Little Beach, Absecon, and Cape May Stations on the Jersey coast were replaced with new structures as was the station at Cape Disappointment, Washington. Extensive repairs were made to stations on the Long Island, Lake Michigan and Pacific coasts.

Moreover additional authority was granted to construct new stations at the following sites:

Point Bonita, California  
Lakeview Beach, Michigan  
Salisbury Beach, Massachusetts.

The very origins of the Life-Saving Service were rooted in the business entanglement of marine underwriters, ship owners, and salvagers ("wreckers" in the terms of the 1800s). We have seen the evidences of this involvement over the years, commencing at the very beginning when the New York Board of Underwriters was requested in 1848 by Secretary of the Treasury R. J. Walker to help construct the first government stations. This tangled relationship continued—sometimes coolly, sometimes warmly—and encountered numerous inspection reports by federal officers, recommendations by federally constituted Boards on Life-Saving Equipment, federal legislation, etc.

The creation of a paid service in 1871 under a strong Kimball finally ended what had been the semi-official domain of the New York Life Saving and Benevolent Association. The association had long since yielded any authority it possessed over the management of the federal establishment. The creation of a cadre of professional lifesavers had, as discussed previously, been accompanied by the creation

of coastal wrecking companies. Individual wreckers serving the call of officially-appointed wreckmasters had ceased to be a way of life on the northeastern seacoast. Israel J. Merritt, a medal winner for saving lives in the 1850s, became the founder of the leading salvage organization in the 1870s, the Coast Wrecking Company. Others in the field included the Chapman Derrick and Wrecking Company of New York, the Scott Wrecking Company of New London, Connecticut, and Lewis Luckenbach of New York.

The unpopular role of the Coast Wrecking Company in the ill-fated *Circassian* disaster in 1876 will bring to mind the risks these salvors were willing to assume in order to save the physical and materiel remnants of a wreck. While not so glamorous a role as that of saving human lives, these commercial rescuers saved countless cargoes and revived untold vessels from utter destruction, and thus played their part in preserving the economic advantages of waterborne commerce to be felt in every consumers pocketbook.

Underwriters who, of course, had a vital interest in successful salvage operations of wrecked cargoes and vessels under their insurance coverage were successful in the mid-1880s in obtaining Kimball's assistance in receiving timely information of shipwrecks through the communications system of the life-Saving Service,

Upon receiving information of a coastal shipwreck at the Marine Exchange, the underwriters could swiftly effect a salvage contract with one of the wrecking companies or could activate an existing long-term contract salvage agreement which would see the immediate dispatch of a powerful sea-going steam tug with its regular wrecking crew and its surfboats and lighters for the removal and landing of cargo, salvaged rigging, etc. Agents for the underwriters were located at various points along the coasts and their names were published and distributed in a booklet provided to the masters of vessels insured by a member or affiliate of the New York Board of

Underwriters. In the days before the Civil War, these agents dealt directly with the wreckmasters to arrange for salvage services. The latter half of the 19th century saw the profession become one of being a relay post for the underwriters and a liaison with the beach community, as well as being an expert in local navigation.

Usually by the time a wrecking tug arrived on the scene of a disaster, the life-savers had completed their work of rescuing passengers and crew.

There was much latitude for cooperation between the two beyond the matter of passing word of the wreck to the Marine Exchange. Lines belonging to the life-savers left rigged between vessel and shore served the needs of the salvagers as well as they had those of the government men. Moreover, if the weather worsened, the life-savers were once again obliged to rescue the lives of those working on the wreck.

On 9 December 1895, James A. Whitlock, Secretary of the Board of Underwriters of New York, addressed General Superintendent Kimball and proposed that Capt. I. J. Merritt of the Merritt Wrecking Company establish a wrecking station at Assateague Beach, Virginia, near the Assateague Station, provided that this wrecking station were provided with prompt notification of disasters occurring on the Delmarva peninsula by the keeper of the Assateague Life-Saving Station, as relayed to him by the stations to the north and south. The location of a wrecking outfit to include the wrecking steamer *W. F. Coley* was a necessity because of the distance of that coast from the nearest deep water ports and because of potential loss of communications.

Kimball, in sensing a rather tricky situation and not wishing to be uncooperative on the one hand, yet not wishing to favor a particular wrecking firm on the other, decided on a clever course. On December 27th, 1895 he advised Whitlock that the keeper of the Assateague Station had been instructed to fabricate a bulletin board which would be

located at a suitable position at the station, accessible to the public, and upon which the keeper would post "prompt notice of all disasters, whether in the vicinity of his or a neighboring station coming to his knowledge." Whitlock responded the next day with a brief but grateful acknowledgement, and thus the relationship of the government life-saving establishment and the underwriters and salvagers was entwined into yet another knot.

The similarity of both habitat and duties which characterized the kinship of professional lifesaver and professional salvor could logically give rise to requests for government cooperation such as those made by the Board of Underwriters of New York. Of course, requests for cooperation in the public relations field were also a frequent occurrence as we have learned from our stage artist friend, the ladies of the WTCU, and numerous authors. One such author was a Charles Macauley of Brooklyn, New York, and New Brunswick, New Jersey, who never ceased requesting information concerning wrecks on the New Jersey coast; it was mostly from Kimball's replies to Macauley during the 1890s that the list of shipwrecks occurring on the coast of New Jersey from 1848 to 1871 was compiled.

Apart from the expected pleas for assistance, a most unusual request was received in the form of a letter dated August 16th, 1895, from Henry Wade Rogers, President of Northwestern University, in Evanston, Illinois, seeking the services of a member of the local Life-Saving Station for the university football team, "one of the best football players we have."

Kimball responded, asking when "the football season begins and ends; whether Van Doozer [the life-saver/football player] wishes to be absent during the entire season, or only on the days when games are to be played; whether all day on such days, or only during the hours of play; whether the games are to be played in the immediate neighborhood of

the station," etc. Unsatisfied by the college president's reply that Van Doozer would be on hand if a wreck occurred, Kimball responded that "after mature consideration, I cannot, in view of the dangerous character of the sport, see my way clear" to allow Van Doozer to play football.

Thus, the Northwestern University football team lost its first official bid to obtain the services of Surfman Van Doozer. President Rogers did not give up easily. In September of 1897 he was to send another such request. This time, however, it was addressed to Secretary of Treasury, Lyman J. Gage, who was, incidentally, a trustee of Northwestern. Rogers made certain allusions to the fact that permission had been granted in 1896, thanks to the Secretary overruling Kimball, for two or three of the crew to play on the team, but that the permission had been rescinded in 1897.

Despite the fact of a pre-season, sign-on agreement between the district assistant inspector and the crew, and the original objections of Mr. Kimball stated in September 1895, Kimball advised the assistant inspector on 29 October 1897, to revoke any order or instruction which would prevent the Evanston crew from playing football on the University team and enclosed a copy of Secretary Gage's reply to Rogers dated 24 October, which was apparently self-explanatory.

There is really no further reason to pursue what Gage had decided-football had won out! Whether this event could serve as a historic precedent whereby the U. S. Revenue Cutter Service School of Instruction (later the U. S. Coast Guard Academy) could claim membership in the Big Ten Conference is dubious. Nevertheless, the participation of the Evanston Life-Saving Station crew on Northwestern's football team is an undisputed fact of history.

Forty-three lives were lost in the 1896-97 season on documented vessels alone, and another eleven persons died as a result of mishaps to small undocumented craft.

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Monte Tabor</i>	Bark	9-14-96	5	1 mile NNW of Peaked Hill Bars, Mass., Station
<i>Calvin B. Orcutt</i>	Schooner	12-23-96	8	4-1/2 miles south of Orleans, Mass., Station
<i>Nabum Chapin</i>	Schooner	1-21-97	9	1/2 mile East of Quogue, L.I., Station
<i>Luther A. Roby</i>	Schooner	10-11-96	3	1/2 mile North of Cape Henlopen, Del., Station
Unnamed	Boat	9-26-96	1	2-1/2 miles NNW of Kitty Hawk, N.C., Station
Unnamed	Boat	9-9-96	2	3-1/2 miles East of Sullivans Island, S.C., Station
Unnamed	Boat	12-19-96	1	5/8 mile NE of Brazos, Texas, Station
<i>Little George</i>	Yawl	3-21-97	2	3/4 mile NE of Santa Rosa, Texas, Station
<i>Dredge No. 8</i>	Dredge	5-1-97	1	1/5 mile North of Fairport, Ohio, Station
<i>Sumatra</i>	Schooner	9-29-96	4	1 mile SE of Milwaukee, Wis., Station
Unnamed	Fish boat	7-16-96	2	Peacock Spit near Cape Disappointment Wash.

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Arago</i>	Steamer	10-20-96	13	2 miles SW of Cape Arago, Oregon, Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	12-1-96	1	1-1/2 miles NNW of Golden Gate Park, Calif., Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	12-7-96	1	3/4 mile South of Golden Gate Park, Calif., Station

The largest number of disasters ever reported in the history of the Service, 699, were reported in fiscal year 1897. Yet the number of vessels reported as totally lost was fifty-four, the smallest since 1879. Kimball was moved to reexamine his presentation of statistics in the Annual Report.

During 1897, additional authorization was granted during the year to construct stations at the following new sites:

Isle of Wight, Maryland  
Hampton Beach, New Hampshire  
Arena Cove, California

New stations meanwhile were being built on sites previously authorized by Acts of Congress at Damariscove Island, Maine; Salisbury Beach and Old Harbor near Chatham Beach, Massachusetts; and Petersons Point at Grays Harbor, Washington. Work had already started on the Isle of Wight Station before the end of the fiscal year. A new station house was constructed at Muskegat, Massachusetts, to replace one destroyed by fire several years before.

New buildings were also under construction at Dam Neck Mills and False Cape, Virginia, and Oregon Inlet and Caffey's Inlet, North Carolina during fiscal year 1897.

It would seem that the crews of the Life-Saving Stations on the Great Lakes were as addicted to the pursuit of athletic contests as

those on the east coast were to hunting and fishing. While the dispute was fermenting over whether the Evanston crew could or could not play football on the team of Northwestern University, the crew of the Ottawa Point Station became enamored with the game of baseball.

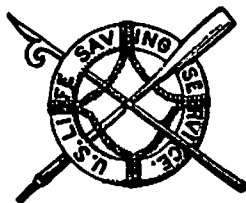
Superintendent Kiah of the Tenth District referred a letter to the General Superintendent from the keeper of that station which related a potential storm of controversy and asked for advice. Apparently a large group of local folks had made it a habit of visiting the station drill grounds on Sunday afternoons in the summer to play baseball with the crew. Such desecration of the Sabbath upset the local church-going people and they righteously threatened to report the crew to Kiah. The keeper, exercising good sense, beat them to it. In order to promote community harmony with the good people, the district superintendent recommended that Sunday ball playing be prohibited. Kimball agreed and told Kiah to tell the keeper "that this practice-as well as any similar practice-must be prohibited and stopped." While Kimball lost his bout with football, he at least scored a victory over Sunday baseball.

If his baseball and football problems were not enough extracurricular matters to keep Sumner Kimball hopping in 1897, a seemingly obscure piece of proposed legislative activity was destined to drive him to the ceiling. A House of Representatives resolution (No. 164) was introduced which would award the Honorable W. A. Newell, (former appointed governor of the State of Washington, U. S. Congressman from New Jersey, on several occasions, and former Lincoln-appointed Superintendent of the New Jersey coast) the honor as the author and originator of the U. S. L. S. S.

Newell had, in his later years, prepared an autobiographical outline which would, if accepted on its face, heap credit upon himself as the sole inventor of the present American system of life-saving. Despite this dubious

claim, the legislature of the State of New Jersey accepted Newell's opinion of his own accomplishments and in 1896 passed a resolution so honoring Governor Newell. The state of Washington followed suit and resolved to endorse the New Jersey resolution by recommending that the U. S. Congress similarly endorse the resolution of the two states. House Resolution 164 was sent to the Secretary of the Treasury for suggestions touching on the merits and propriety of its passage. Secretary Gage, in turn, requested that the General Superintendent of the U.S.L.S.S. prepare those suggestions. They gave Kimball an opportunity to search the records and prepare a rebuttal of that claim.

The season of 1897 ended as storm clouds were gathering—not only involving Kimball's reply to Newell's self-indulgence—but on the international scene. The history books will give the chronology of the events leading to the Spanish-American War. French influence under Maximilian in Mexico and Spanish oppression in Cuba were regarded in their own day in almost the same light as the Russian missile presence in Cuba was during the 1960s. As abolitionists meddled, albeit with moral justification, into the matters of sovereign southern states in the 1850s, U. S. citizen sympathizers with the plight of Cuban insurrectionists raised funds and provided weapons to their Cuban friends below the Florida Straits. The headlong rush into a war with Spain gathered momentum and it had the general support of most of the population.



# CHAPTER TEN:

## *The Mature Years*

### *Part Two: 1897-1903*

**F**iscal year 1898 was to become a momentous year for the U.S. Life-Saving Service. Two particularly significant events were to happen which, though seemingly contradictory, would combine to shape the destiny of the sandpounders. The first was the application of Civil Service rules to the service. The second was the assumption by the U.S.L.S.S. of a military role during the Spanish-American War. A third, superficially trivial event occurred which also was of some historic import, the publication of Kimball's thirty-eight page rebuttal to the claims of Newell as the originator of the U.S.L.S.S.

The Life-Saving Service becoming a classified service was a heralded event. Not without recognizing the benefits espoused by Kimball, the change in status would not become a panacea for the continuing problems of recruitment or low pay. The increasing administrative difficulties in justifying the removal of non-performers "for cause" would serve to hinder the discipline of the service. While the further tendency to lump surfmen performing the hazardous and physical duties of the U.S. L.S.S. in the same category with the other government employees performing routine non-physical, clerical tasks would inhibit any future hopes for retirement legislation, and the subsequent promotional opportunities resulting from retirement so necessary for the continuing input of the best able-bodied young men on the coasts.

Directly opposite from the formal "civilianization" of the men of the uniformed Life-Saving Service was the employment of those same men in support of military objectives.

Dedicated to the saving of lives from the calamities that beset peacetime waterborne commerce, the organization of what the press called "storm soldiers," nevertheless did not escape the attention of military leaders as preparations were made for the expected war with Spain.

On 4 November 1897, some 5-1/2 months before the outbreak of hostilities, the Secretary of the Navy addressed the Secretary of the Treasury:

"Sir:

I have the honor to request that this Department may be informed in regard to each life-saving and signal-service station and house of refuge on the ocean and lake-coast whether it is provided (1) with semaphore, (2) with shapes for signaling, and (3) with telegraph communication. A description of the mechanical construction and operation of the present semaphore is also requested.

Very respectfully,

Secretary

A reply was sent on 11 November in response to the Navy inquiry. It is fairly obvious that contingency plans were in a state of preparation at that date which would include the use of the Life-Saving Stations in the event of war.

Those who wished a cause celebre for a war with Spain found it with the explosion and sinking of the U. S. Battleship *Maine* in Havana harbor on 15 February 1898 with the loss of 268 lives. "Remember the *Maine* and to hell with Spain" became the battle cry of a nation near the point of war hysteria.

On 16 March 1898, a letter was sent to Kimball from the Signal Officer of the First Naval Battalion, New York, who was headquartered on the *U.S.S. New Hampshire* at the foot of East 28th Street, New York City. The Signal Officer wanted to know:

- (a) Have the life-saving stations, and particularly that at Montauk Point, powerful telescopes? Mounted?
- (b) Are they equipped with International Code Flags? What size? Rockets?
- (c) Have they any other signaling apparatus?
- (d) Have any semaphores for either International or Myer Code signaling been erected yet at any of the stations?
- (e) Are any of them provided with Very Code pistols and cartridges?"

The General Superintendent responded to this inquiry on 22 March 1898.

On 25 March 1898, Capt. Shoemaker, the Chief of the Revenue Cutter Service, advised Kimball that "the following named officers of the Revenue Cutter Service have been detached by telegraph, from duty in connection with the Life-Saving Service, as of this date, viz:

First Lieutenant C. H. McLellan  
First Lieutenant J. F. Wild  
First Lieutenant W. G. Ross  
First Lieutenant J. C. Cantwell  
Second Lieutenant Jon E. Reinburg  
Second Lieutenant S. M. Landrey"

McLellan became Executive Officer of the U. S. Revenue Steamer *Manning* and saw considerable service in the blockade and invasion of Cuba. Wild reported to the Colombian Iron Works in Baltimore as assistant to Capt. J. W. Congdon for construction duty. Ross became temporary Commanding Officer of the

Revenue Steamer *Woodbury*, while Reinburg reported to the cutter *Gresham* at Milwaukee. The destination of the other two officers is unknown. Lieutenant McLellan had reported to his old stamping grounds as Assistant Inspector in September 1897, following his period of "exile" in 1894. Both McLellan and Lieutenant Ross would be ordered back to the Life-Saving Service by September 1898. The assignment of these six assistant inspectors to their new duties in March was a further indication of the step-up in war mobilization.

On 9 April, Spain yielded to the U. S. demands through diplomatic corridors. But calming the waves of war sentiment was beyond the capacity of President McKinley and on 11 April, he sent a war message to Congress. On the 25th war was declared.

In summing up the role of the U.S.L.S.S. in the conflict that followed, the General Superintendent resorted to his usual medium, the Annual Report for the year. Near panic had seized the inhabitants of the eastern seaboard when it was learned that Spanish Admiral Cervera had steamed with a sizable armada heading vaguely in the direction of the East Coast of the United States. The fears of all were greatly allayed when on May 13th, the Spanish fleet was sighted steaming almost harmlessly off the West Indies. For a few short weeks, the surfmen of the U.S.L.S.S. achieved the status of war heroes, with the result that they would be indelibly marked in the minds of the civilian populace and military planners as the coast guard which had protected the nation's shores from human assault as well as from that of nature.

As Kimball stated in his Annual Report, "the overwhelming swiftness with which naval operations were conducted happily rendered it impossible for the enemy to threaten the coast," also brought the war to a speedy end. The disastrous effects which might have resulted from a prolonged war upon the personnel of the service involving the enlistments of crews from the civil service June register,



never occurred. Nor did the war have any appreciable negative effect on the performance of the crews as evidenced from the shipwreck fatality statistics of fiscal year 1898. Fifty-nine vessels of the record number of 767 disasters in that year were total losses; and twenty-two persons lost their lives.

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>Edward W. Schmidt</i>	Schooner	7-14-97	1	1 mile SE of Hunnewells Beach, Me., Station
Unnamed boat from Sch. <i>Mary H. Lewis</i>	Boat	3-14-98	1	1/4 mile SE of Cross Island, Me., Station
Unnamed	Boat	4-2-98	1	1/4 mile ENE of Brant Rock, Mass., Station
Unnamed	Skiff	8-9-97	1	1 mile North of Shark River, N.J., Station
Unnamed	Boat	4-13-98	2	1/2 mile SSW of Ocean City, Md., Station
Unnamed	Fish boat	12-2-97	1	1/3 mile SE of Bodie Island, N.C., Station
<i>Geo. L. Fessenden</i>	Schooner	4-27-98	4	1 mile NNE of Chicamacomico N.C., Station
<i>John P. Smith</i>	Steamer	9-12-97	3	1 mile NW of Sabine Pass, Tex., Station
Unnamed boat from Yc. <i>Infanta</i>	Boat	7-26-97	1	75 yds. West of Charlotte, N.Y. Station
<i>Glance</i>	Steam	9-28-97	1	250 yds. WxN of Buffalo, N.Y. Station

<i>Record</i>	Steamer	6-2-98	3	In Duluth, Minn., Harbor
	Yacht			
Unnamed	Row boat	9-19-97	2	1/2 mile East of South Chicago, Ill., Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	5-10-98	1	1-1/2 miles South of Cape Disappointment, Wash., Station

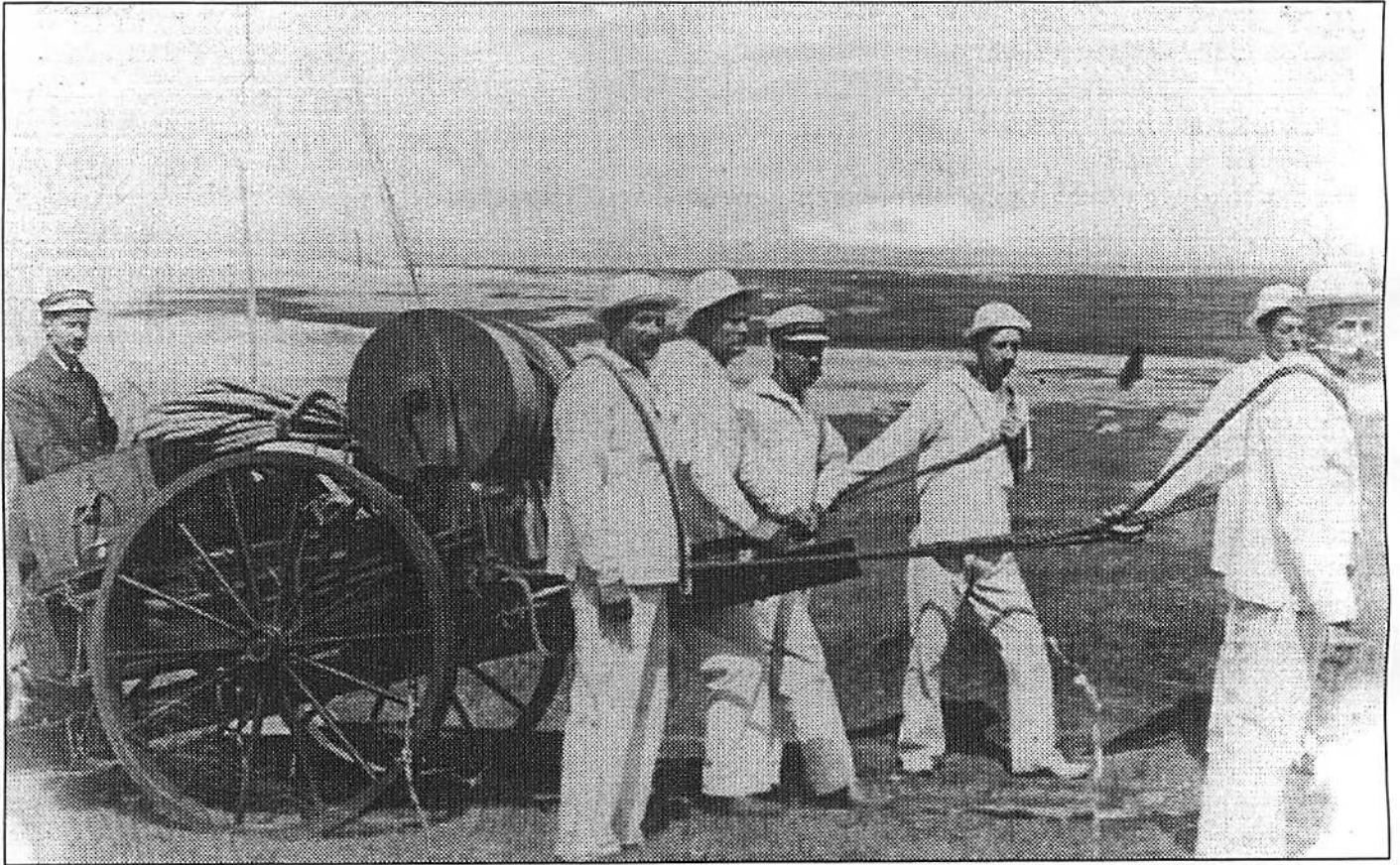
During 1898, new life-saving stations were authorized by Congress at the following sites:

Trans-Mississippi Exposition  
at Omaha (not permanent)  
Gloucester, Massachusetts  
Charlevoix, Michigan.

New buildings were constructed to replace old and inadequate structures at Mantoloking, Island Beach, Ship Bottom, Little Egg, Brigantine, Pecks Beach, Corson Inlet and Holly Beach, New Jersey, and Hog Island, Virginia. Sites previously authorized as new stations at Hampton Beach, New Hampshire, and Sandy Point on Block Island also witnessed the construction of new buildings that year. Several stations on the coasts of Maine and Lakes Erie and Ontario were extensively repaired and improved during 1898.

The telephone system of the service experienced considerable extension and improvement during the year with the introduction of copper wires replacing the previously employed galvanized iron wire. Exclusive of lines not owned by the government, some 800 miles of telephone wire connected the majority of the stations of the U.S.L.S.S. by the end of fiscal year 1898.

During Lieutenant McLellan's brief tour back at his home district, he at once found that the seeds of dissension had been fertilized by his predecessors. The problem was a usual one, his pet boat—the self-bailing, self-righting Beebe—McLellan model—was not adequate for all the tasks placed before it even though it had been supplied in its McClellan



*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 the 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.*

apparatus wagon to each station on the coast. Objections had been raised by the keepers over the past several years, in McLellan's absence. Sensing the favorable view Kimball bestowed on the craft, the objections were subtle ones, couched in the form of recommendations and requests.

The Beebe-McLellan surf-boat was large and heavy, as were the lifeboats tried in open beach launches in earlier years. It had good sea-keeping qualities once launched and a crew trained to use it could launch it in an adequate period of time. But the double bottom reduced the height of the thwarts and thus limited leg room; surfmen in the Beebe-McLellan boat assumed an almost fetal position in pulling their oars. They tired more easily, of course, not only from the cramped position they had to assume but from the increased weight. Opposition to the boat did

not dampen in the decade that had elapsed since its introduction. Before his reassignment to other duties in 1894, Lieutenant McLellan had pretty well stifled all objections, at least official ones. Coupled with the increasing numbers of small boat mishaps in the summer months and coinciding with McLellan's departure from the beach, recommendations began to appear for the presence of small, easily-handled boats—genuine surf-boats—that could be launched by the keeper and one or two other men.

These recommendations were justified and in many instances, the older, locally built, pre-Beebe-McLellan boats had been pressed into this service. But these "old" boats were getting beyond economic repair. Since the usual practice of the crews of many stations was to drill in the old familiar boats, (hence the excuse for retaining them on the beach), those

same crews used their non-selfbailing boats to perform actual rescues.

While McLellan was gone from the sacred sands of his old district, several recommendations were made by his successor, brother lieutenants to provide new boats at inlets, put small inexpensive boat houses on the beach between stations, and to provide small surfboats for quick response when there was not time nor enough crewmen to run out and man the Beebe-McLellan boat. In his endorsement of December 6, 1897, to Kimball on such request by the keeper of Hereford Inlet Station for a small, light boat, "preferably a Squan model but not a BeebeMcLellan," the Inspector of the Life-Saving Service, Captain Walker, noted:

"Under ordinary circumstances this office would be disposed to recommend giving Keeper Hildreth the type of boat he asks for, the boat he would feel most at home in for quick work at Hereford Inlet, but, as it is understood to be against your policy to build any more Squan model boats, I recommend in view of the statements of Lieutenant McLellan herein, that Keeper Hildreth is not particular as to model, that a 20-foot Monomoy boat, with centerboard and sails, be built and placed at this station."

The old battle over surfboats raged anew. Fired by the dissatisfaction and practice of experienced surfmen they refused to acknowledge the universality of Lieutenant McClellan's boat.

The thirty-eight page rebuttal of Newell, Senate document No. 270 of the Second Session of the 55th Congress, which culminated a year of historic case making by Kimball's Life-Saving Service office staff, is a remarkable piece of literature. Kimball attacked, bit by bit, each contention that Newell had made, and in doing so placed extraordinarily heavy emphasis in the role of the Massachusetts Humane Society and, in particular, that of his

friend, the deceased R. B. Forbes in the origination of the Life-Saving Service. True to his ethics, however, Kimball took no credit for his own contributions, but rather spread the credit for the U.S.L.S.S. to all its friends in Congress, the officers of the service, and those detached to it from the Revenue Marine. Lost in his praises, though, were the hundreds of nameless men who at the service's beginning in 1848 and 1849, had lent their full measure of uncompensated support, suggestions, and heroic performances.

The summer of 1898 was exceptional in that many coastal life-saving stations which otherwise would have been closed, remained in operation in support of the war effort. By the end of August, the inevitable success of the American forces had been realized and the end of the war was only a matter of time. On September 1st, Lieutenants McLellan and Ross were ordered back to duty with the Life-Saving Service. In the meantime Captain Charles A. Abbey had again returned to duty as Inspector of the Life-Saving Service replacing Capt. Walker.

On 1 October 1898, Spanish and American Representatives met in Paris to negotiate a settlement to end the war and on the 10th of December, the papers were signed effectively ending the war. The disruption to the service occasioned by the Spanish-American War was not particularly noticeable, except that the usual repairs and renewals at the stations were absent from the Annual Report of that year. A new station house at Toms River, New Jersey was constructed in addition to those on that coast which had been replaced the previous year. A new station previously authorized at Point Bonita, California was begun during fiscal year 1899. On 1 July 1898 Congress authorized the establishment of a new life-saving station at Nahant, Massachusetts, and on 3 March 1899, provided funds for a temporary station at the site of the Pan American Exposition.

If the return to peace-time duties was expected to be a return to the predictable and

hum-drum existence experienced in the more recent years of the service, the severity of quick, unexpected disasters occurring during the 1898-99 season surely jolted the nervous system of the Life-Saving Service. Sixty-three lives were lost on the coast line within the scope of U.S.L.S.S. operations. Forty of those perished on the Coast of Massachusetts during a single unpredicted, sudden storm which developed during the darkness of night on the 26th and 27th of November 1898 and caught countless mariners unprepared. On all north-east coasts, no less than fifty-six vessels stranded in that freak storm. Eleven other persons died that year in the wreck of the steamer *Chilkat*, which in a matter of minutes was capsized and destroyed on the bar at the entrance to Humboldt Bay, California.

A substantial portion of the remaining deaths involved the capsizing of small, undocumented craft and the resultant drowning of all or part of their small crews. In each instance of sudden disaster, the U. S. Life-Saving System was powerless to intervene. Timely notice of the disasters was prevented, either because of poor visibility or because of the swiftness with which the fatal situations developed. The allowance for elapse of time between search and discovery and the mobilization of actual rescue forces at the scene was always absent in such cases. While the lifesaving system did, in good time, react to most of these crises most heroically, this paralysis inherent in responding to immediate situations was the real failure in that system and one which all the beach patrols in the nation couldn't overcome.

As the numbers of water craft subject to quick disasters by virtue of their size or route increased, the problem would proportionately increase in magnitude. The fatal wrecks for 1899 are listed below:

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
Unnamed	Rowboat	8-7-98	1	3/4 mile North of City Point, Mass., Station

Unnamed	Catboat	10-9-86	3	Hardings Beach, Mass.
<i>Amelia G. Ireland</i>	Schooner	11-26-98	1	1-3/8 miles East of Gay Head, Mass., Station
<i>Barge No. 4</i>	Barge	11-27-98	3	Toddy Rocks, Mass.
<i>Calvin F. Baker</i>	Schooner	11-27-98	3	Little Brewster, Mass.
<i>Abel E. Babcock</i>	Schooner	11-27-98	8	3/4 mile NW of Point Allerton, Mass., Station
<i>Columbia</i>	Schooner	11-27-98	5	2-1/2 miles SW of North Scituate, Mass., Station
<i>Mertis H. Perry</i>	Schooner	11-27-98	2	2 miles NNW of Brant Rock, Mass., Station
<i>Lester A. Lewis</i>	Schooner	11-27-98	5	1-1/4 miles NE of Wood End, Mass., Station
<i>Jordan L. Mott</i>	Schooner	11-27-98	1	1-1/4 miles NE of Wood End, Mass., Station
<i>Albert L. Butler</i>	Schooner	11-27-98	3	1 mile ESE of Peaked Hill Bars, Mass., Station
<i>Clara Leavitt</i>	Schooner	11-27-98	6	1-5/8 miles East of Gay Head, Mass., Station
<i>Yamoose</i>	Schooner	12-5-98	2	4 miles NNE of New Shoreham Station, Block Island
Unnamed	Skiff	1-30-99	1	3 miles NE of Shark River, N.J., Station

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>L. P. Smith</i>	Steamer	10-20-98	1	1 mile NNW of Cleveland, Ohio, Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	5-30-99	1	1/2 mile WNW of Cleveland, Ohio, Station
<i>St. Lawrence</i>	Steamer	11-25-98	1	2 miles South of Pt. Betsie, Mich., Station
<i>Chilkat</i>	Steamer	4-4-99	11	1-1/2 miles SW of Humboldt Bay, Calif., Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	5-28-99	2	1/4 mile South of Cape Disappointment, Wash., Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	5-30-99	2	Peacock Spit, Wash.

Lieut. Charles H. McLellan was not without his share of controversy, particularly where he was involved with the development of new rescue methods and hardware, but he was also dedicated to the implementation of the latest technological advances in pursuit of lifesaving goals. In sensing the always present but ever deepening- need for a quick rescue response, he addressed the General Superintendent on June 23, 1899, concerning a matter which he felt should be brought to Kimball's personal attention:

"Sir:

The enclosed newspaper clipping appears to me to be of great importance to our service, for in the automobile I believe we are to have a valuable auxiliary on the land. With a four horse power automobile attached to our beach apparatus or boat wagon, they could be hustled to a wreck

under any conditions of beach or weather, and no doubt carrying the crew, having the men fresh when they reach the wreck.

Respectfully yours,  
C. H. McLellan, Lieut. R.C.S.  
Assistant Inspector"

McLellan had enclosed a brief article from a St. Louis,, Missouri newspaper heralding the manufacture and sale of automobiles with gasoline motors. No reply was forthcoming from Kimball's office, though none was probably expected.

Fiscal year 1900 arrived scarcely a week later bringing into dull focus the challenges of a new century. The Nineteenth Century had been kind to the U. S. Life-Saving Service. It had witnessed a few defeats but the phenomenal victories were overpowering. Tired men and a mature service rested well on the laurels they had won.

Lieutenant McLellan's interest with gasoline engines was by no means limited to the possible use of automobiles in life-saving operations. On March 2nd, 1899 McLellan called attention to the possible use of such mechanical propulsion in a standard 34-foot life-boat and recommended to the General Superintendent that he be authorized to conduct experiments along that line. On 6 April, the authorization was granted, but owing to the unfortunate death of the manager of the plant contracted to do the work, a considerable delay ensued.

During the summer of 1899, work progressed steadily and on September 1st, the boat was ready for testing.

Charles McLellan's report to the General Superintendent dated October 26th, 1899 was published in the Annual Report of 1900 as an appendix to the Report of the Board on Lifesaving Appliances. This effort represented the first practical installation of such a motor in a lifeboat in the United States (the English had adopted a steam lifeboat for experimental trials while in actual service

with the Royal National Life-Boat Institution).

The curious arrangement of propulsion machinery in this boat may have been unnecessarily complicated, certainly the design of a twin screw life-boat would become controversial in future months. Nevertheless, McLellan was on the right track in attempting to meet the increasing challenge of small boat mishaps near harbors and coastal inlets by decreasing the time between discovery of the incident and on-scene rescue.

The Life-Saving Service achieved a measure of real but tardy success during Fiscal Year 1900 with the enactment of legislation which finally removed the discriminatory law limiting the income of surfmen to \$60 per month when they served more than eight months a year. The new law also established a uniform pay rate for surfmen at \$65 per month. Mr. Kimball quickly seized upon the lawmakers mood at the next session of Congress. He recommended in his Annual Report of 1900 that the compensation of District Superintendents be increased.

Once again, the building of new stations at previously authorized sites was underway. Under construction in 1900 were stations at:

Gloucester, Massachusetts  
 Nahant, Massachusetts  
 Grand Marais, Michigan  
 Charlevoix, Michigan

Old station buildings at Cleveland, Ohio and Davis Neck, Massachusetts, were replaced in the annual program of improving existing stations.

The incidence of fatal shipwrecks during the season of 1899-1900 was not much improved over the record of the previous year, at least on the surface, as fifty-three persons lost their lives. Kimball, however, carefully pointed out in his Annual Report that half of those lost were on board two vessels (*Ariosto* and *Virginia*) whose crews attempted to escape in their own boats rather than wait for help from the U.S.L.S.S. crews.

Such efforts at self-help invariably ended in disaster. Not only were the usual ship's boats not up to crossing a roaring surf-line, the men attempting such a venture were rarely knowledgeable in the special skills necessary for successfully landing ashore. Failures of these attempts usually occurred in the surf-line and seldom was there any opportunity to wage effective rescue operations by the Life-Saving Service crews on shore to aid the poor souls being pummeled by storm waves and debris a hundred yards or so off the beach.

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Laura Marion</i>	Steamer	12-23-99	3	1/2 mile NE of Plum Island Mass., Station
<i>Nausett</i>	Schooner	1-26-00	4	3 miles East of Watch Hill R.I., Station
<i>Aaron Reppard</i>	Schooner	8-16-99	5	2-1/2 miles South of Gull Shoal, N.C., Station
<i>Priscilla</i>	Barkentine	8-17-99	4	3 miles south of Gull Shoal, N.C., Station
<i>Lydia A. Willis</i>	Schooner	8-17-99	2	3 miles East of Portsmouth, Va., Station
<i>Ariosto</i>	Steamer	12-24-99	21	2 miles SW of Ocracoke, N.C., Station
<i>Virginia</i>	Steamer	5-2-00	6	9 miles ESE of Cape Hatteras, N.C., Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	9-3-99	2	1-3/4 miles SE of Buffalo, N.Y., Station

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Record</i>	Steamer	10-8-99	1	1 mile SW of Duluth, Minn., Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	8-3-99	1	2/7 mile North of Chicago, Ill., Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	7-13-99	1	1-1/2 miles, West of Yaquina Bay, Oregon, Station
<i>Weeolt</i>	Schooner	12-1-99	2	1-1/2 miles South of Humboldt Bay, California Station

Of no particular importance in the matter of saving lives, Kimball sought and secured legislation to establish a new Life-Saving District on June 6, 1900. The new district was carved from the old Long Island District by including the coasts Rhode Island and Fishers Island under a separate district organization. Since 1882 the District Superintendent of the Long Island District had been authorized the appointment of an assistant whose primary function was the Rhode Island stations. The 1900 Act merely formalized over eighteen years of actual practice with the addition of certain functions involving disbursement of funds. The Rhode Island District became Number Three; Long Island was now Number Four, New Jersey Number Five and so on through the Thirteenth District on the Pacific Coast. Once again the reassignment of new numbers to existing elements of the Life-Saving Organization became a source of possible confusion to future historians but the effect upon the men of the service was virtually nil.

During the spring of 1900, the Secretary of Agriculture requested that the Secretary of the Treasury cooperate with the Weather Bureau in the dissemination of information to New Jersey fishermen of approaching storms over the U.S.L.S.S. telephone line.

The hoisting of applicable weather signals was then to occur at each of the Life-Saving Stations on the New Jersey coast from Spermaceti Cove to Harvey Cedars upon notification by the keeper of the Monmouth Beach Station. He received notice from a local Weather Bureau representative.

The purpose was to enable the fishermen along that portion of the coast to receive warnings of winds which might cause considerable damage to their property interests. The establishment of fish pound net areas just off the beach was most probably the reason for this innovative measure. Representing a considerable outlay of capital, these net fisheries were a profitable form of fish entrapment. Daily visits out to the nets by surf-boats harvested the catch. After passing back through the surf the boats delivered their yield to the beach fisheries and ultimately to the metropolitan market places. The Weather Bureau representatives at Monmouth Beach curiously bore the same name as the owners of the principal fishery in that area.

Even though the purpose of such weather signals was not ostensibly to warn mariners, venturing forth on coastal voyages, the display of such warnings were plainly visible and, if properly exploited, could serve to provide easily understood warnings to coastwise mariners, professional and amateur. Weather information was generally available in large port cities; for commercial shipping interests, except, of course, in the instances of unpredicted storms such as that on that fateful night and morning of 26-27 November 1898, which caught commercial and private craft alike with their "britches down."

As we have seen through the rising fatal statistics on small boat mishaps, commercial shipping was becoming proportionately less and less a source of concern to the Life-Saving Service. The challenge was becoming clear: the U.S.L.S.S. must adapt its techniques and resources to meet the changes of the 20th Century.

Of no less a problem than the changes tak-

ing place outside the service, a situation which had been tagged in earlier years as a potential source of trouble was again highlighted by none other than the redoubtable McLellan. That was the matter of the large number of over-aged men in the Life-Saving Service. No less than one-fifth of the keepers in Lieutenant McLellan's New Jersey District were over 60 years of age (one was 71), and a rather large number of surfmen were in the same category. In summing up his letter of 20 November 1899 on the subject, the Lieutenant concluded:

"Some action should be taken to prevent the accumulation of old men in the Service. It would be better for them and the service, if a rule could be adopted requiring them to leave on reaching a fixed age, say sixty. They would then know what to expect, and be prepared for it. The fact of their passing the medical examination does not make them fit to do the work of the service, in fact some of them will pass the medical officer until they dry up and blow away."

With the peculiarities of the two previous years out of its statistical system, the Life-Saving Service's annual tally of fatal commercial shipwrecks returned to the usual rather low level. Seven persons on board documented vessels perished during the 1900-1901 operating season. Another ten were lost as a result of accidents involving undocumented craft.

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>Wendell Burpee</i>	Schooner	4-7-01	3	1 mile NNW of Cape Elizabeth, Me., Station
<i>Black Bird</i>	Sloop	9-18-00	1	1-1/2 miles South of Cahoons Hollow, Mass. Station

Unnamed	Boat	12-31-00	1	150 feet South of Quogue, L.I., Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	10-13-00	1	1 mile West of Cold Spring, N.J., Station
Unnamed	Skiff	1-11-01	1	1/4 mile North of Great Egg, N.J., Station
<i>Jennie Hall</i>	Schooner	12-21-00	3	2/7 mile NE of Dam Neck Mills, Va., Station
Unnamed	Skiff	7-22-00	1	3/8 mile South of Fort Niagara, N.Y., Station
Unnamed	Canoe	6-2-01	2	4 miles NE of Oswego, N.Y., Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	5-18-01	1	1/2 mile SxE of Chicago, Ill., Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	6-23-01	2	400 yards East of St. Joseph, Mich., Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	5-22-01	1	Peacock Spit, Cape Disappointment, Wash.

For the second operating year in a row, no authorizations were made by Congress for the establishment of stations at new sites. Funds for two temporary stations were appropriated on March 3, 1901, for locations at the St. Louis Exposition and at Port Day, Niagara Frontier, Buffalo, N.Y.

As usual, new buildings were constructed to replace old structures at existing stations. During 1901, such work was undertaken at Harvey Cedars, New Jersey;



Manomet Point, Massachusetts; South Manitou Island, Michigan; and Sleeping Bear Point, Michigan. Other stations on the Massachusetts, Long Island, Virginia and North Carolina coasts were the subject of extensive repairs while the Southampton, Long Island station was removed to a more suitable location.

Kimball again called special attention to the need for increasing the salaries of District Superintendents. These men received between \$1,500 and \$1,800 per year. A minimum of \$2,500 was recommended and would have been enacted, such a measure having passed the Senate, but failing in the House, as a result of the shortness of the session.

During the course of the season, the General Superintendent was faced with a number of personnel situations, all of which portended problems for his service. Three of these matters involved "sacred cows." One involved a section of the law, another a section of the Regulations, and the third an apparent rift between Captain Abbey and Lieutenant McLellan.

The first instance brought to Kimball's attention was a letter written by the wife of one of the surfmen at the Tiana, Long Island, station. In her letter, she registered both an appeal and a recommendation concerning the morale of the lifesavers. Section 5 of the Act of June 18, 1878, provided that "the crews shall reside at the stations" and the Regulations parroted the law. Lieutenant Charles F. Shoemaker, during his tour of duty as assistant inspector of the Long Island district interpreted the language "at the station" to mean that surfmen be on immediate call at their respective station in the event of shipwreck. This did not mean that they necessarily had to reside within the walls of the station building.

To the end that station morale be improved, and that requests for "liberty days" be reduced, Shoemaker in 1887 encouraged the men to make homes near the stations

wherever possible and to bring their families into the beach area. The men then were allowed to sleep and take their meals at home and no apparent reduction in efficiency was realized.

Five surfmen at Tiana, thus deprived of much of the hardships experienced in other coastal areas, enjoyed a rather contented service life, that is, they did until a new district assistant inspector arrived on the coast whose interpretation of the law differed from his predecessor's. The wife writing the letter had lived on the beach with her husband some fourteen years and, of course, took exception to the new lieutenant's decision. She offered a recommendation that electric alarm bells be allowed in each of the five homes in lieu of the requirement that the men sleep within the station, thereby meeting the need for immediate crew availability.

Lacking an effective answer to her logical solution, Kimball merely quoted the law and told her that neither he nor the President of the United States could change the ruling. Moreover, the General Superintendent disavowed anything done in the past contrary to the law and said if it were done, it was unauthorized.

The deprivation of social life, he implied, went hand-in-hand with Service life. Needless to say, Kimball's contribution in preparing that language in the original law and regulations was not mentioned nor was his indisposition towards recommending any changes thereto.

At a time when the service needed to attract new recruits and to retain their best men, Kimball's reply was certainly not very imaginative. It did, however, reinforce the direction that Kimball's policies on family matters had taken the service. In years to come, any deviation from these policies would be regarded as heretical. Any suggestion towards changing them, legislatively or otherwise, would be met with the reply "That's the way we've always done it, we can't change now" or "That's way it was done

in the 'Old Guard.'"

For the sake of preserving our historical perspective, we must note that in the "Old Guard," things were often done quite differently than many Coast Guardsmen now imagine. The part played by Captain-Commandant Shoemaker in his interpretation of the various directives concerning "family housing" and "crew liberty" is but one example which bears this out.

The second personnel situation which arose during that year of 1901 also attracted Kimball's attention to the Regulations of Service affecting crew liberty. Liberty, for understandable reasons, was limited to daylight hours and was intended to apply only within a short distance of the station. Public conveyances such as the railroad were not to be used by the men in coming and going to their homes. For the most part, the men lived reasonably near their homes so there was no particular problem for them in commuting between station and home on their "off" day.

But for the crews of those stations on remote islands and peninsulas, the transportation difficulties were almost insurmountable. At many of those stations, the crews merely stayed at their units for the entire season. Others at similarly remote coastal areas were served by short railroads which during the summer months carried on a lucrative resort trade and during a reduced winter schedule, hauled hunters, fish, freight and what few other passengers who dared to brave travel to and from such bleak, sand swept and mostly uninhabited beaches.

A request was made by a keeper of one such remote station to authorize travel "only in cold and freezing weather," when the men could not row or sail a boat across the mile wide bay separating them from their mainland homes. Kimball felt this to be a worthy request and granted permission for the liberty man to use the train, under the certain weather restrictions stipulated by the requester.

With that act of supreme benevolence

behind him, the General Superintendent dealt with the third difficult personnel situation before him. Lieutenant Charles McLellan had been back on duty as an assistant inspector of the New Jersey Life-Saving District since September 1898. His involvement with the design and experimentation with surfboats had probably prompted his first removal in 1893.

By 1900 he was again engrossed, with the General Superintendent's approbation, in the motor lifeboat experiments. As would be expected, these various projects which required so much of McLellan's time and energies could not help but detract from his duties as assistant inspector. He had almost made a career out of his assignments in the New Jersey District and, of course, had the job down "pat." He knew most all of his men by name and apparently had a good understanding with the aging district superintendent.

Occasionally he made up his own "regulations" and procedures which often offended his crews, not to mention the prerogatives of his boss, the Inspector of Life-Saving Stations, in New York. McLellan usually corresponded directly with his friend, Kimball, and although this avenue of communication was tolerable when it involved his special projects, it could not help but irritate the man who was responsible for the usual performances of assistant inspectors throughout the service.

The year 1901 terminated Lieut. McLellan's tour of duty as assistant inspector of the Fifth Life-Saving District. In his place came Lieutenant Richard O. Crisp fresh from the Seventh District.

Despite the petty internal conflicts of the year, the operating season of 1900-1901 showed some promise as had most all the others before it. If service needed to become more adaptable to the challenges of the times that it recognized on the one hand as being important as but on the other hand as lacking authority to meet. In protecting the future of the U.S.L.S.S., Kimball had ensured that many of the governing provisions of his organization

be written into law; now when change was needed, laws were involved, and the General Superintendent either lacked the political power or the willingness to alter the statutory basis for his organization's existence. This was clearly and admittedly evident in such a relatively small matter as the family comforts of the surfmen of Tiana. It would become more evident in the future.

If the management of the U. S. Life-Saving Service was skittish about misconstruing the intent of Congress with existing laws or was reluctant to request new legislation which would broaden the scope of its internal policies, it certainly had no qualms about seeking that legislation which extended its physical empire. Enactment of laws on March 19th, April 12th, June 3rd and June 28th, 1902 authorized the construction of stations at new sites near Bogue Inlet, North Carolina, on Ocracoke Island, North Carolina, on Monomoy Island, Massachusetts, and at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition respectively.

Along the same lines as previous years, new buildings were under construction to replace old station houses at Squan Beach (Manasquan) and Long Beach, New Jersey; Seatack (Virginia Beach) Virginia and Whales Head (Currituck Beach) North Carolina. The old station at Sabine Pass, Texas was replaced by a new one located nearer the improved waterfront. Similar improvements of harbor facilities at Racine, Wisconsin, caused the replacement of the old station there. A new floating station at Louisville, Kentucky, and one at Ship Canal (Portage) Michigan were erected during the 1901-1902 operating year.

The statistics on fatal shipwrecks somewhat repeated the previous season. Nineteen lives were lost on documented vessels and six on small undocumented craft. Fourteen of the persons on documented vessels fell victim to sudden unexpected disasters of the kind becoming more and more dominant with the passing of the years. Nine of the fourteen were lost a mile off the entrance to Duluth Harbor when two steamers collided sending

one of the vessels to the bottom in less than three minutes.

The remaining five of the fourteen were needlessly lost following their apparent rescue from the Schooner Barge *Wadena* by the Monomoy Life-Saving crew. On the return trip, the five caused the capsizing of the U.S.L.S.S. surfboat resulting not only in their own deaths, but also in taking the lives of the keeper and six surfmen of the Life-Saving Station. Thus the *Wadena* joined the ranks of infamous ships as the following brave men paid the ultimate price:

Keeper Marshall Eldredge  
 Surfman Kendrick  
 Surfman Foye  
 Surfman Rogers  
 Surfman Chase  
 Surfman Nickerson  
 Surfman Small

The *Wadena's* original crew had been rescued some six days before the mishap occurred. A crew of five wreckers were working on board the stranded *Wadena* and in the face of deteriorating weather conditions signaled their distress. The Life-Saving crew responded quickly and removed the men. Another successful rescue operation appeared to be in the making when a sea suddenly struck the surf-boat. The wreckers became so panic stricken that they needlessly rose from their assigned seats in the boat and while grabbing and clinging to the surfmen at the oars, so interfered with their rowing that control of the boat was lost. The boat swung broadside to the sea then capsized killing twelve of the thirteen on board. Fatal wrecks of fiscal year 1902, including those mentioned, are summarized on the following table:

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>Elsie M. Smith</i>	Schooner	2-13-02	2	2 miles SSE of Orleans Mass., Station

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>Wadena</i>	Schooner	3-11-02	5	Shovelful Shoal, off Monomoy Island, Mass.
<i>J. G. Fell</i>	Schooner	11-24-01	1	1-1/4 mile West of Pt. Judith, R.I., Station
Unnamed	Fish boat	11-6-01	2	1-1/2 miles South of Monmouth Beach, N.J., Station
Unnamed	Launch	7-11-01	1	1/6 mile SE of Cleveland, Ohio, Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	7-20-01	1	2/5 mile SW of Marquette, Mich., Station
<i>Thomas Wilson</i>	Steamer	6-7-02	9	1-1/2 miles NE of Duluth, Minn., Station
Unnamed	Sailboat	7-2-01	1	2 miles South of Sheboygan, Wis., Station
<i>Pere Marquette No. 26</i>	Steamer	12-21-01	1	1/4 mile West of Ludington, Mich. Station
<i>C. H. Wheeler</i>	Schooner	12-4-01	1	1 mile North of Taquina Bay, Oregon, Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	5-1-02	1	2 miles SE of Cape Disappointment, Wash., Station.

Especially moved, perhaps, by the appalling loss of the *Monomoy* crew, Kimball once again in his Annual Report stressed the need for passage of a pension bill, H.R. 163, then before Congress. Indeed, as one might

expect, the aftermath of the *Wadena* disaster found the politicians knee-deep in sympathy. Other interested groups such as the Massachusetts Humane Society and the Maritime Association of the Port of New York, pledged their full support. The Royal National Life-Boat Institution sent condolences and deepest sympathy and in separate correspondence on the same date, tactfully requested a full description of the accident, the boat, and other circumstances leading to the capsizing. First Lieut. Worth G. Ross, U.S.R.C.S., then the assistant inspector of the district, made the usual full report to the General Superintendent, the bulk of which was printed in the Annual Report of 1902. Ross was a member of the first class to graduate from the School of Instruction that Kimball had fostered back in 1876, and was later to become Captain-Commandant of his service.

Many humane organizations over the years had been formed to aid persons unfortunate enough to find themselves in danger of drowning.

The reputation of the U. S. Life-Saving Service did not inhibit the growth and success of these largely volunteer groups. As noted, some of them preceded the formal establishment of the government agency, others followed in its wake. Several of the early groups have been mentioned because of their outstanding contributions and because of the part they played in the development of the federal lifesaving establishment.

One of the later groups was the Volunteer Life-Saving Corps of New York whose bonafide efforts in the name of humanity had earned it a fine reputation and a large list of famous "National Board of Honorary Members" whose names filled up nearly half its letterhead stationery.

One such agency which was not as well reputed was an outfit calling itself "Ex-U.S. Life-Savers National Benefit Association." Incorporated in the state of Maine, none of its charter members were ex-Life-Savers, but the prime mover was reputed to be an ex-con who

was an adept swindler. The organization solicited, rather successfully, funds to publish a "History of the U. S. Life-Saving Service." The profits of which were to have gone for the benefit of ex-Life-Saving Service personnel. Of course, the U.S.L.S.S. had no ties, official or otherwise, with the apparently bogus outfit.

The General Superintendent was besieged by the President of the New York "Life-Saving Corps" to aid him in preserving that organization's good name by disposing of the fraudulent group. Federal law was silent about such things and Mr. Kimball, true to form, stated he was legally powerless although state and local authorities were not. Meeting this challenge, the General Superintendent apparently felt that he should step in with some extra-legal activity and so he embarked on a program of publically disclaiming any official connection between the Maine association and his federal establishment. Kimball distributed press releases to that effect to coastal newspapers. The group vanished eventually and the history of the U.S. Life-Saving Service had to wait for other, more respectable interests, more than ninety years later, in the person of Dr. Dennis Noble (*That Others Might Live*, Naval Institute Press, 1994).

The season of 1902-1903 represented no departure from the seasons of recent vintage. Congress authorized another new station near Lorain, Ohio. Funds similarly were provided to allow the construction of rebuilt stations at Chicago, Illinois., Crumple Island, Maine, (which was relocated to Great Wass Island, Maine), and Long Branch, New Jersey. A sundry appropriations bill of the previous year which had authorized the placement of boats and wreck apparatus at Nome, Alaska, had yet to be followed with authority to appoint a regular crew or establish a regular station. The original law had not included territories as within the scope of Life-Saving Service jurisdiction and this technical defect in the law was beyond the imagination of the service to circumvent first and obtain a remedy for later.

Since the date that the equipment had

been placed at Nome, several fatalities had occurred in that area which otherwise might have been prevented if a crew had been authorized, say with part of the funds allocated the previous year to the participation of the U.S.L.S.S. in the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Kimball urged passage of the needed law in his 1903 Annual Report, thus implying that the blame for any such fatalities on Congress.

For the first time in the history of the U. S. Life-Saving Service, the number of vessel disasters involving small undocumented craft exceeded those of documented vessels 347 to 346. Twenty persons lost their lives on documented vessels and four on small, undocumented craft during that year. This mitigated the significance of this statistical shift.

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Washington B. Thomas</i>	Schooner	6-12-03	1	Strattons Island, Maine
Unnamed	Row boat	7-05-02	1	1/4 mile North of Hereford Island, N.J., Station
<i>Abiel Abbott</i>	Barkentine	1-20-3	5	1/2 mile South of Ship Bottom, N.J., Station
<i>Lillian Russell</i>	Schooner	12-16-02	2	4 miles ESE of Hog Island, Va., Station
<i>Wesley M. Oler</i>	Schooner	12-05-02	10	1 mile ExS of Hatteras Island, N.C., Station
<i>Olive Thurlow</i>	Bark	12-05-02	1	2-1/4 miles NE of Cape Lookout, N.C., Station
<i>Charles H. Davis</i>	Steamer	6-13-03	1	1 mile NW of Cleveland, Ohio, Station

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
Unnamed	Scow	8-11-02	1	3/4 miles SE of Harbor Beach, Mich., Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	5-23-03	1	1/4 mile SE of Old Chicago, Ill, Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	8-15-02	1	2 miles SSW of Cape Disappointment, Wash., Station

Thus with a quiet reminiscent of complacent maturity, the U.S. Life-Saving Service completed eleven years of comfortable existence. Those years with their ups and downs, their win-some-lose-some record, marked in the beginning with a steadfast competence gradually evolved into a stubborn compassion to rest on laurels long since accepted as an inbred characteristic of that service. Challenges hurled in its face by a new century were disregarded by a leadership apparently more concerned with its legality than with its legitimacy.

The eleven year period characterized as the "Mature Years," and terminating with the close of fiscal year 1903, brought with it a number of accomplishments. Perhaps, inadequately, these may be summarized by the statistics below:

Number of Disasters	7,636
Value of Vessels	\$76,730,185.00
Value of Cargoes	\$28,911,175.00
Value of Property Saved	\$87,431,565.00
Number of persons on board vessels	48,192
Number of persons assisted	47,783
Number of persons lost	409

During the same period, the Life-Saving Service spent some \$16,016,710.00. Our "Salvage Index," which we contrived at the end of the Golden Age to be 7.00, computes to be 5.46, thus representing a considerable reduction (22%) in return from the efforts of the U.S.L.S.S. In fact, the Salvage Index for the "Mature Years" marks a 3% reduction from that same figure computed for the "First Ten Years." It must be considered also that the expenditures of the service of that early period included the initial establishment and outfitting of the federal system.

Without detracting from the positive accomplishments of the U.S.L.S.S. during the period 1893 through 1903, and there were many, the statistical trends also point to other reductions in performance. For example, the cost per person assisted rose from the \$225 experienced during the previous two eleven year periods to \$335. The cost per shipwreck rose from \$1,790 experienced during the Golden Years to \$2,100.

While the efficiency of the service, measured in "lives saved" divided by "lives imperiled" remained nearly the same, 99.51%, against 99.43% for the previous eleven years, the absolute number of lives lost rose from 232 to 409. Eleven men of the Life-Saving Service gave their lives during those years.

While Congress authorized funds to construct an additional sixteen Life-Saving Stations on new sites, and to participate in nearly every fair and exposition held, no new legislation was enacted to provide added benefits to widows and orphans of life-savers, nor was any effort made to gain pensions for disabled and aged life savers successful. A well-deserved pay raise granted shortly before Fiscal Year 1893 began was tampered with and, though eventually restored to its original extent, failed to meet the inflationary trend of the time.

If we were to consider the increases in annual expenditures of the U.S.L.S.S. over those eleven years to approximate the decreasing value of the dollar, we may observe that

the expenditures for Fiscal Year 1903 represented almost a 42% increase over those of 1893. The Life-Saving Service was formally made a part of the classified civil service and several months later was required to serve as part of the nation's military establishment. Where critical examination of the policies of the service may be subject to some varied interpretation, the statistics for the period 1893 through 1903 bear out the changes taking place in the Life-Saving Service. Clearly the stage was set.

Failure to change policies and improve performance had been acceptable. The Service was yet to be beset by any real difficulties. The next eleven years, however, would see an awakening to the problems within the Life-Saving Service and inevitable changes in its organization would take place.



# CHAPTER ELEVEN:

## *The End of an Era*

### *Part One: 1904-1908*

A number of changes had taken place along the sea coast of the United States in the years since 1893. The total impact of small pleasure craft had yet to be felt, but already they were attracting the notice of the Life-Saving Service. The introduction of gasoline boat engines had been made and, indeed, the Service was experimenting with the installation of such a device in a service life boat of

its own. The very nature of marine casualties had been changing as the proportionate number of small undocumented craft increased.

Most of the total lives lost on vessels were not attributable to boat mishaps. Those deaths which occurred on small craft were marked by the dual similarities of being unexpected and of developing into their fatal consequences so rapidly as to leave no reaction time for rescue efforts. Very often these accidents were capsizings and although they occasionally entailed the loss of one or two lives,



*Early U. S. Lifesaving Station, Chicago, Illinois — 1889*



they were not characterized by any physical loss of property.

Usually, small boat accidents did not involve cargo loss nor customs duties. They did not involve professional crews nor commercial port interests, and they did not involve marine underwriters nor state salvage laws. Curiously all those parties once so interested in relieving the effects of shipwrecks during the early years of the U.S.L.S.S. found they had little at stake in the loss of these small, undocumented craft.

Even the most disastrous fatal accidents to large commercial craft were found to be occurring with the common denominator of unpredictable swiftness. The typical shipwreck of a solid wooden sailing ship on the outer bar of a sandy strand allowing time for the assembly of wreck apparatus and a successful rescue operation, though not yet an infrequent occurrence, was no longer the usual object of Live-Saving Service efforts. Coastwise steamers drifting ashore with mechanical failures, steamers colliding, barges adrift, large steel hulled sailing vessels aground but salvageable, as well as the aforementioned capsizing of smaller undocumented craft, were becoming the usual concern. An occasional, worn-out, wooden sailing vessel built during the post-Civil War, coastwise sailing boom would ground on an offshore shoal in a winter storm and minutes later go to pieces, but this was regarded as an "unavoidable" disaster. Nothing had ever eliminated the potentiality of that kind of shipwreck and probably nothing ever would.

It must be noted that during the first decade of the 20th Century, a number of large tonnage, new sailing schooners, resplendent in their steel hulls, were entered into the coastwise trade in an apparent bid to restore the coastwise shipment of bulk items such as lumber, coal, ore, and the like. The entry of this class of ship largely accounts for the temporary increases in coastal sailing tonnages evident during the first years of the 1900's.

Recapturing the workload of the past years

of the U.S.L.S.S., we can examine some interesting statistics regarding vessel disasters. No lengthy analysis is necessary to describe the phenomenon that sail vessels, so historically the victims of a lee shore, were giving way to steam and other mechanically propelled vessels. This trend would predictably continue except for that slight rise in new steel schooner construction during the next ten years.

The number of disasters occurring to all documented vessels by 1890 had leveled off and remained so through 1903. This was probably attributable to the increase in the less weather-dependent, steamer tonnage. Small annual rises and declines were experienced in these statistics thus reflecting the severity of the year's storms. Obviously then, the annual increase in disasters to all vessels was due to the increase in accidents involving undocumented craft. The total number of disasters had risen at a rate of about twenty-five a year since the reorganization of the Life-Saving Service in 1871, and that rate would seem to continue.

The U.S.L.S.S. continued its expansion both in scope (measured in miles of coastline), as well as in its degree of surveillance within existing district boundaries. Since 1875 this rate of growth approximated five new stations a year-about one new station for each five new disasters. This ratio was about half the annual average number of disasters experienced per existing station throughout the service during the years 1871 to 1904. This growth rate would continue on its own momentum.

By 1903 total losses once resulting in some 25% of all vessel disasters had dropped to 8%. There was every reason to predict that total loss percentages would dip even lower.

With the exceptions of the increases in documented, mechanically propelled vessels and the annual rise in small craft disasters, all statistics pointed to a decline in Life-Saving Service workloads in the years to come; at least those workloads which encompassed the traditionally accepted methods of East Coast

U.S.L.S.S. operations. Those were the methods which relied upon detection by daytime tower watches and by nighttime and other low visibility period beach patrols, from stations manned during the months of August through May; upon successful rescue operations by wreck apparatus or by oar propelled surf-boats launched from open beaches, which in either case had been hauled by hand or horse from the nearest station house, and upon the dedicated efforts of brave civilian surfmen many of whom were of advanced years, paid too little, and afforded not even the pensions and retirement security of men employed by the railroads.

It should have been clear by 1904 that the shift in emphasis in the vessel disaster workload thus far experienced and the apparent changing trends in marine technology, evidenced by the shift from sail, would require new methods of detection, new methods of rescue, and new manpower policies. The challenge had become more and more obvious; whether it was ignored or bureaucratically buried in heaps of legalistic excuses does not matter, it was simply a challenge that was not met. That failure led to the end of an era.

The operating season of 1903-1904 was not particularly significant from the standpoint of shipwrecks, except that small craft accidents again exceeded documented vessel disasters (411 to 359). Fifty vessels wrecked that year were considered to be total losses. Thirteen persons perished in mishaps involving undocumented craft. Twenty-one persons succumbed from disasters to documented vessels, but fourteen of those died in the losses of two schooners: *Augustus Hunt* and *Benjamin C. Cromwell*.

The wrecks of those two vessels were startling in their similarity; both occurred on the coast of Long Island on the 22nd day of the months of January and February respectively. Both were of the same rig and both were bound for ports in Massachusetts with bulk cargoes, coal and lumber, respectively. In each case crews from three stations partici-

pated in the rescue efforts. Two men were saved from each vessel only after initial attempts to use wreck apparatus and surf-boats had failed. The wrecks occurred beyond the range of the Lyle guns, the surf was too rough for launching the boats, and finally, both vessels went to pieces, and became total losses.

The fatal wrecks for Fiscal Year 1904 are tabulated in the usual form:

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
Unnamed	Fishboat	12-22-03	2	2-3/8 miles ENE of Nahant, Mass., Station
<i>Augustus Hunt</i>	Schooner	1-22-04	8	1-1/2 miles WSW of Quogue, L. I., Station
<i>Benjamin C. Cromwell</i>	Schooner	2-22-04	6	1/4 mile East of Bellport, L. I., Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	9-29-03	1	1/3 mile South of Ocean City, Md., Station
<i>Ocean Belle</i>	Barge	10-10-03	2	2-1/2 miles North of Virginia Beach, Va. Station
Unnamed	Sloop	5-19-04	2	1-3/4 miles WSW of Sullivans Island, S. C. Station
<i>Luce Doodle</i>	Sloop	5-14-04	1	3 miles West of Santa Rosa, Texas, Station
Unnamed	Skiff	7-30-03	2	1/3 mile ENE of Old Chicago, Ill., Station

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Frank Canfield</i>	Steamer	4-11-04	3	1-1/4 miles North of Grande Pointe au Sable, Mich., Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	6-23-04	1	1/3 mile SE of Old Chicago, Ill., Station
<i>Famiglia Unita</i>	Named Gas Launch	12-22-03	2	2 miles South of Golden Gate, California Station
<i>Frank W. Howe</i>	Schooner	2-22-04	2	10 miles South of Ihwaco Beach, Wash., Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	4-21-04	2	1-3/4 miles SSE of Cape Disappointment, Wash., Station

During 1904 the usual expansion of the Life-Saving Services was evidenced by the Congressional authorization to establish stations at the following new sites:

Bethany Beach, Delaware  
Eagle Harbor, Kweennau Point, Michigan  
Tillamook Bay, Oregon

New stations authorized by previous action of Congress were under construction that year at Fishers Island, New York; Old Topsail Inlet (Beaufort), Bogue Inlet, and Ocracoke Island, North Carolina. Arrangements were also made during 1904 for rebuilding to commence on existing stations at Cape Henry, Virginia; and Little Kinnakeet, North Carolina. Extensive repairs were completed on stations at Charlotte, New York; and Evanston, Illinois.

The telephone service on the Atlantic coast underwent continuing improvements and extended with few interruptions from

Maine to South Carolina. In the Great Lakes Districts a substantial amount of work was completed on a telephone line which, when incorporated with the U. S. Weather Bureau lines and local telephone exchanges, bode great things for U.S.L.S.S. operations on those coasts. Kimball concluded in his 1904 Annual Report:

“The Life Saving Stations having been made a permanent part of the naval patrol service, the wireless telegraph system about to be introduced in the Navy will be extended to the stations, and the necessary preparations are now underway. When this is effected the stations of this Service will have direct communication not only with vessels of the Navy but with any other vessel similarly equipped, including the revenue cutters and a rapidly increasing number of the larger ocean-going steamships. The many advantages which will result to all the various interests affected, both in peace and war, cannot be readily foretold.”

Notwithstanding this note of prophetic optimism, the General Superintendent again that year in his Annual Report urged passage of a bill then pending in Congress to provide pension and retirement benefits to his men and to widows and children of crewmen losing their lives in the line of duty. The exodus of experienced surfmen from the ranks of the Life-Saving Service was of considerable concern to Kimball. Hopefully such legislation would stem the tide and offer incentives to the men to stay in.

Citing his problem in more than candid terms regarding the employment of new untried men and temporary substitutes, Kimball reported:

“The teamwork, so to speak, deemed so essential ... is deplorably wanting. In most instances the temporary men are also individually inferior as surfmen to those

whom they succeed. Even of such of these it is extremely difficult to obtain a sufficient number to supply the vacancies. Many stations are without full crews of regularly enlisted men, and in some others, there is not a regular surfman on the rolls. In one district, only 6 out of 16 stations are manned with full crews of regulars, in another, only 4 out of 10, and in another 6 out of 11, and several other districts are seriously crippled in the same way. The 'eligible lists' from which the regular crews must be chosen are wholly insufficient to supply the vacant places, and are largely composed of candidates who have barely passed the minimum standard as to practical experience, age, and physical condition-standard really too low for positions so important."

One of the prime congressional objections to the proposed legislation which would grant pensions and retirements to lifesavers was that such legislation would establish a precedent leading to the award of similar benefits to other members of the civil service, a wholly unacceptable proposition for that day and age. The other major objections to the bill were (1) that the apparent gap between surfmen's wages and those of Army and Navy enlisted men would, when coupled with comparable retirement and pension benefits, be unfair to the soldiers and sailors and (2) the proposed scale used to denote retirement benefits equated a keeper with a Navy ensign, and district superintendents with Navy captains.

Leaping to support Kimball in his quest for passage of this much needed legislation was William Livingstone of the Lake Carriers Association of the Great Lakes. The complete text of a letter addressed to the Chairman on Interstate and Foreign Commerce of the House of Representatives dated March 1, 1904 was embodied in the Annual Report for that year. Livingston presented a strong argument for the legislation. This specific action by the Lake Carriers signifies the roots of a long time

friendship of that portion of the marine transportation industry with the present day Coast Guard and its predecessors.

The General Superintendent apparently felt moved by the unfavorable criticism emanating from the comparison of U.S.L.S.S. with the Army and Navy that he prepared a statement on that subject and similarly published it in the 1904 Annual Report.

In the meantime, Charles H. McLellan, had by 1904 found his way back into duty with the Life-Saving Service as an "at large" assistant inspector. He had also been promoted to the rank of Captain, R.C.S. Early in February 1904 Captain McLellan was authorized to visit the National Boat Motor Exhibition and the Sportsmen's Show at Madison Square Garden in New York for the purpose of examining the various gasoline motors on exhibit there. Upon returning, he filed a report dated February 25, 1904 and prepared on stationery bearing the General Superintendent's office letterhead.

It will be remembered that shortly after his return from the Spanish-American War, Captain McLellan was instrumental in having a motor installed in the standard U.S.L.S.S. 34-foot life boat for experimental purposes. With some modifications, this life boat was still in use and was assigned to the Marquette Life-Saving Station. In the meantime, the Board on Life-Saving Appliances had presumably been "studying" this experimental use of a motor life boat. Over five years of such study had elapsed when Kimball, no doubt prodded by McLellan, authorized the good captain to prod about in his usual, unorthodox fashion in a move to circumvent the deliberations of the very properly constituted Board on Life-Saving Appliances presided over, since 1892, by Professor Cecil H. Peabody of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

After receiving Captain McLellan's report on the latest in gasoline boat motors, in which McLellan endorsed foreign-made automobile engines as the ultimate, Kimball got together

with Assistant Secretary of the Treasury R. B. Armstrong. The result of which effort was a directive addressed jointly to Capt. McLellan and Capt. J. W. Collins, R.C.S., the Engineer in Chief of the Revenue Cutter Service. Both captains were to proceed to New York for the purpose of examining the gasoline motors exhibited at the Sportsmen's Show, a repeat for McLellan, and to visit gasoline motor manufacturers in the New York area. A report was to be submitted to the Assistant Secretary concerning any motor that could be installed in a Service 34-foot life boat, a Beebe-McLellan surf-boat, or any open surfboat used by the Service.

This rather clever administrative device took McLellan "off the hook" for his singular effort in investigating boat motors which could be construed as a method of getting past the Board on Life-Saving Appliances. The departmental action by the Assistant Secretary neatly eliminated any responsibility of the U.S.L.S.S. for what otherwise would have been an obvious affront to the Board. Finally, if there were any hint that McLellan were serving his own interests as a one man "board," the inclusion of the Engineer-in-Chief of the Revenue Cutter Service in the two-man commission would allay those suspicions. It looked good, and certainly Armstrong and Kimball must have been looking forward to a final breakthrough in the matter of obtaining a power-driven life boat for the Life-Saving Service. If so, they were in for a rude awakening.

Both Captains proceeded to New York in accordance with their orders, examined the various motors exhibited, and visited the different factories. When it came time to digest their observations and render their opinions, they found that so diverse were their differences of opinion, it was necessary for each officer to submit a separate report to Assistant Secretary Armstrong.

Captain McLellan, having already endorsed the foreign-built gasoline automobile engines which were of lighter construction and turned more RPM's at higher horsepowers,

felt no compulsion to alter his already published ideas. Captain Collins, on the other hand, was not assured that the lighter engines could withstand the service use to which they would be subjected in U.S.L.S.S. life boats. He, in turn, favored an experimental American make 4 cylinder, 4 cycle engine designed to compete with the foreign engines, but which in his opinion, was of more substantial construction.

In favoring the larger American motor, Collins believe that a single screw-driven by that motor would be adequate for the needs of a life boat, thus meeting the requirement to limit the engine space in order to thereby preserve the number of thwarts. By endorsing a single screw, Captain Collins was casting aside the previous twin screw applications heralded by Captain McLellan in his earlier experiments. So as to present some semblance of agreement, Collins wanted to conduct experiments using both screw arrangements.

McLellan drew first blood by submitting his six-page report on 28 March, again on Kimball's letterhead. He began his letter to Armstrong by familiarizing the Assistant Secretary with the years of experience he had with life boats, surf boats, and gasoline engines. This was an apparent attempt to offset the personal contact Engineer-in-Chief Collins had with Armstrong by virtue of the Revenue Cutter Service Division being housed in the office of the Secretary of the Treasury. McLellan alluded to the differences of opinion and in a conciliatory gesture allowed as how he would go along with Capt. Collins' professional judgement regarding the experimental American engine. McLellan, however, reiterated his faith in twin propellers and recommended that five life boats be equipped with twin motors and twin screws and that each boat be powered by a different manufacturer, four by foreign design engines, one by Collins' American choice.

Captain Collins countered with an eleven-page report on April 8th. Apparently having read McLellan's report, Collins voiced his sup-

port for the American make, submitted engineering data, recommended that exhaustive tests be run using both twin and single screw applications, and made reference to a life boat already undergoing the installation of twin engines and twin screws. In his report, as an apparent reference to Capt. McLellan's personal experience with his own gasoline launches, Collins derided "amateurs and yachtsmen" who operate gasoline motor boats by saying everything goes fine as long as the lightly constructed automobile boat engine runs properly, but when anything happens skilled engineers are invariably called in to make repairs.

Whether Capt. McLellan took offense or not is anyone's guess but on 14 April he submitted a supplemental report, once more from Kimball's office, withdrawing his support of Captain Collins' choice American motor. This was done on the basis of an off-hours visit he made to the factory manufacturing that engine and discussions with lower echelon plant personnel over certain difficulties they were encountering with their motor. After casting aspersions upon that particular engine, McLellan unfortunately launched into a technical tirade, for which he was ill-equipped, into the relative merits of automobile type gasoline engines and the comparative "superiority" of the twin screw over single screw in life boat design.

Captain McLellan's supplemental report must surely have irritated the Engineer-in-Chief, to say the least. Captain Collins retaliated with a letter that included most unusual and bitter sentiments, albeit deserved, directed to a Cabinet level official concerning a "brother officer" and a Captain, R.C.S at that.

If McLellan's antagonism of senior Revenue Cutter Captains (i.e. Ottinger, Merryman, Abbey, and now Collins) had not been complete, his assignment on June 2, 1904, to report to New York and relieve Capt. C. A. Abbey as Inspector of Life-Saving Stations must have been the "icing on the cake." Captain Abbey having served nearly forty years, and at least fifteen as a Captain,

was not just to give his place to McLellan and then go elsewhere or retire but he was actually ordered to "step down" to perform solely his previous collateral duty, that as a Superintendent of Construction of Life-Saving Stations on the Atlantic and Gulf Coast.

Technically, at least, McLellan had stepped above Abbey in the "pecking order" assigned by the General Superintendent to the R.C.S. of officers performing detached duties with the Life-Saving Service. It may be that Abbey harbored no ill feelings as a result of this change of assignment, but a very telling piece of correspondence to the General Superintendent from Assistant Secretary Armstrong would indicate otherwise. Kimball was on June 4, 1904, "directed to proceed to New York City and select and as assign to the Inspector and the Superintendent of Construction, respectively, such rooms, space, files, and appurtenances belonging to the offices as seem to you to be appropriate to each."

He was also to "examine into the needs of the two offices, respectively, with reference to a proper division of the force now employed." This little trip of Kimball was occasioned by a necessity "to make a division of the rooms which are now being occupied as offices" by Abbey and his colleague, Capt. John Dennett, R.C.S., the full time Superintendent of Construction who Abbey had previously assisted on a part-time basis. The introduction of McLellan to those New York office spaces was apparently expected to cause no small difficulties and rather than let the three captains work out their own solutions or possibly involve the Assistant Secretary if they couldn't, Armstrong decided to let Kimball do it.

Thus voicing such confidence in the mature capability of his Revenue Cutter captains and of his General Superintendent, the Assistant Secretary settled down to other business. And the fiscal year ended. Despite the fun and games there still was no power driven lifeboat save the experimental model at

Marquette, Michigan and with the exception of unavoidable loss of life on two wrecked schooners off Long Island, nearly 2/3 of the lives lost that year were from undocumented small craft. Their only hope of rescue, however, involved the capabilities inherent in motor life boats.

As if to give lie to the presumption that workloads were shifting in favor of small, undocumented craft, the late fall and winter of 1904-1905 witnessed a near return to the schooner wrecks of the old days. Twenty-seven lives were lost on documented vessels that year, ten more were lost on smaller undocumented vessels and the storms of the season accounted for the total loss of sixty-three vessels. But the trend that had been set in the two previous years also continued, 420 undocumented vessels were involved in disasters as opposed to 359 documented craft.

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>Lizzie Carr</i>	Schooner	1-7-05	1	Concord Point, Maine
<i>Wentworth</i>	Schooner	10-13-04	11	1/2 mile South of Old Harbor, Mass., Station
<i>Elwood Burton</i>	Schooner	10-14-04	4	1-1/4 mile WDW of Peaked Hill Bars, Mass., Station
<i>Texas</i>	Schooner	4-6-05	2	3-3/4 mile SSW of New Shoreham, R.I., Station
Unnamed	Fishing Skiff	11-19-04	2	1/2 mile North of Bay Head, N.J., Station
<i>E. C. Allen</i>	Schooner	9-15-04	1	1-1/2 miles NNE of Lewes, Del., Station

<i>Montana</i>	Schooner	12-11-04	1	1/4 mile NE of Pea Island, N.C., Station
<i>Sarah D. J. Rawson</i>	Schooner	2-0-05	1	9 miles SE of Cape Lookout, N.C., Station
<i>Georges Valentine</i>	Bark	10-16-04	5	2/7 miles East of Gilberts Bar, Fla. Station
<i>John Gregory</i>	Steamer	11-13-04	1	265 yards North of Cleveland, Ohio, Station
Unnamed	Small	9-21-04	1	1/5 mile SW of Portage Boat Mich., Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	7-15-04	1	1/3 mile, NE of Jackson Park, Illinois, Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	5-15-05	1	Peacock Spit, Wash.
Unnamed	Fishboat	6-16-05	2	Peacock Spit, Wash.
Unnamed	Gas Launch	6-8-05	2	3/4 mile SW of Coquille River, Ore., Station.

The loss of the 350-ton British Schooner *Wentworth* was the worst single disaster since the loss of twenty-one lives with the steamer *Ariosto* in December 1899. The *Wentworth* stranded during thick weather in a northeaster. As usual during such storms, the sea was rough and the surf very high. The wreck was discovered by the Old Harbor Station south patrol about 7: 30 am. The patrol immediately flashed a Coston signal and hastened back to the station to give the alarm. Having responded to a telephone call from the Old Harbor keeper, the Orleans Station crew joined the rescue effort. Repeated efforts were made by both crews to

put a line on board the wreck and thus haul the crew of the *Wentworth* ashore by breeches buoy, but their efforts were to no avail.

Because of the ferocity of the surf, it was impossible to launch a surfboat and consequently both Life-Saving crews were powerless to provide any assistance except to retrieve two bodies from the surf. All eleven men on the ill-fated schooner were lost, and the vessel became a total loss.

The pattern of disasters occurring on the bar beyond the efforts of Life-Saving crews was not, of course, new to the service. The loss of the four lives in the schooner *Elwood* and the 5th on the Italian bark *Georges Valentine* that year followed in that mold.

Our earlier derived axiom that the principal work load emphasis of the Life-Saving Service in the early 1900's had shifted towards small, undocumented craft and that the principal cause of the loss of life was sudden unexpected disaster to those craft remained valid. We may, however, add the obvious corollary that the greatest losses of life from single disasters occurred on documented vessels which stranded in storms beyond the range of the U.S.L.S.S. wreck apparatus and which broke up before help could be dispatched in a government boat.

In the 1800's these losses, though frequent enough, were acceptable because they were unavoidable. Larger line-throwing guns would not have been the solution because the maximum distance over which breeches buoy apparatus could be used remained essentially 400 yards. This was a function of the catenary of line rigged between the tripod or cross piece on the beach and the height of the spars on the wrecked vessel. But technology of the 1900's was rendering those previously unavoidable disasters unacceptable.

That portion of the coastline broken by coastal inlets provided many sheltered waters, or bights, where power driven life boats could be docked. Whereas the old sail and oar-propelled boats that had been put at some of those inlets were navigated at the mercy of the

elements, motor driven life boats would be immune to the combined limitations of wind and muscular endurance. Motor lifeboats, if properly dispersed and operated, could be underway in minutes and be dispatched to the scene of a real or potential disaster. Once out of an inlet, the motor lifeboat could proceed at the prevailing average speed of 6 or 7 knots up or down the coast, or out to offshore shoals.

On most of the typical coastal outer island peninsula beaches, the inlets do not occur more than 20 miles apart. The centermost portion farthest from the inlet of that typical coastline would not be more than two hours away by motor life boat, allowing a half hour for getting underway and clearing the inlet. It was not unusual for it to take that long to haul and ready the wreck apparatus or surf boat on the open beach. Most of the worst disasters in the early 1900's might have been averted had inlet motor life boats been dispatched at the time the wrecks were first discovered; there is little question that successful rescues would have taken place from the *Wentworth*.

To adapt to this motor boat operation would involve a philosophical change for the U.S.L.S.S.; that is, heretofore rescues occurring off open beaches were accomplished by approaching the distressed vessel from shore (which was usually to leeward) either by a shot line or surf boat. With motor life boats, the wreck could initially be approached from seaward. Besides the advantages of speed and dependable power, the motor life boat would have a greater capacity for survivors because of its diminished crew manning requirements. Moreover, the usual dangers inherent in returning by boat through a debris cluttered surf, or the possibility of having the wreck apparatus snag on wreckage, would all be avoided.

Heeding Captain Collins' recommendations of the previous year, extensive experiments were conducted on existing motor surf boats using both single and twin screw applications. The 34-foot, twin screw boat, pow-



ered by two 7 HP motors, was tested satisfactorily, but was far outshone by a single screw life boat of the same size, with a lighter 25 HP automobile gasoline engine and which easily obtained a speed of 8-1/2 knots. The Board on Life-Saving Appliances had meanwhile considered, with all due deliberation, the design and experimentation of new and larger motor life boats. So successful was the single screw boat, that Captain McLellan changed direction and vigorously prosecuted the conversion to single screw motor power of existing 34-foot service life boats.

For a number of years, the Life-Saving Service had fully recognized the potential value of wrecking steamers in saving life by providing timely rescue assistance from offshore. Even closer to home, was the occasional teaming of cutters of the Revenue Cutter Service and surfmen of the Life-Saving Service.

At best, however, the use of steamers in such operations was more a matter of chance than of planned coordination. New steam Revenue Cutters, capable of 18 knots, were a part of a progressive shipbuilding program started in 1897 by the Revenue Cutter Service's Captain-Commandant, Charles F. Shoemaker. These fine new ships were based at many of the key sea port cities. Cutters such as the *McCulloch* and *Mohawk*, often under command of former assistant inspectors of Life-Saving stations, stood ready in their docks, or at anchor, or cruising the coast, to render whatever assistance they were called upon.

Summoning a cutter from its moorings in response from a call by the U.S.L.S.S. to assist an offshore wreck had always been a possibility but one seldom, if ever, exercised. Of course, since 1837 cutters were routinely dispatched to cruise off dangerous waters during the worst season. In later years these cruises were intensified and many vessels in distress were discovered and assisted by this "offshore life-saving service." But getting under way or diverting to specifically proceed to a disaster known to be taking place was a rare thing

indeed and could not be said to characterize the rescue operations of the U. S. L. S. S. of the 19th Century.

Where such had previously been inhibited by inherent communications delays and the lengthy cruising time to the wreck, the engineering advances at the turn of the century were making such coordinated rescues more of a probability.

Obviously, the greatest problem encountered in dispatching a revenue cutter to the scene of a distressed vessel was in getting the information concerning the disaster to the cutter in time to allow its arrival before the wreck went to pieces. Once at the scene, the professional cutter crews, with the same skills at oars as the lifesaving crews could put their Monomoy boats close aboard a wrecked vessel and remove the survivors, or give whatever other assistance was needed.

The further installation of wireless communications equipment on cutters (indeed, the first cutter had already been so equipped in 1904), would provide this needed alarm. Provided the shore rescue stations were similarly equipped, great achievements using the combined efforts of both humane services could be realized. If, in the meantime, before wireless communications were fully adopted by both the U.S.R.C.S. and U.S.L.S.S., could the judicious use of existing communications methods could be coordinated between cutters and lifesaving stations, some rescue attempts otherwise doomed to failure still might be successful, particularly in areas or in conditions where the dispatch of motor life boats would not be possible.

In December 1904 the steamer *Drumelzier* stranded on the Fire Island Inlet bar. As was a customary and logical practice, the keeper of the Sandy Hook station, lacking motor propulsion for his 34-foot Service Life Boat, hired a tugboat to tow his rescue craft to the scene of the wreck to aid the persons on board. This was all done with Inspector McLellan's approval. Kimball, always concerned with the dollar, contacted Captain McLellan by tele-

gram on December 28th and asked if it were practicable to have the locally-assigned Revenue Cutter tow the lifeboat to Fire Island.

Two days later, the General Superintendent sent another telegram to the Inspector asking why he did not use the cutter *Mohawk* what the tug charges were, but pointing out that he found no fault with McLellan's actions.

Captain McLellan replied that he had no idea of the whereabouts of the *Mohawk*, but if the cutter were available he would have preferred the tug anyway because of its maneuverability and low freeboard which would aid in transferring survivors in a heavy sea. He concluded by saying he proposed to submit the tug's bill to the owners of the *Drumelzier*, but if they wouldn't pay it, he'd send it on to the Treasury Department.

No doubt neither McLellan, nor Kimball, had any idea of the outcome of the Sandy Hook keeper's decision to hire a local tug. In any event, the matter received departmental attention and on January 9th, 1905, Secretary of the Treasury, Leslie M. Shaw, promulgated Circular Letter No. 60, which ordered the cooperation between the Revenue Cutter Service and Life-Saving Service at the scene of shipwrecks and strandings and the relief efforts therein involved. On January 14th, 1905, the Chief of the Revenue Cutter Service Division, Captain Charles F. Shoemaker, forwarded 400 copies of the circular No. 60 to the General Superintendent for distribution.

Not all Revenue Cutter commanding officers were thrilled by this new means of coordination and at least one District Superintendent was put out because paragraph 4 of the Circular neglected to include holders of his office in the coordinating conferences. The response varied from rather perfunctory form letters from the Commanding Officers of the cutters to the keepers in their locale advising them of the diversity of the cutters cruising grounds and giving the name of the official having the vessel's itinerary, or as the skipper of the Mackinac did, call "attention to the fact

that this vessel is small and not designed for cruising in heavy weather, and could therefore barely take care of herself with any kind of a heavy sea running."

Probably the most positive action came at New York at the instigation of Capt. Worth G. Ross of the cutter *Mohawk* and the encouragement of the neighboring U.S.L.S.S. assistant inspectors, First Lieuts. D. F. I. de Otti and Ellsworth P. Bertholf. A detailed system of signals and instructions were agreed upon and local circulars were promulgated by both assistant inspectors to the keepers in their respective districts.

Captain Ross relieved Capt. Shoemaker later in calendar year 1905 as Chief of the Revenue Cutter Service Division. Lieut. Bertholf would, in years to come, relieve Ross of that same post.

Predictably, the season of 1904-1905 saw the last of Capts. Abbey and Dennett on Life-Saving Service duty. It was also the last year for Professor Peabody as President of the Board of Life-Saving Appliances.

During the year 1905 the rebuilding of old stations continued. Those new houses constructed that year were at Muskegon and Grande Pointe au Sable, Michigan; and Fletchers Neck, Maine. A number of older stations acquired extensive improvements. These included:

- Monomoy, Massachusetts
- Sandy Hook, New Jersey
- Barnegat, New Jersey
- Ocean City, New Jersey
- Lewes, Delaware
- Sabine Pass, Texas
- Niagara, New York
- Chicago (Old Chicago Station), Illinois
- Grays Harbor, Washington

And finally, Congress authorized the establishment of a station at Nome, Alaska. To the legal minds of the U. S. Life-Saving Service, this must have been the supreme accomplishment of the year.

Fiscal Year 1906 was a bad year on the Great Lakes, accounting for nineteen of the twenty-nine lives lost. Ten persons lost their lives on undocumented craft during the 1905-1906 season. The other nineteen fatalities occurred on documented vessels and fourteen of those were on steamships, as 357 documented vessels were involved in disasters, 491 undocumented craft met the same fate.

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>M. C. Haskell</i>	Schooner	3-20-06	1	4-1/2 miles WxS of Monomoy Pt., Mass. Station
<i>Willard</i>	Steamer	3-1-06	3	1 mile North of Straitsmouth, Mass., Station
Unnamed	Small boat	4-19-06	1	1-1/4 miles North of Newburyport, Mass., Station
<i>Pendleton Sisters</i>	Schooner	12-15-05	1	5-1/2 miles NNE of Mentomkin Inlet, Va.,
Unnamed	Scow	8-14-05	1	1/2 NW of Oswego, N.Y. Station
Unnamed	Skiff	9-20-05	1	300 yds. ExS of Erie, Pa., Station
<i>Sarah E. Sheldon</i>	Steamer	10-20-05	2	23 miles West of Cleveland, Ohio, Station
<i>Mable Wilson</i>	Schooner	5-28-06	1	1-1/2 miles West of Cleveland, Ohio, Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	9-3-05	3	1/2 miles SE of Grand Marais, Mich., Station

<i>Malaafa</i>	Steamer	11-28-05	9	1 mile North of Duluth, Minn., Station
Unnamed	Skiff	7-8-05	2	1/3 mile from Kenosha, Wis., Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	5-16-06	1	Peacock Spit, Washington
Unnamed	Fishboat	6-9-06	1	Peacock Spit, Washington
<i>Corinthian</i>	Schooner	6-11-06	2	3 miles North of Humboldt Bay, Calif.

The year saw Congress authorize new stations at Neah Bay, Washington, and Green Hill, Rhode Island; a temporary display was also authorized at the Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition. Several boat houses were constructed in the Chicago area at Evanston and Rogers Park, both under the jurisdiction of the Evanston keeper. The boats located there would be manned on occasion by volunteer crews from nearby yacht clubs.

Stations damaged in the disastrous San Francisco earthquake of April 18th, 1906 were repaired, and extensive improvements were made to the stations at Arena Cove and Fort Point, California.

Much has been written of the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 by persons who experienced it and by those who only imagined it. Either way, the horror of such a natural calamity defies verbal description. The men of the Life-Saving Service were at the scene. Three stations in particular were affected by the disaster. These were the Golden Gate, Fort Point, and Southside Stations. The crews of each performed their duties in a manner typical of the service evidenced by the utmost in bravery, dedication, and humanity. The official report of the keeper of the Golden Gate station to his District Superintendent, T. J. Blakeney, reflects

this performance. Compared with other written reports of the earthquake, the terse understatement characteristic of Life-Saving Service keepers in describing vessel disasters might be truly appreciated.

The men of the Life-Saving Service in the San Francisco area received the grateful acknowledgement from the city fire marshal and the board of fire commissioners. Some sixty-seven persons were taken care of at the U.S.L.S.S. stations in and about San Francisco. A total of 425 man-days of shelter and lodging were provided. By and large the meals provided were from the stations' own messes, the cost of which was borne by the crews themselves.

The operating season of 1905-1906 marked the culmination of seven years of effort by Captain McLellan to obtain a motor-propelled life boat. Following the successful experiments of the year before, some seven of the 34-foot service life boats were motorized and placed in use and six others were in a state of progress towards that end by the close of the fiscal year. The seven completed motor life boats were in operation long enough that year to make a total of some sixteen rescue trips on twelve occasions. The Annual Report of 1906 bore tidings of this event with some cautious optimism:

"The scope of life-saving operations had been greatly extended at all stations where these boats have been used... It is proposed to place them at all stations where they can with advantage be employed, as rapidly as funds for the purpose become available. They are, of course, much heavier than the type of Service life boat in general use (weighing several thousand pounds), and it would therefore be clearly impractical to supply them to stations along beaches the shelving nature of which does not afford a sufficient depth of water to permit their being launched."

Clearly Kimball was not about to rush headlong into making any rash statements concerning the prospects for his new-fangled contraption. Nor was he going to allow any eager Congressman to stampede the department into placing these boats at every open beach station in his Congressional district. After all, the same generous Congress, while denying pensions and retirements to the crews, had bestowed upon the U.S.L.S.S. the authorization to build at Kingston, Rhode Island, the eleventh Life-Saving Station in the Rhode Island district—a district which since its establishment had averaged but twelve wrecks involving sixty-two persons a year, and during its six year existence had experienced only three fatalities. Also, there was no apparent difficulty in obtaining authority and dollars for the Jamestown Exhibition, but the conversion to motor life boats would reportedly occur only at the rate funds "become available." The "pork barrel" incentives of the duly appointed representatives of the electorate were well known to Sumner Increase Kimball.

In addition the General Superintendent was getting well along in years; he and Mrs. Kimball celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 1906. Advancing years had taken their toll upon his health and expectedly, his absence from the offices of the Life-Saving Service were more and more prolonged. Following the death of W. D. O'Connor in 1889, the vacant assistant general superintendent's job was taken by Frank Baker. The next year, Horace L. Piper assumed that job which he held for the next fifteen years. In 1905, the number two job was assigned to Oliver M. Maxam. Maxam's signature as "Acting General Superintendent" graced many outgoing documents in the years following his appointment and he imparted no small amount of authority to his directives.

Perhaps one of the more curious incidents involves a letter he signed on November 6th, 1905 which advised Inspector McLellan that a Lieut. Cochran was relieving Lieut. E. P.

Bertholf as one of the assistant inspectors. A file copy of that correspondence bearing the letterhead of the office was apparently routed to Kimball upon his return to the office. Indicative of the relationship then existing between the office of Life-Saving Service and the assistant inspectors who were being assigned to the districts, the following hand-written notation appears at the top of the copy of those orders:

"You pays your money and you takes your choice."

While it should not be concluded that this represented the hand-writing of Kimball or Maxam, it must be presumed that the author was only expressing a view he knew was acceptable in the inner sanctum of his boss's office.

In years to come these sentiments might come to play a considerable role in understanding much of the intraservice friction found in the Coast Guard of the 1920's and 30's. Lieutenant Bertholf later became the first Commandant of the Coast Guard.

During 1906 the seat of President of the Board of Life-Saving Appliances vacated by Professor Peabody the previous year, was filled by Otto H. Tittmann, Superintendent of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey. And, finally, after reaching the mandatory retirement age of sixty-four and completing many years of detached duties within the ranks of the U. S. Life-Saving Service, Capt. Charles H. McLellan would be retired from his duties on September 30, 1906, as Inspector of Life-Saving Stations before the next season really got underway. He was to be replaced by Capt. Frank H. Newcomb, U.S.R.C.S., best known, perhaps, for his daring exploits as commanding officer of the *Hudson* during the Spanish-American War at Cartagena Bay, Cuba. Had the U.S.L.S.S. seen the end of C. H. McLellan?

The season of 1906-1907 was to bear witness to a number of new developments occur-

ring within the service as well as without. For the fifth year in a row disasters involving undocumented craft outnumbered those occurring on documented vessels, 491 to 347. The fatality statistics for the first time followed that five year trend by revealing that twenty-three persons were lost to small craft mishaps while twenty-two others died from disasters on documented vessels.

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Alice T. Boardman</i>	Schooner	1-4-07	1	2-1/4 miles SW of Monomoy Pt., Mass., Station
<i>Girard</i>	Schooner	2-18-07	2	1 mile North of Highland, Mass., Station
<i>Lugano</i>	Schooner	11-15-06	3	Point Judith, Rhode Island
Unnamed	Schooner <i>Rescue's</i> Small boat	3-14-07	1	800 yds. SW of Blue Point, L.I. Station
<i>Nora</i>	Gasoline Screw	7-29-06	9	1/2 mile SE of Hereford Inlet, N.J. Station
<i>Alva B.</i>	Gasoline Launch	7-29-06	1	3/4 mile ESE of Hereford Inlet, N.J. Station
Unnamed	Canoe	8-18-06	1	300 yards North of Deal, N.J., Station
Unnamed	Canoe	11-25-06	2	1 mile NxW of Charlotte, N.Y., Station
Unnamed	Rowboat	7-1-06	1	1/5 mile NW of Duluth, Minn., Station

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Pasadena</i>	Schooner	10-8-06	2	1 mile NE of Portage, Mich., Station
Unnamed	Canoe	7-4-06	1	2 miles West of St. Joseph, Mich., Station
Unnamed	Sailboat	7-5-06	5	1 mile South of Old Chicago, Ill., Station
<i>Barge No. 2</i>	Barge	9-29-06	3	3/4 mile NNE of Old Chicago, Ill., Station
Unnamed	Scow	11-12-06	2	1/6 mile North of Old Chicago, Ill., Station
Unnamed	Launch & Scow	11-21-06	4	800 yards West of Holland, Mich., Station
Unnamed	Fishboat	7-23-06	1	Peacock Spit, Wash.
Unnamed	Fishboat	7-27-06	2	Peacock Spit, Wash.
<i>Corona</i>	Steamer	3-1-07	2	North Jetty, Humboldt Bay, California
Unnamed	Fishboat	5-13-07	2	1-3/4 miles South of Cape Disappointment, Wash., Station

The most spectacular wreck in statistical terms was that of the *Corona*. Pure numbers removed from the marine casualty statistics show that of 147 persons on board the *Corona*, 145 were saved. Factually, however, we would find that the steamer grounded at the outer end of a jetty at the harbor entrance while trying to cross the bar. Thus pinioned to solid rock, and a few yards from safety, the effort and risk necessary to save the 95 passen-

gers and 52 crew were not nearly so great as they might have been in the case of rendering assistance to the numerous small boat accidents of the year.

The year of 1907 gave the Life-Saving Service the opportunity to fully evaluate and appreciate the successful operation of the 34-foot motor life boats. By the end of the operating season, seventeen of those boats had been placed in service. Locating the boats at stations mostly in need was no difficult matter for the disasters of recent seasons pointed to the most critical areas. It would be no surprise to find, by the end of the year, these boats assigned to the following stations:

Charlotte, New York  
Duluth, Minnesota  
Harbor Beach, Michigan  
Little Egg, New Jersey  
Monomoy Point, Massachusetts  
Old Chicago, Illinois  
Sandy Hook, New Jersey  
South Chicago, Illinois  
Cape Disappointment, Washington  
Marquette, Michigan (2 experimental boats  
circa 1899)

Short Beach, Long Island  
Cobb Island, Virginia  
Fishers Island, New York  
Erie, Pennsylvania  
Buffalo, New York  
Cleveland, Ohio  
Hog Island Virginia.

The assignment of these powered lifeboats excited the public and attracted world-wide attention. The Standing Committee of the Massachusetts Humane Society, of course, exhibited interest in this new device for saving lives. Officials in Norway and Finland were also among those soliciting information. In addressing N. Lyman of the Board of Pilotage and Lighthouses in Finland on July 11, 1906, the General Superintendent presented a tidy narrative on the installation of the motor being placed in the after air case of the

Service's existing 34-foot life boats.

Perhaps, however, the greatest interest in the power life boats was imparted by the men of the Life-Saving Service itself. The reception given these craft by the keepers and crews was one of sheer delight. Kimball extracted from the letters and reports he received from his keepers, a number of testimonials on these boats which he recited in a letter to Charles P. Curtis of the Massachusetts Humane Society on April 24, 1907.

Recognizing the urgency and necessity for placing these craft at their respective units at the earliest possible moment, and further realizing the need for direct supervision of this project, the Life-Saving Service was empowered to recall in October 1906, from his retirement, the most experienced man for the purpose of "Supervising the construction of life boats, apparatus, etc." Those were the words emblazoned on the rubber stamp used by C. H. McLellan below his signature on all the correspondence originated at his office at 525 Park Avenue, New York, New York. By year's end, the nineteen life boats had been motorized for use at Life-Saving Stations and C. H. McLellan was busy supervising the conversion of eighteen more to motor propulsion.

Meanwhile, during 1907, plans and specifications were prepared for the construction of a 36-foot motor life boat to be powered by a 40 horse power gasoline engine. At long last, the U.S.L.S.S. was mechanized.

Concerns over water pollution in the 1960's and 70's reached proportions sufficiently large to capture the attention of the highest officials in the land. While many persons of those years supposed that pollution of coastal waters was a recent problem, they may have formulated a somewhat different opinion or at least an improved perspective had they been aware of an incident involving the U. S. Life Saving Service some 60 years before.

In the summer of 1906, Dr. George A. Soper, a consulting sanitary engineer and a member of the New York Metropolitan Sewerage Commission, was called to investi-

gate a request by the Mayor of New York for information concerning the appearance of garbage on the beaches of Long Island and New Jersey. The newspapers of those coast lines had been carrying stories relating that the city's garbage being dumped in the Atlantic fifteen miles to sea was washing up on the resort beaches. Dr. Soper on July 16th asked the General Superintendent of the U.S.L.S.S. would assist him in his search for the extent of the pollution.

With the approval of the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, the Acting General Superintendent on July 24th sent such an order to the district superintendents of Long Island and New Jersey.

The problem of enforcing provisions to prevent such pollution fell to the Secretary of War (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) who held that in section 1 of the Act of June 29, 1888, Congress intended to authorize and did authorize "the selection of a place of deposit of such garbage sufficiently remote not only to protect the harbor of New York, but incident thereto to conserve 'the sanitation of the harbor and that of adjacent coasts.'"

This early recorded involvement of the coast guard with pollution of the sea coast was, in all probability, the first instance of such concern; in all certainty, it wasn't the last.

Things landing on the beach were always a matter of curiosity and, occasionally, a matter of "appropriation," for the crews of Life-Saving stations. Ordinarily, the surfmen were concerned only with the dangers of shipwrecks, or as in the single instance just discussed, of pollution. On September 18, 1906, the Secretary of the Treasury was requested for some assistance in a law enforcement matter by the Secretary of Commerce and Labor.

Kimball, having been directed to lend the assistance of his agency to the matter, dispatched a letter the same day, to alert the keepers of the northeast coast to be on the lookout for a schooner attempting "to smuggle a shipload of Chinamen from New Foundland

or Labrador coast into the United States..."

The use of the term "guardians of the coast," perhaps curious to the reader, was typically descriptive of the feelings prevalent among many persons concerning the roles of the Life-Saving and Revenue Cutter Services. The terms coast safety guard, coast guard, etc., were printed many times dating from the earliest days of the life-saving establishment. These were applied equally to beach and cutter service alike by Congressmen and other government officials, along with editors, and other prominent persons searching for a descriptive phrase.

The use of the title "Chinese Inspector," in the correspondence relating to this law enforcement effort, while conjuring up all sorts of possible comedic images, does little in the way of pursuing a descriptive job title. Intragovernmental cooperation as it is-and probably as it always was-involves a certain amount of "passing the buck." The Honorable Sumner Increase Kimball was no novice in government office management and while he probably seldom passed the proverbial buck because of his personal sense of ethics, he was indeed astute in avoiding it being passed to him.

Such an example of his footwork might be found in a minor incident occurring during the last part of September and early October 1906 which involved the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. A small schooner named the *Lizzie H. Brayton* grounded inside of the outer bar just off the shore of a rather prosperous summer resort. As may be expected, a complaint by certain citizens of the area was registered either directly, or by way of a gentleman of influence, with the Army Corps of Engineers, to the extent that the wreck should be removed. The district engineer, a colonel, investigated the wreck and finding that the wreck could sincerely be called a menace to navigation decided that perhaps the U.S.L.S.S. could justify the expense of removal by virtue of the benefits such a removal might accrue to the fishermen. Why the Engineers could not

ascertain the existence of those fishermen's benefits just as well as the U.S.L.S.S. escapes logic. In all probability the Army hoped that the Life-Saving Service, in certifying that the local fishermen would gain some advantage, would therefore share some of the blame if it were later determined that such a removal was a waste of taxpayers' money. With such a certification from the U.S.L.S.S. forthcoming, the Corps could then satisfy a complaint and possibly receive credit from a prominent citizen for their benevolence.

On September 28, 1906 the Chief of Engineers, Brig. Gen. A. MacKenzie, U. S. Army, addressed Kimball alluding to a non-specific complaint about the wreck and mentioned the report made by the colonel. The general further allowed as how his investigating officer "believes that it should be removed for the benefit of the fishermen and of the Life-Saving Service. Inasmuch as it appears that your Department is interested in the removal of the wreck, and as there seems some doubt whether, in other respects, the benefits derived would warrant the expense of removal, I have the honor to inquire whether it is your view that the removal should be effected."

Kimball, unaware that his department had any interest at all in the abandoned *Lizzie H. Brayton*, did something he seldom did, he had Maxam refer the Army's inquiry to the district superintendent for that coast—a politician who seldom left his office and was almost devoid of any operational knowledge of the stations under his administrative charge.

Normally such a matter would have been handled by the district's assistant inspector, but in this case Kimball was apparently interested in two things: (1) who, if anyone, was pushing the alleged U.S.L.S.S. sponsorship for removal and, (2) was the undisclosed complainant politically prominent enough to indicate U.S.L.S.S. support for such removal.

The material was returned promptly and bore an endorsement which noted the wreck was not hazardous to navigation, that the



wreck was breaking up, that the only peril was that some incompetent might try to board it, and that there was no fisherman operating so near the wreck that they would be benefited by such a removal. Kimball then replied to the Chief of Engineers on 6 October, paraphrasing the district superintendent's endorsement and concluding simply from that report, "it does not appear that the Life-Saving Service would derive any benefit from the removal of the wreck."

Not all referrals by other departments of the federal government were so expeditiously dealt with.

On 18 October 1906, Secretary of State, Elihu Root referred a proposal sent to President T. R. Roosevelt to the Secretary of the Treasury which suggested an international convention to consider and compare methods and regulations for saving life with a view to obtaining uniformity. Root asked for the views of the General Superintendent concerning this proposal. Six days later, Kimball submitted his views in a six page letter addressed to the Secretary of the Treasury. It is fairly apparent that the General Superintendent recognized the distribution his views might receive, so his comments concerning the withdrawal from the crews of their most efficient men were inserted with more in mind than international relations.

Marine safety functions within the United States can be characterized in two general areas: those which serve to prevent loss of life, loss of property and injuries before marine accidents occur, and those which attempt to minimize the effects of those accidents after they happen. The former category principally places the burden upon the persons who own or operate vessels, the latter upon the government resources dedicated to discovery and rescue efforts. The preventative functions, of course, are not devoid of government participation. Federal officers and men maintain various navigational aids, but it falls to ships' officers to use them properly. Federal officers develop and enforce construction and maintenance

standards, but it is the vessel owner's responsibility to maintain its materiel condition. The government licenses operating personnel of commercial craft, but employment is a responsibility of the vessel. Various law-enforcement checks are made of vessels but regardless of the degree of surveillance, the ultimate safety of the craft rests with the vessel operators themselves. Education, engineering and enforcement are all part of this federal effort to prevent marine casualties but the onus is upon the responsibility of the vessel owners and crews to meet accepted standards of safety. In that other function of marine safety, discovery and rescue, the burden belongs to the rescuer. If the distressed mariner could get himself out of his predicament, he would not be in need of federal assistance.

Kimball's men were almost solely devoted to discovery and rescue functions. Occasionally they did serve to warn vessels standing into danger and, in such instances, they became more or less animated aids to navigation.

The U.S.L.S.S. could scarcely adopt uniform practices and regulations for its rescue operations, indeed each wreck introduced variables which defied any established by-the-numbers application of rescue technique. Discovery procedures were subject to internal regulation, as were discipline and other administrative matters, but these regulations involved no one but the members of the Life-Saving Service. The one attempt made by Kimball regarding uniformity of rescue procedures was the distribution of written material which prescribed the connection of the rescue apparatus and its use on board a wreck.

These instructions were so basic and simple to mariners that no international uniform regulation was needed. The Life-Saving Service had little to gain from an international conference dealing solely with discovery and rescue standards. That did not mean that other agencies did not.

The development of standard buoyage, lighted aids, emergency wireless communica-

tions, weather warnings, passenger vessel accommodation standards, maximum passenger allowances, rules of the road including lights and signals for vessels meeting on the high seas, loading stability, fire fighting, escape equipment, and material hull standards for all commercial craft and competence standards for ships' officers all were subjects concerning marine safety which in 1907 could well have been the agenda of an international conference. It would scarcely have been an intimation offered in a "vain glorious spirit" for the United States to support such a conference. But since broadening the marine safety outlook to include preventative measures was not necessarily in Kimball's interest, he failed to recognize the potential advantages a conference, such as the one proposed, portended.

The apparent view of the U.S.L.S.S. was that in order to save more lives and property from shipwreck, you needed more coastal stations closer together manned by eight men each, with beach patrols for discovery, and wreck apparatus and surf-boats for rescue. The thought that some of the wrecks taking lives, losing property and occurring on the beaches could be prevented through better navigational aids, improved materiel standards for hulls and machinery, and more competent vessel operators, escaped the narrow vision which characterized the leadership of the Life-Saving Service.

In March of 1907, the New York Board of Trade and Transportation, concerned over a recent disastrous collision between a steamer and a schooner on the high seas, called a conference on April 17, 1907, in New York "For the purpose of considering such changes, rules and regulations as may be thought necessary to eliminate or at least to mitigate the evils of the conditions" which led to the collision. The board felt that such catastrophes had "demonstrated the necessity of additional safeguards and of amplifying the scope and authority of the Government Inspectors." Capt. H. W. Knowles, the superintendent of the district in which the survivors came

ashore, was asked by the board to attend and participate in the conference. Knowles acknowledged and forwarded the invitation on to the General Superintendent on March 16th.

On April 3, Kimball sent a letter to Frank S. Gardner, the Secretary of the Board in which he wrote:

"In reply I would state that, while, in the view of my official position, it would hardly be proper for me to take any action relating to matters falling within the jurisdiction of the Steamboat Inspection Service, it will afford me pleasure to be present as a listener if practicable."

It goes without saying that had the causes of the recent tragic collisions been within the jurisdiction of the Steamboat Inspectors, there would have been no reason to call the conference in the first place. Furthermore, marine accidents involving schooners whose masters were unlicensed and whose hulls were uninspected did not normally fall within the investigative prerogatives of the Steamboat Inspectors, however, all shipwrecks involving loss of life within the scope of U.S.L.S.S. operations were thoroughly investigated. These investigations probably formed the only data base available in the government on the condition of sailing craft and the competence of their operators.

Gardner, upon receiving Kimball's reply of the 3rd, wrote again assuring the General Superintendent that "the subjects to be covered will extend beyond the rules and regulations of the Steamboat Inspection Service and embrace all practicably means for the elimination of danger and suffering from perils of the sea." Gardner then suggested as an illustration the stationing of rescue steamers along the coast equipped with wireless radios. In closing his letter, Gardner again urged Kimball's participation.

On April 8, Kimball announced to the Board of Trade he would be unable to attend

the conference, but he extended substantial verbiage on the promising use of radio-equipped revenue cutters and large motor-powered life boats and enclosed a copy of Treasury Circular No. 60 which related to U.S.R.C.S. and U.S.L.S.S. cooperation. Gardner came back with the request that Captain Knowles be allowed to participate as a "listener" as the original invitation intended.

Kimball's final communication allowed as how Capt. Knowles was deaf, he could not very well be a "listener," nor did Kimball think he ought to name any delegates as "spectators" in his absence. It was more than apparent that Kimball was not going to become embroiled in anything that had to do with marine safety in its preventative or regulatory form. He did, however, give Gardner permission to use Circular 60 and Kimball's endorsement of the wireless and motor propelled life boat—in essence he delivered a flat statement of fact which represented the U.S.L.S.S. view that its only function was discovery and rescue—not very imaginative but, legally correct!

On January 17, 1907, Congress legally authorized the construction of a new life-saving station at a site on Isle of Shoals off Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Kimball may not have known it, but this would be the last regular life-saving station ever authorized for construction and operation under the U. S. Life-Saving Service.

During the year construction was underway at new stations authorized by previous Acts of Congress at Bethany Beach, Delaware and Garibaldi, Oregon (at the entrance to Tillamook Bay). Meanwhile, the Neah Bay Station authorized in 1906 for service in conjunction with a first-class tug (to be built and operated by the U.S.R.C.S.) was advertised for contracts. The Jerrys Point, New Hampshire Station was relocated to Wood Island, Maine, on the opposite side of Portsmouth Harbor. A new site at Cold Spring Harbor, N.J., was obtained to allow relocation of the Two Mile Beach Station. The old buildings on the beach

would be abandoned. The new station, to be located just outside the harbor, was to form a base of operations for one of the new 36-foot motor life boats. A new station was placed under construction at the south end of Jackson Park in Chicago, Illinois, to eventually replace the one built in 1893 on the grounds of the Columbian Exposition.

In September 1906 the Santa Rosa Station off Pensacola, Florida was entirely destroyed by a hurricane which leveled the former site to sea level. A new site was granted by the War Department near Fort Pickens and a contract was let in 1907 to rebuild the station there.

Ordinarily, political difficulties with members of the Life-Saving Service were limited to the appointment of district superintendents or the selection of keepers. Kimball bore a reputation for honesty, was consistent as he dared to be, and occasionally stepped on someone's toes, little people and big. The little people, like the lady who wanted her surfman husband home at night, merely lost out. The big people tried to make big noises but usually they, too, lost their tilt with Kimball's windmill. But as the political sophistication of the Treasury Department grew, the General Superintendent found himself losing a few more, at least with the "big" people.

John Arbuckle was one of the "big" people; he was called a philanthropist, a millionaire humanitarian, and his sponsors and supporters included many prominent persons. Arbuckle purchased the two-ship, one-berge, North American Wrecking Company and set upon a plan to set up his own wireless equipped, life-saving service. Needless to say, his outfit would also handle the salvage of all the vessels whose crews he saved. Sound familiar? It was something like the entire wrecking system in existence in the 1850's, except in 1907 it was to be owned by one man.

Kimball knew very well that this scheme, though not without humanitarian overtones, was competitive with all the other wrecking companies who, on occasion, had been equal-

ly as humanitarian. As had the other salvage operations, Arbuckle requested the cooperation of the U.S.L.S.S. and such cooperation probably would have been granted except Arbuckle wanted more, he wanted to receive immediate wireless information directly from the U.S.L.S.S. as soon as a wreck occurred. Then he would proceed to the scene and rescue all on board.

Apparently, he received a cool reply from the General Superintendent who was well familiar with such schemes. Undeterred, Arbuckle approached President Roosevelt, the Congress, and the New York newspapers simultaneously and achieved dramatic results. The President gave his support to Arbuckle's plan and a bill was introduced in Congress to require the U.S.L.S.S. to notify all wrecking companies (not exactly what Arbuckle had in mind) having wireless equipped vessels when wrecks occurred on the Atlantic coast and the Life-Saving Service to cooperate (whatever that meant) with the wrecking companies who, it was stipulated, would not receive any remuneration from the government for their services in saving lives.

The press gave extensive publicity to Arbuckle and particularly played-up the millionaire humanitarian's contention that officials of the Life-Saving Service were uncooperative, thus putting the President and the General Superintendent at odds.

That latter contention had to be dispelled. Therefore, the following letter was sent to Arbuckle by Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, L. M. Shaw:

"February 26, 1907

My dear Mr. Arbuckle:

My attention had been called to an article in the New York World of Sunday last to the effect that the Life-Saving Service had refused to cooperate with you in a life saving plan. I have called the attention of the Chief of the Life-Saving Service to the

article. He tells me that he only had a short conversation with you on the subject and that he thought he had given you assurance of his earnest cooperation. However that may be, I have given instruction that the Service cooperate with you or anyone else in any plan that anyone may devise for saving human life. I suggest that correspondence on the subject however be addressed to the Secretary of the Treasury, or at least to the Assistant Secretary in charge of the Service, who for the present is J. H. Edwards."

Whether Arbuckle ever carried out his intended purposes in the salvage field is unknown nor does it matter for the very nature of the cooperation he sought for his own purposes would enable any other wrecking outfit monitoring the radio frequency used by the U.S.L.S.S. to receive the same information. Moreover, the government committed itself to giving no preferential treatment to the vessels of Mr. Arbuckle. From there on it would be a matter of straight competition with the winners being the most capable. And the ultimate utilization of the wireless equipped cutters of R.C.S. would render the pure humanitarian goals of private life-saving services redundant.

The shift in workload emphasis predictably continued in the direction of small undocumented craft, an increasing number of which were propelled by gasoline motors. In 1908, 708 undocumented vessels became involved in marine casualties within the scope of U.S.L.S.S. operations. Another 386 documented vessels suffered the same fate. Six persons died on the former category of craft while sixteen perished in the latter.

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
Unnamed	Gas Launch	5-2-08	5	1 mile NE of Newburyport, Mass., Station

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>Saxon</i>	Barge	10-12-07	3	2-1/2 miles South of Gull Shoal, N.C. Station
<i>Lenora</i>	Schooner	1-9-08	5	1-1/2 miles SSW of Cape Hatteras, N.C. Station
Unnamed	Canoe	10-29-07	1	1 mile SE of Niagara, N.Y., Station
<i>Alex Nimick</i>	Steamer	9-21-07	6	1-1/2 mile West of Vermillion, Mich., Station
<i>S. P. Paige</i>	Schooner	9-10-07	2	7 miles NW of Sturgeon Bay, Wis., Station

During the year, Captain McLellan, U.S.R.C.S. (Ret.) still on recall from his retired status, supervised the installation of motors in eighteen additional 34-foot life boats during Fiscal Year 1908. The remaining nine unpowered 34-foot life boats would be motorized the following year. Also during the year, the stations at the new sites at Garibaldi, Oregon, and Neah Bay, Washington were constructed with the assigned names of "Tellamook Bay" and "Waadah Island," respectively.

With regard to legislative action, the Farallon Islands were to be provided with a Lyle Gun and beach apparatus, but no regular station was established. Authorization was given for the usual kind of participation in Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition to be held at Seattle, Washington (the authorization for which would be repeated the following year).

The greatest legislative accomplishment for the year, was the passage of the Act of March 26, 1908, which raised the keeper's pay from \$900 to \$1,000 per year, gave the No. 1 Surfman \$70 instead of \$65 per month and

allowed all keepers and surfmen one ration, or at the discretion of the Secretary of Treasury, \$.30 a day commutation. But still no retirement provisions were enacted. Kimball, in his Annual Report, "hoped that Congress will one day come to regard the proposition favorably."

Two rather seemingly insignificant events occurred in 1908 which, if viewed with hindsight, were not insignificant at all. The first occurred on November 9, 1907, when Capt. W. E. Reynolds, commanding the U. S. Revenue Cutter Service School of Instruction practice cutter *Itasca*, queried the Secretary of the Treasury concerning the non-receipt of certain articles requested from the General Superintendent of the Life-Saving Service over two years before. The items which had been requested over the signature of Assistant Secretary H. A. Taylor included a complete beach apparatus and six copies of the regulations of the U.S.L.S.S. These materials were to be used in the course of instruction for cadets. Perhaps the original request had been misplaced or filed without action, it is also possible that it was deliberately "buried" in order to prevent what surely seemed to be an infiltration of the Life-Saving Service by the commissioned officer corps of the Revenue Cutter Service.

In the old days, Kimball carefully selected his assistant inspectors, but in the years immediately preceding and those following the Spanish-American War, he had gradually been losing his control of those assignments.

Notwithstanding all speculation as to why that requested equipment was not delivered in 1905, on November 19, 1907, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, Bickman Withrop authorized the Inspector of Life-Saving Stations to send the apparatus originally requested by the School of Instruction to the *Itasca*, and to let both Kimball and Capt. Reynolds know when the articles were shipped. In a few short years, Revenue Cutter Service cadets who had become familiar with the tools of the sandpounders would find their school-gained knowledge to be of no small

benefit in administering the neophyte U. S. Coast Guard.

Tours of detached duty as assistant inspectors of Life-Saving stations had become rewards for previous tours of arduous service and became regarded by most of the Revenue Cutter officers assigned to them as being good duty. One such officer performing that function in 1908 remarked concerning his reassignment assignment to sea duty command the cutter Manhattan:

“Dear Mr. Maxan:

I want to tell you that I have had a very agreeable tour of duty in the Life-Saving Service, and I want to thank you and will you please express my thanks to Mr. Kimball for his courteous treatment during these last three years. Some day when I have had a turn at the shady side of our duty, I shall hope to return to duty in the Life-Saving Service and I hope it will not be too far from Red Bank (sic. New Jersey). Please remember me to all whom I know in the Department and to your family. If any of you should come to New York while I am on the Manhattan I shall always be glad to see you.

Very sincerely yours,  
C. A. Cochran”

Of some incidence, Lieutenant Cochran was relieved by Lieutenant Harry G. Hamlet from the practice cutter *Itasca*; Hamlet, as with the cases of other ex-assistant inspectors, (Bertholf, Ross, Shoemaker and Shepard) would culminate his career by heading his service in the capacity of Commandant. Perhaps it was the relaxing change of pace from the never-ending string of chores in serving a cutter to the “watch and wait” fire house philosophy of the shoreside rescue operation that created the impression in the minds of many men of the Revenue Cutter Service that the Life-Saving Service required simpler minds and

less ambition than did their own service. Maybe the higher echelons of the Life-Saving Service might ultimately have enhanced their image among their R.C.S. counterparts had they been less concerned with their own empires and more concerned with the operations of their field units.

Had the General Superintendent's Office approached the need for properly training cadets (and future assistant inspectors) with the same enthusiasm as it did the participation of the U.S.L.S.S. in the various expositions across the country, the general image of the Life-Saving Service within the Revenue Cutter Service might have been different. A few weeks spent by cadets at Life-Saving Stations learning the surf, performing drills with the surfmen, pacing the tedious night patrols, and sharing in the mess, might well have prevented the derision attending the word “sandpounder” in later years.

The second seemingly-insignificant incident of the year involved the participation of the Kill Devil Hills Life-Saving Station crew in some experiments being conducted near their station by two young men who usually made bicycles.

Upon learning that the Wright Brothers were attempting to fly an airship they had built, Mr. Kimball felt it advisable that his office be kept current on what was happening out on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. To that end, a telegram was sent to Keeper Ward of the local station by way of the usual telegraph-telephone hook-up used by the service:

“Wire when airship starts on flight for Oregon Inlet and when it returns and whether flight is successful. Telephone Oregon Inlet station to notify you of movements airship that vicinity, which information also wire here. State nature and extent of assistance being given by life savers.”

Two days later, Keeper Ward responded with the following telegram:

“Wright Brothers made two flights today two miles each seventy-five feet high.

Ward”

When Kimball repeatedly reiterated his interest in gaining more than this terse report of the flights, Keeper Ward sent the following report:

“Kill Devil Hills Station  
May 14th 1908  
[To] General Superintendent Life-Saving  
Service Washington, D.C.

Sir:

The Wright Brothers made two Successful flights yesterday of about three miles each this morning they made a flight of about four miles with two men in her this afternoon they made a flight of about eight miles he made a mistake with his Steering gear and she came to the ground head first going at the rate of fifty miles and Completely Wrecked her. They have Suspended this Practis and expect to leave here in a few days. There was no one hurt and no assistance rendered by the Life-Saving Service.

Very Respectfully  
Jesse E. Ward Keeper”

And, less than a week later:

“Kill Devil Hills Station  
May 20th 1908  
General Superintendent Life Saving  
Service

Washington, D. C.  
Sir:

In answer to your letter of the 16th Wish to State that the first telegram stated to Wire when Air ship started for Arregon [Oregon] Inlet. and When returned and extent of

assistance being given by Life Savers this trip was not Taken I wired you on the 13th that the machine had made two Successful flights of two miles each. on the 14th I Wired that the machine made a flight of about eight miles and Completely Wrecked her that there was no one hurt and no assistance rendered by the life Savers but message having to Pass through Several hands in order to reach the apparatus at Wash Woods it was left out that there Was no assistance rendered by the Life Savers at any time only at times Some Member of the Crew would visit the Camp and Would Volanterly help then run the machine in and out of the house

Very Respectfully  
Jesse E. Ward Keeper”

In retrospect we might imagine the sense of awe felt by those early coast guardsmen as they witnessed the flight of man in a power driven flying machine; it was a marvel in itself that their service had acquired power driven life boats. Could they have imagined that one day there would be power driven life boats that flew?



# CHAPTER TWELVE:

## *The End of an Era*

### *Part Two: 1909-1914*

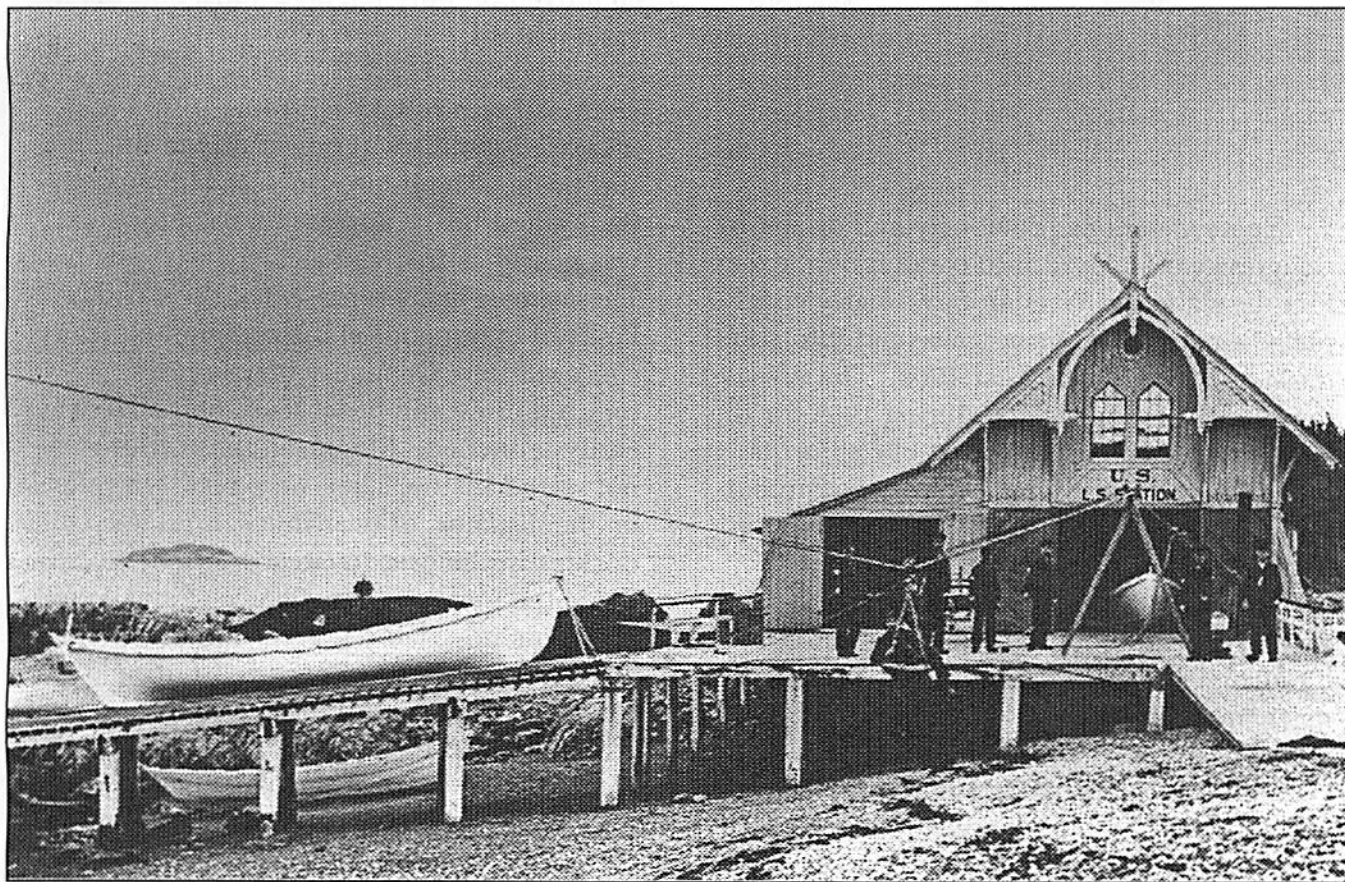
By the end of Fiscal Year 1909, it had become apparent to the officials of the Life-Saving Service that the workload of the Service had shifted in favor of undocumented craft.

Of the total 1,376 vessels involved in instances of distress, 917 were undocumented and of the thirty persons who lost their lives, twenty-two died as a result of accidents to the smaller craft. Naturally the preponderance of dollar damage remained with the larger commercial vessels but this is understandable

when we realize that a small boat can capsize drowning all or part of its occupants and then drift away undamaged.

However, a new danger had made its appearance within the category of undocumented craft which would increase the dollar losses. This was the risk of fire and explosion on the gasoline powered boats which were appearing on the waterways in increasing numbers.

Testimonial to the acceptance of the new workload was the Annual Report of 1909. Unable to stem out-of-hand the increasing small craft accidents, the U.S.L.S.S. did the



*The two primary pieces of equipment utilized by the Life-Saving Service: the surfboat and the breeches buoy. The keeper and his men drilled constantly with both.*



next best thing, it compiled statistics and attempted to analyze them. In a determined effort to categorize those disasters which involved documented vessels from the accidents involving undocumented craft, Kimball separated the two classes of disaster in his Annual Report casualty tables. With regard to loss of life as a result of disasters to documented vessels, the fatal wrecks for the year included the following:

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Charles S. Hirsch</i>	Schooner	10-29-08	2	1-1/2 mile SSE of Paul Gamio Hill, N.C., Station
<i>Florence Shay</i>	Schooner	11-4-08	2	3-1/2 miles South of Little Island, N.C., Station
<i>Yale</i>	Steamer	12-13-08	1	400 ft. East of Buffalo, N.Y. Station
<i>Princeton</i>	Steamer	5-24-09	3	200 ft. NxE of Buffalo, N.Y., Station

No new stations previously authorized by Congress were placed into commission, except that the station at Waadah Bay. Nearly completed the previous year, it was put into commission during Fiscal Year 1909. The lifesaving equipment authorized during 1908 for the Farallone Islands off the coast of California was provided and placed on the government reservation of the Farallon Light Station on South Farallon Island.

Forty-four 34-foot motor life boats were in service during 1909, the remaining nine unpowered boats of that class having been mechanized. Six new 36-foot motor life boats were placed in commission as well during the year, making a total of fifty power life boats in service. Work was undertaken under Captain McLellan's supervision to install single cylinder gasoline motors in some thirty of the service's surf boats.

A clear illustration of the use of these power driven vessels in rescue operation during Fiscal Year 1909 is reflected in the following table extracted from the Annual Report of that year regarding use of U.S.L.S.S. boats.

<i>U.S.L.S.S. Boat Type</i>	<i>Times Trips</i>		<i>Persons</i>
	<i>Used</i>	<i>Made</i>	
Surfboat	907	1161	1024
Power surfboat	200	223	337
Lifeboats	41	41	11
Power lifeboats	333	371	369
Power launches	13	13	7
Small boats (unclassified)	765	912	628
Power small boats	116	122	29
Louisville Station river skiff	29	52	113

Curiously, the breeches buoy, the stalwart of the service during the 19th century, was employed on only ten occasions, and the life car not at all.

Clearly the U.S.L.S.S. response to its new workload was to take advantage of the increased mobility of power driven life and surf boats. The interesting use of "unclassified" small boats, apparently oar propelled, was nearly as frequent as the use of surf boats. These small boats represented the various kinds of extraneous skiffs common at nearly every station. Generally they required a reduced crew and because of their size, were easily launched. Moreover, these craft were not stored inside. They were readily available on the beaches, or near inlets, or tied up to a dock as in the case of Great Lakes Stations. Since the increasing incidence of small craft accidents invariably involved pleasure craft boating, most of them occurred during relatively favorable conditions, or conditions which worsening were no real threat to U.S.L.S.S. surfmen at the oars of a seaworthy dory or bank skiff.

In reality, Kimball's organization was finally doing almost everything it could to meet the impact of small craft accidents; everything,

that is, but try to prevent them from happening in the first place.

The single difficulty clouding all else, was the matter of service personnel. Again in 1909, the General Superintendent pleaded for retirement for lifesavers, citing the fact serious attention was being given to providing certain retirement benefits for employees in the classified federal service and that many of the larger business concerns and municipalities were retiring their faithful civilian employees. He was not successful, needless to say, in his efforts as the average age of his keepers and surfmen escalated.

The advent of the power boat might have invited the closing of a number of open beach stations and the changing workloads might have led to a reconsideration of the virtues of the beach patrol. Reductions in expenses might surely have resulted and though it is idealistic to think that these reductions might have led to a Congressional willingness to award retirement pensions to men of the U.S.L.S.S. Such retirements might well have accommodated the reductions in force. Was it thought of? If it was, it is not recorded. Probably the valid fear that lives would be lost as a result of such cutbacks inhibited any real move in that direction. The wreck reports in the U.S.L.S.S. files might have provided a fine collection of statistics to support such action, but a study in that direction is not in evidence, and it is unlikely that it was ever attempted.

Fifty-three persons died in fiscal year 1910 as a result of marine casualties occurring within the scope of U.S.L.S.S. operations, fourteen of them perished in undocumented craft and thirty-nine on those that were documented.

The trend in emphasis had not shifted back towards documented vessels, far from it. Of the thirty-nine deaths, twenty-three occurred as a result of the wreck of the 1,045 ton Schooner *Czarina* near the entrance to Coos Bay, Oregon. One man survived in that disaster, which occurred under conditions which made rescue impossible. A total of 1,046 undocumented and 417 documented

craft were involved in disasters during that year; 650 of the 1,046 were gasoline powered motor boats.

With regard to the fatal accidents involving documented vessels, the following table reflects those incidents:

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Mizpah</i>	Steamer	12-2-09	3	1-1/2 miles WNW of Peaked Hill Bars, Mass., Station
<i>Frances</i>	Schooner	2-1-10	8	3-1/2 miles South of Big Kinnakeet, N.C., Station
<i>Louis Pablow</i>	Steamer	11-16-09	1	3 miles SE of Sturgeon Bay Canal, Wis., Station
<i>Argo</i>	Steamer	11-26-09	4	1-1/2 miles WSW of Tillamook Bay, Ore., Station
<i>Czarina</i>	Schooner	1-12-10	23	1 mile SW of Coos Bay, Ore., Station

During the course of the year 1910, construction was undertaken on a new station to replace the old one at Galveston, Texas, which had been destroyed in 1900. In the meantime the crew had occupied "temporary," leased quarters. Stations which had existed at Kitty Hawk and Chicamacomico, North Carolina were rebuilt. Extensive repairs and improvements were made to the Erie, Cleveland, Kenosha and Manistee Stations on the Great Lakes, while lesser improvements were made to the Wood End, Pamet River, and Old Harbor, Massachusetts stations and the Nome, Alaska station. The Waaddah Island, Washington, Station was relocated to the mainland and renamed to Baaddah Point with no great improvement noted in pronunciation. Stations authorized at new sites by previous legislation were under construction during

1910 at Lorain, Ohio and Isle of Shoals, New Hampshire.

On June 25, 1910, the last day of the 2nd Session of the 61st Congress, the Senate passed bill S.5677 "to promote the efficiency of the Life-Saving Service" by providing retirement benefits for disabled district superintendents and members of life-saving crews.

A similar bill was introduced in the House of Representatives, but was not acted upon by the committee having it in charge.

On May 5th, 1910, the Secretary of the Treasury, Franklin MacVeagh, made a comprehensive report on both bills which had been referred to him for comment. After expending considerable verbiage on what had transpired in the past, the report once again drew the parallel between the Life-Saving Service and the Army and Navy.

"The life-saver's habitudes and course of life are very similar to those of the soldier and naval sailor. He is enlisted for a specified time of service, after a rigid physical examination to which is added a professional one not required of the soldier and sailor. He is subject to rigid discipline, to constant guard duty, the performance of daily drill, and when occasion requires, to do battle. The nightly patrol of the life-saver however involving long, difficult, and wearisome marches in all conditions of weather, often of especial hardship and exposure, which finds no parallel in the corresponding duty of the soldier and sailor.

In time of war the life-saving stations are admirably adapted for military out posts or pickets. This fact was so apparent at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War that upon request and recommendation of the Secretary of the Navy Congress passed a special act (June 7, 1898) directing that the stations upon the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts be kept open and manned for active service during the months of June and July, when otherwise they would have

been closed, for the sole purpose of cooperating with the Navy. They formed a principal part of the Naval coast guard service throughout the campaign, and according to the report of Capt. John R. Bartlett, United States Navy, superintendent of the Coast signal service, rendered aid of great importance by advising the Navy Department of the movements of Government vessels by means of the service telephone lines, which are connected with the general telegraph systems of the Country. It was at the life-saving station at Jupiter Inlet that the message of Captain Clark, of the battleship *Oregon*, was received when he made land off Jupiter and signaled the safe arrival of his ship with all on board well and ready for battle. In a few minutes the welcome news was in the hands of the Secretary of the Navy. Had the vessels of the enemy (i.e., the fleet of Spanish Admiral Cervera) seriously threatened the Coast, the service of these station crews would have been invaluable in making prompt discovery of their appearance and notifying the authorities in Washington, and also in transmitting orders and intelligence to and from our own fleets. The military discipline of the service and familiarity of its men with the international and service signal codes, and their training in Keeping an alert lookout, eminently fit them for such duty. Upon the occasion of any future war the stations would be again utilized in the same way, which in case of an attempted invasion by the enemy, would subject the men to the actual dangers incurred by soldiers in time of war, since the stations, on account of their importance as outposts, being on the skirmish line as it were, would be the first to invite the attack of the enemy for the suppression of their activities. Indeed, so well is the availability and usefulness of these life-saving stations understood by the Navy that cooperation with them is already provided for. The foregoing would

seen to justify the grant by Congress of the same rates and conditions of retirement that are allowed to the Army, the Navy and the Revenue Cutter Service; and ought also to dispel in the minds of the opponents of the general extension of pensions to other branches of the civil service the apprehension that the passage of the bill could be cited as a precedent for such extension..."

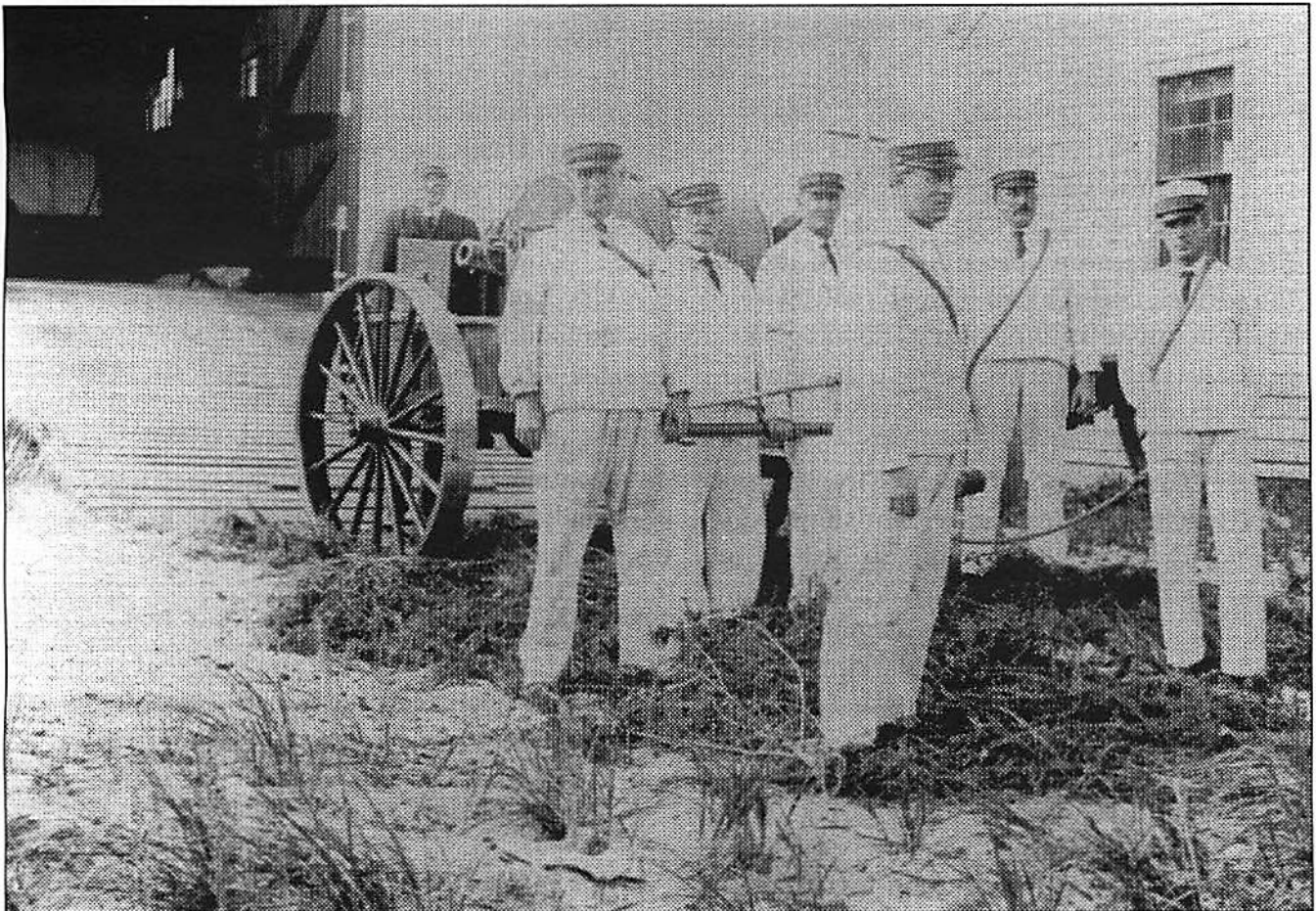
While the Secretary's arguments were not totally successful, he did buoy up hope that eventual passage of retirement legislation would be forthcoming. In his report, he drew the similarity between soldier and sailor and life-saver in the strongest terms yet stated. Without out a doubt, the handwriting was on the wall which would foretell the eventual "militarization" of the U. S. Life-Saving

Service.

In his Annual Report for the Fiscal Year 1911, Kimball remarked upon the similarity between the record of casualties for 1910 and 1911. During the latter year 1,064 out of 1,461 vessel disasters involved undocumented craft, eighteen more than in 1910.

Out of thirty-seven lives lost, fifteen fatalities occurred on small craft; but of the twenty-two who died on documented vessels, again a large number, seventeen, perished during a single disaster. This loss of seventeen lives resulted from the total destruction of a tow of three barges (*Trevorton, Corbin, and Pine Forest*).

The deaths of men on board the tow occurred as the life-savers worked desperately on shore to launch a surf boat and and to lend assistance, thus making the loss of life all the more distressing. Other fatal wrecks to docu-



Those stations without power had to rely on their own muscle power to move the beachcart to the sight of the shipwreck.

mented vessels during 1911 were as follows, all occurring on the coast of Massachusetts.

Vessel	Rig	Date	Lives lost	Place
<i>Olive May</i>	Gas Steamer	12-7-10	1	1-1/2 miles South of Head, Mass., Station
<i>Pine Forest</i>	Barge	1-10-11	5	1/2 mile NNW of Peaked Hill Bars Station
<i>Terverton</i>	Barge	1-10-11	7	1/2 mile NNW of Peaked Hill Bars Station
<i>Corbin</i>	Barge	1-10-11	5	1/2 mile NW of Peaked Hill Bars Station
<i>Hope</i>	Gas Steamer	3-14-11	4	3/4 mile East of Gloucester, Mass., Station

During the year 1911 the post of Inspector of Life-Saving Stations was vacated. Also during the year, more power boats were added to the service and the use of such craft was again heralded in the Annual Report.

In 1911, the station at Wachapreague, Virginia, was rebuilt and extensive repairs were made to stations at Paul Gamiels Hill, North Carolina, and Michigan City, Indiana.

The General Superintendent summed up his position, after expressing his disappointment over the failure of the Congress to authorize retirement and pension benefits for the men of the U.S.L.S.S., by remarking on the generosity of Congress to provide funds for equipment, "commodious" stations, and appliances but on its failure to complete the picture, that of providing retirement pay for "the men on the firing line."

The well-established trend towards the increased involvement of the service with small craft, particularly gasoline-powered

motor boats, continued in 1912. During that year there was only one fatal disaster involving a documented vessel. That single instance was the eight net ton gasoline launch, *North Star No. 1*, with the loss of six lives on January 20, 1912 at the north side of the entrance to Coos Bay, Oregon.

Ten other persons died that same year in accidents to other small craft. There were 1,730 vessels in trouble during 1912, 455 of which were documented; 817 of the undocumented craft were gasoline motor boats. Of the 455 documented vessels, 165 were propelled by gasoline motors.

The accomplishments of the service included the completion of stations at Eagle Harbor, Michigan and Green Hill, Rhode Island, which had been authorized in 1904 and 1906 respectively.

The year 1912 also saw the rebuilding of the stations at Quogue, Smith's Point and Tiana on the coast of Long Island. Extensive repairs to the Kewaunee, Wisconsin station were also completed. And Capt. Daniel P. Foley, U.S.R.C.S. was also appointed as Inspector of Life-Saving Stations, a post he would hold until 1915.

One of the most disastrous years of the service from the standpoint of lives lost on documented vessels was experienced during the operating season of 1912-1913. In fact 1912 exceeded every year, but 1878, in that department as seventy-three persons were lost. Another fourteen died in mishaps involving small undocumented craft. The high toll might be rationalized somewhat by the fact that forty-nine of the seventy-three were lost as a result of disasters involving two vessels the *Rosecrans* (33) and the *Mimi* (16). Both wrecks occurred on the West Coast under circumstances which prevented successful rescue operations by, in Kimball's words, "any human agency."

Fatal wrecks to documented vessels in 1913 included the following:

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Margaret</i>	Steamer	12-30-12	1	3-1/2 miles SW of Avalon, N.J., Station
<i>Laura Tompkins</i>	Schooner	3-2-13	1	10-3/4 miles SE of Cobb Island, Va., Station
<i>John Maxwell</i>	Schooner	11-2-12	6	3/4 mile SE of New Inlet, N.C., Station
<i>Two Brothers</i>	Gas Steamer	11-23-12	3	350 yds. West of Pentwater, Mich., Station
<i>E. M. Peck</i>	Steamer	6-11-13	7	300 yds. west of Racine Wis., Station
<i>Lillebonne</i>	Barge	8-29-12	1	1 mile SSE of Point Bonita, Cal., Station
<i>Osprey</i>	Gas Steamer	11-1-12	5	3 miles SW of Coos Bay, Ore., Station
<i>Rosecrans</i>	Steamer	1-7-13	33	8 miles NW of Point Adams, Wash., Station
<i>Mimi</i>	Bark	4-6-13	16	10 miles NW of Tillamook Bay, Ore., Station

During 1913, a total of 1,743 vessels met disaster of one form or another, 1,151 of these were undocumented; 831 of the undocumented vessels were powered by gasoline motors and 207 of the documented vessels in difficulty were similarly propelled.

More funds were channeled into station improvements during 1913. The stations at Blue Point, Moriches, and Rockaway, Long Island were rebuilt along with the station at City Point, Massachusetts. The station at Brazos, Texas was destroyed by a hurricane in October; it too was rebuilt.

By the end of the Fiscal Year 1913, forty 34-foot and twenty-eight 36-foot motor life boats were in service, as were fifty-six motor propelled Beebe-McLellan surf boats. These boats were used to land 2,748 of the total 4,096 persons taken ashore by the life-savers that year. Despite the incidence of fatal shipwrecks reminiscent of by-gone years, the breeches buoy was employed on only eleven occasions.

The General Superintendent concluded in his Annual Report for the year 1913 that further aversion to the subject of retirement pay for his men seemed to be but "a waste of words." He felt it to be his duty however, "to continue to plead the cause." And he did just that. Kimball's summation-almost in exasperation-is significant because of its note of bitterness regarding the failure of retirement bills in Congress but represents his first official endorsement of a new agency to be called the "Coast Guard."

Fiscal Year 1914 marked the 66th anniversary of the Federal Life-Saving Establishment. For the last forty-four years, the organization had seasonally employed skilled surfmen whose duty it was to man the various items of life-saving equipment.

The operations season of 1913-1914 was not much similar to the early years of the organized service. There was little resemblance either in equipment, or in boats, or in the stations themselves. The men were different too, now in the twentieth century, the surfmen were educated or at least they could read and write-an ability lacking during the early days, even among keepers; and they were better disciplined and drilled. The surroundings of most of the stations had also changed considerably; many, once isolated beyond the path of civilization, were now located in the midst of busy seaside communities.

The bulk of the workload which had once centered upon the many sailing vessels that navigated the Atlantic and Lakes coastline now had shifted in emphasis to smaller gasoline motor driven launches. And where the

natural elements of wind, sea and tide had been the variables contributing to the cause of vessels disastrously stranding on the beaches patrolled by U.S.L.S.S. surfmen now boats with crotchety mechanical contrivances called gasoline motors which unpredictably wheezed and snorted and failed, and once proud sailing vessels now reduced to powerless barges propelled only by a towing hawser, cast those who depended upon their mechanical propulsion performance into situations of peril never ventured upon nor experienced in the days of sail and with a suddenness which fouled the best efforts of their rescuers.

Fiscal year 1914 witnessed the involvement of some 1,937 vessels in accident or disaster, 1,415 of which were undocumented vessels less than five registered tons, 953 of those small craft were powered by gasoline motors, 180 of the 522 documented craft were similarly propelled. Twenty-six lives were lost on documented vessels and twelve died as a result of accidents involving the smaller undocumented variety. Fatal disasters of documented vessels occurred as follows in 1914:

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Rig</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lives lost</i>	<i>Place</i>
<i>Oakland</i>	Schooner	10-13-13	2	2 miles North of Pamet River, Mass., Station
<i>Castagna</i>	Bark	2-17-14	4	3-1/2 miles South of Cahoons Hollow, Mass., Station
<i>Jacob S. Winslow</i>	Schooner	3-1-14	1	2-1/2 miles South of Block Island Station
<i>A. G. Ropes</i>	Sch-barge	12-26-13	5	1 mile NE of Forked River, N.J., Station
<i>Undaunted</i>	Sch-barge	12-26-13	5	1 mile NE of Forked River, N.J., Station

<i>Charles K. Buckley</i> Schooner	4-15-14	7	2-1/2 miles South of Monmouth Beach, N.J., Station
<i>Richard F. C. Hartley</i> Schooner	9-2-13	2	2 miles SE of Chicamacomico, N.C., Station

It was perhaps not inappropriate that the worst of the fatal shipwrecks of the year should have occurred on the sandy beaches of New Jersey, and within that boundary between Sandy Hook and Little Egg Inlet where it all started in 1848.

During 1914, in anticipation perhaps of the probability of the Service's change in status and management, and as a result of several natural calamities, a number of repairs, improvements, rebuildings were undertaken at the various stations. The existing stations at Nags Head and Poyners Hill, North Carolina, were rebuilt. Extensive improvements were made at Point Allerton, Massachusetts, Ocean City, Maryland, and Burnt Island, Maine. Erosion and storm damage made it necessary to effect relocations and repairs at the stations at Chatham, Massachusetts; Hereford Inlet and Corson Inlet, New Jersey; Velasco, Texas; Rocky Point, Long Island; Watch Hill, Rhode Island; and Point Adams, Washington.

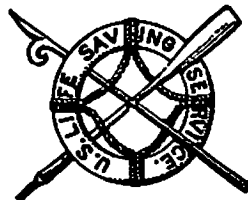
The station at Nome, Alaska was totally destroyed during a severe storm and a catastrophic storm on the Great Lakes in November 1913 caused considerable damage to the bulkheads, piers, and launchways to stations at Cleveland, Port Austin, Harbor Beach, Lake View Beach, and Pointe aux Barques.

On 1 May and again on 8 May 1914, the General Superintendent of the Life-Saving Service and the Chief of the Revenue Cutter Service Division, Capt. Ellsworth P. Bertholf, U.S.R.C.S., testified before the House of Representatives Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. The subject was Bill S 2337 "to create the Coast Guard by combining, therein the existing Life-Saving Service and the Revenue-Cutter Service." Both Kimball

and Bertholf spoke in favor of the merger of their respective organizations at the hearings on the bill.

In the Annual Report of Fiscal Year 1914, Kimball reported that the legislative proposal to unite the Life-Saving and Revenue Cutter Services under the name Coast Guard had passed the Senate, had been favorably reported by the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce and was on the House calendar. He concluded his report on that matter by saying: "The Life-Saving Establishment had long stood at the head of all Kindred institutions and it is inconceivable that Congress will allow it to run down and lose its efficiency for want of legislation that alone will rehabilitate and reserve it."

Thus ended the last full year of operation of the United States Life-Saving Service. On 28 January 1915 a new organization would come into being, the United States Coast Guard. The new would achieve the same fame for humane accomplishment as had the old. Its motto would be "Semper Paratus"-always ready-and Kimball could with pride reflect upon the part he had played in the creation of that service and the reputation it would earn. Of course, new emphasis would be placed on the value of floating units in pursuit of marine safety. This was in keeping with the tradition of the Coast Guard's new leadership. But buried deep within the hurrahs for the new service would rest that never forgotten commitment of the sandpounders of the Life-Saving Service: "You have to go out but you don't have to come back."





# EPILOGUE

**S**ince November 1871 through Fiscal Year 1914, the Life-Saving Service could reflect with pride upon its accomplishments:

Vessels involved	28,121
Persons involved	178,741
Lives Lost	1,455
Persons succor aid at stations	28,711
Days succor afforded	59,659
Value of vessels involved	\$261,746,065
Value of cargoes	\$93,655,019
Total value of property involved	\$355,401,084
Value of property saved	\$288,871,237
Value of property lost	\$66,529,847

In the years that followed the creation of the U.S. Coast Guard, the stations formerly occupied on a seasonal basis by the U.S.L.S.S. were manned year-round by Coast Guardsmen who wore the distinctive uniform of the surfman. While the merger preserved the function from certain destruction, it was not without its difficulties, especially between the personnel of the two services and the men that succeeded them.

By the mid 1950's, when the dwindling surfman rate was finally abolished, much, but not all, of the old animosity between the cutter men and the "sandpounders" had vanished. Many a Coast Guardsman as late as the 1970's could still recall when as a boot recruit he was caught saluting what he thought was a Chief Petty Officer, which in reality was a surfman. And many of the old timers of the Coast Guard will still remark "Surfmen? Oh yeah, the "sandpounders," they never got transferred or went to sea; an odd bunch they were!"

The loss of a tradition for courage and dedicated service, buried perhaps on purpose but probably out of neglect, was accompanied by an obsession the Coast Guard acquired, during

the days of rum-running, for being solely a seagoing outfit. This led to a general depreciation of the Coast Guard operational shore units. In turn this led to a further failure to recognize the need for competent and realistic personnel manning of marine safety commands, the vast majority of which are shore based. This situation obtained until, spurred by the transfer of the Coast Guard to the new Department of Transportation saw the spotlight once again focused upon the operational shore-based command, and a growing awareness of the need for professional manpower in pursuit of marine safety. To in any way lessen the former was, as the history of the U.S.L.S.S. demonstrated, to invite disaster.



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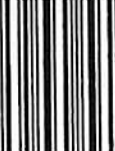
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Robert F. Bennett

# Sand pounders



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