

THE LIFE SAVING STATION IN POINT LOOKOUT

By Point Lookout Historian, Mel Brown

Courtesy of Audrey Brown

The early logs of the Station were very brief and generally routine. They covered weather and sea conditions, patrols maintained, ships sighted, lifeboat drills, and unusual incidents. The weather seems to have been rather bad during the winter months of the 1870's, similar to what we have had this past January-February 1976. Here is an interesting (and rather amusing) excerpt from the log of November 27, 1878, to illustrate the weather then:

“A very heavy storm commences this day at 2 o'clock P.M. It rained and blowed a perfect gale with very full tide.

Charles Smith, the 6 o'clock P.M. watch, did not make signal, his lamp blew out when half way to Station 28. He tried to light his lamp, but it blew so hard and rained so fast that his wick got all wet and he could not light it—so he went the rest of the way without signal.”

The passing ships were mostly schooners, barks, sloops, fishing smacks and the like. Steamships are mentioned, but are very much in the minority. The materials contained in the Station inventory included many items which are not generally used today; such items as stove grates, signal oil, lanterns and lantern globes, blacking brush, a wagon, a shooting carriage and an iron boat (not the surf boat).

The Station is not fully described, but from bits and pieces, it can be determined that the main building was a rather substantial affair. It included a number of sleeping rooms, a living room, a kitchen, and a “water closet.” Five tons of coal were burned during the winter and the

Station was manned by seven men. Six were Lifesavers (also called Surfmen) and the seventh was in charge and had the title of Keeper. Quincy Raynor was Keeper during the 1870's and the others assigned to the Station were Daniel Bedell, William Herbert, Andrew Rhodes, George Raynor, John Edwards and Daniel W. Smith. (Bedell, Raynor, and Smith are names of old Freeport families.)

During those years the Station was manned only from the middle of November until March 31st. During the remainder of the year the men returned to their homes on the mainland. For instance, after March 31, 1876, only occasional entries were made in the log by the Keeper and they were quite informal. He described how he had visited the Station, swept it, aired it out, oiled some of the equipment to keep it from rusting, then locked the Station and returned home. The Station was reopened November 15, 1876, and the log resumed with daily entries. The Keeper received \$50 every three months for his services and continued throughout the year. Presumably, he also received free room and board when on duty.

While their exact locations are not given in the log pages that we have, it appears that there were four stations along our part of the Long Island coast and they covered from Jones Inlet to Atlantic Beach. Jones Inlet was somewhat further east than it is today.

On August 13, 1874, the visit of Captain Henry E. Huntting was described. The log stated that the Station was completely inspected, the surf boat was launched and the men were thoroughly drilled. On another occasion the men practiced with the gun from the launching carriage and found that it carried the rescue line for a distance of 420 yards.

In March 1874, a sail boat from East Rockaway containing two men, Daniel DeMott and H. Abrams, capsized opposite the Station. The two men were taken off by the life savers and given shelter at the Station for two days. Another incident occurred in October 1874 when the schooner Webster Kelley loaded with 277 tons of coal bound for Boston from Philadelphia was lost in a heavy fog, but the six men on board were saved. Five of them were from Deer Isle, Maine, and the sixth from England. On February 1, 1875, the pilot boat, George W. Blunt, was stricken off the beach. The men of the Station saved the crew of six and all their property.

On February 28, 1875, the men of two Stations cooperated in the rescue of the men on the sloop Claricy which went around and was wrecked. No lives were lost and the men of the other station took charge of the survivors and the wreck.

On February 18, 1876, the schooner Alice T. Higgins, 91 tons, loaded with oysters from Chesapeake Bay and bound for Boston was saved with its six crew members and 2/3 of its cargo by the men of the two stations with the assistance of steam tug Emily A. Foote from Gull Port.

Another sea tragedy was recorded for December 12, 1876. The schooner Kate Grant, 132 tons and from Ellsworth, Maine, was loaded with lumber from Jacksonville, Fla, and was bound for New York. She went ashore "at five o'clock on the last watch" opposite the Station. The life savers boarded her and took off the Captain, Mate and six crew members, all of whom were from the state of Maine. By the next morning she was a wreck on the beach and her crew then attempted to

salvage what they could during the next two days. On December 17, 1876, the log described how the *Kate Grant* was “going down in the sand very fast.”

This is the way the log recorded the bad weather on February 24, 1877. “This day begins with a very heavy East storm, tides running very full, surf very large—saw no vessels all day ---.” Few words are said, but we can sense the drama. Two new men showed up in the roster in the fall of 1877—Alanson Raynor and Jeremiah Robbins. Winter consumption of coal was again five tons.

Christmas Day, December 25, 1877, was a rather momentous occasion for Life Saving Station #29. It was first visited by Captain Henry E. Huntting, described as Superintendent of Life Saving Stations, District 3. He gave keeper Raynor 14 six-cent postage stamps and 3 three-cent stamps. This fact was entered in the log and apparently the stamps were to be used in mailing log reports periodically to headquarters. The Station was also visited by a Board of Examiners, Lieutenant Shoemaker, Lieutenant Walker, and Dr. Sautell. The Board arrived late in the day, stayed over night and then inspected the Station and drilled the men thoroughly the next morning. At completion the Board was taken to the next Station. Dr. Sautell, by the way, was continually instructing the men in a method of resuscitation and seemed to be an authority.

During the third watch on January 4, 1878, the Brig, *Sarah M. Loring*, struck the beach opposite Station #30. She hailed from Portsmouth, was bound for New York, and carried a load of sugar. She had eleven persons aboard, nine men and two women. Early in the morning of January 5th, with the wind “blowing a gale and the surf

large”, the entire crew of the Station went to the assistance of Keeper Johnson and his men of Station #30 and saved all on board the Loring. They used breeches buoy and surf boats. All of this is recorded in a matter of fact manner, the same as on January 31, 1878, during a very violent hail storm when a continuous watch was kept from the “hills” (dunes) day and night. The beach was flooded by the surf and the following day the weather was still bad.

Apparently, the Sarah M. Loring disaster involved a matter which did not show in the log, but on February 2, 1878, Lieutenant Shoemaker visited the Station and held an investigation about the Loring. No details were given, but the result was that two of the life savers were dismissed from the Service. On February 4, 1878, they were replaced with Theodore Wright and Melvin Smith. It was about this time that the men of the Station were ordered to make signal contact on each end of their beach patrols with the men from the adjoining Stations.

On June 7, 1878, there is an interesting entry. Liuet. Shoemaker visited Keeper Quincy Raynor for the purpose of ascertaining and obtaining title to land for the purpose of erecting a new station between Jones Inlet and “Jacks” Inlet. (We believe that the name should properly have been Zachs because there was an inlet at that time where Zachs Bay is now.) Raynor entered in the log that he did all in his power to help and the land claim was obtained.

Some new men were added to the crew during September 1878. They were Hiram Raynor and Oliver Golden. During the early morning of November 5, 1878, Hiram Raynor on patrol discovered the schooner, Gazell, which had run aground on the bars of Jones Inlet.

Her home port was Patchogue. She was loaded with lumber from Albany and was destined for Fire Island. Captain E. K. Mott was Master. The ship was in bad condition and all assistance was rendered. The lumber floated ashore over the following days and the owner was notified.

There is no information in the log which indicates that a new Station was build across the inlet, but a good deal of construction work was done on the existing buildings of our Station during the summer of 1878 by a number of carpenters and masons.

On December 19th and 20th, 1878, the crew of the Station assisted the crew of another Station in rescuing the crew, stores, loose articles, etc., of the Schooner Eliz. A. Hooper of Camden, New Jersey, which was loaded with coal from Philadelphia and was bound for Rhode Island. The ship had gone aground on the bars of Jones Inlet.

Another disaster occurred on March 19th, 1879, when the Schooner Eva L. Leonard from Boston bound for Charleston, S.C., 115 tons, loaded with a general cargo, ran aground on the bars of Jones Inlet and became a wreck.

We have not had copied any of the log pages between October 1879 and January 1908. Some day we may go back and study those pages with more time than Jerry Boyle and Al Thompson were able to take.

The logs of 1908 were much more formal than those during the 1870 years. They followed a pre-printed form and included a good deal of information. We have several pages dated in January and February 1908 which show that on January 24, 1908, a bad storm with a very high

surf, heavy N.E. winds, snow, barometer at 2970 and temperature in the 20's caused substantial damage to the Station. The boat house was swept off its foundation, the store house was down, the main building door was broken in, the beach was cut away, and all buildings were left in a dangerous position with little hope of saving them. Also one barrel of kerosene oil and two tons of coal were lost. The Station was manned at that time by six men and the Keeper. The latter was Andras Seaman. The log of February 14, 1908, said that they had begun moving the buildings and on February 22, 1908, it stated that the storehouse was on a new site, the boathouse was neatly there, and that they were to begin on the Station building proper the following Monday. (We have learned from other sources that our Station was originally located about one mile west in the area which was known as Nassau by the Sea. After this storm in 1908 it moved to its new location on Freeport Ave., now occupied by the Community Church.)

We have several pages of logs during 1917 when the Station was operated by the Coast Guard. There are several notations of submarine activity off shore and on July 4, 1917, a warning was received from the United States Navy that a German submarine was sighted and a two masted schooner near the submarine was considered suspicious. One other incident was reported on June 24, 1917. The ferry boat Salem from Freeport to Point Lookout was disabled two miles N.E. of the Station at 4 P.M. There were 50 passengers on board and 42 were taken off by the men of the Station.

The last of the log pages available to us are dated between 1929 and 1930. One incident that was described was a substantial fire in summer cottages in the west end of Point Lookout on September 15,

1928. The Coast Guard reached the scene first and was later replaced by the Long Beach Fire Dept. (The Point Lookout Volunteer Fire Company was not started until 1931.) The log of January 6, 1929, described the wreck of the trawler, Henrietta, in a heavy gale and the loss of three men. A fourth was saved. The wreck was searched by the men of the Station for liquor because she was on a “suspected list,” but none was found. The body of one of the men lost, Chester S. Carmen of Baldwin, was found two miles west of the Station of January 11th. Another evidence of Coast Guard activity during the days of Prohibition was recorded on July 2, 1930, when a Coast Guard picket boat on patrol in Jones Inlet seized a motor boat loaded with assorted liquors. No one was on board. The District Commander ordered the seized boat quickly taken to the Barge office in New York City. During 1929 Chief Boatswain Mate E. R. Burch was in charge of the Point Lookout Station and in 1930 it was C. B. M. Palmer S. Midgett.

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