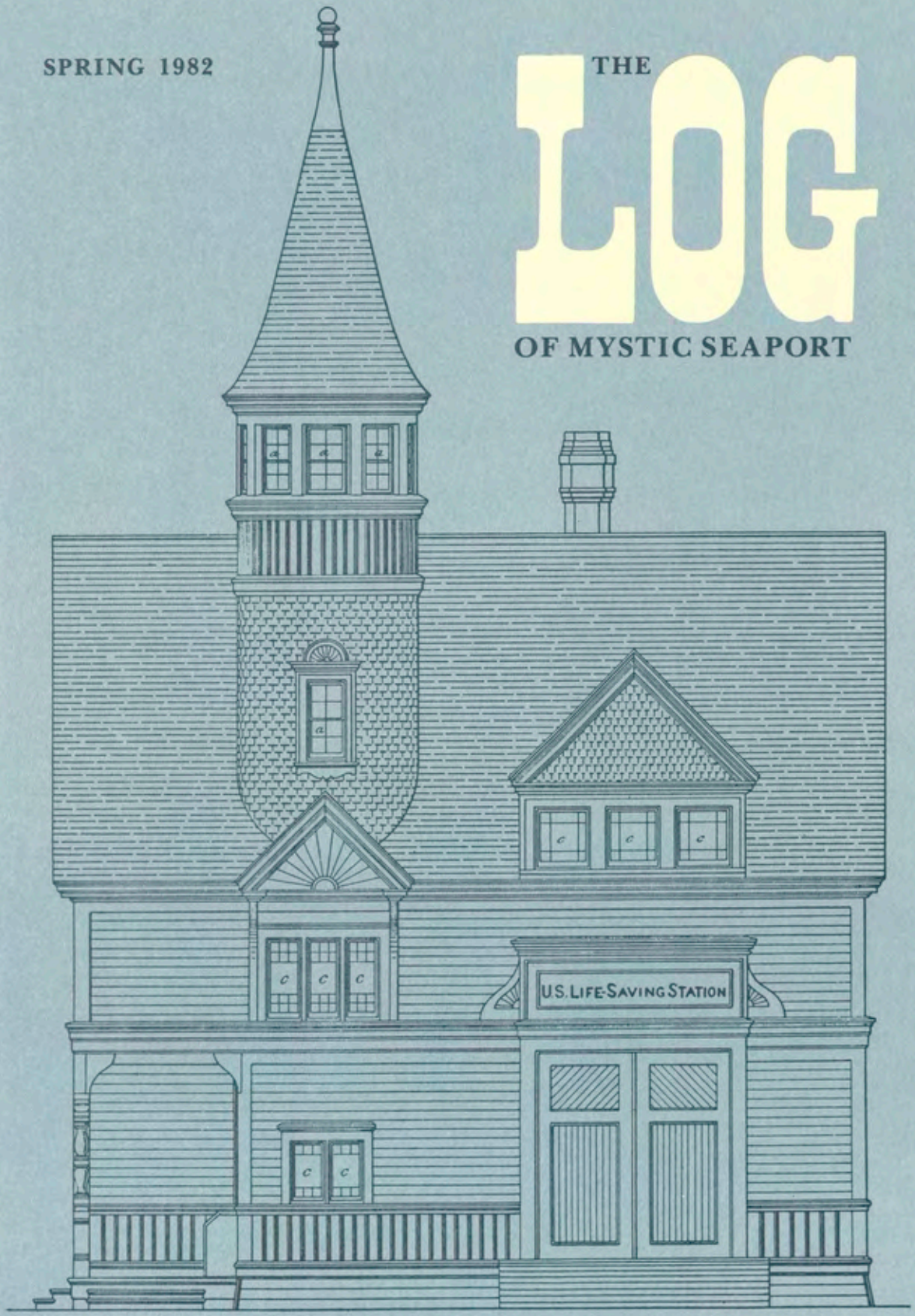
SPRING 1982

THE LOG OF MYSTIC SEAPORT



Designed by Paul J. Pelz, Architect.

Front Elevation

Facing S.W.

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The Log of Mystic Seaport (ISSN 0024-5828) is published quarterly by Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Connecticut 06355. Subscriptions are by membership only. Contributions of previously unpublished articles and pictures are welcome. Editorial guidelines for prospective authors are available from the Publications Department.

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The Log of Mystic Seaport is abstracted in *America: History and Life* and *Historical Abstracts.* It is also available in microform from University Microfilms International, Department F. A., Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

COVER: *Plan of U.S. Life-Saving Station at Jerry's Point, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Paul J. Pelz designed this Queen Anne style building in 1882.*

BACK COVER: *Plan of U.S. Life-Saving Station at Cape Elizabeth, Maine. Designed by Albert B. Bibb, this unique station was built in 1885. (Both plans, Center for Cartographic and Architectural Archives, Records of the U.S. Coast Guard, Record Group 26, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.)*

Volume 34, Number 1 / Spring 1982

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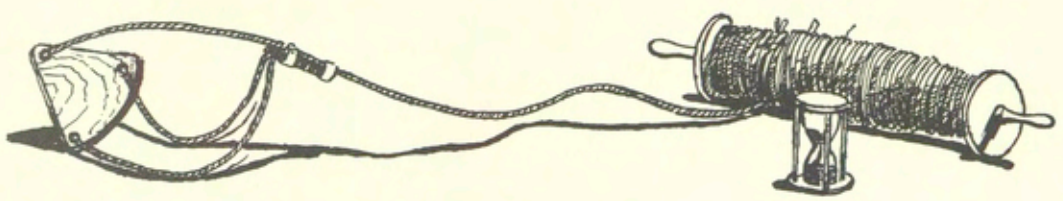
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SIGHTINGS



One purpose of Mystic Seaport Museum is so basic and so much a part of many other activities that it is seldom singled out and acknowledged. That is simply to foster scholarship in the broad field of maritime studies. In many areas we sponsor research projects among the staff as part of their normal work, but we also hope to stimulate scholarly work by individuals among the Museum's staff, its members, students, and others, outside the normal work of the Museum. During 1981 two new Seaport programs were begun to encourage research and the dissemination of the resulting information.

One of these undertakings grew out of the recognition by members of the Curatorial, Education, and Publication Departments, that nowhere was there a forum for discussion of the maritime history of Southern New England. In November 1981 the first annual Mystic Seaport Maritime History Symposium brought together nearly 100 amateur and professional historians and maritime enthusiasts for a day of lectures and discussion. With topics ranging from menhaden fisheries to marine auctions, from steamboats to shipwrecks, a great deal of information was exchanged. November 1982 will see the second symposium.

The other newly initiated program was the prize article contest for *The Log of Mystic Seaport*. By offering a financial award, we hoped to prompt authors with original maritime research to develop their information in article form and make it available to others through publication in *The Log*. When this project was announced we had 50 inquiries from nineteen states. We also learned that both amateur and professional scholars need the tranquility of summer in order to write. After shifting our deadline to the fall we received a number of entries which were read by the members of the Editorial Board of *The Log*. Board members were not aware of the identities of the authors until the winning article was selected.

That winning essay is featured in this issue and gives us a careful study of the life-saving stations that were once so numerous along our coast. The author of this piece is Wick York, who is currently working toward a Master of Arts degree in Historic Preservation at Boston University. This topic, in an expanded form, will become his Master's thesis. Wick is a native of Stonington, Connecticut, and began work as a restoration carpenter on the Seaport staff several years before beginning his graduate work. He is to be congratulated on this fine study which was the unanimous choice of the Editorial Board.

In this issue will also be found the official announcement of the second prize article contest. I urge anyone interested to write for detailed information and not to be intimidated. Share with our members the product of your research!

It is envisioned that both the symposium and the prize article contest will be carried on for many years. We hope through these channels to stimulate further interest in the field of maritime studies.

J. Revell Carr

The Architecture of the U.S. Life-Saving Stations

WICK YORK

The United States Life-Saving Service was formally established as an independent agency of the Treasury Department by an act of Congress on 18 June 1878. Created for the purpose of rescuing victims of coastal sea disasters it was the only exclusively governmental establishment of its kind in the world. All other lifesaving organizations were either private or volunteer societies.

However, the history of the Service itself and other organized efforts at lifesaving go back nearly 100 years prior to its founding. The Massachusetts Humane Society, a volunteer group organized in 1786 and incorporated in 1791, was the first organization in the United States formed solely to save the lives of shipwrecked mariners.[1]

The Society's rescue efforts began with the building of small unmanned huts on desolate sections of the Massachuetts coast to shelter shipwreck victims who were able to make it to shore. The first was built on Lovell's Island in Boston Harbor in 1789. They were probably crude one-story wood frame buildings, approximately 16′ x 24′ in dimension, sheathed entirely with shingles and outfitted with only a stove and some food supplies. In 1807 the first lifeboat station was erected at Cohasset. While it too was a simple one-story structure, it must have been somewhat larger than the shelter huts to accommodate a surfboat and other rescue apparatus. By 1845 the Society maintained eighteen lifeboat stations and numerous huts of refuge.

Although the Humane Society was successful in reducing the number of casualties from maritime disasters along the Massachusetts coast, few such organizations existed in other areas. The need for a national network of lifesavers was apparent. Unreliable navigational aids, inaccurate charts and sailing directions, and scarce and inefficient lighthouses accounted for numerous shipwrecks and stranded crews.[2]

Eighteen forty-eight marks the inception of the U.S. Life-Saving Service and the beginnings of a national system. In August of that year Representative William A. Newell of New Jersey secured an appropriation of $10,000 to provide "surfboats, rockets and carronades, and other necessary apparatus for the better protection of life and property from shipwrecks on the Coast of New Jersey between Sandy Hook and Little Egg Harbor."[3] Prior to this the only Congressional appropriation made for lifesaving rescue efforts was $5,000 in 1847 "for furnishing the lighthouses on the Atlantic coast with the means of rendering assistance to shipwrecked mariners."[4] That expenditure remained largely unused and was eventually given to the Massachusetts Humane Society.

The Newell Act provided funds for building eight unmanned New Jersey life-saving stations, the first at Spermaceti Cove, near Sandy Hook. All were little more than crude one-and-a-half-story frame boathouses, 16′ wide by 28′ long. The single room on the first floor housed the surfboat and other rescue equipment while a small loft above was used for storage. On the outside, each was covered with two or three layers of shingles on the walls and roof and painted or whitewashed.[5]

Numerous additional appropriations



Spermaceti Cove Station, Sandy Hook, New Jersey, the first U.S. life-saving station, built in 1849. Its design is typical of the eight stations constructed after the Newell Act. Photograph taken in 1899 and used in a 1902 illustrated lecture on the Life-Saving Service by Lieutenant Worth G. Ross, Revenue Cutter Service. (Courtesy of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy Museum)

were made during the next six years. In 1849 Congress approved $20,000 for the construction of eight stations on Long Island and six more along the New Jersey coast. Eighteen fifty saw the building of eight more Long Island stations, one at Watch Hill, Rhode Island, and the extension of the Service to North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Texas. In 1853 and 1854 a total of $42,500 was appropriated to build twenty-three lifeboat stations on Long Island and New Jersey, twenty-three lifeboat stations on Lake Michigan, and several others at various places along the Atlantic coast and Great Lakes. By 1854 there were 137 lifeboats stationed along the coast of the U.S., 55 of which were located in New Jersey and on Long Island.[6]

While the number of life-saving stations had risen dramatically since 1848 there were still many problems plaguing the Service, which contributed to great loss of life from maritime disasters. To improve this situation, in 1853 a superintendent was appointed for the Atlantic and Lake coasts, and for the first time paid keepers were placed in charge of the stations. By 1869 surfmen were offered pay as well, but only at alternate stations during the winter months.

A number of fatal disasters along the Atlantic coast during the winter of 1870-71 demonstrated a lack of adequate protection resulting from an inefficient service in need of greater organization and more stations.[7] A survey in the summer of 1871 revealed undisciplined crews, stations in ruins, and rescue equipment either missing or in disrepair. A complete reorganization of the entire service was necessary. Incompetent keepers were removed and replaced by the most skilled boatmen, and for the first time a superintendent in charge of the entire service, Sumner I. Kimball, was appointed.

The investigation also found that the stations were too far apart for the crews of neighboring stations to be of assistance during a disaster, and steps were taken to place them within three to five miles of each other. To bring this about, eighteen new and larger stations were ordered for New Jersey and Long Island, while some existing stations were to be moved to new locations. Plans were also made to enlarge some of the older buildings to provide for additional equipment, and accommodations for the keeper, his crew of six, and any shipwreck survivors.

In New Jersey the original 1871 orders called for the construction of twelve new 12′ x 18′ two-story houses and the modification of all existing twenty-eight stations. However, because of previous bad experiences in altering a few boathouses on Long Island, new buildings were instead constructed at most of the old station sites. The old structures were disposed of, their parts often put to use in the new buildings.[8]

On Long Island, six additional stations, similar to those in New Jersey, were constructed on new sites, while twenty older

ones were entirely rebuilt at their original locations. The rebuilt stations probably followed the same plans and specifications as the new ones. These new Long Island and New Jersey stations, measuring 42′ long by 18′ wide and shingled on their roofs and sides, were often referred to as "red houses" since many were painted that color.[9]

In 1872 the Service was extended to Massachusetts with the construction on Cape Cod of nine stations identical to the twenty rebuilt on Long Island. In March of 1873 Congress appropriated $100,000 for additional stations. The following year twenty-two new stations were established: five in Maine, one in New Hampshire, five in Massachusetts, one on Block Island (the original structure now on exhibit at Mystic Seaport Museum), three in Virginia, and seven in North Carolina.[10]

Not only were these 1874 stations nearly identical in dimension and detail, but, for the first time, it appears that serious consideration was given to the architectural style of life-saving stations. Elaborate detailing of the exterior trim leads one to believe that these stations were architect-designed. Further evidence of this lies in the fact that these stations were carried out in what is referred to as the "Stick style." This style of wood frame construction, popular for residences built between 1860 and 1890, evolved out of the Carpenter Gothic of the mid-nineteenth century. In keeping with the idea that architecture should be "truthful," the Stick style expressed the structure's inner frame through exterior ornamentation. Such buildings were highlighted by functionally appearing decorative wood bracketing in the roof gable and under the eaves, diagonal boards applied over horizontal or vertical siding, and the occasional use of vertical battens. All worked to symbolize the structural skeleton within. Overhanging eaves, steeply pitched gable roofs, towers, and pointed dormers were also characteristic features.

The stations were "plain, yet picturesque, and similar in general dimensions and arrangement, though varying somewhat in outward design according to location – those near cities or popular watering-places being in keeping with their surroundings and presenting a more finished appearance

Sandy Hook Station, Sandy Hook, New Jersey, typical of the forty "red house" stations built along the Jersey shore in 1871-72. Constructed in 1872, it was the second of three life-saving stations built on this site between 1849 and 1891. (79.104)



White Head Island Station, off Spruce Head, Maine. The pre-1880 photograph shows the "original 1874 type" station without any of the alterations or additions often made soon after construction. Note the side buttresses. This station, which was one of twenty-two built from the same plan in 1874, still stands. (Courtesy of Richard Boonisar)



than those on desolate beaches."[11] Each station had "a boat-room and a mess-room, or kitchen, each provided with convenient closets and lockers, and above, two sleeping apartments and a storeroom."[12]

The Act of 1874 also provided for appropriations used to construct forty-one additional stations during the following three years. An appropriation in 1878 authorized the building of thirty-seven more. While all of these seventy-eight stations were of the same basic style as the original twenty-two, two variations, distinctly different from the original 1874 type, emerged.

The first variation, built between 1875 and 1876, was nearly identical to the original 1874 type, but had more angular stick-work in the gable ends and more elaborate roof lookout decks. All buildings of this type had two windows on either side of the roof peak directly underneath the deck, probably for observation in bad weather. Most, possibly all, stations had two separate lookout platforms, one in the center of the roof, the other at the boatroom end, connected by a narrow walkway.

The second variation of the 1874 type had simpler gable detailing, less elaborate stick-work, and fewer diagonal braces. The individual parts of these stations appeared to mesh more easily with one another. Small side dormers, capped with a hip rather than steep gable top, pierced the roof at eave level, and a single roof deck appeared at the front end. As with the two previous designs, the exterior sheathing materials were clapboards, vertical boards, or shingles, often used in various combinations.

The first station of this second variation was constructed in 1876 for the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, and was later put into service at Cape May, New Jersey. Similar to a world's fair, the Centennial was envisioned as a showcase for the many artistic, architectural, and engineering achievements accomplished by the U.S. in its first 100 years. The plans for this station, a more decorative version than later buildings of this type, were signed by architect J. L. Parkinson. It seems likely that instead of creating an entirely new design from the second variation, Parkinson modified the original plans, elaborately embellishing the station for the occasion.

The Organic Act of 1878 formally created the Life-Saving Service as an independent agency of the Treasury Department. At the time, 186 stations were in operation or being planned, and the entire U.S. coast was divided into twelve districts. One hundred thirty-seven stations were located in the seven districts of the Atlantic Coast, 6 in the Gulf Coast district, 35 in the three Great Lakes districts, and 8 on the Pacific Coast.

The Organic Act also called for the classification of stations into three groups: complete life-saving stations, life-boat stations, and houses of refuge. Complete life-saving stations were "distinguished from those of all other classes by the presence of regularly employed crews of surfmen, and by being built as domiciles, and for the temporary accommodation of shipwrecked persons."[13] Complete life-saving stations of the 1874 type and variation were

Eaton's Neck Station at the entrance to Huntington Bay, Long Island, the only station located on Long Island Sound. Built in 1875, this "1874 type, first variation," building is similar to the original twenty-two 1874 stations except that the stick-work in the gable end beneath the roof overhang is more angular and the lookout deck extends from the middle to one end of the roof. Note the windows beneath the deck for observation in bad weather. Photograph taken in 1884. (Courtesy of the Queens Borough Public Library)



typically two-story houses, mainly built of tongued and grooved pine, with gable roofs, covered with cypress or cedar shingles, and strong shutters to the windows, and are securely bolted to a foundation of cedar or locust posts, sunk in trenches four feet deep. Their architecture is of the pointed order, somewhat in the chalet style, with heavy projecting eaves and a small open observatory or lookout deck, on the peak of the roof, from which spires a flagstaff. The walls of the houses are painted drab, with darker color for the door and window trimmings, and the roofs dark red. Over the door is a tablet with the inscription "U.S. Life-Saving Station." The appearance of the houses is tasty and picturesque.[14]

The stations ranged from 18′ to 20′ wide by 40′ to 45′ long, with an interior arrangement similar to that of the 1871 red houses. On the ground floor a boatroom occupied about two-thirds of the space, and the remaining area was used as the general living room of the crew. On the second floor were three rooms, one for storage, one for the keeper, and the other for the surfmen. Complete life-saving stations were located on desolate sections of the coastline where "population is either sparse or absent, and aid upon occasion of shipwreck cannot be improvised, and where also the means of shelter and subsistance for the rescued are otherwise wanting."[15]

Life-boat stations were located primarily on the Lake and Pacific coasts where conditions of the coastline required a different approach to lifesaving. Most of the Lake shores are regular, with few islands, shoals, or treacherous reefs, and closed to navigation by ice for nearly six months of the year. With few natural harbors, entrances were usually marked by long rows of double piers extending seaward. It was not uncommon for ships to miss the approaches and end up on nearby beaches, particularly in fog or during a sudden gale. Life-boat stations were usually located just inside harbor entrances, close to where shipwrecks were likely to occur, and employed a type of vessel which could be easily and quickly launched directly from the station.



Big Kinnakeet Station, Buxton, North Carolina, an example of the "1874 type, second variation." The simpler gable-end detailing, front roof deck, and hipped side dormer are characteristic of this type. The rear side lean-to is a later addition. Built in 1878, this was one of twenty-five stations located on the North Carolina barrier beaches. (Courtesy of David Stick)

On all of the Pacific coast there were only eight stations at this time, all of the life-boat type. This coast was generally less treacherous than the Atlantic coast, having few harbors and a mild climate with occasional fog but few unexpected storms. There was need for few stations, except on prominent headlands and at hazardous river entrances.

Life-boat stations were usually one-and-a-half stories high, 22′ wide by 42′ long, with a single room on the first floor for the lifeboat and gear and a small loft above. They were built of similar materials and painted the same color as life-saving stations. Such stations were placed on piles at the water's edge and furnished with a trap door in the floor or an inclined ramp along which a lifeboat was let down and launched into the water by a windlass. Over the door was inscribed "U. S. Life-Boat Station."

While complete life-saving stations were always manned, life-boat stations were initially staffed by volunteer crews. These stations were usually located in or near centers



Santa Rosa Island Station, off Pensacola, Florida, an "1882 type," built in 1885. This type was the first designed with an enclosed lookout tower. The gable-end stick-work beneath the roof overhang is reflected in the peak of both ends of the tower, and in the side dormer. Note the side buttresses. (Courtesy of Richard Boonisar)

of population eliminating the need for accommodations for crews or for those rescued. The keepers, who were required to live in the neighborhood, summoned their crews as the occasion arose.

The particular condition of much of the southern Atlantic coastline required the third class of station, houses of refuge. Steep shores and deep waters enabled vessels when driven ashore by stormy weather to "come up almost high and dry, rendering comparatively easy the escape of their crews, whose chief liability, under these circumstances, is to perish from hunger and thirst."[16] Occupied by only a keeper and his family, who patrolled the beach after storms looking for survivors, these houses could accommodate twenty-five survivors with provisions for ten days. Each was 15′ wide by 37′ long with three apartments on the first floor and an upper story loft. Typically they were

> two story structures of a style common in the South, with broad gabled roofs, an ample veranda 8 feet wide on three sides of the structure, and large chimneys in the rear, built outside the wall. The houses are of pine, raised about six feet from the ground on light wood posts, and the roofs shingled with cypress. Instead of glass, the windows are fitted with wire-gauze mosquite netting.[17]

In 1882 another type emerged similar in appearance to the earlier three 1874 stations. This station was larger and taller, with nearly a full second story. Like the 1874 types, it too had long overhanging eaves, but was detailed with an A-shaped pattern in the gable ends simpler and more angular than that of the building designed for the Philadelphia Centennial.

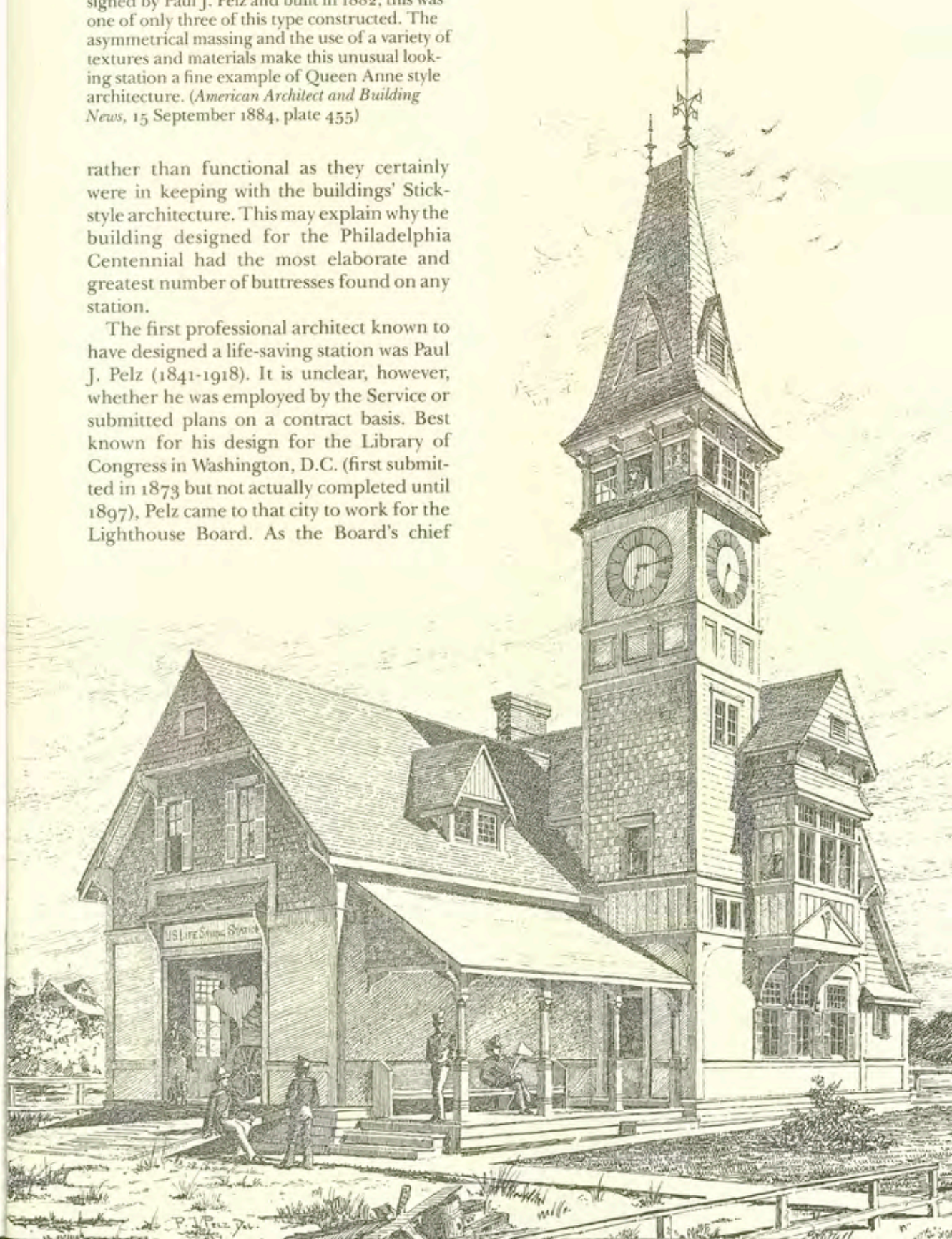
The station was characterized by an oversized lookout tower atop the roof towards the boat ramp end of the building. This first use of an enclosed tower replaced the open roof deck of earlier stations. A large dormer protruded through the roof on one, and sometimes both, sides, with its base beginning slightly above the second floor level. Both the dormers and towers had long overhanging roofs and gable stick-work similar to that of the main building. At least sixteen of these life-saving stations were built on the east coast between 1882 and 1887, the majority being constructed in 1883.[18]

Some stations of both the 1874 and 1882 types had buttresses along the outside walls, usually three to a side. Theoretically, the buttresses would offer additional stability against strong winds, but they were not universally used, nor were they attached securely. Instead of being mortised and pegged to the wall to provide the greatest strength, the diagonal braces of the buttresses were merely nailed in place.[19] It is likely that the buttresses were decorative

Bay Head Station, Bay Head, New Jersey. Designed by Paul J. Pelz and built in 1882, this was one of only three of this type constructed. The asymmetrical massing and the use of a variety of textures and materials make this unusual looking station a fine example of Queen Anne style architecture. (*American Architect and Building News*, 15 September 1884, plate 455)

rather than functional as they certainly were in keeping with the buildings' Stick-style architecture. This may explain why the building designed for the Philadelphia Centennial had the most elaborate and greatest number of buttresses found on any station.

The first professional architect known to have designed a life-saving station was Paul J. Pelz (1841-1918). It is unclear, however, whether he was employed by the Service or submitted plans on a contract basis. Best known for his design for the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. (first submitted in 1873 but not actually completed until 1897), Pelz came to that city to work for the Lighthouse Board. As the Board's chief



draftsman between 1872 and 1877 he designed many lighthouses, including Spectacle Reef, Lake Huron, considered to be one of the best examples of monolithic stone masonry in the United States.[20]

In 1882 Pelz submitted plans to the Life-Saving Service for three stations of the same design to be built at Deal and Bay Head, New Jersey, and Brenton Point, Newport, Rhode Island. Although his design borrowed elements found in other station types, such as a tall lookout tower and exterior diagonal bracing, the overall feeling of the plan was more in the Queen Anne style, a popular architectural mode of the times. Growing out of the Gothic Revival and Stick-style, Queen Anne buildings were characterized by asymmetrical massing and the use of a variety of forms, textures, materials, and colors. The stations' extremely high peaked tower topped with ornamental ironwork, and massive cross-gable roof ending in a large projecting bay window, typified this style. The 15 September 1885 issue of *American Architect and Building News* featured the life-saving station at Bay Head, complete with a tower clock furnished by the local community.

Also in 1882, Pelz designed a smaller station for Jerry's Point, Portsmouth, New Hampshire (see cover illustration). A nearly classic Queen Anne structure, this station was equalled by few others in its excellent and unusual design. The building abounded with numerous details typical of the Queen Anne style: clapboard sheathing at the first floor level, textured shingles above in the gable areas, sunburst motifs in the gable peaks and cornice returns, octagonal chimney pots and a huge oval lookout tower. Like the previous Stick-style 1874 and 1882 types, Pelz's two plans show that the Service had become as concerned with the design quality of life-saving stations as with their function.

In 1885 bids were put out for the repair and alteration of nine stations on Cape Cod and twenty on Long Island. The twenty rebuilt Long Island stations were originally constructed in 1871 as replacements for some of the earlier 1849 and 1854 boathouses; the Cape Cod stations built in 1872 accompanied extension of the Life-Saving Service to the coast of Massachusetts. All twenty-nine stations were similar in design and function, 18′ wide by 42′ long, and built to provide accommodations for the crew and rescue apparatus. However, due to an increase in maritime activity along these shores and a corresponding increase in the number of shipwrecks during the early 1880s, the stations were to be enlarged to accommodate additional equipment.

The architect commissioned to design the alterations was Albert B. Bibb. Born in 1853 at Washington, D.C., Bibb attended Georgetown College prior to taking a position as file clerk for the Post Office in 1871. How and when he became a draftsman for the Life-Saving Service is unclear, but it is known that by 1885 Bibb was working as architect for the Service in the Office of Construction.[21] He carried on the high quality of design established by Pelz.

Bibb's design called for a complete remodeling of the original 1871-72 stations. Significantly, it was to be in a totally contemporary architectural style, the Shingle style. The Shingle style evolved from the Queen Anne that preceded it and was

Highland Station, Truro, Massachusetts, one of nine stations built on Cape Cod in 1872. Similar to the "red houses" of New Jersey, they were remodelled by Albert B. Bibb in 1885. Bibb's design of adding an integral lean-to on each side helped transform these stations into Shingle-style buildings. Photograph by C. N. Taylor, August 1897. (78.72.2)



popularized on the East Coast by Boston architect Henry Hobson Richardson and the New York firm of McKim, Mead & White. Inspired by a post-Centennial interest in colonial architecture, particularly in the shingle houses of coastal towns, this style featured an overall covering of wood shingles from roof to foundation. Wide sweeping roofs with narrow eaves were dominant characteristics as these buildings took on a more horizontal massing. Although this style was popular in summer resorts, its association with the sea also made it appropriate for life-saving stations.

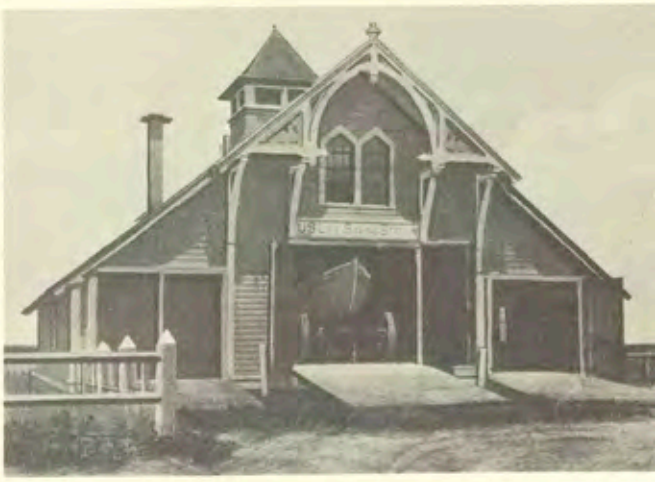
While Bibb was not considered an important architect in his time, it is noteworthy that his plan was such a successful adaptation of the Shingle style. By adding a storage lean-to on either side of the original boathouse and extending the main roof over each addition in a sweeping unbroken line from peak to eave, Bibb converted a vertical structure into a low, horizontally-massed building. The application of scallop-shaped and straight-edged shingles over the entire exterior surface completed the transition.

Bibb was chosen to design alterations for the enlargement of many of the 1874 type stations as well. Using basically the same technique of adding side lean-tos, extending the roof line, reshingling the exterior, and replacing the lookout platform with a hipped cupola, he proved to be equally successful in turning an elaborate station of the Stick-style into a convincing Shingle-style building. The 1874 Surfside Station on Nantucket Island reveals his remarkable skill. All that remains to suggest an earlier style is some of the gable stick-work.

Enlargement of existing stations was not a new practice. Almost from the time a station was built, additions and alterations were made in an attempt to modernize and make more space for the rescue equipment and crew.[22] Commonly, cupolas were added to replace roof decks on older stations. When this was done it was usually with the type of cupola being used on the latest station style of the time. Lean-tos were also frequently added, first to one side and then to the other.



Surfside Station, Nantucket, Massachusetts, an "original 1874 type" station built in 1874, and shown before remodelling. Notice the gable-end stick-work with dolphin motifs, the contrasting color scheme, and the side buttresses. The side lean-to was added after construction. This station was remodelled by Albert B. Bibb in 1885. (Courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Society)



Surfside Station, Nantucket, Massachusetts, after the 1885 alterations. As he had done with the nine Cape Cod stations, Bibb added a hipped-roof lookout tower and side lean-tos, and covered the building entirely with shingles. The station still stands. Photograph from a postcard, ca. 1905. (Courtesy of Richard Boonisar)

Stations were also regularly moved. Sometimes a more advantageous site might be procured, or a change in the coastline might divert traffic so that a particular station was no longer needed in its original location. More commonly, a station would be moved back from the shore as coastal erosion threatened its foundation.

In 1886 Bibb was commissioned to design an entirely new station of different proportions in a more subdued Shingle style. This type, referred to as "Bibb #2,"[23] was a full story-and-a-half high, nearly square in plan, and somewhat smaller than the stations Bibb altered in 1885. Looking more like residences than rescue stations, these simply detailed buildings were dominated by a cross-gabled roof. One gable, steeply pitched, often contained two small hipped dormers, while the other gable, itself hipped on its free end, was topped with a lookout tower nearly identical to those used on Bibb's alterations. Although shingles were always applied to the roof and gables, the walls were occasionally clapboarded. At least fifteen stations of this design were constructed between 1886 and 1891.

Although the majority of Bibb #2 buildings were constructed at new locations, some were placed on sites of previously established stations, often replacing an 1874 type station. This occurred when even more space was required of a station which had already been enlarged to its capacity. When two stations stood on the same site, often side by side, the earlier building was used primarily for storage of equipment and an additional surfboat.

Bibb also produced at least two other designs for which only a single station of each plan was built. The first, built in 1885 at Cape Elizabeth, Maine, featured a two-and-a-half-story, semi-detached lookout tower projecting from the station side (see back cover). This story-and-a-half building had clapboarding at the first floor level and textured shingles on the walled-in porches and gables. Other characteristic Bibb features in this station were small-paned windows, four-panel exterior doors, and turned porch columns. In 1889 he designed a station for Cuttyhunk Island, Massachusetts, also in the Shingle style. Unusual looking for a building of this type, it appeared more like a large summer cottage than a life-saving station. Three round-arched

Wallis Sands Station, Wallis Sands, New Hampshire, "a Bibb #2 type" station built in 1890. Note the portable rollers for launching the surfboat without a cart, and the beach lantern mounted on a pole. Photograph used in a 1902 illustrated lecture by Lieutenant Worth G. Ross, Revenue Cutter Service. (Courtesy of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy Museum)





Cuttyhunk Station, Cuttyhunk, Massachusetts. Designed by Bibb in 1889, this Shingle-style station was unique. Photograph from a postcard, ca. 1905. (Courtesy of Richard Boonisar)

doorways pierced the first floor facade, while the dominant roofline contained three front dormers and was capped by a tall, octagonal lookout cupola.

In 1888 McKim, Mead & White designed a life-saving station at Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island. Why the Service commissioned this well-known architectural firm for only one building is not clear. Supposedly modeled after an English life-saving station, it was the first station in this country to be made of stone.[24] Its heavily rusticated granite block construction harmonized with the firm's nearby Casino Towers of 1886.

During the first part of the 1890s few Bibb-designed stations were being built. He may have left the Service at that time as the next station type was designed by George Russell Tolman. Tolman was born at Boston in 1848 and trained as a draftsman, working at both the Kittery, Maine, and Norfolk, Virginia, Navy Yards. His brother, Albert J. Tolman, was also an architectural draftsman, employed in the Office of Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department. On 2 January 1891 Tolman was appointed to the Life-Saving Service.[25]

Tolman began his work for the Service with a commission for a station at Quonochontaug, Charlestown, Rhode Island. The following year a station of this type was built for the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1892-93. Like the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876, the Columbian Exposition, planned in recognition of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus, was envisioned as a showcase for the leading architects and artists of the U.S. Directed by Charles McKim, of McKim, Mead & White, the "White City" that arose on the fairgrounds was composed of monumental structures. Unlike the station built for the Centennial, which was used only as an exhibit building, the Chicago station was also fully commissioned and actually performed rescues on the shore of Lake Michigan.[26]



Narragansett Pier Station, Narragansett, Rhode Island. The only stone life-saving station built in America, it was designed by McKim, Mead & White in 1888. The station still stands, in altered condition. (*Architectural Record*, May 1895, opp. p. 81)

Similar in appearance to the Bibb #2 type of 1886, Tolman's Quonochontaug type featured a single gable roof pierced by one or two small gabled dormers and a hipped-roof tower at one end. The station was usually surrounded by a covered veranda extending completely around one side

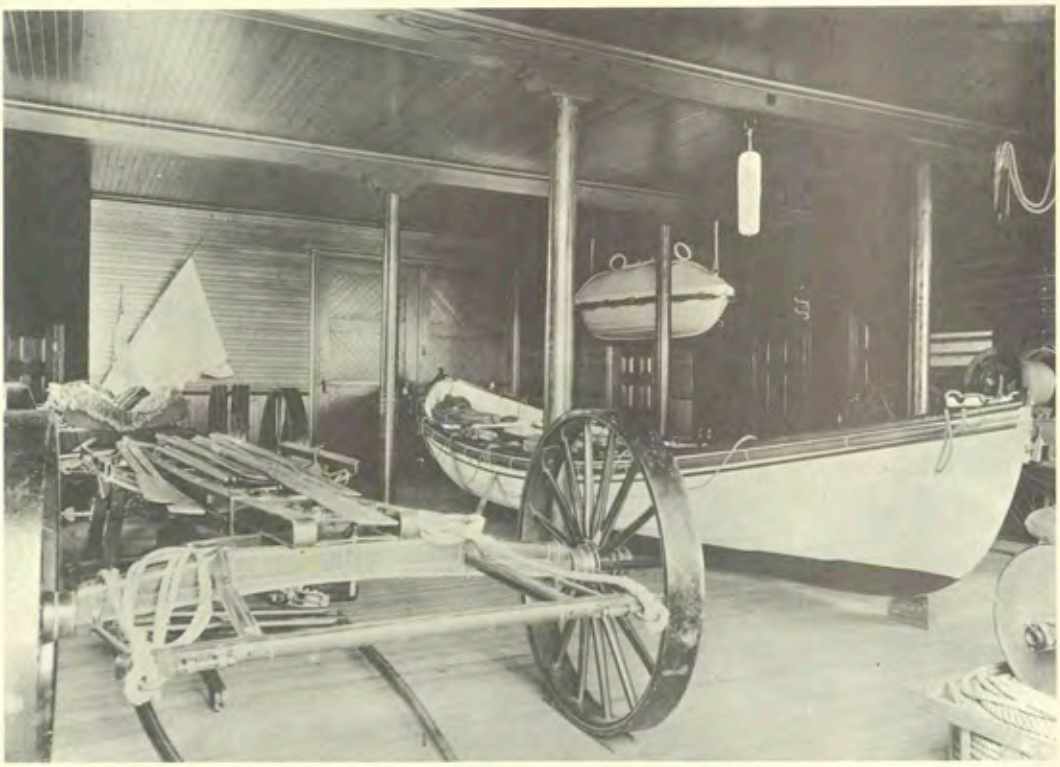


Quonochontaug Station, Charlestown, Rhode Island, the first Shingle-style "Quonochontaug type" station, built in 1891. Constructed near a breachway on the barrier beach, the station had a ramp to launch surfboats into the calm waters of Quonochontaug Pond. The crew rowed through the breachway to reach distressed vessels. The station was demolished in the 1938 hurricane. Photograph from a postcard, ca. 1905. (Courtesy of Richard Boonisar)

and along half of the adjacent two sides. Although the detailing was sparse, this story-and-a-half, Shingle-style building had a picturesque appearance. With a ramp leading from two side boatroom doors, the station was usually placed parallel to the beach.

In 1894 Tolman designed a second station style known as the Duluth type. While this too was usually covered entirely with shingles (clapboards were occasionally used on the first floor level) it reflected a mixture of styles and shapes. Overall, this story-and-a-half structure, larger than most previous stations, combined the massing and detailing of the Shingle style with that of the Colonial Revival style.

Many aspects of Tolman's design show him to be strongly influenced by this new style, which was beginning to gain acceptance in the 1890s. Quite similar to the Shingle style, but with detailing of a more



Boatroom of the Quonochontaug Station, Charlestown, Rhode Island.
(Courtesy of Gerard Aycrigg)



Chicago (Jackson Park) Station, Chicago, Illinois. Photographed at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1892-93, this is a "Quonochontaug type" station, the first design George R. Tolman produced for the Life-Saving Service. (Courtesy of the National Archives)

classical nature, the Colonial Revival was an attempt to return to the Georgian and Federal-style buildings. Often, the colonial features were oversized or exaggerated and out of proportion with other parts of the houses. Typically, classical details such as gambrel roofs, fanlights, Palladian windows, and porticos were common elements. This influence is understandable, as the World's Columbian Exposition, which included a Tolman-designed station, was heavily dominated by high-style Colonial Revival buildings.

The rectangular plan of the Duluth type is divided into two separate sections. On one side of the facade is an office topped by a large jerkinhead (truncated) gable roof containing a mullion-window shed dormer. At the other end of the station is a one-story, two-bay boatroom. A four-story, hipped-roof lookout tower with its top floor cantilevered in stockade-like fashion rises between the building's two sections along the facade. A series of different-sized, small-paned window sashes and a semi-circular fanlight window in the boatroom gable completes the Colonial Revival detailing. At least fifteen stations of this style were built between 1894 and 1904, the first at Duluth, Minnesota.

The station that followed the Duluth type contained many of the same elements, but on a smaller scale. Designed in 1894, this type featured a gambrel roof with a peak fanlight window, shed dormers, and windows with small panes of glass in the top sash and larger panes below. However, it is with the use of a classically detailed center

portico that Tolman introduced a truly distinctive Colonial Revival detail. Above the entrance rises a short three-sided lookout tower projecting at eave level. Only three stations of this type are known to have been built, between 1894 and 1897, but it is presumed that others may have existed.

Like Bibb, Tolman produced at least one design that was carried out in only one building. The Gay Head Station, established on Martha's Vineyard in 1894, was one of the most striking Shingle-style stations built. Perched above the ocean on a high cliff, this two-story building featured a three-story tower built into one corner. A long, sweeping, gable roofline with a jerkinhead at each end extended down to the first floor level on one side and out over a porch on the other side.



Gay Head Station, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. An unusual Shingle-style building, this one-of-a-kind station was designed by Tolman in 1894. (Courtesy of Richard Boonisar)



Wood End Station, Provincetown, Massachusetts, a Tolman "Duluth type" station built in 1895. Photograph from a postcard, 1905. (Courtesy of Richard Ryder)

Watch Hill Station, Watch Hill, Rhode Island, a "Port Huron type" station built in 1907. Dating from 1897, the Port Huron type was designed by Victor Mendleheff. This was the first station type built without an integral boatroom. Photograph from a postcard, ca. 1910. (81.87.2)



Tolman was dismissed from the Life-Saving Service in 1896 as a result of a dispute over a personal matter.[27] He was replaced the following year by Victor Mendleheff. Like his two predecessors, little has been found concerning Men-

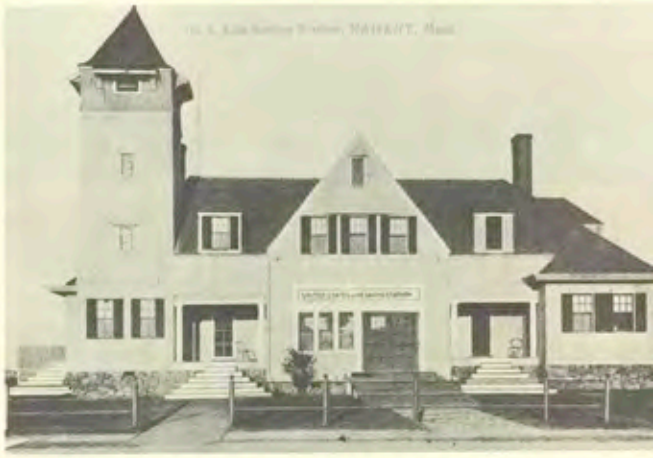
dleheff's professional background, but his designs indicate that he must have been strongly influenced by much of Tolman's work.

Mendleheff's first design for the Service shares many similarities with Tolman's Duluth and 1894 types. Produced in 1897, the first station of this type was built at Port Huron, Michigan. The two-story station is dominated by a massive octagonal tower which projects from the center of the facade for a full three stories. A hipped dormer is found at either side of the tower and a fanlight window occupies the peak at each gable end. The projecting entrance portico to one side of the tower is supported by four wooden Tuscan columns similar to those used in the previous 1894 type. As in the Duluth type, the first floor office opens onto a partially enclosed porch, but in this case the porch roof also is supported by Tuscan columns.

Some Port Huron stations were designed with only an office, kitchen, mess room, and crew quarters. Earlier station types always included a boatroom, which was boarded up if the surfboat was moved to a separate boathouse. However, in most Port Huron stations the surfboat or lifeboat was housed from the start in a separate building at the water's edge. This arrangement allowed the station to be situated at the most advantageous position for sighting wrecks, often on a hillside set back from the immediate shore.

In 1897 Mendleheff also designed a one-of-a-kind station at Damariscove Island near Boothbay Harbor, Maine. This large, rambling Shingle-style building has many features of the Port Huron type. In particular, the lookout towers are nearly identical. He may also have designed the Nahant, Massachusetts, Station. Its four-story, hipped corner tower, steep gabled roof, hipped dormers, Tuscan porch columns, and complete covering of shingles are carried out in a manner characteristic of Mendleheff's work. Constructed in 1899, the





Damariscove Island Station (above), off Boothbay Harbor, Maine. The Shingle and Colonial Revival detailing of this 1897 station is the work of Victor Mendleheff. Nahant Station (below), Nahant, Massachusetts. The four-story tower of this one-of-a-kind station is suggestive of Mendleheff's designs. Built in 1899, it is still used by the Coast Guard. Photographs from postcards, ca. 1905. (Courtesy of Richard Ryder)

original plan called for the building of a station of this type at Gloucester, Massachusetts, as well. However, a Tolman-designed Duluth station was built there instead the following year.

The Chicamacomico Station at Rodanthe, North Carolina, designed by Mendleheff in 1910, looks very similar to Tolman's Quonochontaug type. Although somewhat larger than most Tolman-style



Chicamacomico Station, Rodanthe, North Carolina, designed by Victor Mendleheff in 1910. The massing and detailing of this Shingle-style station is very similar to that of the "Quonochontaug type." The station is included in the Cape Hatteras National Seashore and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Photograph by Neil Pearson, 1974. (Courtesy of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources)

buildings, and having four dormers per side instead of one, this station has a massing of very similar proportions and features many of the same details. Windows of the same size and glass configuration, similar paneled entrance doors, a complete covering of shingles, and, most noticeably, a lookout tower nearly identical to that of the Quonochontaug type lead one to wonder whether Mendleheff merely modified Tolman's earlier design.

Mendleheff's plan of 1910 for the Wachapreague, Virginia, Eagle Harbor, Michigan, and other similar stations combine many of the elements found in Tolman's work. The massing of these story-and-a-half, gable-roofed stations, combined with a three-story tower projecting from the center of the front facade, is reminiscent of the Duluth style. The front portico with its Doric columns and off-set doorway is almost an exact copy of that found in Tolman's 1894 style. Like the Port Huron style, Mendleheff's design also came with or without an attached boatroom. He continued to use many of these features in his subsequent work.

On 28 January 1915 Congress passed a law joining the Life-Saving Service with the Revenue Cutter Service to form the United States Coast Guard. This action combined the efforts of an organization that rescued victims of coastal maritime disasters from shore with one that dispatched vessels to cruise the coast assisting ships in distress.

While the merger represented an administrative change, the Life-Saving Service initially continued to operate in much the same manner as it had in the past. By the late 1920s, however, the Coast Guard began to consolidate its operations. The tasks of shore and sea rescue necessitated a differ-

ent type of station, which was larger and more centrally located. New techniques of rescue, especially those which employed motorized lifeboats and high speed cruisers, allowed fewer stations to cover a wider area. Gradually, many of the small, remote outposts were deactivated as the need for a closely knit network of rescue stations declined.

The Coast Guard has continued to produce new station types to the present day. The appearance of most of these buildings, however, has been more utilitarian, lacking many of the stylistic elements found in their predecessors. Perhaps this is only to be expected as the designs of Coast Guard stations built after the 1920s were as much a reflection of the architectural trends of their day as were the elaborate detailings of the Stick, Queen Anne, and Shingle-style stations of the Life-Saving Service.

SOURCES CONSULTED

The study of the architecture of the U.S. Life-Saving stations must rely mainly on primary sources, as most secondary source material dealing with the Service concerns its history and accounts and techniques of rescue. By far the most useful information is to be found in the Records of the U.S. Coast Guard, Record Group 26, The National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. Station plans and specifications are held in the Center for Cartographic and Architectural Archives, correspondence relating to construction is filed in the Judicial and Fiscal Branch, and station photographs may be viewed in the Still Pictures Division, all sections of the National Archives. While the plans and photographs are in well-organized collections, the great volume of correspondence makes the use of this material a very time-consuming undertaking. Both the Photographic Archives of Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Connecticut, and the Historian's Office, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D.C., have extensive collections of station photographs. Also helpful to this study have been microfilm copies of station plans, (United States Coast Guard Civil Engineering Tracings, Lifeboat Stations) held in the Coast Guard Academy Library at New London, Connecticut.

A few secondary sources which discuss the history of the Service specifically note the proliferation of stations constructed, giving some architectural information. Robert F. Bennett's *Surfboats, Rockets and Carronades* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), gives a concise account of Service history before the 1870s, along with a detailed description of the first stations built. Probably the best single piece on the development of the Service up until 1878 is W. D. O'Connor's "The United States Life-Saving Service," reprinted from *Appleton's Annual Encyclopaedia of the Year 1878* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889). Particularly useful is its description of the three types of stations employed (complete life-saving, lifeboat, and house of refuge). *The Annual Reports of the Operations of the United States Life-Saving Service* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1876-1914) are essential as each report discusses the need for stations at specific sites, establishment of new stations, and the repair, alteration, and rebuilding of older ones. However, nowhere is there recognition in any secondary source that stations were of different types that could be classified by their architectural style.

Finally, visits to surviving stations proved invaluable in understanding the translation of design to the actual building. Ten stations between Maine and New York, representing six different types and two one-of-a-kinds, were studied at their sites. Of the nearly 500 constructed between 1849 and 1915, at least 60 survive today. Some are still active as Coast Guard stations while others have been converted to private residences and restaurants. Six are known to be open to the public, interpreted as museums.

This article represents a work in progress, and is being expanded for a Master's thesis. Any additional information readers can lend would be greatly appreciated.

NOTES

[1] W. D. O'Connor, "The United States Life-Saving Service." Reprint from *Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia of the Year 1878* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889), p. 749.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 750.

[3]Robert F. Bennett, *Surfboats, Rockets and Carronades* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), p. 2.

[4]O'Connor, "The United States Life-Saving Service," p. 749.

[5]For a more detailed description of the eight stations built in 1849 and the 28 stations built in 1855 see Bennett, *Surfboats, Rockets and Carronades*, pp. 35-37.

[6]O'Connor, "The United States Life-Saving Service," p. 751. It is unclear from the text if this is intended to mean that there were 137 lifeboat stations in 1854.

[7]*Ibid.*; J. W. Dalton, *The Life Savers of Cape Cod* (Sandwich, Massachusetts: The Barta Press, 1902), p. 27.

[8]Robert F. Bennett, *The Lifesaving Service at Sandy Hook Station: 1854-1915* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Division, Historical Monograph Program, U.S. Coast Guard, 1976), p. 6. Contracts for the new structures were put out to bid and awarded to one builder, Cottrell, Gallup and Company of Mystic, Connecticut, while the other stations were to be remodeled by the firm of Hand and Ware of Cape May, New Jersey.

[9]*Ibid.*

[10]O'Connor, "The United States Life-Saving Service," p. 753.

[11][J. H. Merryman], "The United States Life-Saving Service," *Scribner's Monthly* 19 (January 1880): 322. Also published in Joseph W. Smith, *Gleanings from the Sea* (Andover, Massachusetts: Joseph W. Smith, 1887), pp. 347-48.

[12]Merryman, "The United States Life-Saving Service," p. 322.

[13]O'Connor, "The United States Life-Saving Service," p. 756.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 759.

[15]*Ibid.*, p. 756.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 757.

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 759.

[18]It is difficult to determine exactly how many stations of a particular type were constructed as every station built in the time span of that type would first have to be accounted for. Here, the number of stations given for a specific type refers to those thus far identified from drawings, photographs, and written descriptions.

[19]This fact was discovered during the restoration of the New Shoreham Life-Saving Station at Mystic Seaport Museum. The station, originally built on Block Island, Rhode Island, was one of the original twenty-two 1874-type stations. It is assumed that this technique of nailing the buttresses to the side walls was the standard practice.

[20]Dumas Malone, ed., "Pelz, Paul Johannes," *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), pp. 411-12.

[21]Albert B. Bibb, Personnel Files, Records of the U.S. Coast Guard, Record Group 26, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. Hereafter records in the National Archives Building are indicated by symbol NA.

[22]*Annual Report of the Operations of the United States Life-Saving Service, 1884* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1885), p. 58.

[23]The names of the station types referred to as "Bibb #2," "Quonochontaug," "Duluth," and "Port Huron," were taken from station plot plans found in the collection of Life-Saving Service Plans and Drawings, Center for Cartographic and Architectural Archives, Record Group 26, NA. It is not known whether these were the official names given by the Service or if they were merely chosen at the discretion of the field assistant drawing the plot plans. All but "Bibb #2" refer to the location of the first station of that type.

[24]Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, *Narragansett Pier, Narragansett, Rhode Island: Statewide Historical Preservation Report W-N-1* (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1978), p. 34.

[25]George Russell Tolman, Personnel Files, Record Group 26, NA.

[26]*Life-Saving Service Annual Report, 1893*, p. 61.

[27]George Russell Tolman, Personnel Files, Record Group 26, NA.

Wreck of the *Jason*

The following narrative of the wreck of the British ship Jason *is an evocative description of a shipwreck, offering a glimpse of the U.S. Life-Saving Service in action. Written anonymously by an employee of the Service, it was the official report of the disaster, published in the* Annual Report of the Operations of the U.S. Life-Saving Service for the Fiscal Year Ending 30 June 1894.

The U.S. Life-Saving Service, instituted in 1848 and formally organized in 1878, maintained stations along the dangerous portions of the Atlantic, Gulf, Pacific, and Great Lakes coasts to assist in cases of shipwreck. The life-saving crews were responsible for warning away vessels standing into danger, assisting disabled vessels, and rescuing and succoring persons from stranded or wrecked vessels. As an example, during the fiscal year ending 30 June 1894, the 247 active stations warned away 244 vessels, assisted 432 vessels, and rescued 83 persons in incidents unrelated to shipwreck. There were 596 shipwrecks requiring rescues (309 on the Atlantic coast and 265 on the Great Lakes), 91 resulting in total loss of the vessel. The number of persons involved was 4,491, of whom only 68 were lost (over one-third of them in the wreck of the Jason*). During rescues, surfboats were used 585 times, self-bailing lifeboats 102 times, and the breeches buoy beach apparatus 12 times. Despite their skill and all their preparations, life-saving crews were sometimes forced to watch in anguish as a vessel immediately went to pieces, scattering her crew in the surf to drown. Such was the case when the* Jason *stranded on Cape Cod.*

At the time the Life-Saving Service was absorbed into the U.S. Coast Guard in 1915, it operated 279 stations. Since 1871, it had assisted at 28,121 disasters and shipwrecks involving 178,741 persons. Only 1,455 persons were lost, an average of but one in every 123 persons involved.

The iron full-rigged ship Jason *was built at Glasgow, Scotland, by Barclay, Curle & Co. in 1870 as one of A. & J. H. Carmichael's "golden fleece" vessels sailing from Greenock, Scotland. For over twenty years she carried cargo between Great Britain, India, and the United States, until her loss in the tragic wreck described below. Her value was estimated at $60,000 when she was wrecked; her cargo of jute was also valued at $60,000.*

The most disastrous wreck that has occurred within the scope of Service operations in recent years was that of the British ship *Jason* on the 5th of December, 1893, near the Pamet River Station, (Second District,) coast of Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

The *Jason* was a full rigged ship of one thousand five hundred and twelve tons register, carrying twenty-five men including officers, and was within only a few hours' sail of her destination when she encountered the misfortune that left her a hopeless ruin on the beach and swept all but one of her crew to untimely death. The voyage so suddenly brought to a melancholy end had consumed almost ten months (including detentions on account of previous ill-luck) and had covered a distance equal to one-half the circuit of the globe. She sailed from Calcutta, India, on the 15th of February 1893, bound for Boston, Massachusetts, under the command of Captain David McGin, loaded with ten thousand bales of jute, but while crossing the Indian Ocean was involved in a cyclone, and emerged from its deadly swirl with the loss of most of her spars and with her cargo seriously damaged. Under jury rig she laboriously worked her way to Port Louis, Mauritius, where she arrived early in the month of

April. There, after being unloaded, she was thoroughly overhauled and repaired, and when ready for sea, which was not until the middle of September, was again loaded and resumed her voyage under command of Captain McMillan, the former master having relinquished his post on account of injuries incurred in the storm that so nearly destroyed the ship. A prosperous passage ensued until the vicinity of the Bermudas was reached, when frequent squalls set in, and followed the vessel until she made the coast of the United States. At that time Captain McMillan was not in possession of reliable information of his position, for the reason that the thick weather had made it impossible to take observations for several days, and he was therefore compelled to rely upon his dead reckoning. On the 3d of December (two days prior to the wreck) he spoke a New York pilot boat, from which he learned his whereabouts, but after passing Georges Shoal, about one hundred miles to the eastward of Cape Cod, he determined to shape his course straight to the westward with a view to raising landmarks. This action was therefore taken, just after midday on the 5th, and proved to be as fatal as it was ill-advised under the existing conditions. The wind was from the northeast, a specially dangerous quarter off Cape Cod in the winter, and the atmosphere soon grew thick with rain, which the falling temperature shortly turned to sleet and snow. Notwithstanding the lack of observations to determine his situation, the captain might easily have discovered his danger by sounding, but nevertheless, with an assurance almost amounting to fatuity, he appears to have held his course boldly without resort to the lead until the dark and gloomy outline of the land loomed up under his lee. The only survivor of the wreck states that the captain then believed he was ten miles offshore, but there can be little doubt that his mind was instantly filled with apprehension of the gravest nature. Between 4 and 5 o'clock, just before darkness shut in, the *Jason,* which had already been seen from the land, was observed to spread all the additional canvas she would bear, haul by the wind, and stand on to weather the cape. The stiff gale steadily grew stronger, the sea increasing with equal pace, and every indication confirmed the predictions made among the surfmen during the afternoon that an ugly winter storm was at hand, while the knowledge that a strong current was setting along the shore to the southward made them sure that the ship was in extreme danger.

She was last seen by the day patrol (always sent out in thick weather), with upper topsails set, just off the three lights of Nauset, holding up to the windward with remarkable strength. It is agreed on all hands that she must have been a very weatherly ship, but although the efforts the master was plainly making to keep her off shore gave her more rapid progress and less leeway, no keenness of nautical perception was required to appreciate her peril, and to know that she must surely strand unless she changed her course – and that, as the testimony shows, was beyond even her great power in the teeth of the fierce northeast tempest and the shoreward heave of the tremendous sea. In fact, from the moment she made the land it seems to have been out of the question either to tack or wear ship. Under the heavily adverse conditions of wind and sea she could not tack, and there was not sufficient room to wear. Information was soon received over the telephone by Keeper Bearse, of Nauset, and Keeper Cole, of Cahoons Hollow, that the gale was strong from the northeast at the Highlands of Truro, where the arm of Cape Cod bends to the northwest, and they made up their minds that the vessel would not be able to get past the latter station, and would in all probability fetch up somewhere between the two, which lie seven miles apart. They, therefore, made every preparation for united action should the emergency arise, and successive patrols were sent out to make swift report of the expected stranding. But



The *Jason*, 1512 tons, 253′ x 38.6′ x 23.2′, a swift sailer, was one of the 13 iron ships in A. & J. H. Carmichael's Golden Fleece Line, with names related to the legend of the golden fleece. (80.120.133)

if Captain McMillan had made a mistake in carelessly approaching the coast, he was of good English grit, and was straining every resource to redeem his error and take his ship safely to haven. How wonderfully he almost succeeded is shown by the fact that at about 6 o'clock the vessel had weathered Bearse's station limits and was past Cahoons Hollow. Still believing that she would not clear the cape, Keeper Cole now thought that she would strike between his own and the Pamet River Station. Therefore, feeling that for the time being the responsibility rested upon him, he was fully on the alert, had the horse harnessed, and the [breeches buoy beach] apparatus prepared for instant action. As time wore on and at 7 o'clock no further news of the vessel had been received, both keepers knew that she was still fighting her way, and even began to feel that she had possibly succeeded in standing off.

At all events if she should come ashore it would be within the scope of the Pamet River Station, and the men at that place were ready for the awful stroke, although their brave hearts devoutly wished she might pass them by. But their hopes were proved to be vain when, at about half past 7, Surfman Honey burst almost breathless into the station and exclaimed: "Hopkins [the north patrol] has just burned his signal." A moment later Hopkins himself arrived and reported that the ship had struck.

It appears that she had been laboring heavily, the wind constantly heading her off after nightfall, and the master, although he kept up a stout heart, must have been well aware that he was constantly losing more and more of the narrow margin that lay between possible safety and inevitable destruction. Whatever misgivings the crew may have experienced, the survivor states that the first intimation they had of their immediate proximity to the shore was when they saw the breakers, and the captain, who was below at the moment, rushed on deck with the ominous outcry, "She has struck!" The boats were still on the bridge where

they had been originally stowed for the voyage, their covers and lashings intact and the tackles unhooked, but Captain McMillan instantly gave the order to clear them away, and, together with the men, set about the work. The ship lay with her starboard side to the waves which the next instant lifted her farther shoreward, and then fell crashing on board. The most of the sailors fled to the mizzen shrouds, but a few, more daring or desperate than the rest, still struggled to clear the boats. Another run of towering breakers was now about to leap on board, and the brave men were compelled to give over and quickly join their shipmates in the rigging. At this moment the red glare of the patrolman's signal gleamed through the darkness, and a cheer broke forth from the shipwrecked men.

Up to this time the master had found no difficulty in controlling the movements of the crew, who appear to have been able and obedient sailors, but now there was no longer any occasion for the exercise of authority, and in the dreadful situation it behooved every man to look out for himself. Within ten minutes from the flash of the signal the great iron hull parted amidships with a loud noise, and the mainmast toppled over, carrying with it the mizzen topmast. The entire ship's company except the captain were at this time in the mizzen rigging, where they were able to hold on only a few minutes when all were washed overboard together. The captain when last seen was standing on the ladder at the quarter deck supporting himself with a hand on each rail. Evans, the only one saved, was in the lee shrouds, and after being swept some distance shoreward, was carried back so near to the wreck that he almost clutched the rigging, but the next wave dashed him away, and in less than five minutes, as he thinks, he was prostrate on the beach with just enough strength and consciousness left to cling to a bale of jute that lay beside him. It is probable that the incidents narrated up to this point had consumed more time, and that he remained where he landed longer than he supposed, but eventually he struggled to his feet and staggered toward a lantern carried by Keeper Rich, who in response to an incoherent remark of the half-crazed lad assured him that he was safe, and would be faithfully cared for. He was clad only in his underclothing and was almost totally helpless. Two men were required to take him to the station, where he was stripped of his wet and frozen garments, wrapped in hot blankets, and otherwise properly treated until restored. He could recollect that when the keeper found him he was able to tell who he was, but could recall nothing that transpired afterwards until he revived in the station.

Sixteen life-saving men were on the beach at this time, the number being composed of the crew of the Pamet River Station and that of the Highland Station from the north, who had been summoned by telephone as soon as patrolman Hopkins reported the wreck.

The beach apparatus of the Pamet River Station was on the ground and ready for service, but the ship was only now and then faintly visible, and there was little reason to believe the apparatus would be of any avail. However, the gun was aimed as well as possible in the direction of the wreck, which was discernible only as a black shadow that seemed a little darker than the surrounding gloom, and the shot was fired. That the line fell across the hulk there is no reason to doubt. That it lodged with considerable firmness somewhere was conclusive to the keeper in charge, for it resisted the slight strain put upon it to determine whether it was fast, but no pull or manipulation on the offshore end could be detected, and after waiting in vain some considerable time for that always welcome sign that the line has been found by the shipwrecked, the lifesavers hauled hard on it until it finally parted under the heavy strain.

The keeper was now satisfied (as the testimony of the survivor, Evans, later proved)

that there was no living being on board the wreck. Nothing could be accomplished by additional efforts to effect communication by means of the gun, and the fury of the surf was so overwhelming that none of the men, familiar as they were with the conditions, of long experience on the coast, and brave as they had often proved themselves, even so much as entertained the thought of attempting to launch the boat. It was out of question, absolutely and beyond all possibility of cavil. The slatting of the distant sails is described as sounding like peals of thunder, and the crashing of blocks and chains as they were flung back and forth against the wire rigging and iron foremast (afterwards shown to have been still standing) sent out volumes of blazing sparks that seemed to some of the bystanders like signals of distress.

It is the custom on occasions of this kind to build a fire on the shore as a beacon of hope to encourage the shipwrecked, and, although there was believed to be nobody on the vessel, this would nevertheless have been done, if possible. But the gale blew with such force that a fire could not be maintained, and, indeed, so terrific was its fury that the polished glass lantern on the beach apparatus cart was converted into a good specimen of ground glass by the incessant beating of the wind-driven sand upon its surface. Now and then a red signal was discharged to attract the attention of any poor fellows who might be washed ashore alive, and a faithful search-patrol was maintained along the beach throughout the night by the life-saving crews, whose number had increased to twenty persons, four additional men having reported from

The surf was still running when this photograph of the wreck of the *Jason* was taken. Her bow lies toward the beach, with foremast still standing and sails slatting themselves to ribbons. The stern section lies on its side to the right. (76.1.203.7)





Samuel J. Evans, only survivor of the *Jason* disaster. (80.45.40)

the Cahoons Hollow Station. It should be added also that two men not connected with the Service volunteered to join in this arduous duty, and manfully performed their part of the weary vigil. Only remnants of spars and cargo, however, were cast at their feet, and when daylight finally dawned all eyes intently turned toward the wreck with a vague half-hope that, by some altogether improbable possibility, there might still be some signs of living men on board. But there were none.

The forward and after parts of the dismembered hull were seen to be from thirty to forty yards apart, lying at nearly a right angle with each other, the former head on, and the latter, on which no masts appeared, thrown on its beam ends inclined toward the shore. The foremast and foretopmast, bowsprit and jib boom, with most of the fore rigging, were still in place, and the lower yard was crossed amid a confusion of tattered sails and tangled ropes. The waves ran high up the mast, breaking almost into the foretop, and shreds and fragments of the jute cargo wrapped themselves like ragged garments around the shrouds and stays. There was nothing for the life-saving crews to do, and after obtaining necessary food and rest those of the adjacent stations returned homeward. In the afternoon, when the tide had run out, a dead body was discovered entangled in the rigging on the after part of the wreck, but the keeper did not deem it necessary to make an attempt to go out with a boat while the surf was still extremely dangerous. On the following morning the surfboat went to the wreck and recovered the body, which, with nineteen others subsequently washed ashore, was deposited in the receiving vault at Wellfleet, where they were, as far as possible, identified by their surviving shipmate and afterwards appropriately buried.

Evans remained with the life-savers several days, until the sad office of identifying his late comrades had been completed, when he reported to the British consul at Boston, by whom he was furnished transportation to his home in England.

A fact which is regarded as of no inconsiderable importance to seafaring men was emphatically illustrated on this occasion, and that is the almost fatal unwisdom of shipwrecked crews in taking refuge, as they often do when driven aloft, in the mizzen rigging. A photograph of the *Jason*, taken several days after the wreck, shows her foremast still standing, while not a remnant of either of the others is to be seen. Whether any of the men would have been saved if all had taken to the fore rigging, nobody is able to say. The slatting sails and flying blocks and running rigging might have killed some, some might have been washed away by the sea, and some might have perished with the cold, but the fact remains that the foremast stood throughout the storm, with

the foretop and crosstrees above practically uninjured. It therefore seems altogether reasonable to believe that some of the crew might have outlived the disaster had they taken refuge on the foremast, even if the life-saving men had failed to reach them that night, or, better still, that they might have been saved at once by means of the very line that was evidently landed somewhere on board within a few minutes after the stranding of the ship. A careful examination of the details of a considerable number of wrecks, both in this country and England, shows that the mizzenmast in a large majority of cases is the first to fall, and that in many instances all that were lost were on that mast and all that were saved were taken from the foremast or the forward part of the ship.

The following letter was received from the father of the survivor of the crew of the *Jason*:

TREGAER RECTORY,
Raglan, England, January 22, 1894.

MY DEAR SIR: As the father of the only survivor of the terrible wreck of the ship *Jason*, may I ask you very kindly to do me the favor of conveying our most sincere and heartfelt gratitude to

The *Jason*'s eerie silhouette on a calm day.
Jute from the cargo drapes her bowsprit stays. (80.45.24)



Captain Rich and one and all of the gallant crew of the Pamet River Life-Saving Station for their indefatigable and successful endeavors to save the life of our beloved son, S. J. Evans, apprentice of the late ship. While rejoicing at his marvelous rescue from the watery grave—most unfortunately the lot of his poor shipmates—we deeply acknowledge our debt of gratitude to Almighty God, as it was certainly a supernatural escape, and at the same time our unbounded thanks to you and the unwearying energy of your captain and crew, as instruments in the Lord's hand, are intense. Our prayer is that He will reward you all in your important office of saving the lives of those of His subjects who risk their lives on the unruly ocean.

Several of the parents and friends have written to my son asking him particulars of the sad fate of the lost, and in reply to each he has expressed the warmest sense of gratitude to those who saved him, stating that everything that possibly could be done to save the whole crew under the terrible circumstances had been done; but having failed, he noticed with much satisfaction that your crew and other friends were preparing to give the poor captain and crew a most respectable and honorable interment. It is probable that he will again be sailing from England in February, I trust on a more favorable voyage.

Repeating my intense gratification, I beg to remain, my dear sir,

Ever yours faithfully,

WILLIAM EVANS

Lieutenant J. DENNETT,
Assistant Inspector United States
Life-Saving Service.

BOOK REVIEWS

Julianna FreeHand. *A Seagoing Legacy.* New York: Random House, 1981. 210 pp., illustrations. $16.75.

For many years I've had a private phrase, "The best ship is the one nobody ever heard of." I presume the same can be said for the shipmasters. Except for the interesting discovery of Julianna FreeHand, the name of Captain Sumner Gray Drinkwater, his wife Alice, and the barks *Grace Deering* and *Benjamin F. Hunt, Jr.*, would have passed into oblivion.

These people and their ships represent the very best that New England produced, for they went about their business on the oceans in an efficient and orderly manner. No headlines screamed of shipwreck, fire, or brutal treatment. Though Captain Drinkwater commanded the schooner *Bramhall* when she was struck by a steamer and damaged, he never lost a vessel.

Julianna FreeHand has edited a collection of diaries, letters, a journal, and photographs by Captain Drinkwater and his wife, Alice, found in the Drinkwater house by family members, in a manner that brings these people to life. We see a young boy receiving letters from his shipmaster father admonishing him about work to be accomplished; and we read letters from a boy proud of his accomplishments. We watch that boy grow, take his own place aboard ship, work his way from boy to seaman, from seaman to mate, from mate to married man, and then to command.

A captain was allowed to carry his wife, and the Drinkwaters sailed together in coasters until Sumner's big break came. In 1897 he was given command of the bark *Grace Deering*, in which a voyage to New Zealand established him as a "deepwater master." On his second voyage in the *Grace Deering*, they brought along a camera and Alice kept her journal of a voyage to Australia, Singapore, and home. She recorded several events aboard ship and people they met ashore. At the end of this voyage, the Drinkwaters received a tribute from the crew. Alice wrote, "This morning the 2nd mate and 5 men went ashore for good and when they was ready to get into the boat, they gave three cheers for the "Grace Deering," three for the Capt. and three for the Mrs., as they all call me, quite a loud celebration in our honor."

There are indications that Captain Drinkwater had his crew problems, but handled them intelligently. He comes through as a sensitive man who loved his seagoing life, but was lonesome when Alice stayed ashore. His letters reflect a love for, and interest in, his family and friends.

A senior captain took over the *Grace Deering* in 1901 and a couple of coasting schooners filled in Sumner's time until he was appointed to the bark *Benjamin F. Hunt, Jr.*, owned by N. W. Rice of Boston. The *Hunt* was mainly in the River Plate trade to South America. After a couple of trips, Alice retired ashore and only a few letters record this part of Sumner's life. These letters speak of his longing for his home and wife. In 1908, he suddenly left his command, and in 1909 became a motorman aboard trolley cars of the Portland Railroad Company.

It took a strong man to leave a quarterdeck for command of a trolley. We are not told why he left the sea; we can only surmise that he chose to be with Alice, who was in failing health and died seven years later.

Sumner lived until 1932. Of his retirement in 1927, Julianna FreeHand writes, "Eighteen years and two months of running a trolley did not make Sumner a motorman any more than contracting out for carpentry jobs with his brother-in-law had made him a journeyman." Old sailors never die!

Though *A Seagoing Legacy* is generally well done, there are some errors and inconsistencies noticeable to a sailor or maritime student. The vessel *John J. Marsh* is shown in a photograph rigged as a three-masted schooner, and the news item of her loss lists her as such. However, the *List of Merchant Vessels of the United States* carries her as a barkentine and the text of the book calls her a barkentine. The *Mattie B. Russell* is termed "brigantine," "schooner," and "barkentine" in various places; she is listed as a schooner in *Merchant Vessels of the United States* for 1890.

Altogether this is an interesting book that proves all Yankee vessels were not run by bloodthirsty egomaniacs. It is a touching story of seagoing Americana.

Captain Francis E. Bowker
Schooner Brilliant, *M.S.M.*

Charles S. Morgan. *Master in Sail and Steam: The Notable Career of One Maine Shipmaster.* Bath, Maine: Maine Maritime Museum, 1981. 93 pp., illustrations. $2.00.

This fine booklet was written by one of the original members of the editorial advisory board of *The American Neptune* for presentation at the annual symposium of the Maine Maritime Museum at Bath in May of 1981.

It presents the "notable career" of Captain Frank Hewitt Peterson of Machiasport, Maine, who rose from working in a stone quarry at fifteen cents an hour, to command thirteen different sailing ships, one of which was the 2,872-ton, five-topmast schooner *Dorothy Palmer.* Changing to steam in the 1920s, after sail was dead, he became a well-known New England coast pilot in the 1930s, and was then honored by being appointed Secretary of the Boston Marine Society, a post he held for twenty-four years.

Morgan has made a thorough and concise effort to present the maritime career of Captain Peterson from 1892, when he shipped as a ship's boy on the two-masted schooner *Regina,* up to his formal retirement sixty-four years later when he resigned as Secretary of the Boston Marine Society. The booklet is enriched with a twenty-two-page appendix chronologically listing the many vessels and voyages of Captain Peterson. It also contains thirty-seven illustrations, many of them photographs of the vessels in which he served.

This is a very well researched and well written biographical sketch of a much-honored shipmaster who successfully made the transition from sailing ship captain to deep-water steam shipmaster and East Coast pilot.

Michael Jay Mjelde
Bremerton, Washington

Rodney P. Carlisle. *Sovereignty for Sale: The Origin and Evolution of the Panamanian and Liberian Flags of Convenience.* Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1981. 210 pp., illustrations. $19.95.

In the sixty years since World War I, an increasing number of merchant ships owned by American and European companies (and in a few instances by Latin American companies) have been registered in foreign countries, notably Panama and Liberia. These vessels carry the Panamanian or Liberian flag and show such home ports as Cristobal or Monrovia on their sterns.

The offhand explanation for such extranational registration is that it is cheaper to operate under the Panamanian or Liberian codes, which permit lower wage scales and provide greater tax benefits than the home countries. This explanation is basically correct, but the story of when and why foreign registration has been adopted is far more complicated. In *Sovereignty for Sale* author Carlisle presents a meticulously researched and well-written contribution to maritime history, and, at times, a suprisingly interesting narrative. However, this book, which explores the intricacies of intergovernmental understandings, the legal problems of liabilities in emergencies or accidents, and the availability of vessels as adjuncts to the U.S. Navy in wartime, is not something to be read in one sitting as a diversion.

During Prohibition, rum runners used the Panamanian flag in an effort to frustrate the U.S. Coast Guard. The Volstead Act entered another highly publicized incident when the ex-German liners *Reliance* and *Resolute* were transferred to Panamanian registry. Transferred during construction in Germany to Dutch ownership, partly to compensate for Dutch shipping sunk by U-boats during the war and partly to avoid confiscation by the Allies, they were bought by a company owned by Averill Harriman when the Dutch were forced to give them up. But the Volstead Act forbade serving liquor aboard and tourists turned to other ships. Further, there was no U.S. subsidy to help them compete with the passenger ships of other countries. The Shipping Board finally acceded to their transfer to Panamanian registry under the concept that they were always available to the U.S. if needed in an emergency. (These were the only passenger vessels transferred from U.S. to Panamanian registry.)

In 1935 ESSO Corporation transferred its fleet of twenty-five tankers from registration in the semi-independent port of Danzig to Panamanian registry, a transaction motivated by lingering provisions of the Treaty of Versailles and by the emergence of Nazi power in Germany. This was the beginning of the large number of tankers eventually to fly the Panamanian flag, many of them later to be of Greek ownership.

A major portion of the book deals with the activities of the U.S. Maritime Commission and, later, the War Shipping Administration (both

under Admiral Emory Land). Before the start of World War II the problem was to preserve a merchant fleet which could compete profitably in world trade. When the war started, the U.S. was not yet involved but had its Neutrality Act in force, so Panamanian registry was used to permit arming of American-owned vessels engaged in trade with the Allies. In all of this there was a running battle with American labor unions and politicians, who decried the practice of the "flags of convenience" as both a subterfuge to escape U.S. labor laws and a debatable effort to maintain neutrality. Permeating these latter pages is the concept, strongly supported by the U.S. Navy and discussed at length by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department, that these vessels were "available" to the U.S., because the Panamanian and Liberian governments would permit the American government to take control of them whenever needed. Events indicated that this concept was not entirely trustworthy.

Rodney Carlisle graduated from Harvard University in 1958 and received his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California. He wrote *Sovereignty for Sale* while a visiting scholar at the Department of Energy in Washington.

Colonel Duncan S. Somerville
West Hartford, Connecticut

ACQUISITION

This watercolor portrait of the centerboard sloop *Scud* was recently donated to the Seaport by Stephen B. Prudden, great-great-grandson of one of the yacht's owners, Charles E. Folsom. A resident of Dorchester, Folsom was a partner in Folsom & Dearborn, paint and oil dealers at 10 India Street, Boston, in 1866.

While the *Scud*'s builder and date of construction are unknown, *The American Yacht List of 1874* indicates that she was 32′10″ overall, with a beam of 11′5″, and a draft of 1′10″ with centerboard up and 8′ with centerboard down. Notably, on 4 July 1866 she won the City of Boston First Sailing Regatta. In November of that year Folsom was elected a member of the newly organized Boston Yacht Club. By 1874, Folsom was a member of the Dorchester Yacht Club, organized in 1870. The owners of the *Scud* were then listed as Folsom and Cooper, possibly Frederick H. Cooper of Dorchester, a commission merchant.

The unsigned painting shows the *Scud* in Boston Harbor off Hull, with Fort Warren on Georges Island and the Narrows "bug" Light visible at left and Boston Light in the far right distance. Dim: unframed paper 19¾″ x 28½″ [81.102]



HISTORIC SHIPS AFLOAT

The *C. A. Thayer*

The ubiquitous wooden coasting schooner has all but vanished in the last fifty years. Perhaps the best-preserved example in a museum today is the *C. A. Thayer,* on exhibit at the National Maritime Museum in San Francisco, California. Built by Hans Bendixsen at Fairhaven, near Eureka, California, in 1895, the *Thayer* joined a burgeoning fleet of several hundred two to five-masted wooden schooners carrying lumber from the Northwest forests to the rapidly-growing cities of California. Owned by the E. K. Wood Lumber Company, and named for a partner in the business, she sailed from the company's sawmill at Hoquiam, Grays Harbor, Washington, to San Pedro, San Diego, and occasionally Guaymas or Honolulu.

Crews of the Pacific lumber fleet were largely Scandinavians, and the *Thayer*'s crews were representative. Life aboard was generally routine, with good food, relatively good wages, short passages, and long calls in port. But the trade was not without its dangers: once the *Thayer* stranded at the entrance to Grays Harbor; and in 1912, while bound to San Francisco deeply laden, her seams opened up in heavy seas. Barely weathering the storm, she was towed to San Francisco, unloaded, and laid up at Oakland.

As steam power had made great inroads into the lumber fleet, the *Thayer* did not return to the lumber trade. Purchased by Peter M. Nelson, she spent the next thirteen years in the Alaska salmon industry. Each spring she carried men and supplies north to Alaska, returning to San Francisco in the fall with barrels of salted salmon. When shipping rates escalated during World War I, Nelson sent the *Thayer* to Australia with lumber three times between 1917 and 1921. Each time she returned with coal or copra and took up the salmon trade again.

With the decline of the salt salmon fishery the *Thayer* was sold in 1924 to J. E. Shields of the Pacific Coast Codfishing Company of Poulsbo, Washington. With a large crew of fishermen and dories she sailed between Poulsbo and the codfishing banks of the Bering Sea. She brought back a very profitable cargo of salt cod in 1930, but was then laid up due to the Great Depression. Eleven years later, the U.S. Army resurrected her to serve as a barge in Alaskan waters during World War II. In 1945, J. E. Shields repurchased her, gave her a makeshift schooner rig, and put her back into the salt cod fishery. By 1950, her last year of fishing, the *C. A. Thayer* was the last sailing vessel in commercial use on the Pacific Coast.

Left in a cove on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington, she appeared destined to molder away as a "pirate ship" in an amusement area. But Karl Kortum, director of the San Francisco Maritime Museum, was working to save some of the Pacific Coast's surviving sailing vessels. Inspired by the example of Mystic Seaport, he organized a group that convinced the California Legislature to establish the San Francisco Maritime State Historic Park in 1956. That year, the *C. A. Thayer* was hauled off her gravel-bank berth and taken to Seattle for repair. In 1957 she entered San Francisco Bay triumphantly, to begin her career as a museum ship.

The San Francisco Maritime State Historic Park was taken over by the National Park Service in 1977 and is now the Historic Ships Unit of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Usually on exhibit with the *C. A. Thayer* at the Hyde Street Pier in San Francisco are the scow schooner *Alma,* steam schooner *Wapama,* San Francisco Bay ferry *Eureka,* and ocean-going steam tug *Hercules.* As part of an urban National Park, there is no admission charge.

The *C. A. Thayer* off Cape Flattery, Washington, on her return to San Francisco, September 1957. (Courtesy of the National Maritime Museum, San Francisco)



Prize Article Contest

The Editorial Board of *The Log of Mystic Seaport* is pleased to announce its second prize article contest.

Purpose To encourage the study of American maritime subjects, and to promote the publication of original research in the field.

Criteria Accurate scholarship demonstrating original research and, when appropriate, the use of primary source material. Articles can take the form of biography or studies on economic, political, social, literary, artistic, or musical aspects of the American maritime traditions. However, strictly naval topics and works of fiction are excluded.

Eligibility Ineligible are Trustees of Mystic Seaport Museum and members of the Editorial Board of *The Log of Mystic Seaport.*

Manuscripts No more than 6,000 words in length (excluding footnotes and bibliography). Entries must not have been previously published. Editorial Guidelines and Contest Entry Forms are available from: The Editor, *The Log of Mystic Seaport,* Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Connecticut 06355.

Deadline Manuscripts must be submitted prior to 1 December 1982.

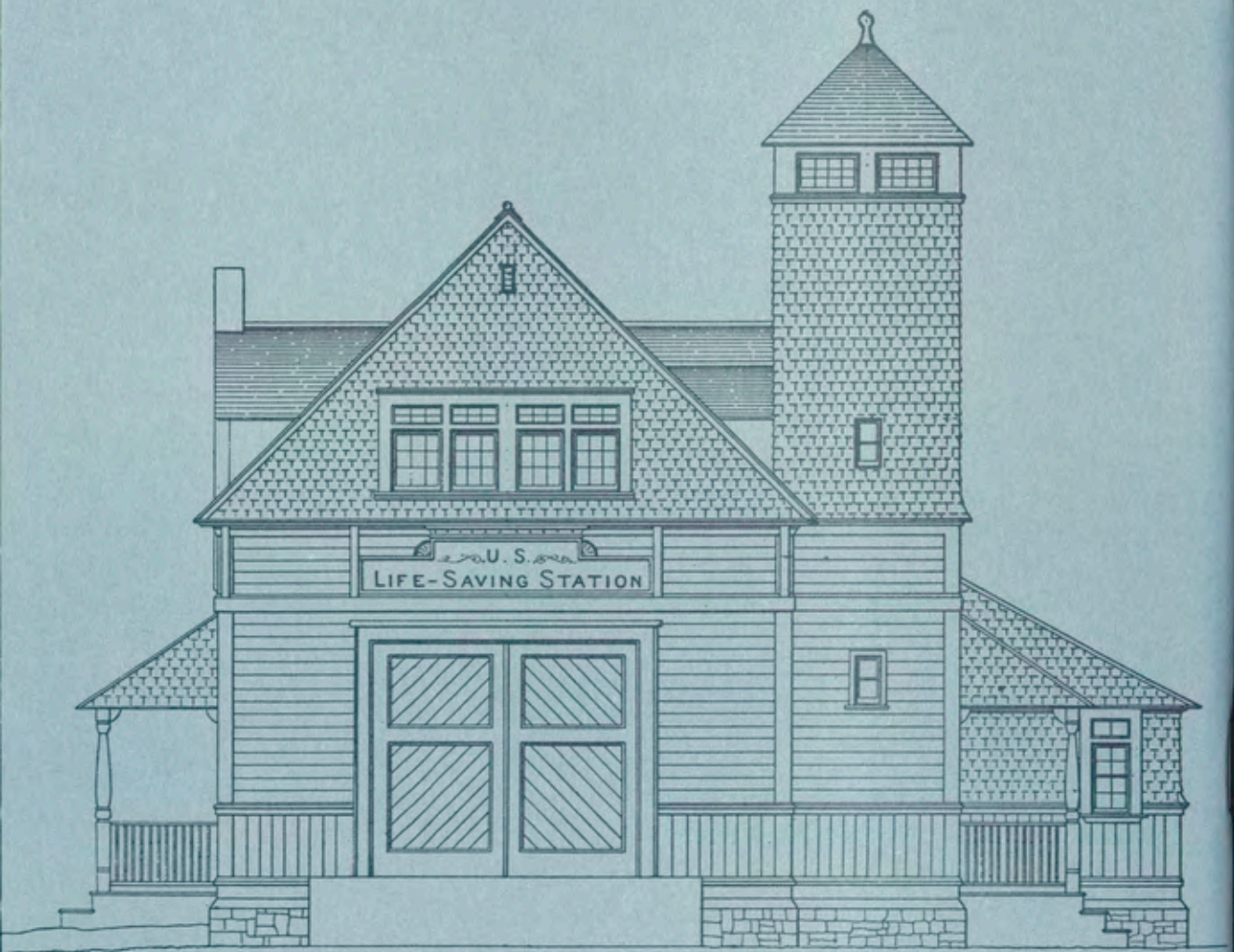
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THE LOG OF MYSTIC SEAPORT

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