



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Station Block Island, Rhode Island

USLSS Station #5, Third District
Coast Guard Station #62

Location:	Block Island, west side, near Dickens Point; 41-09' 40"N x 71-36' 40"W
Date of Conveyance:	1879
Station Built:	1872
Fate:	Still in operation

Remarks:

A station was provided for by Congress in March, 1871, and built here, "on Block Island, west side, near Dickens Point," in 1872. The station was originally called the "Block Island, Southwest Point" station. Block Island station was reconstructed and enlarged in 1886. Noted Rhode Island Life-Saving Service station historian Tim Dring wrote:

Station Block Island, as originally established by the USLSS, was located a little above the southwest corner of Block Island (41-09-40 N/71-36-40 W) but, with the introduction of motorized rescue craft, had to be re-located to the current site inside the entrance to Great Salt Pond (41-11-40 N/71-35-20 W). The station at the Great Salt Pond location was commissioned in January of 1936, and by December of 1941 had the following rescue craft assigned: 36ft.8in. Type TR motor lifeboat No. 4756/CG36400, Type S pulling surfboat No. 3854/CG25370, and 38ft. cabin picket boat No. 4303/CG38317. The new Station Block Island consolidated the Coast Guard's operational responsibilities and resources for the entire island, which had previously been split between the three original USLSS stations locations: the original Block Island station, New Shoreham, and Sandy Point. Station Block Island was discontinued as a year-round, fully active unit in

1986. Currently, Station Point Judith, RI provides either a 27ft. rigid hull/foam collar SAFE type medium utility boat, or a 25ft. Response Boat-Small during the summer boating season as a SAR detachment. This detachment no longer operates out of the "Roosevelt type" station building (which was turned over to the Block Island municipal government by 1990) but, rather, operates out of a smaller building located just a short distance away, with its dock also located in Great Salt Pond. The original Station Block Island location was on the southwest side of island. Station Block Island's later location on Great Salt Pond.

In 1988 the Coast Guard ended year-round operations at the station and limited them to the summer months only. In 1996 the station's buildings were given to the Town of New Shoreham in 1996 with the stipulation that they keep quarters for the Coast Guardsmen on duty during the summer. In 2002 the station received a new 27-foot response boat.

Keepers:

The first keeper was Samuel Allen, who was appointed at the age of 46 (with thirty years' surfman experience) on December 12, 1872 and served until removed effective January 16, 1878. He was followed by Edward C. Allen, who was appointed at the age of 52 effective January 16, 1878; the date of the end of his service is unrecorded. Next came Samuel Allen, Jr., who was appointed October 25, 1879 and served until he was discharged on November 25, 1886. Then came Nathaniel D. Ball (appointed December 6, 1886 until his resignation for physical reasons on January 31, 1905), and William Teal (January 21, 1905 until his incapacitation and subsequent retirement on December 2, 1922). Arthur L. Lanphere was reassigned from the Maddekett station on August 26, 1928 and reassigned to the Gay Head station on November 2, 1931. He was relieved by Chief Boatswains Mate H. E. Johnson. Eli Sprague, Jr., took command on April 15, 1933, having come from the Green Hill station, and served until his retirement on December 1, 1935. Then came Chief Boatswains Mate H. B. Peterson, followed by Harry E. Johnson, who was reassigned from the New Shoreham station on July 15, 1937.

Sources:

Station History File, CG Historian's Office

Dennis L. Noble & Michael S. Raynes. "Register of the Stations and Keepers of the U.S. Life-Saving Service." Unpublished manuscript, compiled circa 1977, CG Historian's Office collection.

Ralph Shanks, Wick York & Lisa Woo Shanks. *The U.S. Life-Saving Service: Heroes, Rescues and Architecture of the Early Coast Guard*. Petaluma, CA: Costaño Books, 1996.

U.S. Treasury Department: Coast Guard. *Register of the Commissioned and Warrant Officers and Cadets and Ships and Stations of the United States Coast Guard, July 1, 1941*. Washington, DC: USGPO, 1941.

