



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Station Oak Island, North Carolina

Coast Guard Station #194



Coast Guard Station Oak Island

Original Location: Near east end of Oak Island, two miles west-northwest of Bald Head Light, and 4-3/8 miles northwest by west of Cape Fear Light; 33° 53' 20" N x 78° 01' 20" W

Date of Conveyance: 1888

Station Built: 1899

Fate: Still in operation

Remarks:

On 23 June 1888 the Secretary of War transferred to the Secretary of the Treasury a portion of the Fort Caswell military reservation on Oak Island, NC to be used for the erection of a life-saving station and boathouse. A different site had been selected four years earlier. The island is located south of the mouth of

the Cape Fear River and the site selected in 1894 was on Piney Point about 3.5 miles from the point where the shoal forming the bar off the mouth of the river connects with the mainland. It was about 300 yards from the head of a creek which empties into the river near Smithsfield, NC. The site was described as high and grassy and about one hundred yards from the ocean yard.

On 20 April 1888, however, a different site was selected for the projected Oak Island Life-Saving Station. On 23 July 1891 the War Department granted the Treasury Department Life-Saving Service "permission to use a lot of 75 feet square as indicated on an accompanying chart, and to occupy the beach in front thereof, on the Fort Caswell Military Reservation, N.C. as a new site for the boathouse of the Oak Island Life Saving Station, in lieu of certain premises on that reservation, the use of which was granted by War Department letter of the 9th ultimo [9 June 1891]." This was a new site for the boathouse only. The Treasury Department eventually acquired 57.2 acres of the Fort Caswell Military Reservation by an act of Congress in April, 1939.

The original building was used until a new larger 10,000 square foot facility was built in 1992. However this structure accidentally burned down 1 February 2002 with no loss of life or injuries. The new structure was commissioned in July, 29004.

The original 1889 life-saving station house is now just across the street from the current [2006] station's main gate on the beach and is now a private residence.

Keepers:

Thomas M. Savage was appointed Keeper on 30 October 1889 and was dismissed on 5 May 1891.

Dunbar Davis was appointed Keeper on 22 July 1891 and left the service in 1915.

William F. Piner (Acting) was appointed keeper in 1915.

Photographs:



Original caption: "Long Island, NC (Aug. 30 1999)--Coast Guard Station Oak Island, NC. USCG photo by PA1 Telfair H. Brown."



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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: Costañó 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.
