



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Station Race Point, Massachusetts Station Provincetown

USLSS Station #6, Second District
Coast Guard Station #34

Location:	1 5/8 miles northeast of Race Pint Light; 42-04' 12"N x 70-13' 58"W in 1878; 42-04' 45"N x 70-13' 15"W in 1915
Date of Conveyance	1873
Station Built:	1873
Fate:	Still in operation

Race Point (#33):

This station was one of the nine original stations built on Cape Cod in 1872 and manned in the winter of 1873. The coast at Race Point is very treacherous, and had been the scene of many wrecks caused by the tides which race by there which swept many ships to destruction on the sunken reefs which lie along the coast. It was built about four miles from Provincetown at a position "northeast one and three-eighths mile of Race Point Light, Cape Cod." It was probably moved, because in 1883, its position was "five-eighths mile northeast of Race Point Light." It was provided "extensive repairs and improvements" in 1888.

There have been 93 major shipwrecks in the Provincetown area since 1873 with over 600 lives saved by the men of the station. In 1930 a new building was completed at Race Point. However, the location became increasingly unsuitable when more modern rescue craft had to be tied up 2.3 miles away, in Provincetown Harbor. Around 1962, Coast Guard officials began to consider a replacement for Race Point Station.

A new station was built in the West End of Provincetown in 1978/79 to accommodate more personnel. Also, the new station is located much closer to the rescue craft than the old location at Race Point. This new station is the first solar-powered federal building in history. Drug abuse by nineteen personnel was reported on August 20, 1982. All nineteen men and women were reassigned to Coast Guard Support Center Boston pending disciplinary proceedings. Coast Guard reservists were called in to fill in at the 28-men station. Seven enlisted personnel were discharged later that fall with four more cases pending. The other eight men and women were reassigned to duty.

Keepers:

The first keeper was Lewis A. Smith, who was appointed at the age of 40 with twelve years experience as a surfman, on December 12, 1872 and removed on May 31, 1875. Then came John W. Young, who was appointed on May 31, 1875 and resigned on September 18, 1888. He was followed by Samuel O. Fisher (after serving as a surfman for eight years at the Peaked Hill Bars station, he was appointed keeper September 5, 1888 and served until his retirement with thirty years service on June 18, 1915). Fisher was one of the survivors in the C. E. Trumbull accident which claimed the keeper and two other surfmen at the Peaked Hill Bars station. He was followed by Henry I. Collins (reassigned from the Pamet River station on June 19, 1915 and died September 14, 1924) and William M. Wolff (July 21, 1925 until appointed as the District Commander of the new Tenth District in Grand Haven, Michigan on February 25, 1927). The next officer in charge is shown as Chief Petty Officer James Morris and, in 1935, Chief A. Lema. Then comes Addison N. Ormsby on March 4, 1939 from the Wood End station. The station is still in operation.

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.