



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Station Sleeping Bear Point

USLSS Station #3, Eleventh District
Coast Guard Station #261

Location:	On Sleeping Bear Bay, near Glenn Haven , Mich., 7 miles south southeast of South Manitou Light; Lake Michigan
Date of Conveyance	1878
Station Built:	1901
Fate:	Turned over to the GSA in 1955

Historical Remarks:

Ms. Jeanne Urbanski, the Great Granddaughter of crewman John Dwiggins recently sent in transcribed copies of newspaper articles regarding the death of her Great-Grandfather while he was on duty:

KILLED BY LIGHTNING IN THE TOWER (*Grand Haven Daily*)

Superintendent Capt. Morton of the 11th district of life saving stations, today received a dispatch from Keeper William Walker of Sleeping Bear station, stating that Surfman John Dwiggins was struck by lightning and instantly killed while on lookout duty Saturday night.

Further particulars have not been learned here but it is supposed that the accident occurred during the heavy electric storm of Saturday night. The tower at Sleeping Bear station is not on the station building but up on a sand hill about 150 feet above the station and Dwiggins was probably on duty here when death came to him.

John Dwiggins was well known here and was for years a member of the crew at the Grand Haven station. He came to this station where he entered the service in 1894 and remained in the crew until 1899 when he resigned to engage in the fishing business out of this port with William Noantay. About two years ago he re-entered the service and was assigned to the Sleeping Bear station under Keeper William Walker, an old station mate at this port.

The deceased was a member of the Odd fellows and had a large number of friends in this city who will be grieved at the sad death.

The death of Surfman Dwiggins while on duty in the watch tower only shows another phase of the dangers to which these men are subjected.

Between the storms of the sea and the storms of the land the man in the tower is on guard that no life shall be lost. And in protecting other lives he lost his own.

The remains will probably be brought here for burial.

The body of Mr. Dwiggins is expected this afternoon and the life saving men of this station marched in a body to meet the remains.

WILL BE BURIED TOMORROW

The body of John Dwiggins, the surfman, who was killed by lightning Saturday night at Sleeping Bear station has been brought to Jenison for burial. The funeral will be held at two o'clock tomorrow afternoon, from the home of Mrs. Dwiggins' parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ulberg and the interment will be at Grandville. William Keltie, with Mrs. Dwiggins and two children of the deceased, came down from Sleeping Bear.

The accident was a very peculiar one. Surfman Dwiggins was found dead in the tower at ten minutes to eight o'clock by Charles Robinson. No. 1 at the station.

The body was badly burned and had apparently been struck on the head and shoulders by the bolt. In the roof of the tower were two small holes, as smooth as though they had been burned in by a hot iron.

Investigation showed that the dead man had punched the clock at 7:30 o'clock.

A number from here will attend the funeral and the Rev. Robert Brown will probably assist at the services.

Keepers:

William Walker was appointed keeper on 12 February 1902 and transferred to Station Grand Haven on 1 June 1910.

Frank Partridge was appointed keeper on 23 May 1910 and transferred to Station Charlevoix on 9 March 1913.

Charles Robinson was appointed keeper on 21 February 1913 and was still serving in 1915.

Photographs:



No caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.

Provided courtesy of Jeanne Urbanski, Great-Granddaughter of Sleeping Bear Point LSS crewman John Dwiggins. She noted: "I believe it was taken between Aug. 1902 and Oct 3, 1903. From Left to Right: Capt. William Walker, Herman Allere, Jesse Bell, John Dwiggins, Charles Robinson, George Mastain, Bob Smith."

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.

