

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

UNITED STATES LIFE-SAVING SERVICE

FOR THE

FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 1900.



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is no time for aid, even of the promptest sort, either from the neighboring fish boats or the life-saving crew.

FLOOD IN TEXAS.

Early in July, 1899, the whole country was made aware of impending disaster in the vicinity of the Brazos River, Texas, which was then out of its banks and liable to cause very serious loss of property and possibly of human life. The attention of Superintendent W. A. Hutchings, of the Eighth Life-Saving District, was forcibly drawn to the grave situation of the people living along the line of the river, and he prudently proceeded to formulate such a plan of action as might be advisable if circumstances should show that the Life-Saving Service could be of assistance. The river was swollen by extraordinarily heavy rains, which deluged the country along the line of its course for a week prior to the day named, and was reported to have risen at that time in some places more than 50 feet above the mean level, and to be still rising, inundating the whole country on either side for hundreds of square miles, sweeping the low bottoms, carrying before it destruction of the richest portion of the State, and destroying large property values, as well as imperiling life.

On the evening of July 5 and the morning of the 6th alarming reports were received at Galveston and appeals for the immediate relief of many persons who had been cut off from the outside world and driven to take refuge in trees and in the upper stories and on the tops of their dwellings, and were wholly without means of escape, except in some instances, here and there, by flat-bottomed skiffs of a type by no means suitable to meet the emergency. The situation was so desperate that prompt and energetic efforts were necessary.

Superintendent Hutchings without delay hunted up Captain Edward Haines, keeper of the Galveston Life-Saving Station, who was then in the city of Galveston on leave of absence of thirty days during the summer period when the life-saving stations are not manned, and directed him to place in readiness to proceed immediately up the river, the Race Point lifeboat with its outfits. In the meantime Mr. Hutchings had forwarded to the general superintendent in Washington a telegram setting forth the extreme urgency of the situation and asking authority, which was granted without delay, to employ the Life-Saving Service, as far as might be practicable, in behalf of the stricken people. During the early portion of the 6th arrangements were made for the transportation of boats and men to a point of destination selected as the base of operations, which was accomplished through the instrumentality of Mayor Jones, members of the relief committee, and the officials of the Santa Fe Railroad, who tendered a special train to take the boats and men to Duke Station, about 50 miles distant, which seemed to be the most important point.

Captains F. W. Chase and Joseph Woolford had secured two boats, one a large longboat and the other a ship's cutter, which, with seven men to man them, were offered to participate in the work under charge of Superintendent Hutchings. These boats, including the surfboat belonging to the Galveston Life-Saving Station, were quickly placed on flat cars, and the whole party, including Keeper White, of the Aransas Life-Saving Station, proceeded by special train, leaving Galveston at 2.15 p. m. and reaching Duke about 4.30 p. m. This

point was selected because the whole section was thickly populated and it was believed that the most urgent necessity for the services of boats and men would be found there.

The train conveyed the party and equipments as near the river front as it was possible to go, where the boats were promptly launched, and a few moments later, having secured local pilots to direct their movements, the men proceeded to follow the edge of the heavy timber and telegraph poles along the line of the railroad, which was submerged from 6 to 10 feet. After pulling probably as far as 2 miles, they approached the rising ground leading toward the great steel bridge which spans the river, and there found huddled together some 70 or 80 persons (men, women, and children) on a little elevation locally known as a "mound" or "dump." These small elevations were the only places where refuge could be found, and among the human beings there were cattle, horses, mules, swine, etc., in great numbers.

The boats, finding abundant work at hand, at once separated and commenced systematic operations. The crews under Captains Chase and Woolford began loading people to be transferred either to Duke or as near that point as possible, while the surfmen of the life-saving stations proceeded to a large house a quarter of a mile distant, known as the "red house," being built of brick, and the oldest plantation house along the river. They had to proceed through thick woods and among and around many dangerous obstructions before reaching the place. Some 45 or 50 people (adults and children, black and white) were found there in the upper portions of the building, which was well submerged. Their rescue was in due time safely effected, and all were landed on elevated ground adjacent to the railroad.

As soon as the last boat load of persons from the red house had been landed the surfboat joined the boats of Captains Chase and Woolford in conveying other people to safe ground near Duke, whence the boats had originally set out. This admirable work was continued until well into the night, when the last person in that immediate vicinity had been rescued.

The operations so far accomplished were conducted under extremely adverse circumstances, the boats having to contend with a strong current sweeping with great force over the bottoms, and when they were loaded with people great skill was required to keep them from being demolished against trees, telegraph poles, and other obstructions.

Before the rescue of these people was complete a message was received from the town of Thompson, across the river, stating that there were 200 or 300 persons imperiled in that neighborhood, who were sadly in need of aid. It was, however, practically impossible to operate with the boats through the thick woods and dangerous bottoms during the night, and further action was necessarily deferred until the following morning. A number of the persons already rescued (consisting of 20 or 30 whites) were made as comfortable as possible by their friends and the residents of Duke. The majority, however, some 75 or 80 colored, with a few Mexicans, were mostly compelled to take shelter in box cars placed by the railroad company at this point for that purpose, and their advent swelled the number of refugees congregated there to something over 400 persons. The rescuers ceased their labors and retired for the night at about 9 o'clock.

On July 7, after an early breakfast, the Life-Saving Service force and the Chase and Woolford crews again manned their boats, each

having a competent negro pilot, and, in pursuance of arrangements made the night before, separated near the bridge, pulling off in different directions, the station boat proceeding along the bottoms on the west side of the river toward the T. W. House plantation, some 6 miles distant, where many people were reported to have taken refuge.

The other boats, Keeper Edward White of the Life-Saving Service accompanying them, proceeded to Thompson. When the station boat had made some 4 miles, and while crossing a wide stretch of water, covering immense cotton fields, it came up with two rude skiffs, about a quarter of a mile apart, having in them four men, two women, and three children, all colored, vaguely seeking to reach some place of safety. The box-shaped skiffs in which they floated were roughly constructed of odd pieces of lumber, such as dry-goods boxes, etc., and were absolutely dangerous in the smoothest waters. All of their occupants would undoubtedly have been drowned if left to pursue their way, and consequently the life-savers took them into the surfboat and resumed pulling toward the T. W. House plantation. A half-mile farther on, while skirting the edge of a piece of timber, they found an old colored man waist deep in the water in his hut, which stood upon a high knoll. He was trying to secure some four or five fine mules that had instinctively gathered about the place, but he wisely concluded to take advantage of the surfboat, which, after taking him aboard, continued toward its destination, passing over valuable fields of cotton, cane, and corn, over which the water, from 6 to 16 feet deep, rushed with destructive force, showing here and there the tops of submerged houses, or the ruins of others entirely washed away, the whole combining to complete a scene of most melancholy desolation.

At the T. W. House plantation there were found in one of the larger structures (the ginhouse) about 125 persons, all colored, and in some of the smaller buildings, which were upon moderately high ground, there were from 3 to 8. Many negroes were inclined to remain, but the larger portion of them took advantage of the opportunity to escape, and six or seven trips were made from this point to a place about half a mile distant, where there was an elevation from which a tolerably good road led to Duke. About 100 people were safely landed, and were also enabled to take with them a considerable portion of their scanty household belongings. Among the rescued persons were some entirely helpless by reason of blindness, congenital physical disability, etc.

It was now about the middle of the afternoon, and all having been accomplished in that vicinity that seemed possible, the boat returned toward Duke, where it arrived at 7.30 p. m. The Chase and Woolford boats, which had also returned, reported having rescued 172 persons, including a considerable number of Italian laborers having their women and children with them. The movements of the boats during the entire day were made under the rays of a scorching sun, and the crews who had manned them, thoroughly tired out, now threw themselves down for a well-earned night's rest.

Early in the morning of the 8th, after a frugal repast consisting of crackers and canned goods obtained from a country store near by, the men again manned the boats, having taken the precaution to put on board such simple articles of food as could be obtained for consumption during the day. The Chase and Woolford boats, Keeper White again going with them, rowed out to the main channel of the river,

which could be distinguished by its swift and turbulent current, as well as by the woods along the windings of its banks, while the surfboat steered for the inland bottoms so as to take in all the plantations below Duke toward the town of Sandy Point, with the understanding that the three boats should meet at or near that place in order to work in concert if found necessary. When the T. W. House plantation was reached, persons there who had refused succor the day before informed the crew that the sound of guns had been heard to the southward during the night, and also to the westward, apparently in the woods toward the river front, and therefore much apprehension had been experienced for the safety of several families known to have lived in those directions.

The services of an extra good "bottom" pilot for this particular section were engaged, and the surfboat was rowed over that entire portion of country, going to every discernible house, which necessitated hours of exposure under a broiling sun, cutting and dragging the boats through thick vines and limbs of trees and accumulations of débris in order to gain open water on the opposite side. By most persistent and patient efforts, however, the men succeeded in reaching every place known to have been inhabited in the "half-moon circle," having made a pull of 16 or 18 miles. All the small houses that had not been carried away were submerged to the eaves. No signs of life were discovered except three colored men afloat in a fairly good skiff, who were standing by their submerged shanty in the woods and endeavoring to recover and carry to higher land their work animals.

When the fruitless effort of the life-savers to ascertain the cause of the gun firing was completed, the surfboat headed for the Darrington plantation, some 6 or 7 miles to the southward. The course taken was designated by colored pilots as "the road," but the superintendent states that, since the boat was floating along 16 or 18 feet above the roadbed, he had not much confidence in the pilot's opinion, which, however proved to be correct. The buildings of the Darrington plantation soon came into view. When still half a mile distant, however, a strong counter current swept the surfboat against some submerged obstacle, which punctured a hole in the bilge on the port side and let the water into the bottom in such a torrent that it would have quickly swamped her had not all hands thrown themselves to the starboard side, thus raising the hole above the surface of the water, when it was temporarily plugged from the inside by articles of wearing apparel. In this condition it was cautiously paddled to a two-story building fastened to the ground by chains carried over the roof, which was found to be in charge of Mr. Ticknor, the overseer, and State guard of convicts employed there, most of whom had been taken to a place of safety near Sandy Point. All further rescue operations were necessarily suspended until the boat could be got out of the water and repaired, which was finally effected by lifting it to a platform of the cotton house, which was about a foot above the surface of the flood.

Mr. Ticknor informed the surfmen that there were two or three houses up the river from which he felt certain the people had not been able to escape, and offered to guide the boat to them. His proffer being accepted, a pull of about 5 miles was made, when the first house was reached, still standing, but submerged to within 2 feet of the eaves and surrounded by an extremely dangerous current, which the superintendent thinks might have been then running at a rate of at least

6 miles an hour. No persons were found there, and the superintendent believes that the structure must soon thereafter have been swept away. The next point designated by Mr. Ticknor as worthy of search was some 4 or 5 miles farther upstream, and as long as there seemed to be any probability of doing good the life-savers felt bound to make the effort, laborious as it might be. The pull against the current was very arduous, and the house designated was not reached until late in the afternoon. The water in its immediate vicinity was only some 4 feet deep, but no signs of life could be discovered except that several mules and horses were standing in the water about the building. As the life-savers had anticipated, it turned out that the inmates of this place had already been rescued by the crew of the Chase boat, but only a few minutes earlier.

Daylight being now almost spent, and the boat crews being not only very tired but somewhat discouraged, they decided to proceed to Sandy Point under the pilotage of Mr. Ticknor, and conclude the day's work at that place. Upon reaching high ground, some three-quarters of a mile from their destination, they came to the temporary quarters of convicts, who were under guard, and there they tarried for about half an hour in order to rest and enjoy the refreshment afforded by an excellent ration of coffee "all around," which was furnished by the thoughtfulness and generosity of Mr. Ticknor, who accompanied the party no farther. Having been supplied with a competent pilot for the rest of the journey, the boat departed, and after contending with much floating débris driven by a fierce current, reached Sandy Point thoroughly worn-out. During the long day which had now closed they had searched a territory of about 30 miles up and down the river amid conditions calculated to break down the strongest of men. Arrangements were speedily completed for lodgings at a neighboring house, where the weary life-savers made themselves as comfortable as possible between a few cots and beds and the open gallery without beds and slept soundly through the remainder of the night.

The morning of July 9 found the crews assembled at Sandy Point, the Chase and Woolford crews having reported there from a plantation house, where they had slept, after landing on high ground some 100 persons, mostly colored. The three crews numbered 18 half-famished men, and Mrs. Martin, the mistress of the house, proved to be entirely unable to furnish them with the necessary morning meal. Superintendent Hutchings, however, finally secured of the relief committee a sack of flour and a quantity of pork, which, with coffee and molasses, had to suffice for the preparation of the breakfast. As soon as the plain repast was finished, the current day's work began. Reports had come in stating that within a radius of 10 miles there were several large plantations isolated and with hundreds of people in dire distress. Few preparations were required to make the boats ready, and all of them were soon under way, each carrying as a pilot a citizen of Sandy Point who was well acquainted with the country thereabouts.

By 12 o'clock the surfboat had landed 54 persons, all of whom were colored, and the most of them women and children. By sundown 27 more had been gathered up—all from the larger houses and plantations. During this day's operations the surfboat was in charge of Keeper White, Keeper Haines being obliged to remain idle on account of his hands being disabled. The Chase and Woolford boats rescued 50 persons necessarily left in a rather insecure place the night before,

and in addition to these 85 others, taken from various inundated places, making a total of over 200 persons rescued on the 9th of July. The night was passed by all three boat crews at Sandy Point.

At daylight on the 10th there was a perceptible fall in the water, which afforded conclusive evidence that the worst of the flood was over, and therefore Superintendent Hutchings and Captains Chase and Woolford, all of whom were needed in Galveston to attend to other important matters, determined to return home if possible as soon as the operations of the day should be concluded. Provisions being now at hand in charge of the relief committee, the smaller boat belonging to Captain Chase was selected, in conjunction with the surfboat, for the purpose of carrying food to the various places in need. Keeper White was put in charge of the Chase boat, and Keeper Haines, the condition of whose hands had much improved, took command of the surfboat, which belonged to his station. Both boats, taking only small crews in order to save space, were fully loaded with sides of pork and sacks of flour, with which they proceeded to Palo Alto, Lang, Cleburne, Masterson, and Tankersley plantations, where their supplies were fairly distributed. Eight persons were also conveyed at their own request to Sandy Point. At 5.30 p. m. Captains Hutchings, Chase, and Woolford, who had participated in the good work of the day, boarded an inspection train, taking with them one of the Chase boats, and departed for Galveston.

Throughout the greater part of the next day, the 11th, the two remaining boats, under command of Keepers Haines and White, continued the distribution of provisions at needy points. In the afternoon the water had so far fallen that no further assistance seemed to be required where they were, and consequently Keeper Haines telegraphed to Angleton and Columbia, farther down the river, inquiring whether the life-saving boats were needed there. A negative reply having been returned, the boats were taken from the water to the railroad station for shipment to Galveston on the morrow. Up to 4 o'clock p. m. of the 12th, no opportunity having occurred to ship the boats, Surfman Jacobsen was detailed to take charge of them while Keepers Haines and White ran a handcar some ten miles to reach a train which would take them to Galveston, where they arrived in the evening. The boats reached Galveston on the 14th. Transportation was furnished free both ways for boats and men through the courtesy of the railroad officials.

In concluding his report of this remarkable week's work Superintendent Hutchings says:

The representatives of the United States Life-Saving Service force, excluding myself, consisted of Keeper Edward Haines, of the Galveston Station; Keeper White, of the Aransas Station; Surfman J. Jacobsen, of the Galveston Station, and Alexander Hamson, Walter Hamson, Alexander Andersen, B. J. Hughes, and H. C. Nilsen, volunteer surfmen. The work performed was laborious in the extreme, either rowing under the burning heat of the July sun, or, when not exposed to its debilitating influence, cutting and breaking the way for the boats from one stretch of open water to another through thick vines and branches of trees and poisonous shrubs, often encountering reptiles which had found refuge above the waters.

The operations covered some 150 miles over a country totally devastated by the greatest overflow the Southwest has ever known. Thousands of people were rendered homeless, and the crops of the richest section of this great State were mostly destroyed, causing a loss of millions of dollars. By a systematic method of performing the labors assumed, and by dogged persistence, the life-savers were instrumental in rescuing with the United States surfboat 257 lives, and in the other boats, under command of Captains Chase and Woolford, 300 more.

Too much praise can not be accorded the men engaged in these noble efforts to save human life and property. Captains Chase and Woolford (themselves volunteers), with the 7 men who accompanied them, furnished their own boats without charge, and performed heroic service. During all this trying period not a murmur of discontent or peevishness was uttered by any of the men. Under adverse circumstances in every way, half fed, and with no comfort save the satisfaction of doing a noble duty, they stubbornly continued their arduous efforts until there was no further use for them.

It should be stated that in addition to the severe and exhausting exposure suffered by all, Keeper Haines and Superintendent Hutchings were afflicted with poison, while the ever-faithful surfman Jacob Jacobsen contracted fever of which he died a short time after his return to the life-saving station.

DEATH OF CAPTAIN GEORGE W. MOORE.

The Service has to lament the death of Captain George W. Moore, one of its most efficient and respected officers, which occurred on the 24th of July, 1899.

At the time of his death Captain Moore was acting under detail from the Revenue-Cutter Service as assistant inspector of the life-saving stations of the Eleventh Life-Saving District, with headquarters at Chicago, Illinois.

He was born November 17, 1837, in Baltimore, Maryland, where he spent his youth and acquired his education. His school days, however, terminated at the age of 18, when he shipped as a sailor and thereafter continued to follow the sea in the merchant service for eight years, having served in various grades on some of the celebrated clipper ships of that day engaged in the Pacific trade.

On May 7, 1864, he entered the Revenue-Cutter Service as acting second lieutenant, was promoted to be first lieutenant July 11, 1865, and captain January 18, 1872,

On the purchase of Alaska by the United States in 1867, he was ordered to that Territory and there served as collector of customs for several years. He was also a member of a commission constituted for the purpose of determining the award of the Alabama privateer claims. For about ten years he was superintendent of construction of the Revenue-Cutter Service and also for the United States Life-Saving Service.

In 1895 his health became quite seriously impaired and, at his own request, he was placed upon waiting orders, which enabled him to secure such rest and change of scene as were necessary to his recovery. When war was declared with Spain in 1898, the younger officers of the Revenue-Cutter Service who were detailed for duty in the Life-Saving Service were ordered to vessels, and thus the assistant inspectorship of the Eleventh Life-Saving District—comprising all the stations on Lake Michigan—was vacated. To this important post Captain Moore was assigned, and in that capacity continued to serve until his death. On the 17th of July he was stricken with a fatal shock of paralysis, which terminated his life one week later.

Personally Captain Moore was of a kindly and generous disposition, honest, firm in his convictions, and sincere in his personal attachments—a truthful, upright, and estimable citizen. As an officer he was scrupulously attentive to duty, precise, painstaking, and reliable. Whatever it was his to do he did with a whole heart, faithfully, with the

utmost attention to details, and when the work was done it was always well done.

WOMEN'S NATIONAL RELIEF ASSOCIATION.

During the fiscal year 82 cases have arisen where the keepers of life-saving stations have had occasion to furnish dry clothing to the victims of marine disasters and minor casualties incident to seafaring life, and the gratitude of the 294 persons who were thus succored is ample testimony of the beneficence of the Women's National Relief Association, which placed these supplies within their reach. Forty-six of these destitute people—many almost naked—were the survivors of six vessels driven ashore in the vicinity of Cape Hatteras by the disastrous storm which swept the Atlantic seaboard from August 16 to 18, 1899.

Benefactions, Women's National Relief Association.

Date.	Station and locality.	Beneficiaries.
1899.		
July 1	City Point, Massachusetts	Two men, crew of capsized sloop Attila.
4	Saint Joseph, Michigan	Two men and two women from capsized rowboat.
7	Cape Disappointment, Washington	Two men from capsized fish boat.
8	Bois Blanc, Michigan	A man from capsized sailboat Bessie.
9	Spermaceti Cove, New Jersey	Eight men from capsized sloop Eagle Wing.
10	City Point, Massachusetts	A man from the British steamer Norseman, who had been drenched by hose while fighting fire.
16	Gurnet, Massachusetts	Master of catboat Mildred, who had been drenched by spray.
18	Erie, Pennsylvania	Five persons from swamped catboat Lena.
24	City Point, Massachusetts	Three persons from swamped skiff.
26	Thunder Bay Island, Michigan	Ten persons drenched in thunderstorm while out sailing.
30	Sand Beach, Michigan	A man from sunken tug Grace A. Ruelle. The body of a man drowned in this casualty was dressed for burial.
Aug. 4	Evanston, Illinois	A man and a woman from capsized boat.
4	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	A boy who fell off a dock.
5	Cedar Creek, New Jersey	Five persons from capsized sloop Aji.
10	Racine, Wisconsin	A woman rescued from the disabled sloop Dorothy.
11	Jerrys Point, New Hampshire	Two men from capsized sailboat.
11	Oregon Inlet, North Carolina	Three men from wrecked sloop Jane.
13	Cleveland, Ohio	Four men rescued from sunken schooner H. G. Cleveland.
15	Fort Niagara, New York	Two boys rescued from capsized sloop.
16	Gull Shoal, North Carolina	Three men rescued from the wreck of the schooner Aaron Reppard.
16	Big Kinnakeet, North Carolina	Crew of ten persons rescued from the wreck of the schooner Florence Randall.
17	Gull Shoal, North Carolina	Ten survivors of the wreck of the barkentine Priscilla.
17	Little Kinnakeet, North Carolina	Crew of seven, rescued from wreck of schooner Robert W. Dasey.
18	Quonochontaug, Rhode Island	Two men from wrecked sloop Annie.
18	Oregon Inlet, North Carolina	Five men rescued from a fishing camp which had been cut off from the rest of the beach by a wash-out during the violent storm of this date.
18	Chicamacomico, North Carolina	Seven men from wrecked schooner Minnie Bergen.
18	Creeds Hill, North Carolina	Crew of nine men rescued from the Diamond Shoal Light-vessel, No. 69.
20	Sand Beach, Michigan	Five survivors of the capsized schooner Hunter Savidge.
22	Shoalwater Bay, Washington	Two fishermen from capsized boat.
24	Corson Inlet, New Jersey	Three men from capsized boat belonging to yacht Genevieve.
27	City Point, Massachusetts	Two men from capsized sailboat.
Sept. 3	Fairport, Ohio	Three men from wrecked dredge No. 4.
5	Assateague Beach, Virginia	Two men, crew of capsized sloop Maud S.
10	City Point, Massachusetts	Six persons from capsized catboat Leander.
19	Atlantic City, New Jersey	Four men, crew of wrecked schooner Sudie Wayman.
23	Deal, New Jersey	Two fishermen from capsized boat.
24	Erie, Pennsylvania	A man from capsized sloop.
24	Old Chicago, Illinois	Two men from water-logged steamer Cleveland.
26	Charlotte, New York	Five men, crew of foundered British schooner W. Y. Emery.
27	Fourth Cliff, Massachusetts	Two men from capsized rowboat.
Oct. 3	City Point, Massachusetts	A man rescued from a capsized rowboat.