

*U.S. Coast Guard History Program*

## Station Monomoy, Massachusetts

USLSS Station #14, Second District  
Coast Guard Station #43



<b>Location:</b>	2 miles north of Monomoy Light in 1878; 41-36' 00"N x 69-58' 41"W; 2 1/4 miles north of Monomoy Light in 1915; 41-35' 25"N x 69-59' 10"W
<b>Date of Conveyance:</b>	None
<b>Station Built:</b>	1873-1874
<b>Fate:</b>	Transferred to Fish and Wildlife Service in 1955

**Remarks:**

Monomoy station was one of the original nine stations built on the shores of Cape Cod when the Life-Saving Service was extended to these shores in 1873. "There is no more dangerous stretch of coast on Cape Cod than off Monomoy. Disaster follows disaster in that region, and the work of the life savers is attended with the greatest peril at all times." Several sites are given for the station: "two and one half miles north of Monomoy Light," "two miles north of Monomoy Light"

and, later, as "on Monomoy Island, north two and one-fourth miles of Monomoy Point Light." It was "extensively repaired and improved" in 1888. Mention was made in the 1905 Annual Report that it was improved during that year and, in 1916, the launching facilities were extensively improved.

When the station was first manned on March 20, 1873, the first keeper was George W. Baker, who was appointed at the age of 41, with three years experience as a surfman, on December 12, 1872, and served until his resignation due to ill health on March 1, 1882. He was followed by William T. Tuttle (appointed February 9, 1882 and died "from disease contracted in line of duty" on July 2, 1899), Marshall N. Eldridge (August 1, 1899 until he drowned on March 17, 1902), Seth L. Ellis (sole survivor of the *Wadena* disaster, he was appointed April 23, 1902 and served until he resigned on December 31, 1907), Charles H. Howes (December 26, 1907 until he was dismissed on October 28, 1911), Franklin E. Hamilton (October 28, 1911 until he "died from disease contracted in line of duty on April 22, 1914), Robert F. Pierce (1914 until his reassignment to the City Point station on May 18, 1915), Richard E. Ryder (acting until his appointment on January 14, 1916, reassigned to the Orleans station on July 2, 1921), Robert E. Ellis (reassigned from the Monomoy Point station on July 10, 1924 until his retirement on July 1, 1931), and Richard E. Ryder (from the Chatham station on September 18, 1931, he was reassigned to the Old Harbor station on June 20, 1932). He was relieved by Chief Boatswains Mate A. C. Towers, who was gone in 1934. Monomoy station was listed as "discontinued as an active unit" in 1922 and continued to be so carried. It disappeared from the records entirely in 1939. The property was transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1955.

Surfman H. H. Nickerson was killed on March 30, 1877, when he fell from aloft while assisting in saving property from the Italian bark *Papa Luigi C.*

A signal event in the history of this station involved the wreck of the coal barge *Wadena* on the night of March 17, 1902. The barge struck on Shovelful Shoal during a northeast gale and heavy seas during the night of March 11. The crew of the life-saving station removed the crew and it remained there for several days while the cargo was offloaded into lighters off and on as weather permitted. On the night of March 16, the weather became so threatening that all but five of the crew were removed. By the next morning, the patrol from the station observed a distress signal on the barge. Keeper Eldridge launched the surf-boat and proceeded to the barge through the very heavy and treacherous seas associated with the shoals. The five crew were successfully removed. During the process of turning the boat around to return to the beach, the surf-boat took a wave over the side. The survivors panicked and interrupted the work of the surfmen. The surf-boat rolled over. Two successful efforts to right the boat resulted in being rolled over again; the cold water and rough seas took their toll. The one survivor, Surfman Seth L. Ellis, was awarded a gold life-saving medal for his actions. Some felt that getting the surf—boat underway was needless, since the five men

on the barge were relatively safe. Replied Keeper Eldridge: "We must go-there is a distress flag in the rigging." In connection with this disaster, Mr. Elmer F. Mayo, of Chatham, Massachusetts, was also awarded a gold-life-saving medal for rescuing, at great personal hazard, Surfman Ellis.

**Keepers:**

George N. Baker first appointed on DEC 12, 1872 and resigned in MAR 1, 1882.

William T. Tuttle appointed on FEB 9, 1882 and died JUL 2, 1899.

Marshall N. Eldridge appointed on AUG 1, 1899 and drowned MAR 17, 1902.

Seth L. Ellis APR 23, 1902 and resigned DEC 31, 1907.

Charles H. Howes appointed DEC 26, 1907 and dismissed on OCT 28, 1911.

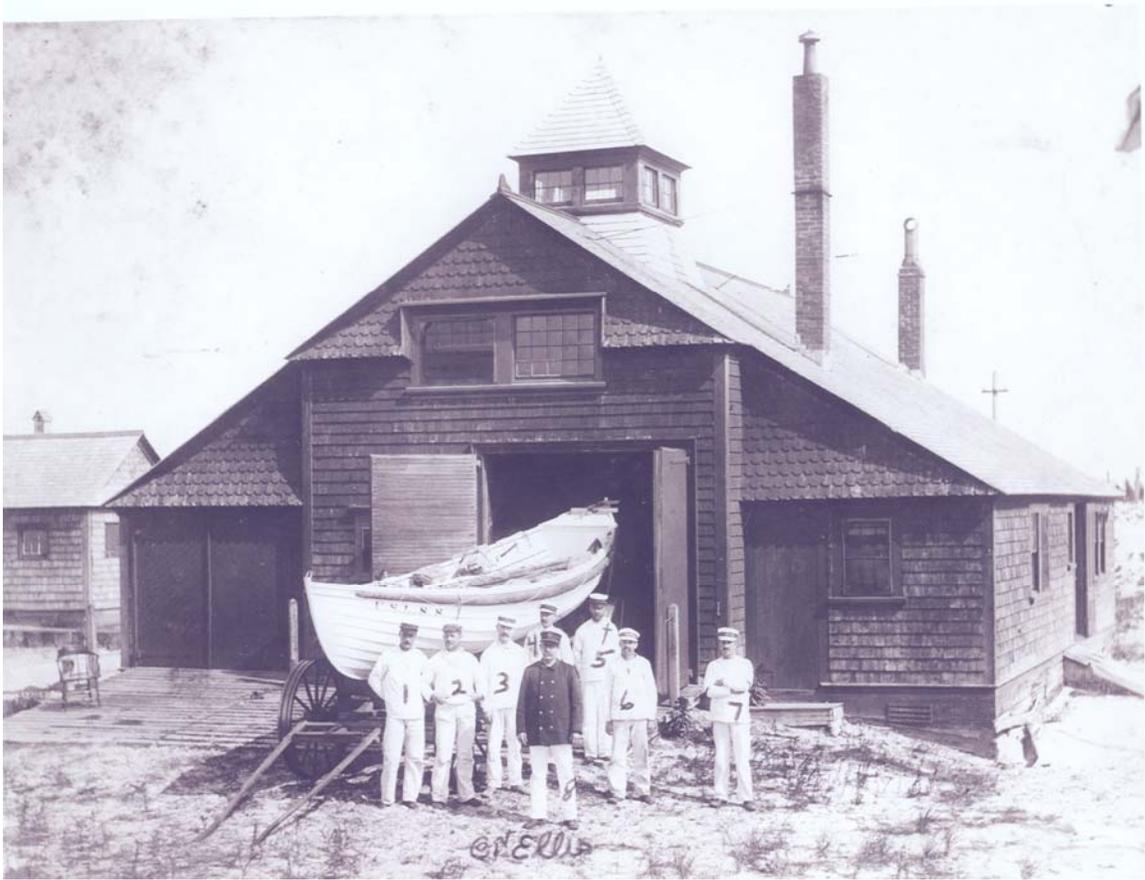
Franklin E. Hamilton appointed OCT 28, 1911 and left service 1914.

Robert F. Pierce was appointed 1914 and left service in 1915.

Richard E. Ryder (acting) appointed 1915 and was still serving in 1915.

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## Photographs:



No official caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.

Station Monomoy, unknown date. Seth Ellis is the keeper (dark uniform coat) in the photo. Our thanks to Tim Dring for identifying this photo.

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## Sources:

Station History File, CG Historian's Office

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.