



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Station Coskata, Massachusetts

Coast Guard Station # 45

Location:	On Nantucket Island, 2 1/16 miles south of Nantucket (Great Point Light); 41-22' 00"N x 70-01' 15"W
Date of Conveyance:	1883
Station Built:	1883
Fate:	Abandoned in 1953

Remarks:

The need for this station was set forth in the *1879 Annual Report*: "Nantucket, with its neighboring islands and shoals, is an exceedingly dangerous locality, and the single life—saving station here (Surfside) and the life—boat house of the Massachusetts Humane Society are insufficient to afford adequate protection to mariners. The disasters in these waters are very numerous. After a single storm last spring, no less than 68 vessels more or less disabled were in sight from the town, eleven of them being ashore. Urgent representations in this relation have been made with solicitations for appropriate relief. There should be at least two additional stations in this vicinity." The act of May 4, 1882 authorized the establishment of two complete life-saving stations in the neighborhood of Nantucket and adjacent islands, Massachusetts. Coskata station was built "on Nantucket Island, Coskata Beach, south two and one-quarter miles of Nantucket (Great Point) Light" in 1883. "Necessary repairs and improvements" were made at the station in 1893 because the buildings "were old structures, much out of repair, and also in need of enlargement in order to conveniently accommodate the crews and apparatus." In 1933, PWA funds were used to rebuild the station buildings.

The property was abandoned in 1953.

Keepers:

The first keepers were Benjamin B. Pease (November 14, 1883 until his resignation May 21, 1886), Walter N. Chase (May 19, 1886 until his resignation April 1, 1898), Henry C. Coffin (March 29, 1898 until his resignation due to physical reasons on January 12, 1908), John B. Norcross (January 6, 1908 until his retirement due to incapacitation on April 30, 1917), Leland S. Topham (acting, never appointed), Frank E. Allison (December 1, 1919 until his reassignment to the Brenton Point station on May 3, 1921), and Albert Rohdin (reassigned from the Surfside station on July 6, 1921 until his reassignment to the Brenton Point station on August 3, 1922). Next came Chief Petty Officers E. G. Sanborn (1927 until reassigned to the Gay Head station in 1929), E. Nutting (reassigned from the Cuttyhunk station in 1929), C. T. Lewis (1932), G. P. Lewis (1932), C. R. Ellis (1934, to the Pamet River station in 1935) and N. J. Johnson (1935). Coskata station was still listed as active in 1940, but does not appear on the records in 1945.

Keeper Walter N. Chase was awarded a gold life-saving medal and his crew of Surfmen Jesse H. Eldridge, Roland H. Perkins, Charles H. Cathcart and John Nyman and Temporary Surfmen Josiah B. Gould and George J. Flood were awarded silver medals for "rescuing, during heavy gale and sea, the crew of seven men from the rigging of the Canadian schooner H. P. Kirkham, wrecked on Rose and Crown Shoal, fifteen miles seaward from the station on January 21, 1892. The men were saved only by the utmost skill and bravery, and were brought to land after battling for twenty—three hours against wind and sea." On June 16, 1892, Surfman Perkins died "from disease caused by exposure at the wreck of the H. P. Kirkham."

Walter N. Chase

Gold Life-Saving Medal Awarded 2 April 1892

On 21 January 1892 the Canadian schooner, *H.P. Kirkham*, wrecked on Rose and Crown Shoal, fifteen miles from Coskata Life-Saving Station on Nantucket (MA) Island. Keeper Chase and his six- man crew rescued the crew of seven men from the rigging during a heavy gale and sea. The men were saved only by the utmost skill and bravery and were brought to land after being battered by the elements for twenty-three hours. For his leadership Keeper Chase received the Gold Lifesaving Medal while each of his crewmen received the Silver Lifesaving Medal. These included Jesse H. Eldridge, Roland H. Perkins, Charles B. Cathcart, John Nyman, Josiah B. Gould, and George J. Flood.

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: Costano 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.

