



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Station Fire Island, New York

USLSS Station #25, Third District
Coast Guard Station #83

Location:	On Great South Beach 2 1/2 miles east of Fire Island Inlet 2 miles west southwest of Fire Island Light; 40-37' 34"N x 73-13' 36"W in 1878; "40-37' 40"N x 73-13' 20"W in 1915.
Date of Conveyance:	1878
Station Built:	1849
Fate:	Still in operation

Remarks:

This was one of the early stations built in 1849 "one-half mile west of Fire Island light." The Fire Island station originally occupied a portion of the Fire Island Lighthouse Reservation. At various times, permission was given to move the buildings to different locations on the reservation. The 1878 Annual Report mentions that "for the proper protection of the Richardson self-righting and self-bailing life-boat, a suitable boathouse has been erected." In 1920, a contract was awarded move the station buildings to a new site. It is not known whether the new station occupied the same site which was described in the permit granted by the Lighthouse Bureau in 1920 or some other portion of the land. By permit dated June 9, 1920 from the Lighthouse Bureau, the right to occupy a definitely-described portion of the reservation containing 2.15 acres was granted.

In the 1921 Annual Report is a mention that the station buildings had been moved to a new site on the bay side of the island on account of the encroachment of the sea. The Act of June 7, 1924 transferred the whole Fire Island Lighthouse Reservation to the State of New York for park purposes; the act, however, reserved to the United States the right to assume control, use, etc.,

without license, consent, permit, lease, etc., from the state and specifically reserved any portion of the reservation which might be necessary for the use of the Coast Guard. Eventually (1925), the description of the site of the station was "on Fire Island Beach and west one-half mile of Fire Island Light." In 1932, a new station was erected. The station was moved again, as described at the beginning of this section, and by 1936, the position changed to "near west end of Fire Island, two and one-quarter miles west of Fire Island Light." Fire Island station was one of those extensively damaged during the hurricane which swept the Atlantic coast in September of 1938.

The station remained in commission throughout the war.

Keepers:

The first keeper was Benjamin Smith, appointed in 1853. The next known keeper was the lighthouse keeper (name unknown) in 1872. Next came Leander Thurber (appointed on December 20, 1872, he served until his resignation effective November 13, 1876). Following him was Leander A. Jeffries (December 2, 1876 until his resignation September 1, 1881), Daniel S. Hubbard (September 13, 1881 until his resignation August 25, 1885) and Charles E. Wicks (August 29, 1885 until his dismissal November 13, 1900). A break in the records occurs at this point, but there is an entry of John T. Doxsee, keeper, "died from asphyxiation by inhaling gas" on April 3, 1913. The next appointment in the records is that of Harry F. Smith on May 1, 1913; he retired due to incapacitation November 10, 1918. Then came Edward W. Baker (December 1, 1919 until his resignation June 3, 1924), William B. Tooker (reassigned from Zachs Inlet station April 14, 1924 until his reassignment to Long Beach Station January 4, 1925) and James S. Fletcher (December 17, 1925 until appointment as Assistant to the Fourth District Commander on March 11, 1928). Then Chief Petty Officer C. A. Mister was appointed in 1929. Next came Chief Warrant Officer William F. Halsey (reassigned from Quogue station on November 26, 1930 and served until his retirement July 1, 1931. Chief Petty Officer J. W. Midgett followed. Then Chief Warrant Officer R. W. Butcher reported from the 75-foot patrol boat CG 286 on February 21, 1933; he left to go aboard CGC *Nemana* on June 7, 1933. Chief Petty Officer Palmer S. Midgett reported aboard, was commissioned to warrant grade May 10, 1935, and detached to Pea Island station on June 13, 1937. Chief Warrant Officer P. H. Simpson was assigned next on June 9, 1937; he was there until the outbreak of World War II.

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.

