



## *U.S. Coast Guard History Program*

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# **Station Newburyport / Merrimack, Massachusetts**

Formerly Station Plum Island; later-Station Merrimack

USLSS Station #1, Second District  
Coast Guard Station #20

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<b>Location:</b>	North end of Plum Island, Mouth of Merrimac River; 42-48' 30" N x 70-49' 00"W
<b>Date of Conveyance:</b>	1881
<b>Station Built:</b>	1882
<b>Fate:</b>	See below

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### **Remarks:**

The original station, first called Plum Island, is believed to have been built in 1873 at a site which, in 1882, was described as "near Newburyport, three miles distant." Effective July 1, 1902, the name of the station was changed to Newburyport (the name Plum Island went to the Knobbs Beach station) and the position was described as "near mouth of Merrimac River." Eventually, the position was given as on the "north end of Plum Island, near Newburyport Light, south side mouth Merrimac River."

The first keeper, James W. Elliott, was appointed on April 4, 1882, and died "from disease contracted in line of duty" on November 3, 1894. He was followed by Charles M. Noyes (December 10, 1894 until his dismissal on July 8, 1896), Thomas J. Maddock (July 9, 1896 until he retired with thirty years service on February 26, 1919), Harry F. Burnham (reassigned from the Plum Island station on March 1, 1919 and reassigned to the Great Wass Island station on December 10, 1924), George B. Ricker (December 23, 1924 until reassigned to the Rye

Beach station on July 27, 1919), Charles A. Hand (from the Portsmouth Harbor station on February 27, 1925 until returning to the Portsmouth Harbor station on May 1, 1931), Walter H. Sprague (August 14, 1931 until he retired on August 1, 1935), and Frank H. Holbrook (reassigned from the City Point station on July 18, 1935 and remaining until the eve of World War II). The station was listed as an active station in 1945. At some point it was renamed as Station Merrimac. The station's buildings were rebuilt a number of times and its location shifted due to beach erosion when a new station was built in the late 1960s / early 1970s.

Synopsis of a detailed historical report by Betsy H. Woodman (January 1989):

The new Coast Guard station at Merrimack River was dedicated on Saturday, 4 August 1973. The first local station had been built precisely 100 years earlier, in 1873. 1973 also signaled the beginnings of a busy urban renewal of Newburyport. Merrimack River Station is classed as a small boat or SAR station. At present (1989) 29 people man the station with a Senior Chief as officer in charge. Sea going equipment includes: two 44' steel hulled boats; one 41' utility power boat; one 22' Boston Whaler; one 15' Boston Whaler; and several small craft for crew recreation. Acting as a support system for Merrimack River Station is local Flotilla N-308 of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

**Remarks:**

New station in Newburyport is still in operation and is now designated Merrimack River.

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**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.

