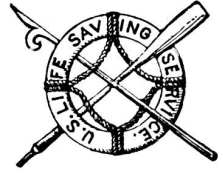


THE UNITED STATES LIFESAVING SERVICE IN NORTH CAROLINA



The United States Lifesaving Service (U.S.L.S.) was created as a response to the numerous shipwrecks that occurred along the coast. Its origins were based on local humanitarian efforts and citizen organizations concerned with the safety of those at sea. North Carolina's shoreline was especially dangerous, earning the nickname "Graveyard of the Atlantic." Hundreds of ill-fated ships wrecked upon this remote stretch of sand banks and shoals, claiming countless lives. Were it not for the heroes of the surf, the casualty count would have been even higher.

- ✘ **1789** Congress establishes an agency within the Department of the Treasury to function as a “floating police service” solely for the purpose of collecting taxes on ship tonnage and goods imported. The U.S. Lighthouse Establishment is also created at this time. There is no mention of lifesaving or rescue operations.
- ✘ **1790** The floating tax collection service, known as the Revenue Service or Revenue Marine Service, receives funds to build ten cutters (fast moving sailing vessels).
- ✘ **1801** North Carolina authorizes a commissioner of shipwrecks for specific districts along the coast. The commissioners can deputize citizens to help shipwreck victims and hold public auctions for the disbursement of property that washed ashore.
- ✘ **1831** Revenue cutters begin patrols along the countries coast for the safety of other vessels during winter storms.
- ✘ **1837** Congress officially authorizes the Revenue Marine Service to conduct mariner assistance and rescue missions in addition to enforcement.
- ✘ **1848** Congress appropriates money to help some organizations and states begin operating lifesaving stations, similar to how volunteer fire departments may work today. These were shore based rescue stations, crews would row out to shipwrecks near the beach where it was too dangerous for the larger cutters to come render assistance. There are no records for allocations to any stations in North Carolina.
- ✘ **1870-1873** Congress passes several legislative acts establishing the United States Lifesaving Service as a division of the Revenue Marine Service. Based on guidelines developed at this time, the head station keeper was employed year round and six additional crewmembers worked from December through March (their season would gradually be extended over time, eventually lasting from August 1 to May 31).
- ✘ **1874** The U.S. Lifesaving Service begins operating in North Carolina, although most Outer Banks residents had been helping shipwreck victims as best they could for some time. Seven stations are built along the beaches between Currituck Beach and Hatteras Island.
- ✘ **1878** By an act passed on June 18, 1878, the U.S. Lifesaving Service becomes a separate branch in the Treasury Department. Eleven more stations are added to the North Carolina coast.
- ✘ **1880-1905** An additional eleven stations are built in North Carolina during this time, bringing the total to 29.

- ✦ **1915** The Revenue Marine Service and Lifesaving Service merge to form the United States Coast Guard.
- ✦ **1947** Most lifesaving stations are decommissioned as technological advances in navigational aids, increased communication by radio, more accurate weather forecasting and construction of dependable self-propelled vessels make shipwrecks a rare occurrence.
- ✦ **1967** The U.S. Coast Guard is moved from the Department of the Treasury to the newly formed Department of Transportation.
- ✦ **2003** The U.S. Coast Guard is transferred to the Department of Homeland Security, although in times of war it can operate as a service of the Department of the Navy.

Of the 138 lifesaving medals awarded for service before 1900, 40 went to North Carolinians, a note-worthy statistic considering there were over 270 stations in operation employing roughly 1,900 surfmen. These medals were bestowed upon a crewmember that demonstrated extreme and heroic daring in a rescue or attempted rescue.

Information sheet prepared by Benjamin Wunderly, North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort
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HISTORIC LIFESAVING STATIONS OF NORTH CAROLINA



Lifesaving Stations:

- ✦ **BUILT 1874**
 1. Jones Hill (Whale Head/Currituck Beach)
 2. Caffey's Inlet
 3. Kitty Hawk
 4. Nags Head
 5. Bodie Island (Oregon Inlet)
 6. Chicamacomico
 7. Little Kinnakeet
- ✦ **BUILT 1878**
 8. Deals Island (Wash Woods)
 9. Old Currituck Inlet (Pennys Hill)
 10. Poyner's Hill
 11. Paul Gamiels Hill
 12. Kill Devil Hills
 13. Tommys Hummock (Bodie Island)
 14. Pea Island
 15. Cedar Hummock (Gull Shoal)
 16. Big Kinnakeet
 17. Creeds Hill
 18. Hatteras (Durants)
- ✦ **BUILT 1880-1888**
 19. Cape Hatteras - 1880
 20. New Inlet - 1882
 21. Ocracoke - 1883 (Hatteras Inlet)
 22. Cape Fear - 1883
 23. Oak Island - 1886
 24. Cape Lookout - 1888
- ✦ **BUILT 1894-1905**
 25. Portsmouth - 1894
 26. Core Banks - 1896 (Atlantic)
 27. Ocracoke - 1904
 28. Fort Macon - 1904
 29. Bogue Inlet - 1905

By 1905, along the Outer Banks, North Carolina's lifesaving stations stood within five to seven miles of each other.

🏰 Lighthouse - Date Constructed

