

Lifesaving Station

California's first lifesaving station was established in 1878 at the northwest corner of Golden Gate Park facing Ocean Beach. The station was manned by members of the United States Lifesaving Service, which had been organized in 1871.

The strong currents, heavy fog, and jagged rocks of the coastline around Lands End and Ocean Beach had been the cause of many shipwrecks, and the crew of the Lifesaving Station regularly risked their own lives to save victims of foundering vessels. Large crowds would come to the beach to watch their training. During these exercises the crew would pull its 2-ton lifesaving boat on a wagon into the cold, often choppy water, row out past the breakers, and practice pulling people from the water while bailing out the vessel.

The Lifesaving Service merged with the Revenue Cutter Service in 1915 to create the Coast Guard. In the early 1920s some of the Ocean Beach station's buildings were removed, but the station remained operational until November 1951.



Golden Gate NRA, Park Archives, Interpretation Negative Collection, GOGA-2316

Top: A crowd watches a Lifesaving Station crew training exercise; *Bottom:* The crew handles their boat in the surf.