

# Historic Life-Saving Service and G Ranch Cemetery

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Point Reyes National Seashore



## “Continuing Their Watch”

From 1890 to 1914, the United States Life-Saving Service was stationed at Point Reyes along the great beach. In 1914, the U.S. Coast Guard was formed and the tradition of the Life-Saving Service carried on until 16 Dec. 1968, when the Point Reyes Lifeboat Station was deactivated. Four of those Surfman from that era are buried here and have continued their watch over Point Reyes National Seashore.

From the monotonous routine of training drills and techniques to excitement, fear and anxiety the life of a Surfman was a contrast of moments



The daily duties were planned on a weekly schedule through out the Life-Saving Service, but at Point Reyes, a simple day of beach apparatus drill, the launching of the rescue boat could be and was fatal, as it was for three of the Surfman lying here. Huge seas were but one of the dangers. Walking the nightly Beach Patrol during storms through the stacked driftwood or just cold miserable weather took its toll.

The entries below are abstracts taken from the logbooks of the U.S. Life-Saving Service Lifeboat Station at Point Reyes, Calif.

. Fred Carstens and Andrew Anderson

Died 12 Dec.. 1891: Approximately 10 am the boat crew was in the act of getting the boat up on the beach when breaker came in and overturned the boat injuring both these men. They were taken to the dwelling and a doctor was called but arrived too late.

George Larson

Died 1 March 1893: while practicing with boat in the surf, when the boat over turned, it killed. George Larson. He was taken to the Dwelling soon after the accident, sent for a doctor but he arrived too late. Pictured to the left.

John Korpala

Died 2 March 1891: Korpala complained of having chills and a headache. At 6 a.m. 3 March 1891 he was found dead in the bed in his room. Coroner was called and pronounced that Korpala died from hemorrhage of the lungs.

Neither time or change of service name changed the dangers to the Surfman from the Pacific Ocean at Point Reyes. The Tragedy of Motor Lifeboat #36542 Thanksgiving eve 1960.

On Thanksgiving eve 1960 Coast Guard Motor Lifeboat #36542 with Surfman Anthony Holmes and Hugh McClements left for a routine assist of commercial fishing boat stranded at Bodega Bay. They radio completion and that they were headed home.

When they did not return on schedule, the other crew on hand became concerned. The search was begun, Motor Lifeboat #364542 was found the next morning run aground on Point Reyes Beach, motor still running, crew gone. Five days later the remains of Anthony McClements was found, further down the beach. On December 16 1960 the remains 19-year-old Hugh McClements were found.

Coast Guard Motor Lifeboat #36542, now retired from duty it stands in quite memoriam at the Historic Lifeboat Station at Chimney Rock, Point Reyes National Seashore.

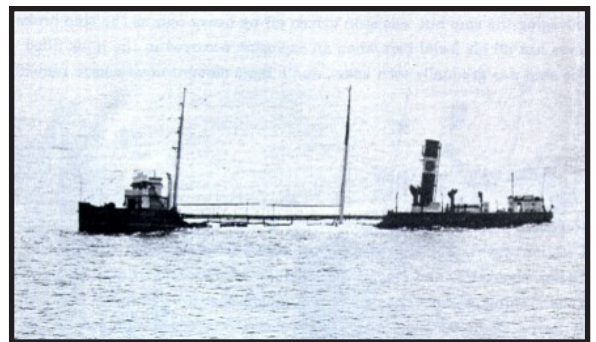
The tolls in lives lost on these shores was low due to the dedication and bravery of the Life-Saving Service and the United States Coast Guard stationed on the Great beach and at Chimney Rock.

Some 120 plus ships and boats have floundered on the sandy shores and rocky cliffs of Point Reyes. With the first recorded shipwreck on the Pacific coast here at Drakes Beach in 6 November 1595, San Agustin. To the small fishing boats that still flounder on the Great Beach. The lives saved and materials salvaged, all in a days work for the Life-Saving Service and the United States Coast Guard. The community and their lives were part of the service here at Point Reyes. As part of that, in 1891 the Claussen family donated a small plot in the family cemetery to be used as Life-Saving Service Cemetery.



Samoa, 1913 – Only a couple of hundred yards from the Life-Saving Station the Samoa ran aground. All crew were rescued from the Samoa. People in the breeches buoy were literally dragged through the surf, reaching the beach wet and frightened. The Samoa was left on the beach to rust away and was visible for years from the station.

Richfield, 1930 - Similar to the Exxon-Valdez incident, the crew reported that the Captain may have had too much brandy, and left the First Mate in charge and went to his cabin. The First Mate mistook the Drakes Bay lighted buoy for the Point Reyes Light and changed course thinking he had cleared the point. The Richfield ran aground on Chimney Rock with 28,000 gallons of gasoline aboard.



United DC-3, 1938 – The United DC-3 circled the Point Reyes Lighthouse as it was running out of gas after becoming lost in a storm. The flight made an emergency landing at sea and drifted into the headlands below the lighthouse. After a harrowing night at the mercy of the storm and the loss of 5 passengers and crew members, the remainder of the crew were rescued.