

“Semper Paratus —

The United States Coast Guard at the Jersey Shore

by Jill Ocone

From well before colonial times through present day, vessels of all kinds have been sailing along the Jersey Coast. Shifting sandbars and unpredictable weather have created havoc for these mariners—who often end up in danger of losing their boats—as well as their passengers, crew, and cargo.

Standing by to answer the call for help is the United States Coast Guard (USCG), America’s earliest maritime protector and one of the oldest federal government organizations that has served in every conflict while protecting the country since its earliest inception.

Origins of the United States Coast Guard

On August 7, 1789, the U.S. Lighthouse Service, one of the precursors to the USCG, was established under the control of the Treasury Department. The following year, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, as authorized by President George Washington, created a maritime service known as the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service with ten vessels to enforce customs laws. Lighthouse keepers would help people and vessels near their stations, and the Cutter Service assisted mariners in distress offshore. Despite both services’ best efforts, vessels that had run aground during strong nor’easters were sometimes reduced to pieces in a matter of hours, and many victims drowned each year due to exposure.

In August of 1848, because of the growing number of maritime incidents each

continued on page 70

Left: Crews from Station Manasquan Inlet conduct training with helicopters from Coast Guard Air Station Atlantic City to sharpen their skills in conducting medivacs.

Opposite page: Station Manasquan Inlet’s 47-foot motor lifeboat can handle heavy weather and tow larger vessels such as trawlers and clamming boats.



Dylon O'Donnell

Always Ready”



year, Congress appropriated funds to pay for life-saving equipment to be used by volunteer organizations. Volunteers known as “wreckers” staffed the stations up and down the Jersey Shore, but at times, little could be done to help those in need due to sparse volunteer forces and subpar equipment.

As a result, the U.S. Life-Saving Service (USLSS) was officially created on June 18, 1878 after a particularly deadly season on the seas, and many of the first official stations in support of the USLSS were established along the Jersey Shore. Stations were at first manned from November to April with a six-man crew, but by the turn of the century, they operated year-round. The dramatic and harrowing rescues performed by the USLSS captured the attention of the press, especially when USLSS crewmembers were lost in the line of duty.

To better serve the maritime community, the U.S. Rescue Cutter

System and the U.S. Life-Saving Service merged to create the USCG on January 18, 1915 by President Woodrow Wilson’s signature on the *Act to Create the Coast Guard*. The USCG absorbed the U.S. Lighthouse Service in 1939 and the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation in 1942. Since 2003, the USCG is part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

There were originally twenty-four Coast Guard Stations in Monmouth and Ocean Counties from Sandy Hook through Beach Haven, some having first been USLSS stations, but most of them were abandoned by the 1960s. Out of the twenty-four stations, three are currently active. Station Sandy Hook covers the northernmost coastal area of Monmouth County with an area of responsibility that extends from Breezy Point, Belford, Great Kills, Keyport, Outer Bridge, Raritan River, and the Navesink/Shrewsbury Rivers. Station

Barnegat Light covers the southernmost waters from Seaside Park through Barnegat Inlet to Absecon Inlet, including Barnegat Bay and Barnegat Shoals.

U.S. Coast Guard Station Manasquan Inlet

One of the stations tasked with the responsibility of protecting Jersey Shore waters is Station Manasquan Inlet, located in Point Pleasant Beach, with an area of responsibility extending from Long Branch through Seaside Heights. The well-known building, located at 40 Inlet Drive, was named to the National Register of Historic Places in March 2021. Known as the Old Coast Guard Station Manasquan Inlet and Coast Guard Lifeboat Station #105, the building replaced five coastal lifeboat stations when it was constructed from 1936 to 1937: Squan Beach Station in Manasquan, Bay Head, Mantoloking, Chadwick Beach, and



Station Barnegat Light covers the southernmost waters from Seaside Park through Barnegat Inlet to Absecon Inlet, including Barnegat Bay and Barnegat Shoals.

Toms River. The original boathouse was constructed in 1939 and the original crew quarters in 1976. Both of those buildings suffered severe damage from Superstorm Sandy in 2012 and were razed and replaced with the current state-of-the-art facility, which was officially commissioned and opened in 2017.

Station Manasquan Inlet's missions over the last eighty-five years have included port, coastal, and Intracoastal Waterway security; search and rescue; recreational and commercial boating safety law enforcement; pollution response; short range aids to navigation; defense readiness; and supporting the war on drugs. The station provided national defense activities during World War II, including rescuing survivors from the burning oil tanker *R.P. Resor*, which was torpedoed by a German submarine, and reporting on enemy submarine activity. It also provided maritime support and patrols in the days and weeks following the 9-11 attacks. When Station Shark River closed as its own primary unit in 2006, Station Manasquan Inlet's crew picked up coverage duties until the Shark River station was permanently closed earlier this year.

The USCG built upon the USLSS's strong foundation of search and rescue, and the roughly thirty crew stationed at Manasquan Inlet embody the service's tenants of honor, respect, and devotion to duty. While most come from other parts of the United States (including Montana, Alaska, Florida, and California), Petty Officer Second Class Dylan O'Donnell is Jersey Shore born and bred and has been stationed at Manasquan Inlet since 2018. "I grew up in Belmar and my parents were educators, so I grew up knowing the value of helping people," he said.

O'Donnell explained what a typical day for a Coast Guardsman stationed at Manasquan Inlet is like. "Our day starts at 6:45 AM with breakfast. The culinary staff here is great. They cook us three meals and then go home for the night," O'Donnell said.

The rest of the day for a Coast Guardsman depends upon his or her



Tom Lynch / AngryFishGallery.com

Mariner's view of the old and new buildings at Coast Guard Station Manasquan Inlet.

individually assigned duty schedules. Operations often include patrols in support of recreational boating safety inspections or living marine resource boardings. (The latter includes making sure boats are fishing in legal waters, permits are on board, fish are of legal size, quotas haven't been surpassed, etc.) Station Manasquan Inlet also assists the N.J. State Police, N.J. Division of Fish and Game, the Manasquan Fire Department, and other local law enforcement agencies and first responders. "We'll check fishing permits and boats, and we're always on standby for search-and-rescue operations," said O'Donnell. "There's always an overnight crew in case a search-and-rescue operation happens at night."

Manasquan Inlet's fleet currently consists of two boats. The forty-seven-foot motor lifeboat (MLB) can handle heavy weather and tow larger vessels such as trawlers and clamming boats. The MLB is always fully operational with a crew at the ready 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and locals often see the boat and its

crew practicing in the inlet and the waters off Manasquan and Point Pleasant Beach during days of heavy surf and angry seas. The twenty-nine-foot response boat small (RBS) is used primarily for law enforcement but can tow smaller boats. According to O'Donnell, the station participates in about one hundred search-and-rescue operations and three to five hundred vessel boardings each year.

O'Donnell explained that Stations Manasquan Inlet and Sandy Hook are two of twenty-three Heavy Weather Stations in the USCG. At these facilities, all stationed crew are certified for duty on twenty-foot seas with thirty-knot winds. The Heavy Weather Stations are classified a step below Surf Stations. Station Barnegat Light, with two motor lifeboats in its fleet, is classified as a Surf Station—which is required where surf greater than eight feet occurs thirty-six days or more each year.

One of the aspects of life in the Coast Guard that surprises people is the amount of free time afforded to crew. "There's lots of time off

continued on page 72

compared to a civilian job and a normal work schedule. We work about half of the year,” explained New York native Petty Officer Third Class Erickson Almonte, who has been stationed at Manasquan Inlet since September 2019. Usually standing duty shifts are forty-eight to seventy-two hours long with alternating weekends on duty.

Almonte was working a desk job in the finance industry when he decided to join the Coast Guard. “I chose the one thing I never did, a job on the water,” he said. Being stationed at Manasquan Inlet means he can see his friends from SUNY Farmingdale and his New York family. “My schedule here allows me to also take classes on my free time, and I already earned fifty-five credits towards my degree for free,” Almonte said. Sea school classes also count towards collegiate credit.

Seaman Jessica Stafford joined the Coast Guard after working two jobs while trying to go to school at the same time in her home state of North Carolina. “There had to be a better way,” she said, “and I was set to join the Navy until a friend I had in the Coast Guard asked me to visit him in Florida, and it was awesome.” She’s been at Station Manasquan

Inlet since October 2018 and recalled when the local community came to their support during the last federal government shutdown. “We didn’t get paid for almost two months and were so grateful to receive gift cards from the community,” she said. “We were able to get groceries and what we needed, and I’ll never forget that help from the locals.”

A dedicated maintenance crew is on duty every day so that guardsmen can concentrate on preparedness while on standby for search-and-rescue emergency missions. Upon graduating from boot camp, each guardsman undergoes additional training for law enforcement responsibilities, boarding teams, and standing watch. One aspect that sets the Coast Guard apart is that boot camp graduates can try various jobs before deciding upon a permanent specialty. “This is the only branch of the military where you leave basic training without a pre-designated job,” O’Donnell said.

Stafford added that the ability to try a job in the field first helps each person figure out which position is right for him or her. “You might hate a job you thought you’d enjoy and can try something else. This system is very helpful,” she said.

The crew at Station Manasquan

Inlet is more than just a branch of the military. “These people are the best friends I ever had, the siblings you didn’t know you wanted,” Stafford said. “You spend so much time together with everyone, we get very close.” That family shifts every year when some crew will be transferred to other stations while new crew members arrive. Typically, the maximum time that someone is stationed at one location is four years.

A new concern for all three is the vast increase in the number of boats on area waterways because of the pandemic. “More people who are new to boating on the water means more recreational boating safety inspections,” Almonte said. “I wish more people at least wore lifejackets when boating.” They recommend local boaters take boating courses and always ensure safety of their passengers.

A long-standing tradition for the Coast Guard is Morning Colors, a ceremony held each morning at every Coast Guard station at 8:00 AM, where the United States Flag and Coast Guard flags are raised while *Reveille* is played. Evening colors occurs at sunset, so the time varies each day. Civilians are encouraged to pause when they are within earshot of the ceremony’s iconic bugle.

Station Manasquan Inlet often holds open houses and tours and participates in many local events including career days at schools (where students learn about the life of a coast guardsman) and with assisting navigation and safety during offshore powerboat races.

“This is the best job I’ve ever had,” O’Donnell said. “I wish more people knew this was available as an opportunity.” He explained that he was motivated by a higher need for service and found his calling as a member of the Coast Guard. “I am a huge fan of teaching and instructing, and when I see someone have that light bulb ‘a-ha’ moment—when they get it—it’s worth it.”

The men and women of United States Coast Guard Station Manasquan Inlet continue to stand at the ready to help the Jersey Shore community whenever they are needed. ♦



At Station Manasquan Inlet, 29-foot response boats are used primarily for law enforcement but can also tow smaller boats.

Jill Ocone

Coast Guard Stations in Monmouth and Ocean Counties Through the Years

USLSS = United States Life-Saving Service

Coast Guard Station Barnegat Light

Station #113 (USLSS Station #17)

3/8 miles south of Barnegat Light/Barnegat

Date of Conveyance/Year Built: 1855/1872

First built upon land that the U.S. Government did not have title. Still in operation.

Coast Guard Station Bay Head

Station #106 (USLSS Station #10)

At the head of Barnegat Bay/Bay Head

Date of Conveyance/Year Built: 1884/1856

Station was originally named Point Pleasant until changed by the Treasury Department on June 1, 1883. Abandoned in 1946.

Coast Guard Station Bonds

Station #118 (USLSS Station #22)

South end of Long Beach/ Beach Haven

Date of Conveyance/Year Built: 1855/1849

In 1896, it became necessary to move buildings from this site due to the encroachment of the sea. Keeper records show an acting keeper appointed in 1915 but no entries were made after that date. Fate unknown.

Coast Guard Station Cedar Creek

Station #111

At Island Beach State Park, 5 3/8 miles north of the Barnegat Inlet

Date of Conveyance/Year Built: unknown/1872

Keeper records date back to 1856 for this location, which was deactivated in 1938. After WWII, *The Good Earth* author Pearl S. Buck and her adopted children used the building as a summer home. Demolished in 1975.

Coast Guard Station Chadwick's

Station #108

Chadwick Beach Island

Date of Conveyance/Year Built: 1883/1849

The original station burned down on April 26, 1923. A new station was built to replace it. Abandoned by 1939.

Coast Guard Station Deal

Station #102 (USLSS Station #6)

On Deal Lake/Deal

Date of Conveyance/Year Built: 1849/1849

One of the original stations built in 1849. Rebuilt on a new site in 1881, which identified it as "Asbury Park, New Jersey." Station was repaired and improved in 1889. Became inactive in 1938. Station personnel rescued sixty-one people from the *Pliny*, which sank on May 13, 1882; forty-eight people from the *Wyndermere* on March 18, 1892; saved seven of eleven lives when the *Mary F. Reilly* sank on August 24, 1893. Abandoned in 1946.

Coast Guard Station Forked River

Station #112 (USLSS Station #15)

At Island Beach State Park, 2 1/2 miles north of Barnegat Light/Forked River

Date of Conveyance/Year Built: 1900/1855

Station occupied a site on Island Beach for which no conveyance was ever obtained for many years. Closed in 1947 and abandoned in 1948, today the historic station's buildings serve as the park's Nature and Interpretive Centers.

Coast Guard Station Harvey Cedar

Station #115 (USLSS Station #19)

5 1/2 miles south of Barnegat Inlet/Harvey Cedars

Date of Conveyance/Year Built: 1885/1849
Abandoned in 1950.

Coast Guard Station Island Beach

Station #110 (USLSS Station #14)

At Island Beach State Park, 8 miles north of Barnegat Light

Date of Conveyance/Year Built: 1849/1849

Abandoned in 1946, today the historic station is used as the park's maintenance building and is located near the park's entrance.

Coast Guard Station Little Egg

Station #119 (USLSS Station #23)

2 miles northwest from Little Egg Inlet/Little Egg Harbor

Date of Conveyance/Year Built: 1876/1856

Turned over to the General Services Administration in 1964.

Coast Guard Station Long Beach

Station #117 (USLSS Station #21)

12 miles south southwest of Barnegat Light/Long Beach

Date of Conveyance/Year Built: 1900/1849
Abandoned in 1946.

Coast Guard Station Long Branch (also known as Greens Pond Station)

Station #101 (USLSS Station #5)

3 miles north of entrance to Deal Lake/Long Branch

Year of Conveyance/Year Built: 1878/1849

Station built at a position given as "Greens Pond." Turned over to the General Services Administration in 1954.

Coast Guard Station Loveladies

Station #114 (USLSS Station #18)

2 1/4 miles south of Barnegat Light/Loveladies

Year of Conveyance/Year Built: 1872/1871
Discontinued in 1922.

Coast Guard Station Manasquan Inlet

Station #105

South side of Manasquan Inlet/Point Pleasant Beach

Year of Conveyance/Year Built: 1936/1936, 2017

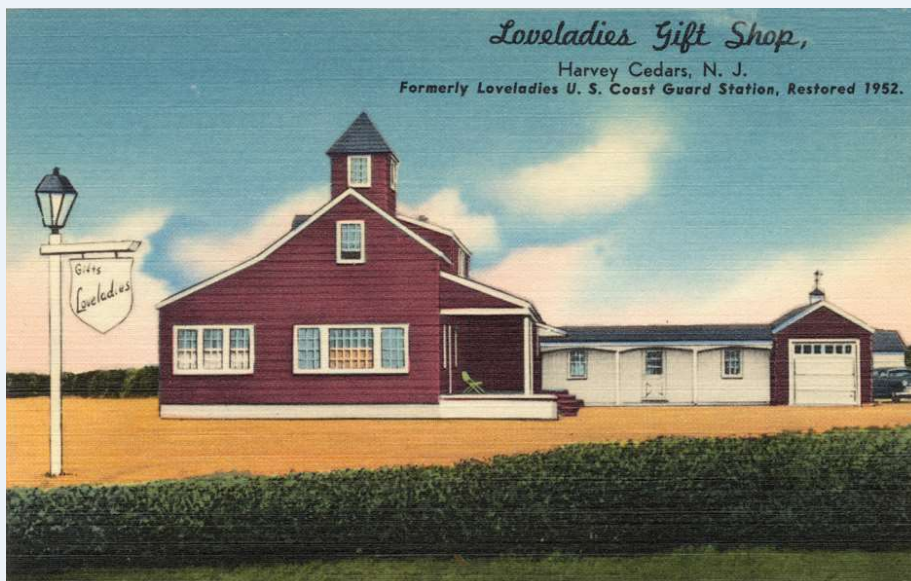
This station replaced the Manasquan, Bay Head, Mantoloking, Chadwick Beach, and Toms River Stations because of its ocean access and protected mooring facilities. A boathouse was added in 1939 and enlisted quarters in 1976. Both buildings were razed in 2015. A new, state-of-the-art building was completed and commissioned in 2017. Still in operation.

Coast Guard Station Mantoloking (Formerly named Station Swan Point until June 1, 1883)

Station #107 (USLSS Station #11)

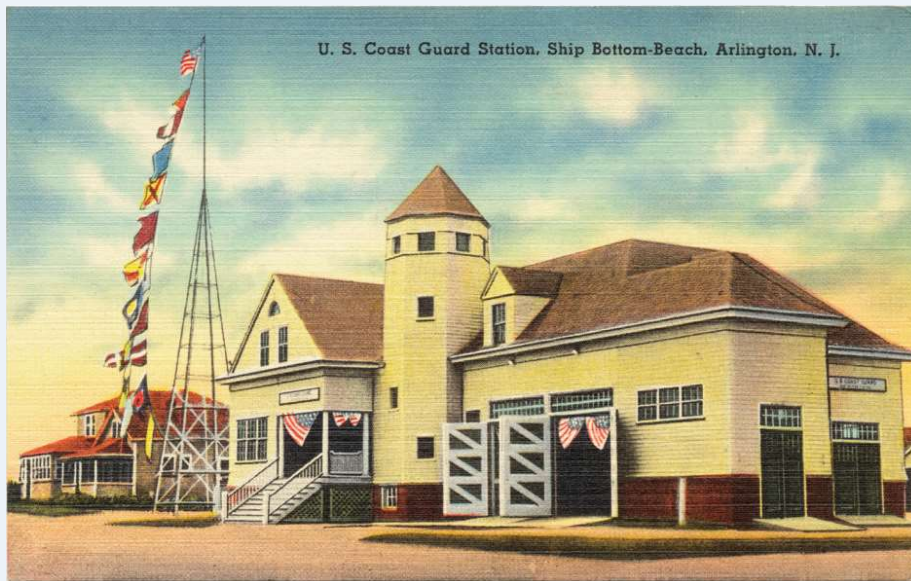
Near north end of Island Beach/Mantoloking
Year of Conveyance/Year Built: 1879/1872

Crew awarded gold life-saving medals "in honor of conduct seldom equaled and never surpassed in the history of the life-saving effort" for their actions at the wreck of the schooner *George Taulane* on February 3, 1880. Five lives were saved. Listed as inactive in 1938. Turned over to the General Services Administration in 1953.



Postcard of the Loveladies Gift Shop, formerly Coast Guard Station Loveladies.

continued on page 74



Postcard of Coast Guard Station Ship Bottom.

Coast Guard Station Spring Lake
(Formerly named Station Wreck Pond until June 1, 1883)

Station #104 (USLSS Station #8)
1 1/2 miles south of Shark River/
Spring Lake
Year of Conveyance/Year Built: unknown/
1877
Station rebuilt in 1878. Station was discontinued in 1834. Abandoned in 1947.

Coast Guard Station Monmouth Beach

Station #100 (USLSS Station #4)
3 1/4 miles south of Navesink Light/
Monmouth Beach
Year of Conveyance/Year Built: 1849/1857
Monmouth Beach Life-Saving Station was the second one to be established on the New Jersey Coast. The station was nearly destroyed by a two-day storm in April 1894. Turned over to the General Services Administration in 1964.

Coast Guard Station Sandy Hook

Station #97 (USLSS Station #1)
North end of Sandy Hook
Year of Conveyance/Year Built: 1848/1848
The station was rebuilt in 1891. Keeper and crew were awarded life-saving medals for their actions in rescuing the crew from the yacht *Foam* during a severe gale on July 27, 1885. Still in operation.

Coast Guard Station Seabright

Station #99 (USLSS Station #3)
Mouth of Shrewsbury River/Seabright
Year of Conveyance/Year Built: 1878/1871
At the time this station existed, Seabright (now Sea Bright) was one word. Original building was built dangerously close to the water's edge and had to be repaired in 1888 and rebuilt in 1891. A lookout tower was manned at the site during World War II and was discontinued in 1946. Turned over to the General Services Administration in 1954.

Coast Guard Station Shark River

Station #103 (USLSS Station #7)
1/2 mile north of Shark River Inlet/Avon by the Sea
Year of Conveyance/Year Built: 1885/1871
The station was first built in 1871, rebuilt in 1872, and relocated to a site "near the mouth of the Shark River" in 1885. Station Manasquan Inlet covered the Shark River Station from 2006 through 2021, when it officially closed.

Coast Guard Station Ship Bottom

Station #116 (USLSS Station #20)
8 miles south southwest of Barnegat Light/Ship Bottom
Year of Conveyance/Year Built: 1887/1872
Seven gold life-saving medals were awarded to the Ship Bottom crew for their 1903 rescue of *Abiel Abbott* survivors. Turned over to the General Services Administration (year unknown).

Coast Guard Station Spermaceti Cove

Station #98 (USLSS Station #2)
2 1/4 miles south of Sandy Hook Light/
Sandy Hook
Year of Conveyance/Year Built: 1849/1849
Station was rebuilt in 1894 with a larger residence area for the crew. Listed as active in 1940 but does not appear on the list of stations in 1945. Fate unknown.

Coast Guard Station Squan Beach

Station #105 (USLSS Station #9)
1 mile southeast of Squan Beach/
Manasquan
Year of Conveyance/Year Built: 1849/1856, 1936
In the 1930s, the station became part of the U.S. Coast Guard and served as the Manasquan Coast Guard Station. Decommissioned in 1996, it was sold July 26, 2000 to Manasquan borough for \$1.00. The station was added to the National Register of Historic Places on March 5, 2008.

Coast Guard Station Toms River

Station #109 (USLSS Station #13)
1 7/8 miles east of the mouth of the Toms River/Seaside Park
Year of Conveyance/Year Built: 1898/1872
Turned over to the General Services Administration in 1954. Today, the building is Seaside Park Borough Hall.



Postcard of Coast Guard Station Toms River in Seaside Park.