

Portage Ship Canal Life-Saving Service Assists with Keeper/Captain Albert Ocha 1886-1889  
The Station was on the west side (Houghton side) of the canal,  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from Lake Superior.  
This time period occurred just 10 years after the founding of the closest community of Oskar.



The following write ups were taken from the U.S. Annual Reports online :

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### **Fountain City**

July 23, 1886—Word was brought to the Ship-Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, in the evening of this date, that the steamer *Fountain City*, of Buffalo, New York, was ashore in Portage Lake. The point indicated was not in sight of the station, being about two and a half miles to the southward and outside the limits of the patrol. The lifesaving crew proceeded to the scene with the surf-boat and assisted to run an anchor off in deep water. They then manned the windlass, but the most strenuous efforts failed to move the vessel. About 9 o'clock a passing steamer was hailed and the surfmen ran a hawser to her and she succeeded in pulling the craft clear, no damage, apparently, having been sustained. The latter had a crew of some thirty-two men, besides a number of passengers, and was bound to Duluth, Minnesota, from Buffalo.

September 12, 1888.—At 4 o'clock in the morning the steamer *Fountain City*, of Buffalo, New York, while steaming through Portage Lake in the darkness, got out of the channel and stranded some two miles below the ship canal and three and a half miles south of the station of that name, (Tenth District), Lake Superior. She was from her home port, bound to Duluth, Minnesota, with twenty-one passengers and a crew of twenty-nine. She had no cargo. Word of the accident reached the keeper through a party of hunters, shortly after 9 o'clock in the forenoon, as he was on his way to town with the supply-boat. Sending at once for his crew to follow with the surf-boat he kept on to the vessel. When the station men arrived, at half past 10 o'clock, the keeper, at the captain's request,

took the surf-boat, proceeded to Houghton, Michigan, and employed a tug to go to the steamer's assistance. When, on their return, they had arrived within a quarter of a mile of the stranded vessel, she succeeded in backing off the shoal, the water in the lake having risen sufficiently to float her. She had sustained no damage.

## Fountain City.

**Original Name:** Fountain City.

**Owner:** Kirkland and Ball, 1857,  
United States, New York,  
Buffalo

**Builder:** Perk Masters, 1857, United  
States, Ohio, Cleveland

**Engine Builder:** Cuyahoga Iron Works., 1857,  
United States

**Year Built:** 1857

**Year Engine Built:** 1857

**Final Disposition:** Burned at Sturgeon Bay,  
Wisconsin on May 5, 1896  
and abandoned.

**Remarks:** "Fountain City" -  
Cincinnati, Ohio.

**Registry Number:** US. 9680

**Hull Number:** None

**Vessel Type:** Passenger and Freight

**Length:** 210 ft.

**Width:** 30.4 ft.

**Height:** 12 ft.

**Gross Tonnage:** 969 t.

**Net Tonnage:** 805 t.

**Materials:** Wood

**Engine Type:** Direct acting



**Fishing boat capsized.** 1886 August 20

The day watch of the Ship Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, reported, at half past 12 o'clock, that he had discovered an object adrift in the lake quite

a distance from the land, but was unable, even with the aid of his glass, to satisfy himself of its nature, it having the appearance of a capsized boat.

A tug which was in the harbor had already put off with one of the surfmen on board. The surf-boat immediately launched and reached the scene, some five miles to the eastward of the station, shortly after the steamer. The object proved to be an overturned and nearly sunken fishing-boat with two men clinging to it.

As the tug had been unable to render any assistance to the craft the life-savers stripped off the sails, righted it and bailed it out, after which they towed it into the canal, taking the two men with them. The latter were Finlanders, and while they could not speak English their actions indicated a due appreciation of their rescue.

It appears that a sudden squall had capsized their boat in the morning two miles from the land, and they had drifted several hours with the current, there being little or no wind. Later on an offshore breeze sprang up, and had they not been seen they must certainly have been carried far out into the lake and probably lost. USLSS Annual Report

**Clyde.** 1886 August 28.

Steam barge with a valuable cargo of flour and carrying a crew of seventeen persons all told.

Word was received about noon at the Ship Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, that a steam-barge had stranded near Eagle River, some twenty miles northeast of the station. On finishing their dinner the life-saving crew launched the surf-boat and started for the scene. The wind was dead ahead and at times fresh, and after an arduous pull, lasting nearly seven hours, the vessel was finally reached. She proved to be the *Clyde*, of and for Buffalo, New York, from Bayfield, Wisconsin, with a valuable cargo of flour and carrying a crew of seventeen persons all told.

She was fast on a reef about a mile from the land, having struck at 4 in the afternoon of the 27th during thick weather. Two tugs, with a gang of men and lighters, were alongside and as soon as the surfmen obtained supper, which they were obliged to go ashore for; they joined in the work of unlading the steamer for the purpose of lightening her. They labored steadily until 1 o'clock, when they tried to get a little needed sleep, but as there was no place to lie down except on deck few of them secured any rest, at all.

At daylight (29th) they resumed work discharging the cargo and by 7 o'clock the tugs had succeeded in pulling the vessel clear. The remainder of the day the station men assisted to put the flour back on board and by dark there was left only a portion of it to be transferred.

The wind then began to freshen from the westward, making up rough water, and the tug captains concluded to take the lighters for shelter to Eagle Harbor, between seven and eight miles northeast of Eagle River. The state of the sea preventing further operations, the life-saving crew manned their boat and lay by until the craft were all well under way, when they accompanied them on their journey. The smoky and foggy weather made the darkness almost impenetrable, and the wind had increased to nearly a gale.

The surfmen were unfamiliar with this section of the coast, having only a general idea of the trend of the shore and that it was lined with rocks and ledges with scarcely a rod of sand beach along its whole extent. Going before the wind the surf boat would at times get in advance of the tow, but whenever the lights of the vessels became indistinct and were liable to be shut out, the men would take in sail and row back.

The tugs shaped a course too far off the land and passed the Eagle Harbor light, which was visible through the misty darkness little more than a mile. When this became apparent one of them stood in towards the shore, and after a run of some two miles made out the light and began blowing her whistles for the guidance of the other vessels. The steamers kept up responsive signals at intervals, but through some misapprehension became farther separated. The one which had approached the land then headed in for the harbor, the surf-boat following, but in searching for the range lights which mark the channel she got so far to leeward as to lose the main light, and for fear of stranding was unwilling to try and pick it up again. The captain explained the situation to the keeper and asked the latter if he would endeavor to find the way into the harbor for him.

This, as events proved, was no easy task. The surfmen rowed as near to the shore as possible and laboriously groped their way, so to speak, along the edge of the breakers, between rocks and reefs that they knew nothing of, on one occasion striking bottom and slightly staving their boat, until, after two hours exhausting effort, they made the lights and entered the harbor. Speedily taking the necessary bearings they again set forth, and in attempting to make a straight course back, ran on another reef, and were obliged to follow the shore as they had come.

Meantime the barge had steamed up alongside the tug, but the whereabouts of the other tug and lighter was not known. When the surf-boat arrived the keeper gave directions to the two vessels which would enable them to reach a position where the channel lights could be plainly seen.

It was now half-past 4 in the morning, (30th,) and the surfmen, who had had no rest for two days, having worked nearly every minute of the time, were sorely feeling the effects of the continued strain upon their energies, being well-nigh fagged out and on the verge of sinking with exhaustion at the oars. It was therefore almost imperative, under the circumstances, to return at once to the shore. The vessels, to which every assistance had been rendered, were left for the time being to care for themselves.

The surfmen made the harbor at about daybreak, their previous experience aiding them to find their way in with little difficulty. They were so completely overcome with fatigue as to be scarcely able to reach a hotel where something could be obtained to eat. While a meal was being prepared, however, they found a chance to lie down on the floor and partially rest themselves.

After breakfast, undeterred, the hardy fellows again manned the surf-boat and put off in search of the vessels, none of which had arrived in port. About eight miles out they ran across the floating cargo belonging to one of the lighters which, it was subsequently ascertained, had sprung a leak and been cast adrift in a water-logged condition. Both tugs were found at Copper Harbor, where they had taken refuge, some fourteen miles up the coast. It appears that soon after the surfmen left the tug and barge, as previously described, the former let go her lighter and started to the assistance of the other tug which began blowing distress signals a short distance to leeward. The latter, being a poor sea boat, was found unable, with the lighter in tow, to turn round in the heavy seas. Both vessels then shaped a course for Copper Harbor, where, as has been seen, they subsequently arrived in safety.

The wind holding from the westward the surfmen remained at this place until September 1, establishing a temporary station and regularly patrolling the beach.

On that date the *Clyde* came back from Marquette, whither she had gone, having learned by telegraph where the tugs were. The life-saving crew helped to transfer the cargo still remaining in the lighter and in tow of one of the tugs, reached the station at 11 o'clock in the night.

Considerable loss was incurred by the breaking up of the lighter that was cast adrift and which had a large quantity of flour on board. USLSS Annual Report.

**Monitor.** 1886 October 15 —

In the afternoon of this date the captain of the barge *Monitor* called at the Ship-Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, and requested the keeper to obtain assistance for him so that he could enter the canal.

His barge, he stated, was lying in a dangerous position outside and the weather was rough and threatening. The lifesaving crew accordingly pulled to Hancock, about 8 miles distant, and procured a local tug which towed the barge safely through the canal. 1887 USLSS Annual Report

**Mores.** 1886 November 13.

Shortly after 1 o'clock in the morning the patrol of the Ship Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, reported that the tug *J. C. Mores* was sounding her

whistle for assistance in the canal below the station. The keeper hurried to the spot and ascertained that the steamer had a lighter alongside which was sinking, and the captain wanted help to unload it.

The life-saving crew were at once called out and proceeded to discharge the cargo, which consisted of pressed hay and lumbermen's supplies. When this was finished the surfmen pumped the craft dry.

The tug had been towing the vessel on Portage Lake, which was covered with ice, and the latter had cut the lighter through, causing her to leak so badly that the tug's crew was unable to keep the water out. They, however, kept her afloat until within hail of the station, where they knew assistance could be obtained. USLSS Annual Report.

**Wallace.** 1886 November 18

This date will long remain memorable in the annals of the Life Saving Service as the one on which the crew of the Ship Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Michigan, sped to Marquette (on a train), a distance of one hundred and ten miles, and rendered extraordinary and gallant service in saving the crews of two vessels.

Early in the morning of November 17 one of the worst northeasters that ever swept over Lake Superior, set in with a bewildering storm of snow and sleet, mounting to a gale, which scourged the waters into appalling turbulence. This tempest continued for over three days, and the damage it wrought to shipping was prodigious. Within the forty eight hours following its beginning over thirty wrecks were reported, involving the loss of more than half a million of dollars and nearly forty lives. The sea was so violent that its effect reached the harbors, creating a surge and undertow that in many instances made the vessels at the docks snap their heavy moorings like pack thread, and seek safety in riding at anchor in the open stream.

At Marquette, early in the day, the seas rolled sheer over the breakwater, setting the harbor water in wild commotion, and disquieting or endangering all the craft upon it. By 2 o'clock in the afternoon the waves were sheeting freely over the barrier, and a little later they tore the wooden tower of the breakwater light from its massive timber fastenings and sent it adrift headlong. A great throng of people who had gathered on the piers and witnessed this stroke of devastation presently had their hearts brought into their mouths by the sight of a schooner, the *Eliza Gerlacli*, scooting madly with all her canvas closely reeled toward the break water. The tug *Gillette* at once boldly started for her, and fortunately got her in tow in time to avert the impending collision.

Immediately after, the same tug found in the thick snow-storm another vessel, the schooner *Florida*, about to become a total wreck by smashing against the docks, and in saving the seven men on board by getting them to jump from one vessel to the other, which was all that could be done, the mate was caught between the two hulls as the sea flung them together and crushed to death. These are samples of the casualties which were constantly impending or occurring throughout the region.

The next day (November 18) the tempest continued with gloomy violence. The gale blew from the northeast with unabated fury, and as far as the eye could pierce under the heavy veiling of the snow, the sea showed as a tumultuous waste of breakers. Everything in the neighborhood of the harbor bore the marks of ravage. The breakwater which had lost its light-house tower the day before was now stripped of all its planking, and lay bare and drenched with a wall of water incessantly sweeping across it under a storm of spray forty feet high. A large dock, known as the rolling mill dock, had been submerged during the night, and a mountain of lumber, shingles, lathing, etc., which had been piled upon it waiting for shipment, had been swept away. The dismal light of breaking day revealed this scene of dreary confusion and havoc to a few spectators grouped upon the harbor piers.

Before long the attention of these men was concentrated upon a quarter six miles to the eastward, where two spectral shapes were momentarily appearing and vanishing through the snow-fall. It was conjectured that these phantoms denoted two vessels ashore and excitement at once began to kindle. Gradually a concourse of people from the town filled up the vacant spaces of the piers, and by 11 o'clock in the forenoon a large crew of men got a yawl boat upon a wagon and started on an expedition of discovery.

It was as they had surmised. They found on their arrival two vessels ashore off the mouth of Chocolay River—one a large steam-barge, the *Robert Wallace*, the other her consort, a barge or four-masted schooner, the *David Wallace*. They both belonged to Lorain, Ohio, and were bound from Duluth, Minnesota, to Buffalo, New-York, laden with wheat in bulk. The *Robert Wallace* had a crew of fifteen men; her consort, the *David Wallace*, had nine. They had sailed in company and were both driven in, lost in the thick atmosphere, until they brought up aground about four hundred yards from shore near the entrance to Chocolay River. The stranding appears to have taken place about an hour after midnight on November 18th. It was immediately followed by the shocks of immense seas which broke successively over the vessels, smashing in the after cabin and pouring down the companion-ways into the engine room of the steam-barge, from whence rose huge clouds of steam as the water met the boiler. To intensify the horror and confusion of the moment, the companion schooner ran up on the barge, fortunately without crashing into her, but quite as

fortunately got free the next minute by a breaker lifting her bows, and swung off toward the shore, when her tow-line was cut to prevent her dragging the barge into the trough of the sea.

Meanwhile the crew of the barge made a rush through the invading water for the forecastle, and took refuge in the captain's cabin, while the sea continued its demolition aft. The surges swept the deck from stem to stern; the after cabin was beaten to pieces, and towards morning the hull so sagged with its own weight that it was practically broken in two. All the time the men on board were in constant expectation of the vessel going to pieces, and it was not until they realized how strongly the forward part held together that they began to hope for ultimate safety. As long as they had steam the whistles were kept sounding, but so deafening was the noise of the gale that they could not be heard even on board the neighboring schooner.

The crowd of men with the yawl arrived from the town, after day-break, and saw the two vessels lying stern on to the beach, with the breakers streaming and flying over them. The steam barge had the appearance of a complete ruin, her deck being nearly level with the water which swept over her from end to end. Her men could be seen by glimpses, peeping from the wheel house and captain's cabin. The schooner looked in better plight, lying well imbedded in the sand nearer the beach, with less water pouring over her, and only broken up a little forward.

The suffering and peril of the sailors had gone home to every heart, and the generous citizens now engaged in a protracted series of almost frantic efforts to reach them. Five men manned the yawl and put out through the terrible surf with a rope in tow, held by their comrades on shore, but almost immediately the wind and surge whirled them back to the beach. Undaunted, they bailed out the boat and with redoubled fury launched again. This time they actually passed half the distance to the schooner over the awful furrows, when a huge sea leaped upon them, and filled the boat almost to swamping. Their only course was to signal their mates on shore to haul them back to the beach. This was done, and it was concluded that with a boat so small rescue was impossible.

A tug next attempted to steam over to the wrecks, but failed, not being able to get near enough for effective service.

The throng on the beach continued to increase, and by 1 o'clock in the day had become large. The people came driving down from the city in a stream of vehicles, all alive with sympathy and intense anxiety for the fate of the imperiled men. It was presently determined to dispatch a team to the powder-mill near the city for an old mortar which was stored there, the intention being to fire a



line over the vessel. Meanwhile another attempt was made to reach the wrecks with a skiff, but before her crew had got midway a swift and powerful current bore them out of their course and they had to return to shore. From time to time the wan sailors on the wrecks, who could be seen through the whirling snow anxiously watching the efforts made in their behalf, themselves contributed their efforts for relief by sending out lines attached to waterbutts, but the furious undertow invariably swept them off as they neared the shore.

Darkness was approaching, and the only hope now was to effect line communication with the vessel. The coming of the mortar was awaited with impatience and anxiety. The old gun had been spiked, and the delay in its arrival was owing to the necessity of taking it to some relatively distant iron-shops to have it drilled. Pending its coming, the throng on the beach busied themselves with coiling down lines for the endeavor to reach the wrecks, and in lighting a number of huge bonfires for the encouragement of the men on board. These fires, it afterward appeared, were a great comfort to the sailors, who took them as a token that they were not abandoned, but that efforts for their deliverance would continue to be made. They were cheered, too, by the presence of the concourse, which the flare of the flames revealed through the ghastly whirl of snow against the background of the darkness. During the whole night it seemed to them that the beach was lined by a restless multitude, all intent upon them.

It was fully 6 o'clock in the evening before the wagon came with the mortar. The old piece of ordnance was received with tumultuous cheering, and at once put in position for action. The line was attached by eager hands to a twenty-four-pound shot and the gun fired, but with a charge so light that it did not carry more than fifty feet. The line was hauled back, and the mortar once more loaded. This time it went off with a stunning report, flew asunder, and was scattered over the beach in a hundred pieces. It is wonderful that no one was hurt, but so it happened. The weary hours of waiting had a futile but not a tragic ending. The boom of the explosion, heard on board the wrecks, muffled by the uproar of the wind and sea, was not understood, being hailed as a token that exertion still continued, and giving heart and hope to the shipwrecked.

The multitude on the beach were now cast down with the conviction that nothing could be done. It was terrible to realize that a large group of men were doomed to perish within a short distance from them without the possibility of assistance.

In the midst of the general solicitude and despair, however, it had occurred several hours before to some person (Captain John Frink, of the tug *Gillette*, is named as the one) that a last resort lay in invoking the aid of the crew of the distant life-saving station at Ship Canal. It was clear that everything now

depended upon procuring a life-boat and the help of a disciplined corps of life-savers. Unknown as yet to the throng on the Marquette beach, though probably not to the people in the town, who were quite as thoroughly roused to the peril of the two crews, the managers of the railroad had nobly arranged for a special train to bring the life saving men to the scene, fully equipped for rescue. A telegram had been sent to Captain Albert Ocha, the keeper of the Ship Canal Station, telling him of the danger to the crews.

The message was brought across the lake and up the canal to him from Houghton, six miles distant, by the tug *James W. Croze*, and reached him at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. He and his men at once sprang to the fullest activity, and with the aid of the tug's crew got the life boat on board, together with the Lyle gun and the necessary equipments for action. The tug then steamed away with them to Houghton, where a train, consisting of a strong engine, a passenger coach, and two flat cars, was waiting for them. To pile the life boat and the apparatus upon these cars was the work of but a few minutes, volunteers pouring in on every side to help men whose errand was to save life. Then the crew bundled into the car provided for them, and at a quarter of 8 o'clock the train, amidst the cheers of the beholders, clanked out at a pace which rapidly increased to pell-mell speed, though over a track heavy with snow.

The noblest descriptive powers would find a fitting subject in the epic journey of the life savers. It need not, however, be here dwelt upon. The mind catches in advance its salient features—the incessant headlong rush of the powerful locomotive into the night and gale; the muffled roar and rattle over the buried tram way; the huge rolls of smoke volleying from the funnel, and torn and tossed by the wind; the lights of the train racing with it in its speed; around and above it the enormous concave of obscurity made livid by the vast whirlwind of sleet and snow, and within their dimly-lighted car, lifting all into strange significance and dignity, the lolling figures of the crew, uncouth and negligent, with the sense of the perilous adventure to which they were speeding, plain upon their stern and composed faces. The cars which bore them flew with an almost eerie velocity. Despite the load of snow upon the rails nearly the highest speed was maintained, and for the greater part of the way the time was but a few seconds more than a mile a minute. The whole distance of one hundred and ten miles was traveled, including necessary stoppages, within four hours.

It was about half-past 11 when the surging and cheering crowd gathered at the Marquette railroad station saw something white, shapeless, deformed, monstrous, and enormous, come snorting and clanging into the depot. It was the delivering train, nearly buried in accumulated snow. The car behind the engine was especially loaded, and looked like some grotesque behemoth

brought in captive out of the winter landscape. From it in a moment poured the crew in their storm clothes, eager for their ordeal.

They had passed on their way at Michigamme to telegraph to Captain Frink to have teams ready to take the apparatus from the train to the lake, and also to procure a good store of lanterns. This he had done, and also gone around among the merchants and collected generous contributions of bread, meat, coffee, butter, cheese, etc., for the half-starved men upon the wrecks when they should be brought ashore. The start was made without delay, and after a rough trip, part of the way by train and part by wagons and sleighs along the dark lake shore, in the edge of the water, and over a sort of corduroy of floundering drift-wood, which made it slow and hard traveling, they finally arrived abreast of the two vessels at 1 o'clock in the morning (November 19).

Here they found a multitude of people, and the wild place lighted by bonfires. The darkness outside of the tossing light of the flames was intense, and the gale furious, but the snow had ceased. In some way, not clearly understood, the rudder of the life-boat had been injured in getting it from the carriage, and it was judged best, in view of the awful surge of the sea, to attempt the rescue by the lines. The Lyle gun was accordingly placed, and a line fired across the steam barge amidships, but it appears that the men on board could not venture aft from the shelter of the wheel-house to look for the line on the waveswept deck, so the keeper concluded to resort to the life-boat.

It was 2 o'clock when the launch was made. There were two reefs to cross and the surf was terrible. By the time the first reef was surmounted the boat had shipped three seas, the irons of the rudder had bent and the timber split, and return to the shore for repairs was unavoidable.

Pending the attempt to get the rudder into order another shot was fired over the vessel, but the sailors did not appear to get the line, and by the time the day began to break the life-boat was again launched. This time the pull was long, hard, and desperate. Several seas were shipped, but the foaming reefs were crossed and the boat came alongside. She was a weird spectacle.

The seas had frozen on her, so that she seemed a shell of ice, with which she was so loaded down that of the fifteen men on board the steam-barge it was judged prudent to take in only nine, with which number the ice-enveloped life-boat crew contrived, after much labor and peril, to safely regain the shore. They instantly re-launched, and after another battle with the tumbling freshets (?) of the lake, and the shipment of a succession of seas, each of which, filled the buoyant boat to the gunnels, they brought in the other six men from the barge Robert Wallace.

They then put out once more to the succor of the nine men on board the other vessel, the *David Wallace*. She lay astern of the barge, about two hundred feet distant. It was then about 7 o'clock in the morning. The wind had somewhat lessened, but the breakers were tremendous. Again and again the boat was flooded, and driven astern on the second reef she was nearly thrown end over end; the rudder split so much and got so weak that she had to be managed almost solely by the oars, involving double skill and labor; and her valiant crew were incessantly drenched with the icy water, which froze upon their clothing as fast as it struck. Their efforts continued indomitable, and by (7?) o'clock they surged alongside the schooner in their boat of ice, and returned to the beach with the nine men on board.

As fast as each boat load was lauded, the sailors were taken to the great fires which the citizens had built, and there given hot coffee and food. The men from the schooner were not so badly off, but the fifteen men from the steam-barge (*Robert Wallace*) were numb with cold, and nearly starved, having had hardly anything to eat for two days. It was a noble providence to have had an ample supply of provisions and hot drink ready for service to them immediately upon landing, close to the comforting fires. (24 saved)

The life-saving crew reached their station the next day (November 20) an hour after noon, leaving behind them at Marquette a glowing remembrance of their powers and achievement. To have come rushing behind their wild locomotive through the night and tempest over so many snowy leagues to the rescue of a group of despairing sailors, and then, with hearts greater than danger, to have gone out again and again through the dreadful thickets of the breakers and brought every man ashore, was a feat so boldly adventurous, so grandly picturesque, that the current accounts of it in the public journals roused at the time the whole lake region to intense enthusiasm, and sent thrills of sympathy and admiration through the country.

The steam barge, the *Robert Wallace*, though greatly damaged, was eventually saved. The other vessel, the *David Wallace*, was also saved. The wheat cargoes of both vessels were lost. 1887 Annual Report of USLSS



**Sea Gull.** 1887 May 22.—

At 2 o'clock in the afternoon the crew of the Ship-Canal Station, (Tenth District.) Lake Superior, manned the surf-boat and went to the assistance of a small sloop which was helplessly drifting towards the shore, with a broken rudder, about a mile and a half north of the station. A fresh southwest breeze prevailed at the time and a heavy sea was running.

There was only one man on board, who, as soon as he found himself unable to steer the craft, let go the anchor, but it failed to hold and the sloop was in danger of being driven on the beach.

The life savers overtook her in the nick of time and towed her safely into the canal. She was the *Sea Gull*, of Keweenaw Point, Michigan, loaded with nets and fishing gear, bound to Ontonagon, in the same State. USLSS Annual Report

**Moss.** 1887 July 19

At 6 o'clock in the evening the lumber laden schooner *A. H. Moss*, of Detroit, Michigan, from Ashland, bound to Buffalo, New York, while towing through the Portage Lake ship-canal, Michigan, and passing a vessel bound north, stranded about half a mile southeast of Ship Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior. She had a crew of five men.

The life-saving crew went immediately to her assistance and ran lines to the towing-steamer, but the vessel was hard and fast aground, and at each attempt to haul her off the lines parted.

The deck-load was therefore discharged, the work being accomplished at 9 o'clock. The line was then run again, and the vessel was soon floated without damage. USLSS Annual Report.

**City of Fremont** 1887. September 3

Steamer with bricks and barreled salt. She was from Ashland, Wisconsin, bound to Lake Linden, Michigan, with thirty passengers and a crew of twenty-seven persons.

At 1 o'clock in the morning, during foggy weather, the patrolmen of the Ship Canal Station, (Tenth District), Lake Superior, heard a distress signal from a steamer off the canal entrance. They hastened to the station and reported the circumstance. The life-saving crew manned the surf-boat, and pulling out found that the steamer *City of Fremont*, of Chicago, had stranded in the thick weather, a quarter of a mile off the piers.

The captain wanted a tug and lighter, and the station crew, taking with them the mate of the vessel, proceeded to Houghton, a distance of nine miles. They secured the required assistance, and set out on the return.

When near the canal they met the steamer, which had, by throwing overboard part of her cargo of bricks and barreled salt, got off the shoal unaided. USLSS Annual Report 1888.

**Bradley, Alva** 1887 October 24, 25

Shortly before 4 o'clock in the afternoon a tug from Houghton, Michigan, arrived at Ship Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, with a telegram for the keeper. The life-saving crew with their apparatus was wanted at Marquette, a port lying to the southeast and distant something over a hundred miles by rail. Preparations for the trip were quickly made. The surf-boat, carrying the apparatus, was launched, towed to Houghton, and transferred to a flat-car.

The train bearing the life-savers left at half past 6 o'clock, and reached their destination four hours later. The keeper went at once to the tug office from which the dispatch had been sent, and learned that the coal laden schooner *Alva Bradley*, of and from Cleveland, Ohio, was ashore about twelve miles above Marquette, to which port she was bound. Her crew was still on board and the yawl-boat was lost. A tug had gone out to her in the afternoon, but owing to the heavy cross-seas had been unable to approach within two miles of her or to be of any assistance. The keeper asked to have the tug take his boat out to a position as near the stranded vessel as possible, but as the gale still

continued the owner of the tug thought it would be imprudent to make the attempt before daylight.

The life savers, however, were not to be delayed. The flat-car was run down to the wharf, and by the time the surf boat was ready to put out, it was decided to let the tug go out with the boat. The start was made half an hour before midnight. When after a rough experience they arrived about the miles from the schooner, the captain of the tug signaled for the surf-boat to cast off the line and the life saving crew proceeded alone. The wind blew a gale from the southwest, raising a heavy sea; as a northwest gale had prevailed the preceding day and there was still a swell from that direction, the result at this time was a chopping sea which was very trying for the surf boat and crew. The spray dashed constantly over them, freezing wherever it struck, and the boat and the clothing of the men were soon coated with ice.

They reached the schooner at 2 o'clock in the morning (25th) and found her crew of ten men safe, though almost despairing of succor. The quarters on board were still comfortable; but the vessel was pounding the rocks, cracking in every joint, and threatening to go to pieces with every sea. As the life-saving crew had understood that the tug would wait for them, they hastened to get the schooner's people into the boat and set out on the return. They pulled to the place where they had left the tug, but there was nothing in sight except the confusion of waters. They burned Coston signals, but as these elicited no response they headed the boat for the town. The captain soon declared that he could not stand so long a trip in the cold, and the keeper accordingly changed the course and steered for the nearest shore. When they arrived abreast the schooner it was decided to go on board and wait till morning.

At day-break all hands again took to the surf boat and set out for the beach half a mile away. After entering the surf and just before reaching the shore, the boat swamped. Fortunately, however, all struggled safely to the land, and two men who were on the beach helped them to haul out and bail the boat. Here they remained a short time. While considering the best method of getting back to Marquette, the tug that had towed them out the night before was seen steaming toward the schooner. They accordingly launched the boat, pulled out to her, and were towed back. The wind was ahead and the surf-boat, from the rough handling in the heavy sea, soon sprung a leak, and also shipped considerable water.

When they reached the town at half past 9 o'clock in the forenoon, they were frozen to the boat so that their clothing had to be torn to release them. They were numbed and almost disabled by the cold, but were assisted to the wharf, taken to the tug-office, and kindly looked after. Brandy was moderately served out to them, and all were shortly able to go on to the hotel for breakfast.

The keeper could not get his surf-boat and apparatus returned to Houghton by train without an uncertain delay. He therefore made arrangements to go back in tow of a steamer which left at 9 o'clock in the evening. The station crew reached home at 3 o'clock the following afternoon (26th). The *Bradley* was subsequently got off the shoals damaged to the extent of half her value. The loss on the cargo amounted to eighteen hundred dollars. USLSS Annual Report.

**Music** 1887 September 12

On this date as the tug *Music*, of Bay City, Michigan, was entering the ship canal from Portage Lake, she touched bottom, causing the three barges which she had in tow to swing round and the two after ones to take the ground. The crew of the Ship-Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, went to their assistance in the surf-boat, and ran a line from one of them to a spike, after which they helped to heave her afloat by means of the capstan. The other barge was pulled off by a tug. USLSS Annual Report.

**Tuttle, HB** 1887 November 8

Steam-barge was from Ashland, Wisconsin, bound to her home port, with a crew of eighteen persons and a cargo of iron ore.

Shortly before midnight of the 7th, during a northerly gale and a heavy sea, the steam-barge *H. B. Tuttle*, of Cleveland, Ohio, stood into Portage Lake Ship Canal, Michigan, for shelter. In the morning (8th) she attempted to proceed by the inside passage, but as the storm had materially lowered the water in the canal she soon brought up in the channel, about half a mile from Ship Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior. The life-saving crew went to her at once, and shortly after, the water rose sufficiently to float her. The keeper sent his crew back to the station and at the captain's request piloted her as far as Houghton, where a local pilot was procured. USLSS Annual Report.

**Seaman** 1887 November 13.

Early in the morning of this date a vessel signaled with lights to the Ship-Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior for assistance. The surfmen at once launched their boat; pulled out to her and found that she was the schooner *Seaman*, of Cleveland, Ohio, in want of a tug. They then rowed to Hancock, Michigan, a distance of ten miles, and procured the desired assistance. USLSS Annual Report.

**Keystone and tow Joseph Masters.** 1888. June 5, 6.



*Steamer, and schooner in tow.*

*Keystone* was towing the schooner *Joseph O. Masters* (both vessels of and from Cleveland, Ohio, and bound to Ashland, Wisconsin) was struck by a northerly gale when about fifteen miles northwest of Ship-Canal Station, (Tenth District, Lake Superior).

This occurred on the evening of the 5th, and, as the vessels were light, it was found necessary to make for a harbor at once. They arrived at the canal entrance at 10 o'clock at night, and the steamer got in safely; but the schooner struck the west pier, parted her line, and drove ashore about a mile west of the station.

The accident was discovered ten minutes later by the patrol, who hastened to the station with the alarm. The life-savers quickly launched their surf-boat, and soon met the captain of the steamer, who wanted to go with them to the schooner. He was accordingly taken on board.

The *Masters* lie in the breakers, head to the sea. She had a large hole in her starboard bow above the water-line, and her steering-gear was badly disabled. Her crew consisted of eight persons.

At the captain's request the station crew pulled through the canal to Hancock, Michigan, in quest of a tug. They could obtain none at the time, however, on account of the gale, but they secured the promise of one at day break, and returned to the schooner. Shortly before light, as the sea increased rapidly and became dangerous for the surf-boat, they went to the station for the life-boat.

The tug soon arrived, and, assisted by the *Keystone*—the station-men running the line, slipping the schooner's cable, and helping to pump her out—hauled the vessel off the shoal and took her into the canal without further mishap.

The life-saving crew made another trip to Hancock for articles needed in the work of repair and were employed on board the remainder of the day (6th) mending the steering-gear.

They returned to their post half an hour before midnight, leaving the vessel in condition to resume her voyage as soon as the weather should moderate. The captain expressed very great gratitude for the assistance he had received at their hands. The vessel's damages proved to be comparatively slight. USLSS Annual Report.

**Lighter.** 1888. June 6.

In the forenoon, during a gale from the north, the crew of the Ship-Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, pulled about a mile to the southward of their station, recovering and securing a lumber-laden lighter which had broken adrift from the pier at the canal entrance. USLSS Annual Report

**Belle Stevens.** 1888. July 3

At 3 o'clock in the morning the crew of the Ship-Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, recovered a cat-rigged fishing-boat that was found by the patrol full of water on the beach a mile and a half northeast of the piers and restored it to the owner.

**Belle Stevens.** July 3.1888

Twenty minutes after the crew of the Ship-Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, had returned from the fish-boat, recovered as above described, a yawl with three men in it arrived at the station and reported the schooner *Belle Stevens*, of Duluth, Minnesota, ashore at the mouth of Salmon Trout River, nine and a half miles to the south westward. She had a crew of four men, and was bound, without cargo, from her home port to Marquette, Michigan.

The accident was caused by mistaking a couple of lights on the beach for those at the ship-canal entrance. There was a strong southwest wind blowing with a heavy sea. A tug was needed to assist in floating the schooner, and after considerable difficulty, the keeper succeeded in engaging one to go to the scene later in the day.

The life-savers proceeded to the vessel in the surf-boat, arriving alongside at about half-past 1 o'clock. They ran out an anchor and tried to heave her clear, but the bottom being flat rock the anchor would not hold. Several efforts to free her, therefore, proved ineffectual. At about dusk the tug put in an appearance and the surfmen sounded out deep water for her. They then ran her tow-line to the schooner, and in about half an hour pulled her afloat. She was towed to Hancock, on Portage Lake, and found to have suffered little or no damage. Her crew was very thankful for the valuable aid rendered by the station men. USLSS Annual Report.

**Myles.** 1888. September 26-28.

All day of the 26th the Canadian steam-barge *Myles*, of Hamilton, had been some eight miles north of Portage Lake Ship Canal, Michigan, vainly trying to make headway against the wind. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon the weather became stormy and a heavy sea made up. The craft being obliged to seek shelter stood for the canal entrance. The captain supposing from his chart that the water there was some 16 feet deep, whereas it is only a little over thirteen,

thought he would have no difficulty in making the harbor with his vessel which was drawing fourteen feet. As soon as her bow was inside she struck bottom and swung broadside round with her stern against the east pier. The shock broke her large steam-pipe and unshipped her rudder.

The crew of the Ship-Canal Station, (Tenth District,) went immediately to her assistance in the life-boat, ran lines, and tried to get her off but were unsuccessful.

The captain decided that a tug would be necessary and so the surfmen secured one and carried her hawser to the barge. The only result of the tug's efforts was to swing the steamer around and pull her about a ship's length inside. After several futile attempts to release the *Myles*, in which a number of lines were parted, the tug abandoned the undertaking and went for some lighters to remove the cargo, which consisted of corn.

The next day the surfmen remained by the vessel and turned back three steamers that were on their way into the canal, there being no room in the channel for them to pass in while the barge was aground. One of these steamers might otherwise have met with a serious accident as she arrived off the entrance after nightfall.

The tug did not return to the scene until the morning of the 28th. She brought two lighters which the surfmen aided to load with the barge's cargo. This sufficiently lightened the stranded vessel and she floated off and was towed into the harbor, having sustained some damage. She had a crew numbering twenty men and was bound from Washburn, Wisconsin, to Kingston, Ontario.  
USLSS Annual Report 1889

### **Reed Case** 1888 October 20

The third instance of loss of life within the scope of Service operations, occurred near the Ship Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, on October 20, 1835. The captain of the schooner *Reed Case*, of Chicago, Illinois, was drowned.

The vessel was bound, light, from Duluth, Minnesota, to Portage Lake, Michigan, with a crew of eight men. When she arrived off the canal the morning of the 10th, the wind was blowing a gale from the southwest, with a heavy sea running, yet she attempted to pass in between the piers.

The keeper first observed the vessel some five miles off shore, and knowing the danger and difficulty she would encounter in trying to enter the canal, he hastened to the station to make preparations to go to her assistance. One of the surfmen on watch in the lookout, which is situated near the canal entrance, saw the schooner at about the same time and ran out on the pier-end in readiness to take a line when she arrived.

She kept constantly sagging to leeward, and it soon became evident that she would miss the entrance. She continued on, however, and struck the end of the east or leeward pier with such force as to stave a hole in her bow. The sudden impact caused her to rebound, but the sea swept her a second time against the pier.

She then managed to get clear and, standing a short distance into the lake, let go both anchors. One of the chains parted, and the remaining anchor failing to hold she

commenced to drag down the lake and towards the shore. After going some four miles she reached shoaler water, where the single anchor fetched her up. She was now about half a mile from the land and five miles northeastward of the station.

The keeper on reaching the station caused the life boat to be launched, and the crew pulled up the canal to the entrance. Here a five-gallon can of oil was suspended from the bow of the boat and another from the stern, in such a manner that the contents flowed slowly from the cans and spread over the surface of the water. The foresail was reefed and set and the boat headed down the lake towards the schooner, but it was not long before the sail had to be taken in to prevent the mast from breaking.

The surfmen then took to the oars, and at 11 o'clock, two hours from the time of starting, they arrived alongside the vessel, which was rolling and pitching heavily. The captain informed the life-savers that the schooner was leaking badly and that he wanted the assistance of a tug. The keeper replied that it would be impossible to induce a tug to venture out, but that he and his men would remain by the craft and render all the aid they could. The captain, however, in spite of the keeper's advice, insisted on sending one of his crew ashore, but, after making arrangements to lower the yawl, he was finally prevailed upon to allow the surfmen to land the steward in the life-boat. The schooner's yawl would certainly have been swamped the moment it touched the water.

The man was taken into the boat and the life-savers made for a small sand beach not far distant. They were soon confronted with the danger of being capsized in the trough of the breakers and were obliged to keep off before the wind and seek a landing farther down the shore, under the lee of a reef and a bluff some thirty feet high. While crossing the reef a huge comber knocked one of the men from the thwart and washed his oar overboard. Before he had time to recover himself the boat struck the beach head on, where another sea swept over it and turned it broadside against the bank with such force as to stave it badly. The life-savers succeeded in hauling it clear of the surf, whereupon the steward started off in search of a tug.

It was now about 1 o'clock, and the men proceeded to the station. The wind, meantime, had veered to the north, from which quarter it was blowing strong, accompanied by heavy snow squalls. It was thought best as a measure of precaution to transport the beach-apparatus to a point abreast of the vessel, and so a team of horses was obtained for the purpose. Snow and slush covered the ground, and with mire-holes and roots of trees obstructing the way, it was with great labor and difficulty that the cart was drawn to a favorable position opposite the schooner.

A fire was built on the beach and kept burning brightly, and the surfmen maintained a vigilant watch throughout the night.

At 2 o'clock in the morning (20th) the steward returned and said that he could not get a tug to venture out in the storm. At daylight the vessel was pitching heavily in the trough of the sea, and at times it seemed as though she would capsize. An attempt was made to reach her with a line, but she was entirely beyond range and the shot fell short.

It was then decided to go to the station for the surf-boat. The latter being procured was rowed to the entrance of the canal, but the breakers there were so high that it was deemed best to haul it across the land to a spot near the schooner and make an effort to reach her by pulling head to the sea, instead of taking the risk of going out between the piers and down the lake.

A team of horses was accordingly obtained, and with the assistance of the crew of the steamer *City of Fremont*, which was in the canal waiting for the gale to moderate, the wagon containing the boat was started on its journey. At a point about half a mile from where the vessel lay the road became impassable for the wagon, and the boat was removed and dragged over the ground the rest of the way. It was then discovered that a hole had been stove in the bottom.

The keeper had hastened on in advance to select a good launching place, and on coming in view of the schooner saw that her yawl was being lowered. Thereupon he ran to the beach-wagon, took off the canvas cover, and marking upon it in large letters, "Boat is coming," stretched it up between the trees so that it could be seen by the crew of the vessel. He then hurried back to urge on the men in charge of the surf-boat. In five minutes the latter arrived at the shore, when it was found that the schooner's yawl was swamped in the breakers and two men were clinging to it.

All the shore party, except one surfman who remained on the bluff, ran down the hill and up the beach to assist the imperiled sailors. The surfman who remained behind soon saw another man struggling in the water a little ways from the yawl, and he at once hurried to the surf-boat and procured two life-belts. On returning found that the man had disappeared.

While the station crew were going along the beach the steward of the vessel informed them that the captain was in the yawl when it left the schooner, but that he had been washed out when the boat first filled. Gaining a spot opposite the yawl, which the undertow was keeping from the shore, the life-savers joined hands and wading into the surf as far as they could, got hold of the boat and hauled it out. One of the men was sitting on the bottom grasping the thwarts, and the other was clinging to the stern from the outside. This man, who was losing his hold, was rescued just in time by one of the surfmen, who, with a life-belt on, rushed in and caught him.

The two survivors were chilled through and so completely exhausted that they were unable to stand. The life-savers quickly carried them to the fire, removed their wet clothing, and covered them with their own garments. They then briskly rubbed them to increase warmth and circulation, and administered stimulants that had been provided from the station medicine chest.

Meanwhile a surfman had been dispatched to the station for dry clothing, material to repair the boat, and a conveyance for the transfer of the rescued men.

As it was growing late and the situation momentarily becoming more precarious, it was decided to make an effort to reach the vessel with the surf boat before dark. It was first necessary to lower it down the steep bank by means of a line, one end of which was made fast to the stern and the other part taken around a tree. On getting the boat to the water's edge the keeper directed Surfman Jeremiah Hanly to get into the bow and be ready with his oar to keep the craft from being thrown broadside on the beach. This Hanly refused to do, saying that he would not endanger his life in such a sea. He was promptly discharged on the spot by the keeper, and the crew thereby became short-handed by the loss of two members, the man who had been sent to the station not yet having returned.

Nothing daunted by lack of numbers, the remaining men waited their chance, effected a launch, took to the oars, and succeeded in pulling clear of the shore. The first comber they met half filled the boat and compelled them to hold it in check until one of

the oarsmen got to bailing. It was evident, however, that the water could not be kept out on account of the leak in the bottom, and so the surfmen bent their united energies to the oars, and by a powerful effort reached the vessel. They speedily took off the four men, and without wasting a minute's time put back to the beach and fortunately made a safe landing. These results were accomplished in the face of the greatest peril and under difficulties that appeared insurmountable, and the successful termination of the undertaking was greeted with cheers by the spectators who had gathered at the scene.

The sailors were immediately conducted to the station where they were provided with food and shelter.

The surfmen returned to the shore for their apparatus and made search for the captain's body, but did not then find it. They recovered it the next morning (21st) at the water's edge a mile and a half from where the accident happened. The remains were properly cared for until evening, when a relative arrived and took charge of them.

The shipwrecked men left the station for their homes the same day. The schooner filled and rolled over on her side, becoming a complete wreck. Attempts by the surfmen, in conjunction with tugs and a wrecking company, to save her proved futile. The clothing furnished to alleviate the privations of the sailors was drawn from the supply donated by the Women's National Relief Association.

The foregoing narrative shows that the life saving crew did all they possibly could to prevent the loss of life at this disaster. The captain, Charles L. Green, of Chicago, Illinois, perished in a rash attempt to make the shore in a frail and unfit boat, while if he had remained on the vessel until assistance could have reached him he would undoubtedly have been saved with the others.

### **Robert Holland** 1889 *April 23*

While the crew of the Ship-Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, was out practicing in the surf-boat their attention was attracted to a steamer that was blowing whistles for assistance. The surfmen pulled alongside of her and found that she was the *Robert Holland*, of Chicago, Illinois, bound thence to Washburn, Wisconsin, without cargo, and having a crew of fifteen, all told.

Her machinery had got out of order and the captain wanted to be piloted into the harbor. The keeper took the vessel safely inside. Later in the day the life-saving crew rowed the captain some five miles down Portage Lake {maybe it was to Oskar?} to a blacksmith, who made the necessary repairs to enable him to proceed on his journey. USLSS Annual Report.

### **JC Morse.** 1889. July 31

Fred Stonehouse's Keweenaw Shipwrecks: Tug, sunk in Lower Entry. While she and steamer Peerless were entering the canal met with the tug running close aboard the bank. The wake of the Peerless reflected off the bank, rolled the tug and capsized her. Her crew escaped without injury. Usually employed in towing

log rafts. The tug DS Hebard raised the Morse without trouble. (in PL Mining Gazette August 1, 1889.)



### **JAY C. MORSE shipwreck 1889**

Other names : none seen in early mvus's and nsps as J.C. MORSE

Official no. : 12958

Type at loss : propeller tug/excursion vessel, wood

Build info : 1867, G. Notter, Buffalo

Specs : 78x18x9, 99g 70n [180 t. om]

Date of loss : 1889 July 31

Place of loss : near Portage Ship Canal entrance

Lake : Superior

Type of loss : collision

Loss of life : ?

Carrying : ?

Detail : Struck boulders offshore and sank. Recovered, possibly much later.

Struck a rock and foundered on a sightseeing trip with the loss of one life, Jul 17, 1867, after an unsuccessful run to shore.

Shown in '69 mvus as sidewheeler

Sources : mv,ms,gwgl,lhl

The above photo from MTU archives says the JC Morse last owned by Ford Motor Company was abandoned and broken up in 1933 at Range Plant in Dearborn.

### **Bessemer and Schuylkill 1889 October 5,**

On Lake Superior, a strong NW gale, accompanied by heavy seas and snow squalls, ushered in this day. The storm arose while the steamer Bessemer and her consort, the schooner Schuylkill, both of Chicago Illinois, were on a voyage from Ashland, WI to Cleveland Ohio. Early in the morning, when off Eagle Harbor, Mi the wind was blowing with such violence that the steamer could make no headway with her.

It was decided to put back the Ship Canal for shelter. This course was rendered necessary too because of the fact that the vessels were beginning to leak badly. Both were deeply laden with iron ore, and the seas broke over them continually, but by diligent work at the pumps, they were kept afloat.

When at 8 o'clock in the morning, they arrived off the canal, the crews were exhausted. The Bessemer hauled in for the entrance, but, unfortunately there was not sufficient depth of water in the channel to float her, and when, about 500 feet outside of piers, she grounded and swung broadside to the gale. The fury of the wind and waves became more apparent as it was seen how quickly the heavily freighted steamer was dashed against the pier.

A moment later her tow (Schuylkill), having also taken the bottom and become unmanageable, crashed broadside into the steamer. Both vessels immediately began to break up and in a short time the beach, for a mile or more was strewn with wreckage.

In less than half an hour after the stranding of the vessels the crew of the Ship Canal Station (tenth district) was on the scene. The station was a mile away but the patrol man had observed the disaster and given the alarm promptly. The lifeboat was at once manned, but found it to be impossible to row it against the strong head gale and current, and the surfmen had to land and track it to the canal entrance.

When they arrived, both crews, with exception of three men on the schooner's (Schuylkill) bow, whose retreat had been completely cut off, had succeeded in reaching the pier in safety. These men were rescued by the life-savers.

Ten minutes later the schooner was a complete wreck; the steamer, though broken in two when the schooner struck her did not go entirely to pieces until a couple of hours later.

The shipwrecked people were destitute, having saved nothing from the vessels, and were taken to the station and given a supply of clothing from the stock donated by the Women's National Relief Association. Later in the day the station men, accompanied by some of the sailors visited the wreck, but no clothing had been washed ashore.

Both cargoes became a total loss, and the booms and broken spars subsequently saved by the surfmen were of little or no value.



The Bessemer carried a crew of 14 men, and her consort was manned by 8. They remained two days at the station. USLSS Annual Report

**BESSEMER** (Boatnerd.com)

Other names: built as JUSTIN R. WHITING renamed in 1885

Official no. : 46130

Type at loss : propeller, wood, bulk freight

Build info : 1875, Langell, St. Clair, MI

Specs : 178x28x16, 436g 326n

Date of loss : 1889, Oct 5

Place of loss : off North end of Portage Ship Canal

Lake : Superior

Type of loss : storm

Loss of life : none

Carrying : iron ore

Detail : She and consort SCHUYLKILL were struck by a rapidly-rising gale, and ran for the Canal when it became apparent that BESSEMER was going to sink. The two went onto a reef at the mouth of the canal, collided and broke up quickly. Crew was able to jump onto the breakwater. Her remains partly blocked the canal until cleared by dynamiting the next fall.

Sources: nsp,gwgl,h,ks,mv,eas,lss,wb,hgl,sb,mpl,df,bb

**SCHUYLKILL**

Other names : also seen spelled SCHUYKILL

Official no. : 115145

Type at loss : schooner, wood

Build info : 1873, Gibson, Buffalo

Specs : 152x31x12, 472g

Date of loss : 1889, Oct 5

Place of loss : off Portage Ship Canal

Lake : Superior

Type of loss : storm

Loss of life : none

Carrying : iron ore

Detail : Tow of steambarge BESSEMER(qv) in NW gale, she grounded near the entrance to the canal while seeking shelter and broke up within a few hours. Owner: P. H. Flemming, Cleveland. She was a total loss of about \$20,000, and was dynamited to clear the channel in September of the following year.

Sources : polk,hgl,mv,gwgs,ks,lss,nsp,wb,sb,df,eas,bb

**Minnehaha.** 1889. October 5 and 6.

Being towed by Hiawatha

When, in the middle of the afternoon of the 5<sup>th</sup>, the surfmen of the Ship Canal Station visited for the second time the scene of the wrecks of the Bessemer and Schulykill, a large schooner (Minnehaha) was observed heading for the canal. She was too far off shore to be plainly distinguished, but her general appearance indicated that she was in distress. The surfboat was not suitable for

outside duty in such weather and returned to the pier end with the lifeboat and awaited the nearer approach of the schooner.

When the latter arrived within communication distance, she displayed a signal of distress, and the channel being blocked by the wrecks, the people on shore warned her not to attempt to enter the canal. She was anchored something more than a mile out in the lake. The station men at once put off to her, their progress being anxiously watched by a number of interested spectators on the pier. She proved to be the four-masted schooner Minnehaha of Port Huron MI with a cargo of iron ore.

Besides having her jib boom broken, some of her rigging carried away, sails torn, and rudder head split, she was leaking badly, and had about four feet of water in her hold. She had but little free board, and the waves were washing over her fore and aft. Fortunately she was fitted with a steam pump, otherwise she must have sunk.

She had broken adrift from the steamer Hiawatha and the latter owing to the severity of gale, could render no assistance, and was compelled to seek shelter at Isle Royale. Thus abandoned, the Minnehaha kept away for the Ship Canal, and suffered the damages above mentioned on the trip. A heavy sea threw the captain and mate across the deck and injured them. The captain did not desire to leave his vessel, and the only service the station men could render him was to forward a telegram to his owners. As long as the pump worked well and the anchor held, the crew was in no danger. Before returning to the station, the keeper instructed the captain to signal should it become necessary to abandon the schooner. A surfman was stationed on the pier during the night to keep a watch on the vessel.

The following morning the station men pulled out to the Minnehaha to deliver a telegram that had been received for the captain. A few hours later the Hiawatha arrived, took the schooner in tow (the gale having moderated) and proceeded on her voyage. USLSS Annual Report.

**Keeper Robert Smith took over after Keeper Ocha.**