

Portage Ship Canal Life-Saving Station assists with Keeper Smith

Constitution September 25, 1891

Grounded at entrance of canal, parting tow line; also leaking. LSS telephoned for tug, ran hawsers, and pumped her out.

Monitor - Belonged to same tow as the Constitution. Same service as given that vessel.

F. and P. M. #2. 1892. Nov 15.

Steamer aground. Rowed Hancock seven miles distance to secure a tug. Ran lines to her. Vessel was then hauled afloat. USLSS Annual Report

James Mowatt. 1893. Sept 15.

Stranded in thick weather 10 miles from station. Crew landed in their own boat. LSS went to her in lifeboat, camped on the beach with the sailors and obtained provisions for them. Subsequently telegraphed for wrecking outfit and aided in lightening cargo of lumber, placing steam pumps on board, running lines, etc. Vessel was floated on the 21st and towed to Hancock, Michigan. [See letter of acknowledgment.]

PULASKI, NEW YORK, *December 6, 1893.* DEAR SIR: Please allow me through you to thank Captain George A. Smith and his noble crew of life-savers of Hancock, Michigan, (Ship Canal Station,) for their heroic efforts in behalf of the crew and timely aid in releasing the schooner *James Mowatt* from the rocks twelve miles southwest from Eagle River, Michigan, September 15 to 21, 1893. On September 15, hearing of the stranding, Captain Smith and crew came to us in the surf boat in the face of a strong gale from the west, and on reaching the wreck found that the crew were on the beach. Unwilling to return to the station without knowing our condition, they decided to make a landing, notwithstanding the wind had in the meantime increased to a violent gale. The feat was skillfully performed through the heavy sea and surf. They remained with us on the beach till the 16th, when the gale had somewhat subsided and shifted to northwest, and returned to the station with dispatches for myself for assistance. On the 18th Captain Smith and crew returned and stood by us night and day, rendering every assistance in their power till the wreck was released and towed to Hancock on Thursday, September 21.

I am free to say that without the aid of the life-saving crew of Hancock we could not have released the *Mowatt* without much greater cost to schooner

and cargo. They are a brave, manly, and muscular crew of men, and a credit to the United States Life-Saving Service.

Very respectfully, yours, C. H. BECKER, *Master, Pulaski, New York. USLSS Annual Report.*

Peerless. 1893 Oct. 5

Stranded on account of foggy weather. LSS summoned tug and passed her hawser to the steamer, which was then released uninjured. USLSS Annual Report 1894

Fred Stonehouse in Keweenaw Shipwrecks: A popular visitor to the Keweenaw. Had 45 state rooms supplied with running water an unheard of luxury at the time. Her dome and side windows were of stained glass of highest grade. 166 feet long wooded propeller. Renamed Muskegon.



Crosthwaite. 1893 Nov. 16.

Barge.

Stranded while entering canal in tow of steamer Hiawatha, parting hawser. LSS ran lines to pier timbers, hove her afloat, and towed her up the canal about 1 mile to a place where the steamer lay awaiting her. USLSS Annual Report

HATTIE. 1894 MAY 17

SCHOONER.

Missed channel while towing into canal and stranded west of piers; sprung a leak. LSS ran a line and made an unsuccessful attempt to haul her off; worked in conjunction with tug, manning pumps, dredging channel, etc., until 24th, when, having found and patched leaks, she was floated by steamer A. D. Hayward. [See letter of acknowledgment.]

BUFFALO, NEW YORK, *June 25, 1894.* DEAR SIR: On the 17th of May the schooner *Hattie* was stranded on Lake Superior west of Portage Canal, where Captain Smith commands one of your life-saving crews. I wish to offer thanks to both yourself and Captain Smith for the great services rendered in releasing the vessel. You have a crew there you can be proud of. Many thanks to all.

Respectfully, yours, G. H. LENNOX, *Captain, East Saginaw, Michigan.*
Mr. J. G. KIAH, *Sand Beach, Michigan.* *USLSS Annual Report*

Valerie 1894 August 26

Fred Stonehouse's book *Keweenaw Shipwrecks*. Page 140: While returning from an excursion to Isle Royale with a full load of 45 sightseers the *Valerie* was struck by a sudden squall forcing her on Gratiot Reef. Ship Canal life-savers removed all aboard.

USLSS report: Stranded during night 12 miles from station. The crew was notified in morning by telephone and went to place in company with two tugs. They ran lines but their efforts failed to release the vessel.

They rowed 7 miles to summon tug Hebard, then returned and assisted to remove ballast, to place steam pump on board, and to raise vessel with jackscrews. They worked for three days, but without success. The master of the *Valerie* decided to haul her out on the beach and repair her. When repairs were completed (September 5) again went to scene and worked two days, raising tug with jackscrews, running lines, etc., until her release at 10.30 p. M. of 6th. 45 People saved. *USLSS Annual Report 1895.*

1911 June 29. Two miles NE of entry *Valerie* was listed in Annual Report as a casualty.. but no typed report was in report .



A. W. Colton 1894 Sept 3.

Fog. Ran aground. Stranded 3 miles from station at 6 A. M., with excursion party on board; signaled for assistance.

(LSS) went to her with surfboat and landed fifty-four passengers on the beach. Returned to station and telephoned for tug, then again boarded vessel and tried to kedge her off, but without success. Upon the arrival of the tug, ran lines. Vessel was pulled safely afloat. USLSS Annual Report

Bob Anderson- tug Sept 18, 1894.

Grounded on a reef and signaled for help. LSS obtained tug by which she was floated. USLSS Annual Report.

Pickands, James. 1894 September 22

Her crew was blinded by forest fire smoke. Wrecked on a reef near Eagle River, Michigan, 20 miles from station; broke in two and became a total loss. The ship's company having received orders to proceed to Cleveland, Ohio, the lifesaving crew boarded the wreck, secured and landed their baggage for them. 63 persons on board and saved. USLSS Annual Report 1895.

Montana. 1895 September 26

Fred Stonehouse Keweenaw Shipwrecks: At the time of the stranding the North Entry was marked by two wooden piers extending straight out into the lake. In early September the US Army Corps of Engineers installed a foghorn on the west pier. Before it could be adequately secured the Sept. 26 gale waves knocked the boiler into the canal and sank in mid-channel. But here comes the Montana headed into canal. Unable to signal a warning the Montana struck the boiler which put a hole in her wooden hull. Her flour cargo was a total loss. It became a wreck for local people to come see. Then ... from the LSS Annual Report....

Struck and stranded, swinging across channel at entrance to canal. Station crew ran lines from her to piers and straightened her in channel. Telephoned for tug at master's request, which upon arrival towed steamer inside, where she filled and sank. On the 29th and 30th surfmen assisted in shifting deck load of flour and putting steni (??) pump on board. Cleared her of water and tug took her to a port for discharging cargo and repairs. USLSS Annual Report 1896

Montana on the far right.



Norseman. 1896 Aug. 22

Disabled by breaking crosshead of engine 6 miles N. of station. Patrolman heard distress signals blowing at 1 a. m. and reported to Keeper. Surfboat was launched and pulled to the helpless steamer. Master requested keeper to procure tug to tow his vessel and two consorts to port.

Surfmen returned to station and keeper tried to get tug by telephoning, but failed. Surfboat was then manned again and pulled 10 miles to port where tug could be engaged, then returned in tow to the crippled steamer.

Ran hawser from her to tug, and she was towed to harbor. Life savers stayed by the two consorts until tug could return and pick them up, wind and sea having sprung up so that only one vessel could be handled at a time. USLSS Annual Report

Arnold, B W.

November 11, 1896

Wooden steamer. SE of LSS. Snow squall. LSS rowed out to the steamer. Tug freed the steamer. (USLSS Annual Report 1897).

November 21, 1896 . LSS tower watch noticed a vessel on fire 11 miles SW of entry.

LSS rowed out in surfboat and came across the schooner-barge Mowatt who was the towing vessel of the Arnold. Mowatt had the crew of the Arnold. Capt asked for a tug. When it arrived the Arnold's flames were too hot to get a rope to tow her. She was beyond saving. The burned out wreckage of hull drifted ashore 7 miles SW of canal near Salmon Trout River. (USLSS Annual Report 1897).

S B Barker. 1897 June 14, 1897.

Stranded 8 miles SE. of station at 1 o'clock in the morning with a pleasure party of 29 people on board. Life-savers proceeded in surfboat, in tow of tug to assist in floating her. Ran a line to tug and succeeded in releasing the steamer after half an hour of hard pulling. USLSS Annual Report

Mary McGregor. 1897 Sept 19

Deck load of lumber shifted, giving her a heavy list to port, and she entered the canal for assistance. Station crew boarded her, and after handling the deck

load for about an hour and three-quarters, succeeded in getting her on an even keel. USLSS Annual Report

James King. And Wenona 1898 September 7

At 11 p. m., while the steamer Garden City was trying to make the piers with these two schooners in tow, she got too far to leeward and both of them grounded. The King was near the pier, and the station crew arriving about that time, they got out her lines and made her fast.

She was released the next morning by a tug, and was towed inside the piers apparently undamaged.

The Wenona went so far up on the beach that the life-savers could not get their boat between her and the shore, so they got a ladder and had it made fast by one end to the fore rigging, and as the crew came down, the surfmen carried them ashore and took them to the station, where they remained until the next day. Such of them as needed dry clothes were fitted out from the supply of the Women's National Relief Association.

Surfmen worked with the crew of a tug for a week trying to dredge a channel deep enough to release the Wenona, but had to give up the undertaking. USLSS Annual Report.

Colorado. 1898 September 19

Steamer. Flour on board. 19 persons on board and saved.

LSS Keeper received a message from Eagle River, 20 miles NE. of station, that this vessel was ashore there, and he at once started for the scene in the surf boat. Shortly after arrival, another steamer was seen approaching, which the master of the Colorado recognized as one of the same line as his vessel.

Surfmen took him out and boarded this vessel and made arrangements for lightening the cargo of the stranded steamer. After landing the master, surfboat towed to station behind the other steamer.

Station crew assisted lighters and tugs from the 20th to the 23rd in taking off the cargo of flour, and on the latter date the vessel broke up and became a total loss.

The shipwrecked crew went to the station on the tug and the surfmen gave them breakfast, and later on they went to Houghton, whence they were sent home. USLSS Annual Report 1899.

Mediator. Mead. 1898 September 19

Fred Stonehouse in *Keweenaw Shipwrecks*: The steamer Kalkaska had two tows, the J. H. Mead and the Mediator. The Kalkaska had lumber. In heavy weather the tow line broke. Both tows were driven ashore 1 mile west of Gratiot River.

10 miles NE of station. While on their way to the Colorado, surfmen found this vessel ashore 1 mile west of the mouth of Gratiot River, but as all hands were ashore, keeper decided to go on to the Colorado.

On the 26th, however, station crew went to the Mediator in tow of a tug, and after they had removed part of her deck load of lumber, the tug was able to pull her afloat. Towed her to Houghton, but she was abandoned there and became a total loss. USLSS Annual Report 1899.

Toledo 1898 September 29

13 people on board saved.

The steamer, lumber laden, with the barge Shawnee in tow, became water-logged 25 miles SW. of the station on this date. Her crew boarded the Shawnee and sailed to the canal. There they engaged the steamer D. F. Rose to tow the Toledo in, and the surfmen assisted to lay her on the beach near the piers. (Fred Stonehouse in *Keweenaw Shipwrecks*: towed within 500 feet of shore and grounded. Later, the wreck was dynamited as a hazard to navigation)

Keeper then telephoned for a tug and lighter, and upon their arrival all hands set to work lightening the deck load. They worked until 11 p.m. saving about 1,000 feet of lumber. At this hour the wind came out west and the work had to be abandoned. The Toledo broke up and became a total wreck on the 30th. USLSS Annual Report

Jesse Farwell. 1898 Oct. 16

Wooden Steamer.

Stranded at entrance to Copper Harbor, 40 miles NE. of station. The keeper was notified of the casualty by telephone at 8.30 p. m., and at once sent for a tugboat. It was necessary for the tug to coal up, consequently, she did not reach the station until 1 o'clock the next morning.

The lifeboat and a lighter were towed to the stranded vessel. Station crew ran a line from her to the tug which released her after pulling four hours. She was

towed into the harbor damaged slightly, and the life-saving crew returned to station, arriving there at 9.20 p. m. USLSS Annual Report

Massachusetts. 1899 July 27

During dense fog this vessel stranded 16 miles NE. of the station, and after throwing overboard part of the cargo of iron ore, the master began blowing signals for help. Surfmen pulled to her in the surfboat and, after working with the crew in jettisoning (put overboard) cargo for about seven hours, they lightened the steamer enough to enable her to back off into deep water. USLSS Annual Report