

### Miscellaneous Services of Portage Life- Saving Station surfmen:

1886. August 22.—**Near drowning.** A woman and little girl, belonging to a picnic party, fell into the canal and were in danger of drowning when rescued by a surfman of the Ship-Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, with the help of several others who promptly came to his assistance. They were taken to the station and the woman, who was both exhausted and frightened, was given a cordial from the medicine chest, and supplied with dry clothing, and kindly cared for by the keeper's wife until she had fully recovered.

1886 August 27.—**Near drowning.** Surfman Hasking, of the Ship-Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, on this date, rescued a woman belonging to a picnic party, who accidentally fell out of a pleasure-skill into the canal. She was very thankful for her preservation, and stated that without the surfman's aid she must have drowned.

1887 July 19 **Unknown steamer** On this date, during the prevalence of a thick fog, the crew of the Ship Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, launched the surf-boat and went off to a steamer, which was blowing her whistle for assistance, and piloted her into the canal. She was close to a rocky ledge near the west end of the patrol, and narrowly escaped stranding.

1887 August 20 **Unknown boat** 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.

1888. July 10. **Horse Rescue** A horse that got into the space between two rows of timbers that form the canal bank near the Ship-Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, was discovered by the surfmen and extricated from his dangerous situation.

1888 July 10. **Near drowning**. While a number of excursionists were landing at the Ship Canal Station, (Tenth District,) Lake Superior, a woman belonging to the party fell into the canal. She was speedily rescued by Surfman Beaumont, with the assistance of her husband, and taken to the station. She was supplied by the keeper's wife with dry clothing.

1896 Oct 6 **Coston Signal used**. Steamer bound into the canal was heading too far to the westward and would have soon stranded had not the mid watch sighted her in time and guided her in with his Coston signal.

1897 Oct. 16., **Recovered body**. Surfmen dragged for body of a man who had been drowned from a dredge working in the canal. It was recovered and delivered to members of the family.

1898 Oct. 28.. **Boat w/ no name**.. During a fresh offshore wind and thick snowstorm a workman on breakwater tried to cross the canal in an old scow, but was unable to make headway and drifted out into the lake. His companions reported at station that he was missing with the scow and that it was thought he had gone adrift. Life-saving crew launched the surf boat, pulled out about 10 miles into the lake, and there found him, took him into the surf boat and made him pull an oar to warm up. The old scow, which was worthless, was abandoned.

1899 October 31. **Recovered body**. While attempting to board a moving scow from the canal pier, Thomas Gallagher, of Escanaba, fell into the canal and the scow passed over him. The accident was at once reported to the station, and the crew went to the place and recovered the body within half an hour. Persistent efforts at resuscitation were of no avail, and after working over the body for two and one-half hours, the surfmen turned it over to the coroner.

1900 May 14. **Rescue from drowning**. While under ht influence of liquor a man fell from the pier into the canal, about a mile for the station. Two surfmen went to his rescue and hauled him out.

1900 June 18. **Assistance at fire**. Station patrol reported that there was a building on fire about ½ (?) mile N of station at 11 pm. Surfmen hastened to the scene with fire buckets and worked to extinguish the flames, but the building was consumed in spite of their efforts.

1900 July 20, **Breakwater rescue.** At 5.40 p.m. a small tug started out to take 18 workmen from the breakwater, but found the sea too rough and had to give up the attempt. Station crew launched the surfboat and went out after the workmen, landing them all safely after making two trips to the breakwater, over which the sea was breaking and threatening their safety.

1900 July 1, **Sail boat no name.** Sail blown away and boat drifting out into the lake with two boys on board. Station crew launched the surfboat, overhauled the drifting boat about 2 miles NW. of station, and towed it to the shore.

1901. April 29. **Transportation of body.** Surfmen transported to the shore and turned over to the proper authorities the dead body of a man who had been accidentally killed by being caught in the drum of a steam windlass on the dredge in the harbor.

1901. May 19. **Gas Launch.** Machinery became disable about 1 mile N of station while four persons were out on a pleasure cruise in this launch. They made a signal for assistance and surfmen immediately responded, towing them into the canal.

1901. Sept 21 **Capsize of a rowboat.** One life was lost by the capsize of a rowboat in the Portage Lake ship canal at Portage, Michigan, on September 21, 1901.

At about 9 a. m. on the date of the accident 2 peddlers with their packs, desiring to land on the opposite shore of the canal, hailed the surfman on watch in the lookout tower near the Portage Life-Saving Station and requested him to ferry them across. Although contrary to the regulations of the Service and in direct disobedience of orders, Surfman Johnson left his post without being relieved and jumping into a small rowboat started across the canal with the 2 men. In making the landing alongside of the revetment and before the boat could be made fast, the man in the bow stood up, and in his efforts to get his pack ashore lost his equilibrium, his struggles pushing the boat out in the canal. The weight of his wares together with that of his body falling on the gunwale caused the boat to capsize and the 3 men were thrown into the water.

One of the peddlers immediately seized the surfman about the shoulders and both sank, while the other succeeded in swimming to the pier, where his cries for help attracted the attention of the light keeper Bennett, who at once hastened to the spot and assisted the man to reach a place of safety. Surfman Johnson came to the surface alone and clung to the overturned boat gasping for breath, but the man that had gone down with him was not seen to rise again.

The cries of distress over the water were heard by the life-saving crew, who at once manned the surfboat and pulled out to the capsized boat, where they learned from Johnson that a man had been drowned. After grappling for the body for about fifteen minutes it was recovered, but all efforts on the part of the life-saving crew at resuscitation were unavailing as the man was dead. His body was identified as that of Hasen Monser, of Hancock, Mich., and was turned over to the authorities of that city. The rescued man was removed to the lifesaving station and furnished with dry clothing from the supply of the Women's National Relief Association.

This case emphasizes the necessity of the strictest attention to duty on the part of those charged with the exacting duties of the watch. It is needless to add that a necessary result of this lamentable accident was the severance of the surfman's connection with the Service.

1903 July 9,. **Unnamed sailboat.** Was struck by a heavy squall and drifted broadside on to the beach, J mile E. from station, the two occupants, a man and a woman, landing through the surf without injury. Station crew hauled the boat out clear of the breakers and anchored her; they then took the man and the woman to the station and gave them dry clothing from the supply donated by the Women's National Relief Association, and also a warm dinner. At 4 p. m., the wind having moderated, the couple left for their destination.

1904 July 18, **Recovery of body.** At 12.25 a. m., in response to an alarm rung by the lookout, station crew launched surfboat, pulled out into the harbor, and after dragging for five hours recovered the body of a man who had fallen overboard from a tug. The remains were taken in charge by the coroner.

1904 July 23, **Near Drowning.** At 1 p. m. a young woman fell into the water from a dock near the station, and Surfman McDonald jumped overboard and rescued her.

1904, August 1. **Rescue of horse.** In response to a request the life-saving crew went 2 miles SE. of station and extricated a horse which had become stalled in a bog.

1910 September 21, UNITED STATES CUSTOMS SERVICE, *Subport of Hancock, Mich.,*  
 DEAR SIR: I desire to call your attention to Mr. Fred C. Sollman, No. 4, of the life-saving crew at the Portage Lake Ship Canal. Mr. Sollman is a young man of excellent bearing, and his diligence in the performance of his duties would attract attention under any ordinary circumstances. On July 27, 1910, his qualifications as a life-saver were brought home to me very forcibly when my youngest son was by accident knocked off the pier into the canal. In all

probability he would have drowned if it had not been for Mr. Sollman, who was at the boathouse at the time. He ran and jumped into the canal and saved the boy as he came up the third time. This same Sollman, only three days before, was instrumental in saving from drowning a man from Calumet, Mich., who was visiting the lake shore.

As he is a conscientious and diligent young man in the performance of his duties, I think he deserves special mention, and I take this occasion to recommend him for further advancement. Very respectfully, THOMAS COUGHLIN.

To: Mr. J. G. KIAH, *Superintendent Eleventh Life-Saving District, Harbor Beach, Mich.*