

STORIES of New Jersey

In 1859 Congress appropriated funds for salaries for official keepers, but still supervision was lax. There was no accounting to the Treasury, buildings and equipment were not repaired, materials were frequently stolen. But in 1870 Congress appropriated money to pay for six experienced surfmen in each of the boats at alternate stations along the Jersey coast. The surfmen, appointed by the keepers, received \$40 a month and were on duty only from December 15 to March 15.

The dilapidated hut on Sandy Hook was replaced by a more modern structure in 1873. Seven men used the little red lifesaving station as a headquarters. Three years later, when the *Maggie M. Weaver* went down off Sandy Hook with all hands lost, an investigation established the fact that the men had bungled the job of rescue. The crews of both the Spermaceti Cove station and the Sandy Hook station, farther north, were equally at fault; the supervisors were off on private matters, no men were patrolling the beach, and when the foundering ship was finally sighted, efforts were so disorganized that there was no hope of making the rescue.

Following this tragedy, greater care was exercised and more efficient supervision maintained. In 1894 a new building was erected, and this building was replaced by a modern station in 1937. The station on Sandy Hook is as efficient now as any in the country. Twenty-two coast guards, experienced in using all the modern boats and devices with which the station is equipped, watch both the ocean and the cove waters. The first boat shelter of 1848 is maintained as a museum on the Spermaceti Cove Station reservation.

With improved equipment rescues were on a larger scale, and fewer people were lost. In 1852, 253 passengers were taken safely from the *Rhein* at Corson's Inlet, and 271 from the *Georgia* off Long Beach. During the next two years 200 were rescued from the *Sea Duck*, 105 from the *Chauncey Jerome* at Long Branch and 600 from the *Western World*. This splendid record was marred when shortly later the *New Era* and *Powhatan* went down with a total of 571 lives lost. The storms were so severe that it was impossible to get the lifesaving equipment into action until too late.

The *New Era*, a 1,340-ton American-built packet, sailed out of Bremen September 19, 1854, with 374 German emigrants in the steerage, 11 travelers in first and second class and 30 in the crew. In her hull was a cargo of German goods. The seas were quiet as she made for Liverpool, where an additional cargo of 600 tons of chalk was loaded. Then, on her way to America the ship was battered by a series of terrific gales that smashed the cookhouse, killed three and injured five people and cracked open her seams.

The storm was still raging and the pumps working at top capacity when cholera broke out in the steerage; 43 men, women and children who died of the plague were buried at sea. Storm winds blew the ship off her course. On November 13, within 100 miles of Sandy Hook, soundings showed that the ship floated in only 24 feet of water. Every effort was made to keep the overladen boat from stranding, but in vain. A tar barrel was ignited and a gun fired.

Persons on shore hearing the signal hurried to the rescue, but before they reached the ill-fated boat the first mate and part of the crew had deserted in a yawl; the second and third mates took more of the crew in another boat; the