

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION
of the
**CAPE BLANCO
 HERITAGE SOCIETY**



CBHS BOARD MEETINGS: Currently held at Point.B Studio at 10:00 AM on the 2nd Tuesday of every month.
PLEASE NOTE: Our meetings are open to everyone who would like to attend. We invite and encourage anyone interested in CBHS to participate!

Planning the Port Orford Lifeboat Station

Sumner Increase Kimball, USLSS



L to R — U.S. Life-Saving Service Organizer and General Superintendent; the seal; first USLSS Station on the Oregon Coast at Cape Arago.

PART ONE: The increase in shipping traffic up and down the Pacific Coast and the attempts to establish major shipping ports along the Oregon coast in the late 19th Century resulted in an increasing number of shipwrecks. On March 3, 1891, an act of Congress authorized the establishment of a life-saving station at or near Port Orford.

Local residents favored a life-saving station in Nellies Cove, however, a USLSS survey team reported that placing a station on such rugged terrain would require too much engineering obstacles and be too expensive. After repeated appeals by local residents, the Service attempted to acquire property in Nellies Cove.

Our timeline is based on information from the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service and The Point Orford Heritage Society:

Sept. 2, 1789: Treasury Department established by act of Congress.

Aug. 4, 1790: U.S. Revenue Cutter Service organized.

1807: First Lifeboat Station in the U.S. constructed at Cohasset, MA by the Massachusetts Human Society.

Aug. 14, 1848: United States Life-Saving Station Service established.

1877: First U.S. Life-Saving Station built on Pacific Coast at Shoalwater (Willapa) Bay, Washington coast.

1878: First U.S. Life-Saving Station built on Oregon coast at Cape Arago, Coos Bay, Oregon.

April 1894: Scoping trip by T.J. Blakeney, superintendent of the 13th Life-Saving District, and C. L. Hooper (*right*) of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service to determine suitable site for lifeboat station. Reported back to General Superintendent S.I. Kimball that site at Nellies Cove identified as suitable.

June 1894: Several landowners agree to sale or lease of land to United States Life-Saving Service (USLSS) at a reasonable cost. However, S.E. McGraw sets price of land at Nellies Cove at \$1000.00, a price deemed too high for purchase by the government. This significantly

slows the process of establishing a station at Port Orford.

1904: U.S. Senators, Congressmen and local business people write to USLSS General Superintendent Kimball inquiring on the establishment of Port Orford's Life-Saving Station, including requests for re-evaluation of the proposed site at Nellies Cove.

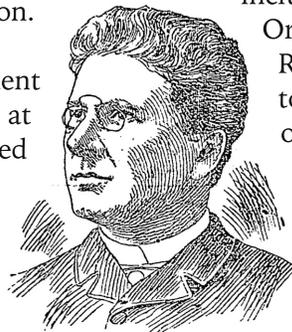
Feb. 1905: Kimball sends Captain William H. Roberts and Captain Fred Munger to re-evaluate suitable sites: including an alternative site at Port Orford wharf (*our current Port*).

Roberts and Munger are directed to obtain conference with owners, discuss land donations or lowest price offers.

Feb. 22, 1905: E.W. McGraw states that he will sell 50' square for a boathouse plus 50' wide right-of-way from

the boathouse to an area near the top of a bluff (*The Heads*) for \$250.00. He will convey approximately a 300' square parcel* at the top of the bluff for the station for \$1000.00.

Feb. 22, 1905: E.W. Jensen offered to



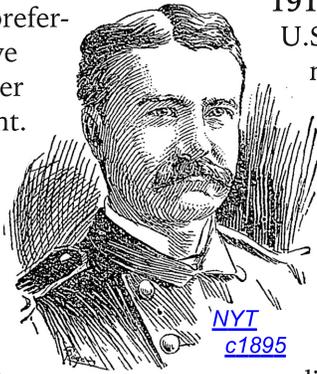
sell 300' square* for construction of buildings connected with the Life-Saving service at Port Orford, Oregon, situated at the head of Nellies Cove for the sum of \$300.00 plus right of access.

**Note: Ownership of the above mentioned 300' square parcel was unknown at this point. Both McGraw and Jensen are offering it for sale.*

A newspaper notice suggests a possible site at the wharf in the town of Port Orford, which is preferred since McGraw is not* anxious to dispose of his property.

March 1905: Recommendation is made to utilize wharf location for establishment of the Station, with a powerboat to reach across reefs. This site is preferable to Nellies Cove because of the lower cost of development.

March 15, 1906: Kimball instructs Captain Munger and Captain D.F. Tozier (right) to visit Port Orford and arrange for the acquisition of Oregon Coal and



[NYT c1895](#)

Navigation Co. land on the wharf for the agreed sum of \$300.00.

May 1906: San Francisco earthquake and fire destroys "...all papers of every kind showing the ownership of the land in question..." (regarding parcel to be conveyed from Oregon Coal and Navigation Co. to USLSS).

June 1906: Adjacent property owner objects to conveyance because of possible obstruction of access to lumber mill on his property. USLSS is faced with reducing the size of the acquisition or abandoning the site.

1907-1910: Numerous inquiries are made to the USLSS regarding the disposition of the [proposed life-saving] station at Port Orford (right).

1910-1914: S.I. Kimball writes to U.S. Senator Chamberlain and numerous other parties stating that construction of a "... station dwelling, boathouse, launch way, outbuilding, etc. would exceed the sum of \$30,000.00. Add this to maintenance of a station and the salaries of a keeper and crew ... (and it is) ... not predictable to take further steps

toward construction of a station at Port Orford at this time."

NEXT IN PART TWO: When the USLSS merged with the Revenue Cutter Service in 1915, residents continued to pressure the newly formed Coast Guard to construct a life-saving station in Port Orford. ✪

In March, 1906, a site was selected for a life saving station at Port Orford, Oregon, by Captains F. M. Munger and W. H. Roberts, of the United States Revenue-Cutter Service, who had been constituted a commission for the purpose. They examined Nellies Cove, which was recommended by several residents of Port Orford as an excellent site, and while the location was found to be protected from winds coming from the east around by north to west, it was exposed to southerly winds. After considering the various locations, a site was selected on land belonging to the Oregon Coal & Navigation Company, and lying to the west of the company's wharf.

Letter from S.I. Kimball, Superintendent of the USLSS, in response to the Hon. W.C. Hawley of Port Orford, OR, (Port Orford News; Nov. 13, 1907). Read the entire letter at the [UofO's Historic Oregon Newspapers Archive](#).

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OUR MISSION: To provide interpretative and educational services for the Cape Blanco Light Station, Historic Hughes House and Ranch and the Port Orford Lifeboat Station. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and your donation is tax-deductible.

Mail this portion of the form with your check made out to:
Cape Blanco Heritage Society. P.O. Box 1132 Port Orford, Oregon 97465.

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