United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Point Reyes Lifeboat Station

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number Drakes Bay ☐ not for publication

city, town Point Reyes ☒ vicinity

state California code CA county Marin code 041 zip code

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
☐ private	☒ building(s)	6	____ buildings
☐ public-local	☐ district	____	____ sites
☐ public-State	☐ site	3	____ structures
☒ public-Federal	☒ structure	____	____ objects
	☐ object	9	____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 9

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☐ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government-lifesaving

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Coast Guard Standard Plan

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete / pilings
walls wood
roof composition shingle
other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Point Reyes Lifeboat Station, built in 1927, consists of National Register of Historic Places listed structures located within the boundary of Point Reyes National Seashore at the western end of Drakes Bay on the California coast. Closed by the United States Coast Guard in 1968, the station is now owned by the National Park Service.

THE DRAKES BAY LIFEBOAT STATION AS BUILT AND MODIFIED

The Point Reyes Lifeboat Station was built on a rare stretch of sand on an otherwise rocky coastline south of Point Reyes, which abruptly thrusts out into the Pacific 40 miles northwest of San Francisco, creating the western end of Drakes Bay. Placed near the end of the point, the station is exposed to the extreme conditions of climate and topography that created a need for a lifeboat station: heavy fog, high winds, and angry surf. The boathouse, the principal structure of the station, stands at the base of the hills and cliffs of the point, with its piers and lifeboat launching marine railway extending into the bay. Above, perched on the hillside, stands the rest of the complex.

As built, the station included the boathouse, a spacious officer-in-charge's residence, two garages, storage sheds, powerhouse, water storage tanks, a flagstaff, lookout tower, and rock retaining walls. As it stands in 1989, the station has changed little. Several minor outbuildings have vanished, a dirt road was relocated farther up the hill after a landslide, and a water tower removed from its wood frame base and placed on concrete foundation. These changes were all made during the operational history of the station. [1]

[X] See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D NHL CRITERIA 1,4

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Maritime	1927-1939	1927
Politics/Government	1927-1939	1927
Humanitarian	1927-1939	1929, 1930, 1931
NHL XII L: Business: Shipping and Transportation		
NHL XIV B: Ships, Boats, Lighthouses, and Other Structures		

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Significant Person: N/A

Architect/Builder: U.S. Coast Guard

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Point Reyes Lifeboat Station was built to rescue seamen whose misfortune it was to wreck on the treacherous shores of the Point Reyes peninsula, which abruptly interrupts the ocean highway off the Pacific coast. Vessels making landfall from transpacific passages usually aimed for, and turned south at Point Reyes for San Francisco. Strong currents, thick fogs, and shifting winds drove ashore vessels seeking shelter in the point's lee. Between 1595 and 1939, more than 30 vessels engaged in coastal and transpacific trade were lost there, and more than 20 other major vessels were stranded or victims of maritime accidents. Because of the large number of shipwrecks on the peninsula, a lifesaving station was built in 1888 on the Ten-Mile Beach of Point Reyes, serving until 1927, when it was relocated to Drakes Bay.

The United States Life-Saving Service, later incorporated with other services to create the U.S. Coast Guard, was established in 1878 to render aid to the hundreds of shipwrecked vessels and mariners lost annually on the nation's coasts and lakeshores. A variety of station types were developed for various launching conditions, most employing manually launched surfboats hauled across beach sands to the ocean. Other stations on rocky coastlines employed railways to launch boats. The development of motor lifeboats in the early years of the 20th century revolutionized lifesaving, and a number of earlier stations built on sand beaches were decommissioned in favor of more centrally

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

PLEASE SEE FOOTNOTES CITED IN TEXT.

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☒ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☒ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: Point Reyes National Seashore

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 13

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	10	502400	4205400
B	10	502500	4205400
C	10	502420	4204875
D	10	501960	4205060

E 10 502000 4205160

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Please see continuation sheet.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the original boundary of the station and incorporates all nominated features.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James P. Delgado, Maritime Historian
organization National Park Service (418) date July 10, 1989
street & number P.O. Box 37127 telephone (202) 343-9528
city or town Washington state D.C. zip code 20013-7127

Boathouse

The primary structure at the station is the boathouse, built in 1927. Designed to house type "T" 36-foot motor lifeboats, the boathouse quartered the station's crew on its second floor. A rectangular, two-and-a-half story wood frame structure 60 by 40 feet in area, the boathouse rests on a concrete and wood piling foundation. Finished with horizontal wood siding, the boathouse is painted white with gray trim and has a hip roof covered with red cement-asbestos shingles. The windows are double-hung wood sashes, six over six. The interior of the building is equally divided between boat storage and living quarters for the crew. The first floor is primarily occupied by the boat deck, which as built housed a 36-foot motor lifeboat and a 26-foot rail-launched surfboat. A second 36-foot motor lifeboat was added to the station in 1934 and the surfboat was placed outside. In May 1940, a shed addition on the eastern facade of the boathouse allowed the shifting of the tracks for the second 36-foot motor lifeboat to that side of the building. [2] The rails for the surfboat were removed from inside the station, leaving only the two rails for the motor lifeboats. Each set carries a launching cradle. The third set of rails were retained outside the boathouse, though, so that the surfboat could be placed on a cradle and launched down the launchway like the motor lifeboats.

As built the boathouse employed a gasoline-powered winch to haul up the boats. In 1965, an electric winch, with manual override, was installed as a replacement. [3] It remains in the building and is operational. The walls of the boat deck are tongue-in-groove siding; on the front facade are the three sets of double-hung doors that swing out for boat launching. The Electrolux 100W electric furnace, manufactured by the S.T. Johnson Co. of Oakland, California, is located on the boat deck. It exhausts into a flue that leads to the boathouse chimney.

The first floor also houses the mess deck. A large kitchen, remodeled by the Coast Guard in 1951, 1963, and recently rehabilitated by the National Park Service, and the pantry, now converted into a bathroom, are located at this level. The floors are linoleum, the walls plastered, and the lighting is fluorescent tube. From the mess deck, a short flight of stairs step down to the boat deck, while another stairway, with 17

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

risers, leads to the second floor. The stairway has a hardwood rail with the ends served with lashing in a nautical manner. The second floor, or the berth deck, contains six 10- by 12-foot bedrooms, each sleeping two men, a radio room (with all equipment removed), an office, a large recreation room, and a bathroom with showers. The bathroom was originally a smaller space; it was enlarged and two shower stalls installed in 1942. It was again modernized, along with the galley, in 1963. [4] From the second floor, a stairway leads to the loft, which makes up the half-story. The loft was divided into various small closets with an open storage area in the center. During 1988-1989 renovation, firewalls were installed to divide the loft into several smaller spaces while preserving the closets and a series of wood drawers containing spare plumbing and electrical parts for the building.

An elevated walkway on the eastern facade of the boathouse leads to the launching ramp in front of the building. The heavily planked ramp, mounting the launching rails, continues out 40 feet to the water's edge, the rails converge into a single set of tracks that run another 60 feet or more into the water, resting for much of their length on pilings tied together with heavy wooden beams. On each side of the railway are two elevated piers that extend to the end of the railway. Around 1940, davits with a manual windlass were mounted on the northern dock for launching the surfboat formerly stowed in the boathouse. The davit and windlass assembly was dismantled after 1968.

Officer-in-Charge's Quarters

The officer-in-charge's quarters, built in 1927, is a rectangular, two-story wood frame structure 20 by 50 feet in area. It has a full basement. Covered with horizontal wood siding painted white, the building has double-hung wood sash windows, six over six, with a plain surround painted gray. The gable roof, with two dormers, is wood shingled and painted red. A single brick chimney for the fireplace is located at one end. There is a front and a back porch; both are enclosed because of the harsh, damp, cold climate. There are six rooms on the first floor; the living room, kitchen, pantry, a bathroom, bedroom, and small office. There are four rooms on the second floor; two bedrooms, each with spacious walk-in closets, and two large storerooms. The interior walls are plastered, with high

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

ceilings, hardwood floors, and a hardwood stairway that leads to the second floor. An original brass cap, shaped like a pyramid, tops the newel post. The interior has not been substantially modified and reflects the utilitarian accommodations of government-supplied quarters. The bathrooms, kitchen, and electrical fixtures were modernized by the Coast Guard in 1966. Around the same time, the fireplace was bricked up because of the violent winds that occasionally swept down the chimney. [5]

Outbuildings

Between 1927 and 1942 the Coast Guard built fourteen outbuildings and auxiliary structures as part of the lifeboat station complex. Outbuildings constructed in 1927 were a three-car garage, a one-car garage, two storage sheds, a powerhouse, four redwood water tanks, bellpost, drill post (for rigging the breeches buoy), lookout tower, and flagstaff. As of 1989, only the two garages, powerhouse, and the watertanks remain at the station. A pumphouse built in 1935, as well as the gravel road leading into the station and stone retaining walls alongside the road, are the other structures present. The road originally went only to the officer-in-charge's residence; it was extended in 1937 to reach the boathouse.

The three-car garage, a square wood frame structure about 28 feet square with horizontal wood siding, sheathed with No. 1 sawn cedar shingles, and a wood shingle hipped roof, is painted white with red roof and gray trim. There are five wood sash windows, double hung, one over one. Three garage doors face the driveway, with a small door on the east side. The one-car garage, which was probably built as a workshop and later housed the officer-in-charge's automobile, is a 12- by 20-foot rectangular wood frame structure. It has horizontal wood siding sheathed with No. 1 sawn cedar shingles, painted white. The hip roof is wood shingled and painted red. There are four double hung wood sash windows, one over one, with the garage door on the west facade and a small door on the north facade.

The powerhouse is a square, 12- by 12-foot wood frame structure with horizontal wood siding sheathed with No. 1 sawn cedar shingles painted white. The generator and an electric pump

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

installed in the building were later removed and the interior of the building is empty except for the concrete pad and steel piping that connects to the station's well, which went dry in 1934. To replace it, a new well was drilled and a pumphouse was built in August 1935. This small 10- by 10-foot wood frame building has horizontal wood siding, painted white. [6] It is connected to the new well and feeds the station's four redwood water tanks. The four redwood water tanks for the station remain on site, two on the hillside above the residence and two above the boathouse. The two tanks above the boathouse were moved from their original location after a landslide in 1956; they are now farther up the hillside.

Structures not present that were built after 1927 include several non-official residences built on the hillside by the surfmen for their families, two cottages built in 1936 for station personnel, a WWII temporary Quonset hut that was built as a recreation room around 1942, and an 85-foot high guyed aluminum radio tower erected in 1962 and removed in 1968. The residences were demolished sometime around 1956. The Quonset hut was demolished by the Coast Guard around 1960.

36-FOOT MOTOR LIFEBOAT NUMBER 36542

One of the 36-foot motor lifeboats employed at this station is now owned by the National Park Service and is usually housed in the boathouse. Built at the Coast Guard yard at Curtis Bay, Maryland, in 1953, the boat, a type "TRS," is numbered 36542. There were three types of 36-footers; the original type "T," the "TR" of 1931, and the "TRS" of 1938. Number 36542 is an excellent example of the once-common 36-foot motor lifeboats, hundreds of which were built between 1908 and 1956; less than a dozen of these vessels survive in the United States today. 36524 is currently at the Marshall Boat Works in nearby Marshall, California, where it is hauled out. The 36-foot motor lifeboat is a rescue craft designed to remain afloat and self-right in adverse sea conditions. It was the first standard motor-propelled lifeboat type adopted by the Coast Guard for lifesaving. The double-ended hull is fully-enclosed by three turtleback trunks and two well decks. The hull is divided into several watertight compartments, with a GM 4-71 marine diesel

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

engine turning a single screw. The oak-framed and oak and cypress-planked vessel has a solid oak keel reinforced with a cast-brass shoe, with clamps and stringers providing longitudinal support along with two substantial rubrails on the outer hull. The hull is 36.8 feet long, with a 10.6-foot beam and a 3.4-foot draft. [7]

NOTES

1
The station was previously documented for the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and 1985; see James P. Delgado, Gordon Chappell, Anna C. Toogood, and F. Ross Holland, Jr., "National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form, Point Reyes Lifeboat Rescue Station Station," Unpublished manuscript report, National Park Service, Western Regional Office, San Francisco, June 10, 1979 and June 5, 1985. For the purposes of this study, another site evaluation was undertaken by the author on June 12, 1989.

2
"Point Reyes Station, Additions-Alterations & Repairs to Boathouse and Launchway, U.S. Coast Guard, Civil Engineering Office, San Francisco," drawing # 3759-31, May 1940. Copy on file at Point Reyes National Seashore, Point Reyes, California.

3
"Point Reyes Station, Electric Drive Motor for Boat Hoisting Winch," U.S. Coast Guard, 12th District, Engineering," drawing D-663-1, August 11, 1965. Copy on file at Point Reyes National Seashore, Point Reyes, California.

4
"Point Reyes Lifeboat Station, Improving Bath & Washing Facilities in Sta. Bld'g, United States Coast Guard, San Francisco District, Engineering," drawing 3759-38, April 1942. Also see "Pt. Reyes Lifeboat Station, Alterations to Existing Barracks Building, U.S. Coast Guard, 12th District, Civil Engineering," drawing D-425-1. October 28, 1963. Copies on file at Point Reyes National Seashore, Point Reyes, California.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

5
"Point Reyes Station LB, Family Quarters Remodeling, U.S. Coast Guard, 12th District, San Francisco, Civil Engineering," drawing D-781-1, December 7, 1966. Copy on file at Point Reyes National Seashore, Point Reyes, California.

6
"Pump House & Piping, Layout for Water Supply, Point Reyes C.G. Station, Pt. Reyes, Calif., U.S. Coast Guard, Office of the Civil Engineer, Government Island, California," drawing 3759-18, September 1935. Also see "Point Reyes Station Water Well, U.S. Coast Guard, Civil Engineer's Office, Washington, D.C.," drawing 101180, November 2, 1935. Copies on file at Point Reyes National Seashore, Point Reyes, California.

7
Don Birkholz, "Conditional Survey of 36' Motor Lifeboat #36542, for Point Reyes National Seashore, National Park Service." Unpublished manuscript report, Tri-Coastal marine, Inc., October 1987, pp. 2-3.

located rail-launching stations on more protected shores because the motor lifeboats had a quicker response time. The result was felt at Point Reyes with the relocation of the station and the construction of a boathouse and launchway for motor lifeboats in the lee of the Point on the protected waters of Drakes Bay. This type of station served until the mid-1960s, when the development of the 44-foot motor lifeboat led to the quick abandonment of the 36-foot motor lifeboat and the rail-launching lifeboat stations.

For 80 years the lifesaving and lifeboat stations of Point Reyes provided a humanitarian service to Pacific coast shipping, one of the nation's vital maritime trades routes; half of those years were served by the station on Drakes Beach with its motor lifeboats. A typical example of a rail-launching station with launchway and cradle-launched 36-foot motor lifeboats, the Point Reyes Lifeboat Station is the only unaltered station of this nationally employed type remaining on the Pacific Coast. It retains its principal structures, the majority of its secondary structures, and most importantly its launchway, tracks, launching cradles, and one of its 36-foot motor lifeboats.

The preceding statement of significance is based on the more detailed statements that follow.

THE UNITED STATES LIFE-SAVING SERVICE AND THE COAST GUARD

It is a traditional responsibility of mariners to assist vessels in distress, and the annals of the sea are filled with accounts of masters and crews who risked all to save others on foundering or burning ships. U.S. Government vessels honored this tradition, but it was not until 1832 that the government formally introduced the concept of Federal responsibility for rescuing mariners in distress. That year, the Secretary of the Treasury instructed the masters of several U.S. revenue cutters to cruise in the winter months to render what aid they could to shipwrecked vessels. However, many ships were cast upon the nation's shores where no other vessel could reach them, and the saving of life and property was the responsibility of those ashore. In 1786, the Massachusetts Humane Society was founded to provide assistance to those wrecked on the shores of Cape Cod, and other

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

organizations followed suit, building houses of refuge on isolated beaches so that men cast ashore would not perish from the elements. [1]

In 1847, the federal government first recognized the need for a government response to shoreside wrecks. A small appropriation was granted for lifesaving equipment at a number of lighthouses. In 1848, this appropriation, which was not used, was followed by a $10,000 appropriation to place lifesaving equipment on the New Jersey shore, where large numbers of vessels were cast up after failing to make the New York harbor entrance. Under the supervision of the United States Revenue Marine, stations were built to house the equipment, but skilled lifesavers were not provided. [2] In 1854, superintendents for the Jersey stations were provided for by Congress, but paid crews were not made available until after 1871, when Congress allocated $200,000 for that purpose.

The need for a professional government-supported service devoted to lifesaving became a paramount concern, and in 1878, Congress established the United States Life-Saving Service (USLSS), with money to build additional stations and provide for professionally-trained, paid crews to man them. Within four years, the service had grown to encompass 189 stations across the United States--139 on the Atlantic seaboard, seven on the Pacific coast, five on the Gulf coast, 37 on the Great Lakes, and one at the Falls of the Ohio at Louisville, Kentucky. [3] In nearly all cases, these stations were isolated boathouses and quarters built on sandy stretches of ocean beaches; the pounding surf forced the lifesavers to haul lifeboats on surf carts over the sand and launch them into the waves by hand. The majority of East coast lifesaving stations were of this surf-launching type; it was only on rocky coastlines, sheltered harbors, the Great Lakes, and the Pacific coast that elevated launchways were built to slide boats down a ramp and into the water. However, some stations with launchways were built on sandy beaches after 1900 to accommodate a new type of lifeboat.

The Life-Saving Service was never able to utilize marine steam propulsion in its lifeboats; steam engines were too bulky and heavy, as well as too easily extinguished in a swamped, surf-

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

lashed boat. In September 1899, though, the first motor lifeboat, a standard 34-foot pulling boat fitted with a 12-horsepower Superior gasoline engine, was launched and tried out on Lake Michigan. The USLSS commissioned a group of experts, headed by Professor C.H. Peabody at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to study lifeboat mechanization and design. "The commission threw its weight in favor of power boats and offered invaluable technical advice." [4] The USLSS began mechanizing its boats in 1905; more than a dozen motor lifeboats were in service by year's end. By 1913, more than 70 motor lifeboats and 70 power surfboats were in service; two years later, as the Life-Saving Service merged with other agencies to constitute the U.S. Coast Guard, 80 motor lifeboats and nearly 150 power surfboats were on the inventory. [5] There were two types of motor lifeboats--the original 34-foot boat, with 25 hp engines, and the 36-footer, introduced after 1905, with a heavier 35 hp engine.

These craft, with fixed propellers and heavier construction, could not be surf launched. Hence, after the introduction of the motor lifeboat, a number of former lifesaving stations were rebuilt as lifeboat stations with elevated marine railways; the first was Wood End Station on Cape Cod, with the ways leading into the sheltered waters of Provincetown Harbor. The 1908 introduction of the 36-footers, however, set a standard for the American motor lifeboat that lasted for five decades. Throughout the United States, motor lifeboats were employed at lifeboat stations--those with launchways--while the old-style "pulling" surfboats were used at lifesaving stations.

These two basic station types were built in numerous architectural variations and adapted to regional conditions. By 1924, the 36-foot motor lifeboats made up the majority of craft used, though a number of pulling boats, and, thanks to improved technology, 26-foot, 12 hp gasoline engined surfboats were also found in the various stations around the country. The newly created United States Coast Guard continued to maintain the old stations, building new ones as well, so that by 1929, the apparent "high water mark," there were approximately 250 lifesaving and lifeboat stations in the United States. [6]

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

THE POINT REYES LIFESAVING AND LIFEBOAT STATIONS

The Point Reyes peninsula claimed California's first recorded shipwreck in 1595, when the Spanish exploring vessel San Agustin was driven ashore in Drakes Bay. No other vessel is known to have wrecked there until 1841, but following the discovery of California gold in 1848, the rise of San Francisco as the nation's principal port on the Pacific and increased transpacific and coastal shipping resulted in more wrecks. Only the ranchers who lived on the peninsula, and occasionally the keepers of Point Reyes light were available to rescue stranded mariners, and often they were of little or no help, as eight major wrecks between 1866 and 1886 demonstrated. In the latter year, the U.S. Life-Saving Service, which had established its first station on the Pacific coast at San Francisco just eight years before, approached Point Reyes landowner Charles Webb Howard to negotiate acquiring a station site. In January 1888, the USLSS purchased a 3-1/2-acre plot on the peninsula's "Ten-Mile Beach" from Howard. The site stood three miles north of the point, and as the name implies, on a flat ten-mile expanse of sand, giving a view of ships off the beach and the headlands. A lifesaving station was built in 1888 and equipped with surfboats; it served for 39 years. [7]

The station faced vicious surf which not only made rescue attempts dangerous but also made training in boat launching and rescue techniques unncessarily hazardous. Three surfmen lost their lives while launching their boats on the beach between 1889 and 1927. The station was also ill-sited to assist wrecks in Drakes Bay around the southeast side of the point, and it was there that the majority of wrecks occurred as vessels sought shelter in the lee of Point Reyes. Around 1894, the USLSS built an auxiliary boathouse on Drakes Bay to respond to wrecks there and for training; in 1913, they purchased three adjacent parcels of property on the bay for a new boathouse, residence, and lookout.

The new station was not built for thirteen years. This was because of the 1915 absorption of the USLSS into the Coast Guard, the United States' entry into the First World War in April 1917, and unexplained further complications. The deteriorating old

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

station on Ten-Mile beach remained in use. Then, in January 1925, the Coast Guard drew up plans for the new station on Drakes Bay. The new facility was to be a lifeboat station, with launchway, gasoline-powered winch to hoist the boats up, a combination boathouse/crew's quarters, officer-in-charge's residence, hot water heating, electrical lighting, and garages; all considered luxuries to the crew in a nearly 40-year old station suffering from years of deferred maintenance. The Fred J. Maurer Company's low bid of $42,162 was accepted early in 1926, and in July of the same year Maurer's men began to work. During construction, the station received its first authorization for a power lifeboat. On September 17, 1927, the crew moved into the new boathouse and residence, even though all of the station buildings were not yet complete. [8]

In the 41 years the station at Drakes Bay was in commission, the surfmen responded to numerous distress calls, hauling fishing boats and yachts out of the surf, and towing out of gas vessels to the fish company piers on Drakes Bay. In this fashion, in just ten years, the new station's crew saved $3,000,000 worth of property and assisted 45 vessels in distress. [9] Included in those figures were three major shipwrecks in the immediate vicinity of the station. The first was on the evening of June 27, 1929. The 946-ton steam schooner Hartwood, laden with wire cable, steel, pipe, and sugar, and carrying 26 persons, crashed ashore on the rocks of the point. The heavy seas and rocks began to break the wooden hull apart, and the captain ordered all hands to abandon ship. Two boats were launched. Thirteen people, including the captain's wife, 5-year-old son, and the 7-year-old son of the first mate, slid down the falls into the boats. Heavy seas prevented the launching of the smaller workboat, leaving 13 men stranded on the ship.

The lifeboat crews had meanwhile responded to Hartwood's telegraphed SOS and quickly located the steam schooner's boats. The occupants were taken to the station while the Coast Guardsmen rigged a breeches buoy on the cliffs above the wreck. As the cable alternately sagged and snapped taut with each roll of the ship, three men were hauled to safety. The breeches buoy was abandoned after the third came ashore, however, as the increasing swell was cracking the cable like a whip. By running the motor

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

lifeboat close to Hartwood, the crew was able to pass a line to the ship. Most of the men crossed over the line, hand over hand, to reach the launch. Meanwhile, the crew on shore raised the breeches buoy cable and pulled the last two Hartwood crew members ashore. The steam schooner quickly broke up. [10]

Nearly a year later, on May 8, 1930, the Atlantic Richfield Company gasoline tanker Richfield stranded on the reefs off Chimney Rock, tearing her hull open to the sea and spreading gasoline over the water. The crew abandoned ship and were rescued by the motor lifeboat crew from the Point Reyes Station, who had witnessed the tanker's grounding. Attempts to pull the tanker free failed, though, and the Coast Guard posted a mariner's warning prohibiting open fires at sea in the vicinity of Point Reyes until the ship had broken up and her gasoline cargo dispersed on the waves. On November 7, 1931, the freighter Munleon, carrying 800 tons of general cargo, ran ashore at the point near the spot Hartwood had been lost at two years previous. Holed by rocks, Munleon settled into the water as the Coast Guard motor lifeboat hove into view. Three separate trips in the lifeboat brought the 28-man crew to safety, but Munleon was abandoned to the surf and rocks as a total loss. [11]

Apart from these and a few other adventures, the Coast Guard crew at the station, like firemen, spent much of their time preparing for the time when disaster would strike. Maintaining equipment and drilling occupied much of the time. Other than assistance calls and the occasional shipwreck, nothing altered the routine except once, when tragedy struck the station on November 23, 1960. The 36-foot motor lifeboat CG 36542, with two Coast Guardsmen as crew, were dispatched that evening to tow a disabled fishing boat into Bodega Bay. Late that night, about an hour away from the station, the crew radioed that they would soon dock. That was the last time they were heard from. The next morning, searchers found the lifeboat cast up on Ten-Mile Beach, with the propeller turning. The crew was gone. An air-sea -land search failed to turn up the missing men, but by year's end their bodies washed ashore. The best explanation was that a large wave capsized the boat off the point, throwing the two men into the water. The self-righting lifeboat came up, and, engine running, continued on its way, leaving the crew behind in rough, dark seas. [12]

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

The 36-foot motor lifeboats were fast becoming obsolete by the 1960s. Coast Guard experiments resulted in the postwar development of the 44-foot motor lifeboat. The 36-footers were last built in 1956, when the final batch of 58 boats was launched. The 44-foot motor lifeboat, a steel-hulled craft with twin diesel engines, fire and salvage pump, and modern navigation equipment, has been termed "the finest rescue boat in the world." The first built, CG 44300, was launched and successfully tested in 1962. The Coast Guard ordered 25 of the new boat, which gradually began to replace the 36-footers. By the 1970s, only a handful of 36-footers were left in service, as compared with 105 of the 44-foot boats. [13] A number of older station with adequate dock facilities were converted into 44-foot boat stations, with their launchways removed or left idle and the boat deck converted into offices or quarters. This was done, for example, in 1971 at the Fort Point Station inside the Golden Gate. Other older stations that could not be converted to 44-foot boat use were decommissioned, sold, or demolished.

The impact of this decision was felt at Point Reyes. The old station was not equipped to handle the new boats. Many of its responsibilities were taken over by a new station at Bodega Bay to the north. Commissioned on July 6, 1963, the Bodega Bay Station employed both a 44-foot and a 36-foot motor lifeboat. Lifeboat CG 36542, used at Point Reyes, was transferred to Bodega Bay in 1963. There, it and the 44-foot boat were engaged in some 150 routine calls per year, usually assisting fishermen with engine trouble. By 1978, CG 36542 was the last 36-foot motor lifeboat in active service in the United States, another indication of the rapid changes wrought by the introduction of the 44-foot boat. [14] As Bodega Bay shifted into operation, Point Reyes declined, and in 1968, the station was decommissioned after 41 years of lifesaving service at Drakes Bay and 80 years of service on the Point Reyes peninsula. The vacant station was transferred to the National Park Service in 1969 since the surrounding land was now part of Point Reyes National Seashore; in 1981 the Coast Guard transferred 36-foot motor lifeboat 3CG 36542 to the National Park Service for interpretive use at the station.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

THE RAIL-LAUNCHING LIFEBOAT STATIONS OF THE PACIFIC COAST

The construction of the new station building at Bodega Bay, and the reconstruction of the lifeboat station at Fort Point, and equipping both with the new 44-foot motor lifeboat reflected similar moves elsewhere in the Coast Guard. One of the few dozen lifesaving and lifeboat stations built on the Pacific coast, the Point Reyes station outlasted many of its predecessors. There were only eight stations in California, around a dozen stations in Oregon, and an equal number in Washington. [15] Of these, approximately a dozen employed a launchway; these were among the last stations to be closed in the 1960s in favor of new stations deploying the 44-foot motor lifeboats now in service, or remodeled for the same. Of all of these stations, only four are known to possess a launchway; these have been closed off, the boat decks converted, and their doors removed or sealed. Only Point Reyes retains an unaltered boathouse, launchway, with rails, cradles and boat on the Pacific coast. As such, she is the best example of the Pacific coast variation of a nationally-employed and significant type of lifeboat station.

NOTES

1
Robert Erwin Johnson, Guardians of the Sea: History of the United States Coast Guard, 1915 to the Present (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1987), p. 4.

2
See Robert F. Bennett, Surfboats, Rockets, and Carronades (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Coast Guard/Government Printing Office, 1976) pp. 10-31 passim.

3
Johnson, Op.cit, p. 7.

4
Stephen H. Evans, The United States Coast Guard, 1790-1915: A Definitive History (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1949), p. 187. The annual report for the U.S. Life-Saving Service for 1913 reports on the rapid incursion of the 36-foot motor lifeboat.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

5
Ibid, p. 188.

6
Johnson, Op.cit, p. 124.

7
Ralph C. Shanks, Jr. and Janetta Thompson Shanks, Lighthouses and Lifeboats on the Redwood Coast (San Anselmo, California: Costano Books, 1978) pp. 28-31.

8
James P. Delgado, Gordon Chappell, Anna C. Toogood, and F. Ross Holland, Jr., "National Register of Historic Places Inventory/ Nomination Form, Point Reyes Lifeboat Rescue Station," unpublished manuscript report, National Park Service, Western Region, 1979, section 8, p. 3.

9
Ibid, section 8, p. 4.

10
See David Buller and James P. Delgado, "Losses of Major Vessels Within the Drakes Bay Survey Area," in Larry Murphy, ed. Submerged Cultural Resources Survey, Poirtions of Point Reyes National Seashore and Point Reyes-Farallon Islands National Marine Sanctuary: Phase I-Reconnaissance (Santa Fe: National Park Service, Southwest Cultural Resources Center, 1984) pp. 57-58.

11
Ibid, pp. 72-80 passim.

12
Shanks, Op.cit, pp. 40-41.

13
Johnson, Op.cit, p. 313.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

14
Shanks, Op.cit, p. 40.

15
See Delgado et al., Op.cit, section 8, p. 5-8, and Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, "Historic U.S. Coast Guard Life-Saving Facilities on the Oregon Coast," unpublished manuscript, Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, Salem, July 1980.

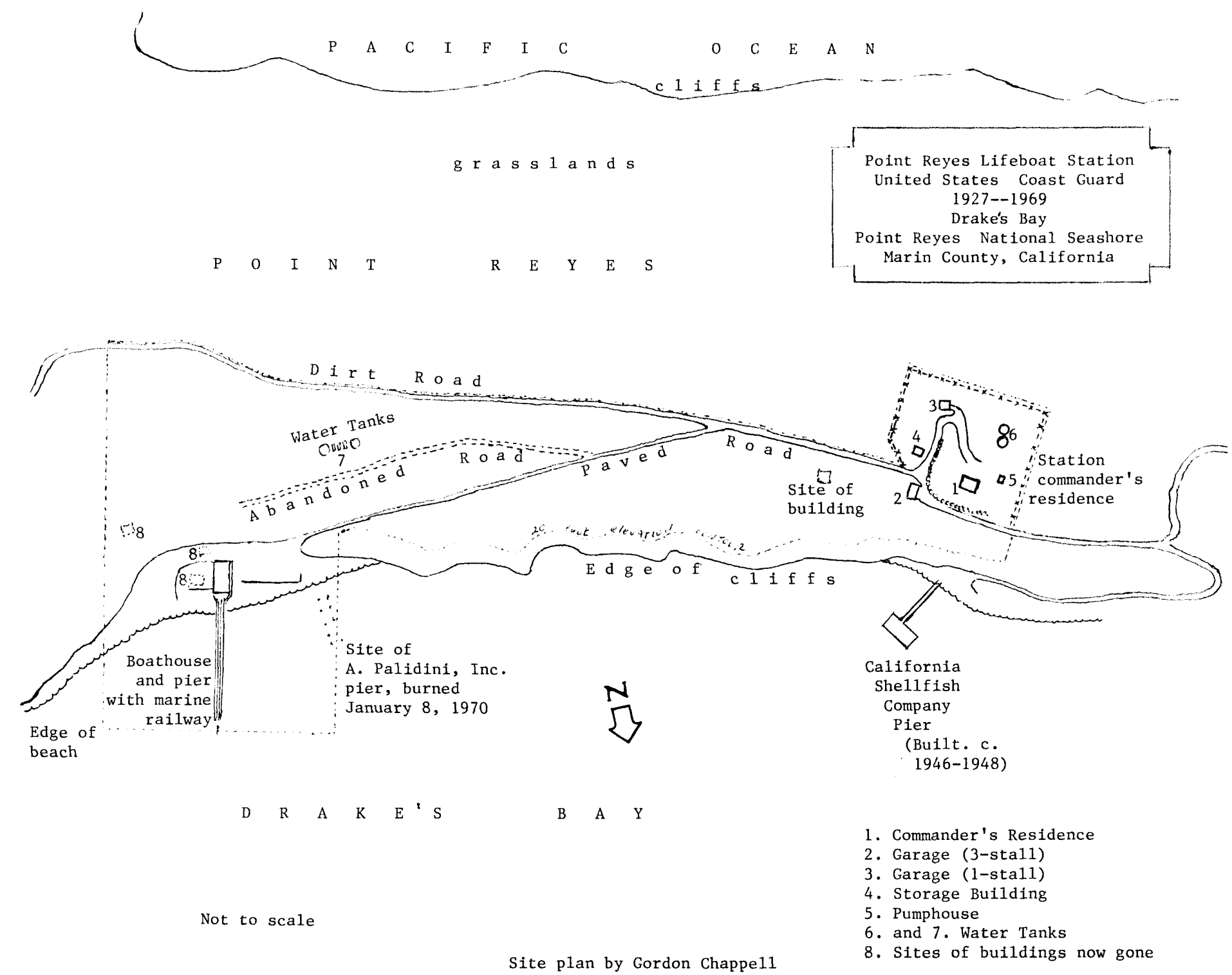
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 **Page** 1

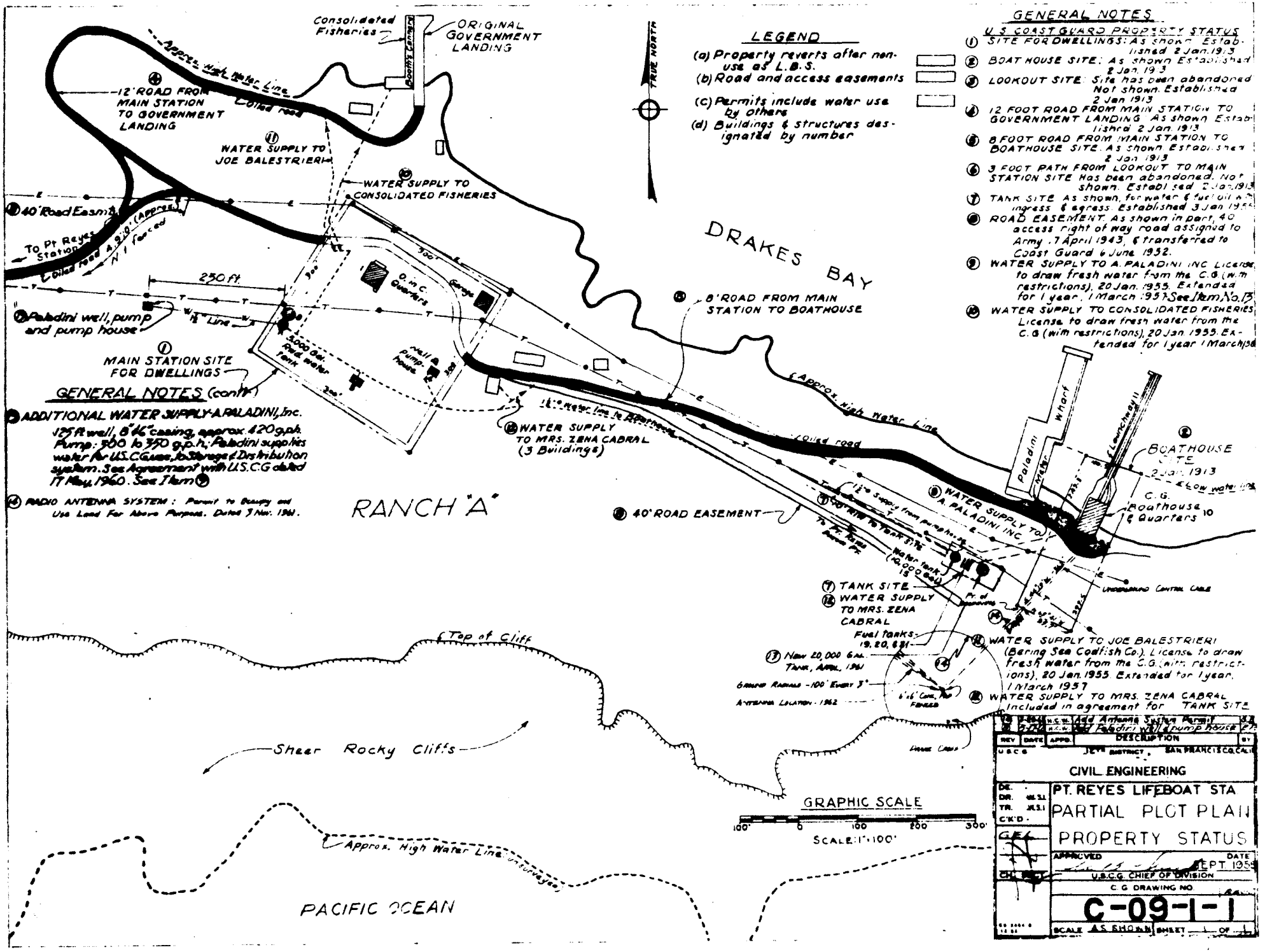
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary begins 10 feet north from the end of the Coast Guard pier in line with the centerline of the pier, and extends 120 feet east at right angles to the centerline of the pier. At that point it turns 90 degrees to the right (south), and extends across the small beach and up the cliffs to the south side of the dirt road which extends across the grasslands toward the end of the foot of the point to the east. Then the boundary follows the south edge of that dirt road westward to its intersection with the paved road: from that point it follows the south side of the paved road to the gate and fence on the east side of the station commander's (OIC) compound. Then it follows the fence southeast, south, west, and north, around that portion of the compound that is south of the paved road, until it reaches the gate west of the residence: then it continues on the same line down the hill and down the cliff to the 20 foot elevation contour along the cliffs inside Drakes Bay until again reaching the north side of the paved road between the compound and the boathouse. It follows the the south edge of the paved road as it descends along the edge of the hillside east toward the boathouse, until it reaches a point 120 west of the centerline of the pier, at which point it turns north and runs parallel to the centerline of the pier until it reaches a point in the water on a parallel to a point 10 feet beyond the end of the pier, and at right angles to its centerline. Then the boundary turns east again in alignment with the first segment described, following that line to the starting point.



Site plan by Gordon Chappell

OLLIO SPEED 18 FPM



LEGEND

(a) Property reverts after non-use as L.B.S.
(b) Road and access easements
(c) Permits include water use by others
(d) Buildings & structures designated by number

GENERAL NOTES

U.S. COAST GUARD PROPERTY STATUS

(1) SITE FOR DWELLINGS: As shown. Established 2 Jan. 1913
(2) BOAT HOUSE SITE: As shown Established 2 Jan. 1913
(3) LOOKOUT SITE: Site has been abandoned Not shown. Established 2 Jan. 1913
(4) 12 FOOT ROAD FROM MAIN STATION TO GOVERNMENT LANDING As shown Established 2 Jan. 1913
(5) 8 FOOT ROAD FROM MAIN STATION TO BOATHOUSE SITE. As shown Established 2 Jan. 1913
(6) 3 FOOT PATH FROM LOOKOUT TO MAIN STATION SITE Has been abandoned. Not shown. Established 2 Jan. 1913
(7) TANK SITE As shown, for water & fuel oil with ingress & egress. Established 3 Jan. 1955
(8) ROAD EASEMENT. As shown in part, 40' access right of way road assigned to Army, 7 April 1943, & transferred to Coast Guard 6 June 1952.
(9) WATER SUPPLY TO A. PALADINI INC License to draw fresh water from the C.G. (with restrictions), 20 Jan. 1955. Extended for 1 year, 1 March 1957 See Item No. 13
(10) WATER SUPPLY TO CONSOLIDATED FISHERIES License to draw fresh water from the C.G. (with restrictions), 20 Jan. 1955. Extended for 1 year, 1 March 1957

GENERAL NOTES (cont'd)

(11) ADDITIONAL WATER SUPPLY-A. PALADINI, Inc. 125 ft. well, 8"&6" casing, approx. 420 g.p.h. Pump: 300 to 350 g.p.h.; Paladini supplies water for U.S.C.G. use, to Storage & Distribution system. See Agreement with U.S.C.G. dated 17 May, 1960. See Item (9)
(12) RADIO ANTENNA SYSTEM: Permit to Occupy and Use Land For Above Purpose. Dated 3 Nov. 1961.

REV	DATE	APPD.	DESCRIPTION	BY
			Add Antenna System Permit	
			Add Paladini well & pump house	

U.S.C.G. 13TH DISTRICT, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

CIVIL ENGINEERING

DE. —
DR. WLSJ
TR. JRSJ
CH'K'D. —

PT. REYES LIFEBOAT STA
PARTIAL PLOT PLAN
PROPERTY STATUS

APPROVED — DATE SEPT. 1955
U.S.C.G. CHIEF OF DIVISION

C. G. DRAWING NO.
C-09-1-1

SCALE AS SHOWN SHEET — OF —