



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Gilbert's Bar House of Refuge

USLSS Station #2, Seventh District
Coast Guard Station #207

Location:	At St. Lucie Rocks, 2 miles north of Gilbert's Bar Inlet; 27-12' 00"N x 80-09' 50"W
Date of Conveyance	1875
Station Built:	1876
Fate:	House turned over to the Department of the Interior in 1952.

Remarks:

On March 19, 1875, the Secretary of the Treasury learned from William H. Hunt of Dade County, Fl., for a period of 20 years a piece of land at Saint Lucie Rocks known and designated as Gilbert's Bar on the sea coast as a site for a house of refuge. According to the 1879 "Annual Report of the Life Saving Service" these houses of refuge along the east coast of Florida "contemplate no other life saving operations than affording succor to shipwrecked persons who may be cast ashore, and who, in the absence of such means of relief, would be liable to perish from hunger and thirst in that desolate region. Crews of surfmen are not needed here, but the keepers and members of their families are required to go along the beach, in both directions, in search of castaways immediately after a storm."

On April 19, 1886, the brigantine *J.H. Lane*, 371 tons, of Seaport, Maine, bound from Matanzas to Philadelphia with eight crewmembers and a cargo of molasses valued at \$13,640 was wrecked 14.5 miles north of Jupiter lighthouse and 5.5 miles south-southwest of Gilbert's Bar Station. The life-savers rescued seven crewmen, one life was lost, that of Henry Whitlock, steward of Portland, Maine.

On October 16, 1904, the 767 ton bark *George Valentine* from Camagoli, Italy, was stranded with a crew of 12. Five of the crew were lost and seven saved. On the very next day, the Spanish ship *Cosme Colzado* was stranded about 300 yards offshore and one sailor, Juan Money Mallona died because he was tangled in the rigging and drowned, according to eye-witnesses.

The station continued in active service under the Coast Guard until 1941 when the Navy started governing it as a patrol station for the beach. The station was closed entirely in 1945. By 1955, the station was the last House of Refuge on Florida's east coast that was still in existence. It was maintained as a museum.

This is the only House of Refuge still standing.

Keepers:

Frederick Whitehead was appointed keeper on 1 DEC 1876 and left in 1877.

P. A. McMillan was appointed keeper on 26 MAY 1880 and transferred to Station Indian River on 16 DEC 1881.

David Brown was appointed keeper on 16 DEC 1881 and resigned on 25 MAR 1885.

Samuel F. Buncker was appointed keeper on 25 MAR 1885 and resigned on 11 JUL 1888.

David McClardy was appointed keeper on 11 JUN 1888 and resigned on 2 MAY 1890.

Hubert W. Bessey was appointed keeper on 12 JUL 1890 and resigned on 1 JAN 1902.

Axel H. Johansen was appointed keeper on 28 DEC 1901 and transferred to Station Biscayne Bay on 14 JAN 1903.

William E. Rea was appointed keeper on 2 JAN 1903 and resigned on 20 MAY 1907.

John H. Fromberger was appointed keeper on 2 MAY 1907 and transferred to Station Sullivan's Island on 15 APR 1910.

Axel H. Johansen was appointed keeper on 4 MAY 1910 and served until 22 NOV 1918.

Sources:

Station History File, CG Historian's Office

Dennis L. Noble & Michael S. Raynes. "Register of the Stations and Keepers of the U.S. Life-Saving Service." Unpublished manuscript, compiled circa 1977, CG Historian's Office collection.

Ralph Shanks, Wick York & Lisa Woo Shanks. *The U.S. Life-Saving Service: Heroes, Rescues and Architecture of the Early Coast Guard*. Petaluma, CA: Costañó Books, 1996.

U.S. Treasury Department: Coast Guard. *Register of the Commissioned and Warrant Officers and Cadets and Ships and Stations of the United States Coast Guard, July 1, 1941*. Washington, DC: USGPO, 1941.

