

Station Moriches, New York

USLSS Station #18, Third District
Coast Guard Station #76



Location:	On West Hampton Beach, abreast Moriches Bay, 1 1/16 miles east northeast of Moriches Inlet and 11 3/4 miles west southwest of Shinnecock Light; 40-46' 25"N x 72-42' 49"W in 1878; 40-46' 30"N x 72-43' 10"W in 1915.
Date of Conveyance:	1849
Station Built:	1849
Fate:	Turned over to the GSA in 1954

Remarks:

Moriches station was built in 1849 at a site first described as "two and one—half miles southwest of Speonk village." At some time after its establishment, the

station was moved to a tract of land then known as "Common Meadow" in the town of Southampton; the government had no title to this land. The station remained here for about twenty five years until it became necessary to relocate because of repeated flooding of the land. A new site was acquired in 1910. The site description was given in the 1920s as "abreast of Eastport and southwest two and one-half miles of Speonk Point." A contract was let in 1912 to "replace structures no longer suited to the needs of the service."

During the hurricane which swept the Atlantic coast in September of 1938, the station was demolished and all equipment except the motor surfboat was lost. In 1939 and 1940, the station listing appears with a notation "operation temporarily discontinued." However, there was still a Moriches station after the war.

Moriches Inlet created in 1931 has always been treacherous. For several years, mariners have been warned that navigating the inlet can be highly dangerous. In January, 1980, Moriches Inlet was by an Atlantic storm which widened it to 3/4 of a mile in width. The inlet has been filled in over the past summer to its former size, but is still very hazardous.

Even Coast Guard boats have had a rough time in this inlet in recent years. During the summer of 1977, the station's 30 footer while attempting to run outside the inlet had its forward hatch carried away by a wave. The hatch crashed through the windshield and badly injured the coxswain. The seaman on board took over and kept the boat on an even keel until a rescue helicopter could take the injured man off and put a replacement coxswain on board. The following year the station's 40 footer was swamped over the stern while coming through Moriches Inlet from seaward.

During 1980, Moriches Station answered numerous rescue calls in the bays and inlet. Two dramatic cases stand out in the crew's minds above the others. In June 1980, the station motor lifeboat went on a desperate mission to save a diver. The vessel *Wahao II* had sent a diver down on an old wreck twelve miles southwest of Moriches Inlet. The diver had equipment malfunction and suffered an attach of the bends. The Moriches SAR boat arrived on scene, gave first aid and rendezvoused with a helicopter to evacuate the man to a Connecticut Hospital. Unfortunately, the diver later died in the hospital.

The second dramatic case at Station Moriches took place in September, 1980. One evening in early September while on patrol CG44405 sighted a 180 foot vessel 1 1/2 miles south of Moriches Inlet conducting mother ship operations with marijuana. As the motor lifeboat headed out the inlet the mother ship was warned by numerous contact boats heading into the bay with their illegal cargoes. The 44405 pursued the fleeing mother ship for five miles to the southeast of the inlet before breaking off the chase. But information provided by the Moriches Station boat crew aided the Coast Guard Cutter *Tamaroa* in overhauling the mother ship

the next day. Two hundred and fifty tons of marijuana were seized aboard the vessel.

Moriches station was involved in the search and rescue operation on 17 July 1996, following the crash of TWA Flight 800.

Keepers:

The first keeper was E. Topping, who was appointed in 1853 for an unknown term; he was followed by Alvah Jones in 1856 who also served an unknown term ending some time in 1873. Then came William Smith (appointed July 1, 1873 and serving until he resigned on July 1, 1878), John N. Culver (January 28, 1878 until he was removed from office May 14, 1881), George C. Raynor (July 18, 1881 until his resignation May 1, 1886), Louis M. Jayne (appointed August 9, 1886, appointment revoked August 19, 1886), Henry D. Terry (appointed August 19, 1886 until his resignation April 28, 1887), Gilbert H. Seaman (May 12, 1887 until his resignation due to physical reasons March 11, 1904) and Charles T. Gordon (March 8, 1904 until his retirement August 21, 1922 with thirty years' service). No warrant or chief petty officer in charge is listed until 1928 and Chief Boatswains Mate A. J. Carter. He is followed by Chief Petty Officers Charles R. Peele (1929), W. J. Eldridge (1932) and J. H. Ketcham (1933 until 1938).

Moriches Station History & Chronology

by

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CHRONOLOGY OF MORICHES STATIONS

The first station was a garage type building located on the beach opposite East Moriches in 1849. The first 14 stations were built that year on Long Island. The second station was built in 1872, the year crews were hired for the winter. Two wings were added in 1887.

The third station was built in the winter of 1912-13 and replaced the earlier building on the beach opposite Swan Island, near the Cupsogue pavilion. This station washed away September 21, 1938 in the great hurricane of '38.

The fourth and present station was constructed in the winter of 1941-42 just in time for World War 2. It served as the Long Island command headquarters. The area's primary radio station for communicating with ships at sea was moved from Rockaway Point to the building near the gate on the east side of the property, which was bulldozed in 1999. It was discontinued in 1972. High powered transmitters were built around the area housed in small buildings. Additional high power stations were located near the Fire Island Lighthouse and remotely keyed from this station.

The 1942 station was also the area headquarters, which was moved from a storefront in Bay Shore, where it had been for many years. In charge was Captain Eugene T. Osborn, hometown East Moriches, LI. He was first stationed at Bellport as a surfman in the US Life Saving Service. In the new Coast Guard he advanced himself Warrant, then up the ladder. During prohibition (1927) he was in charge of the surf stations along the Jersey shore. His last command was Moriches. He supervised its building and no doubt influenced the siting. His daughter still lives on Atlantic Ave in East Moriches.

Moriches Inlet also influenced the location of the station. It broke through in March of 1931 in a Northeast storm. The 1938 Hurricane opened up many inlets in the area. One wiped out the Potunk station at Westhampton. The Shinnecock inlet was formed by the storm destroying the Shinnecock Station on the beach. The present station was built at the same time as Moriches. Other inlets were closed with much less fanfare than accompanies such activity today. The inlets that formed from 1980 through the 1990s at Cupsogue (Pikes Inlet) and just east of the Moriches Inlet took much political haggling to get closed. Of course they grew larger during this period.

By the 1970s Moriches became a station and Shinnecock became the Group consisting of Fire Island east to Montauk. In the 1980s Group Rockaway was combined with Group Shinnecock to form Group Moriches.

Rockaway became part of Sandy Hook, later Activities New York. Jones Beach, then called Short Beach became part of Group Moriches.

The boat crew at Moriches was known as SARDET Moriches for several years. A few years ago in a move to close the station on paper, yet keep it active, it became Small Boat Moriches, working under Shinnecock as it is now.

The administrative office was the mess hall and the room to the north was the galley. In 1942 the administrative offices were on the second deck. The ATON operation, recently moved from Shinnecock and took over the abandoned garage that was originally used to house the Radio Station's Communications trucks. In 1945-46 they also used it to house a DUKW (Duck). The building also held a small radio repair facility that served the area stations and lighthouses. As OinC, that was my last billet in the Coast Guard.

More information about the old surf stations and the wrecks on Long Island can be found in my book, *WRECKS AND RESCUES ON L.I., The Story of the US Life Saving Service*.

Van R. Field, USCG Auxiliary

Photographs:



"Life Saving Station opposite Eastport L D, 1909 [?]; no photo number; photographer unknown.
Courtesy of Van R. Field.



No caption/date; Photo No. 76; photographer unknown.

Courtesy of Van R. Field.



No caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.

Courtesy of Van R. Field.



No caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.

Our thanks to Tim Dring for identifying this photo.

Sources:

Station History File, CG Historian's Office

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