

Strength Against the Storms



HULL LIFESAVING MUSEUM, HULL, MASSACHUSETTS

CASE STUDY: August 2012

The town of Hull, Massachusetts, is situated on a narrow peninsula just South of Boston Harbor. Locals are determined to preserve Hull's heritage as the founder of seafarer lifesaving efforts. The **Hull Lifesaving Museum**, former US Coast Guard Point Allerton Station, is a prime example of a character building with precious ties to the past. From 1880-1969, this building housed lifesaving crews who chanced their own lives to save mariners at risk from the sea's jagged rocks.


The 19th Century was a period of growth for this part of Boston which counted 150 cargo schooners entering her harbor each week. Main cargo items were lumber and coal. Authorities decided that a lifesaving station was needed at some point north of Scituate Harbor. Hull is renowned for its intense nor'easter storms and was the perfect location. Brave men who signed on for this rescue station's intense duty roster were hardy souls with the courage to clamber into a surf boat, plunge the vessel into rough seas and head out to rescue sailors being dashed against jagged rocks.

The narrow, one-mile wide inlet is guarded by the 'twin sentries', a lighthouse and the Hull Lifesaving Station. The inlet is treacherous and rocky, with wrecks being commonplace as early ships waited out violent storms in this tiny channel. Survival wasn't

easy, especially in an era where ships were all under sail, rather than on reliable engine power. Thankfully for sailors, the Hull lifesavers were a dedicated team. There are many stories of rescues where thankful sailors were taken to shore, given warm, dry clothes and food... mere hours later they would find their ship battered apart, reduced to broken wooden planks bobbing along the shore.



Authentic rescue boat outside museum

1785.....	1878.....	1889.....	1969.....	Mid-1970s.....	2012.....
Massachusetts Humane Society formed with a purpose to save lives and prevent shipwreck drownings.	US Lifesaving Services begin. 150 schooners per week traverse the narrow, rocky channel leading to Boston Harbor.	Hull Lifesaving Station activates.	Hull Lifesaving Station decommissioned to museum status.	Volunteers install cedar shingle roof on museum building.	New Certi-label™ roof installed on Hull Lifesaving Museum.
 <p>SAVING LIVES THEN. CHANGING LIVES NOW.</p> <p>HULL LIFESAVING MUSEUM</p>					

The Legendary Joshua James



*Joshua James
Keeper Award*

It takes a special team of people to demonstrate such courage. Joshua James (1826-1902) was a lifelong Hull resident. Born in the early 19th century, it was James who could “hear the land speak” by listening to the sounds of various waves slapping against the shore. James made up his mind to dedicate his life to preventing shipwreck drownings after his own mother died at sea. He joined a local Humane Society crew and spent six decades saving lives.

Over 500 hundred sailors owed their lives to Joshua James and his crew. The crew's acts of courage, in the name of saving others, are legendary. Their motto, “you have to go out but you don’t have to come back” embodies the spirit of their lifesaving mission. James is famous also for his last words. After coming home from a boat crew training drill, James collapsed on the beach and uttered his final, poignant words: “the tide is ebbing”.

In 1876, James was appointed boat keeper of the lifeboat crews. At the age of 62, he earned the title Keeper of the Lifesaving Service Station, exceeding the service age limit by 17 years.

Continuing a Cedar Roofing Tradition

Today, it is fitting that this key piece of local history be preserved so it may remain a familiar landmark on Hull's coastline. **Victoria Stevens** is the Museum's Curator and Educator; she kindly provided the CSSB with a guided tour. The facility was reroofed in March, 2012 with **Certi-Sawn® Premium Grade (100% Edge Grain) 18" x 5/8" tapersawn cedar shakes** manufactured by CSSB member **A & R Cedar, Inc.**, Hoquiam, WA. “Wood was chosen,” Stevens said, “because it is historically accurate.”

Project plans were reviewed by architect **Don Ritz**. Product was distributed by **Nutmeg Forest Products, Inc.** and supplied by affiliate member **Len Taylor, Jr., of Taylor Forest Products Inc.**, Marshfield, MA. Installation services were provided by **Mike Viola** and his crew from **Viola Roofing and Contracting**, Hull, MA.

Placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981, the museum welcomes over 15,000 people a year. The late 19th Century building is one of 15 “Bibb #2 shingle style stations”, named after famed architect



Traditional lifesaving station roof design provides a navigational landmark

Albert B. Bibb. It was in dire need of a new roof as water intrusion was occurring and was even affecting the plaster on the walls. An intensive seven-month grant writing and planning process for this non-profit society culminated in the search for cedar roof product specification and installation assistance. **Tony Bonura, CSSB District Manager, Northeast**, was located via **Bill O'Neil**, an Independent Consultant in the community. The fact that CSSB District Manager services are free to purchasers of **Certi-label™ material** was an added bonus, as the project budget was fairly tight.

Sailing enthusiast **Len Taylor, Jr.** stopped by the site to offer his assistance and was generous with his time. For those not dealing with roofing products every day, the wide selection available can be daunting to the uninitiated. Fortunately **Len Taylor, Jr.** provided



*Certi-Sawn®
Premium Grade
18" x 5/8" tapersawn cedar shake*

guidance on the correct **Certi-Sawn® tapersawn shake product** to choose, one that would best suit the look and functionality desired. Unpainted, natural

cedar roofs are traditional for lifesaving stations and this roof provides the same look as the one installed during Joshua James' era.



Beautiful cupola

The original cedar shingle roof was installed by museum volunteers in the mid-1970s. The job took two weeks with approximately 12 men on the jobsite. Stevens commented, "Overall, this [roofing] process was a wonderfully positive experience." All staff and volunteers appreciate the fact that **Viola Roofing and Contracting** took great care to ensure nails weren't left lying around (the museum runs children's day camp programs on site) and that the roofing work did not

interfere with museum visitor schedules. One of the particular challenges was to build a plywood box that encapsulated the Chance Brothers Co. Limited Lighthouse Works 1902 Fresnel lighthouse lens, which is a massive (and heavy) museum object on display in the boardroom. Too big to move, this plywood chamber was a creative solution that amply protected a treasured piece of history.



Fresnel lighthouse lens

Much like the multi-generational cedar shake and shingle industry, lifesaving careers tend to run in families. Several notable families from the area contributed to the success of the lifesaving efforts over the years. The **Hull Lifesaving Museum** is a treasure trove of seafaring artifacts, including old photographs, rare postcards, paintings, sea charts, log books and actual ship rigging and equipment. Several Humane Society medals are on display, kindly donated by the families of the brave men who ventured out into choppy, unforgiving seas. A tour through the museum ensures one is deeply immersed in the unique and daring life these men chose.



Historical lifesaving rescue equipment



The Nantasket, famous surf rescue boat

Performance Overcomes Controversy

Of particular historical importance is **The Nantasket**, a 29-foot long surfboat with 10 rowing stations and a big, bluff bow. Her initial design was the subject of much debate; old salts called her too heavy and not maneuverable in rough, icy waters. They felt justified in their concerns as the men not only had to plunge into dangerous seas... they first had to tow their vessel out across the road and rocky shore, *then* launch her into the surf. **The Nantasket** proved her disbelievers wrong during one icy storm... the Great Storm of 1888. Not only did she save multiple crew members of a wrecked schooner, she also navigated the rough seas with temporary patches glued to her battered sides.



The Nancy run aground. Photo courtesy of Hull Lifesaving Museum.

An Unexpected Tourist Attraction

The Nancy was a five-masted schooner that ran aground on soft sand in 1927. **The Nantasket** rescued her crew and it was the rescue boat's last mission. **The Nancy's** keel remained hopelessly stuck in the sand, wedged in so deep that there was no hope of salvaging her. Legend has it that she's still ashore... and some old timers know where to find her. Imagine, though, living back in a time where the shipwreck was a tourist attraction commanding 25 cents per ticket, advertised on colorful billboards. Imagine living through

the Great Depression where **The Nancy** was dismantled piece by piece and her hull used for cottages' construction materials. Interestingly, there are still homes today that claim to have a piece of **The Nancy** forming part of their walls.

Modern Rescues and Education

Today more modern coast guard equipment rescues sailors in trouble. Engines make a world of difference compared with ships under sail power. After James' time, the Boston Harbor opened up another wider,



Historical Banner inside Museum

channel from Massachusetts Bay so the number of wrecks abated. The new Point Allerton rescue station, currently home to 35 active duty and 25 reservists, remains intricately linked to the former; to this day Joshua James Ancient Keeper award is given to those who serve with the highest degree of dedication.

Today the **Hull Lifesaving Museum** runs a popular apprentice program in marine trades for at risk youth. Giving young adults hands-on experience goes a long way to refocus their lives towards positive outcomes. Of particular note is the hands-on boat restoration work with low student to teacher ratios. It's a win win opportunity as the students also provide repairs to the marina, as well as furniture restoration and sales. Other programs associated with the **Hull Lifesaving Museum** include children's summer camps and 4 or 6 oarsmen boat training, old style. Guided tours, during opening hours and by appointment for special groups, are also available. Museum staff's 'can do' attitude ensures that this facility is a thriving hub of activity where there's something for everyone to enjoy.



The beautiful new Certi-Sawn® roof



Famous lighthouse across the narrow channel

A Beacon in the Community

Boaters still see the same landmarks as did Joshua James and his crew back in the late 19th Century. Strong ties to the past are further evidenced by the 2011 announcement that a United States Coast Guard Cutter would be named *Joshua James*. Across the narrows is a lighthouse that sits on the first lighthouse site in America. The lighthouse cannot, however, claim to be the oldest lighthouse structure as it was blown up twice during the American Revolution of 1776! The Annual Illumination of the Harbor is a large fundraiser for the **Hull Lifesaving Museum** and takes place each July. Flares are sold and at a prescribed time the harbor lights up in remembrance of Hull's connection to the sea as well as to those brave sailors who dared try taming her.



Enthusiastic and capable museum staff

In 1969 the **Hull Lifesaving Museum** was ceded by the Coast Guard as a museum, with a new station being built to serve the Point Allerton crew. Preserving history is an admirable cause and the **Hull Lifesaving Museum** does a wonderful job... So good in fact that **The Nantasket**, with her restored rigging and equipment, appears standing by, ready to answer one last desperate call to action.

The Hull Lifesaving Museum has a fundraising campaign underway and is actively seeking donations for its next phase of building maintenance. Refinishing the siding is one of the next major projects planned.

Credits: Historical information and The Nancy photo herein are courtesy of the Hull Lifesaving Museum.

Special Thanks to Victoria Stevens, Curator and Educator, Hull Lifesaving Museum, for her expertise and the guided tour.

More information:

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Hull Lifesaving Museum

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The Museum is open year-round:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 10am - 1pm

July - October, open weekends, 10am - 2pm

November - June, closed weekends



Written by:

Lynne Christensen is the CSSB's Director of Operations. She has worked for the CSSB since 1998 and is involved in a variety of departments with a focus on marketing. Christensen holds a Master of Business

Administration degree as well as the Certified Association Executive credential. She resides in British Columbia.



All Photos (except The Nancy) by:

Tony Bonura is the CSSB's District Manager, Northeast. He has over 40 years sales and marketing experience in the forest products industry and shares his immense knowledge with a wide range of marketplace participants. Bonura is the current Chairman of the Joint Forest Products/Coatings Committee, headquartered at the Forest Product Laboratory in Madison, WI. He resides in New York State.



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