

## United States Lifesaving Service

Congress first debated federalizing a lifesaving service following the horrific 1837 loss of the Barque Mexico with 116 Irish immigrant passengers, mostly women and children, off the New Jersey coast. Instead, legislators sporadically funded regional lifesaving efforts for several decades. In the aftermath of the Civil War, the nation's wealth, trade, and shipping traffic grew rapidly. Volunteer lifesaving services could no longer keep pace with the number of vessels running aground near major ports.



In 1878 Rutherford B. Hayes named Sumner Increase Kimball the General Superintendent of the newly formed U.S. Lifesaving Service. During the next 37 years, USLSS surfmen at 271 stations protected the nation's shorelines. Using surfboats, breeches buoys, ingenuity, courage, and determination, USLSS "Storm Warriors" aided 28,000 ships and 179,000 people. Only 8% of the vessels (2,424) were lost, and fewer than one percent (1,512) of the wreck victims died.



United States Lifesaving Service Annual Reports are available for research purposes, as well as selected copies of USLSS logs and reports from Point Allerton Station, and USLSS equipment.