CHAPTER IV

COOS BAY STATIONS

Mariners consider Coos Bay the best natural harbor between San Francisco and Puget Sound, and today, it is the world's largest forest-products shipping port.[83] The bay has forged the history of the region and was the most important factor in the development of the area. Coos Bay is located two-thirds of the way down the Oregon Coast and is the economic focus for the towns of Coos Bay (formerly Marshfield), North Bend, and Empire (Figure 45).

There have been three station locations throughout the history of water rescue on Coos Bay. The first station was situated at Gregory Point two miles southwest of the entrance to Coos Bay. The station was activated in 1879 and was the first life-saving station on the Oregon Coast. In 1891, the station was abandoned for a far more hospitable location just inside the entrance to Coos Bay at North Spit. In 1916, the station was moved for the third and final time to the south side of the Coos Bay and the harbor town of Charleston. The station buildings at Charleston still stand and are being used today by the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology, a program of the University of Oregon.

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[83]State of Oregon, *1991-92 Oregon Blue Book* (Salem, OR: Oregon State Printing, 1991), 340.

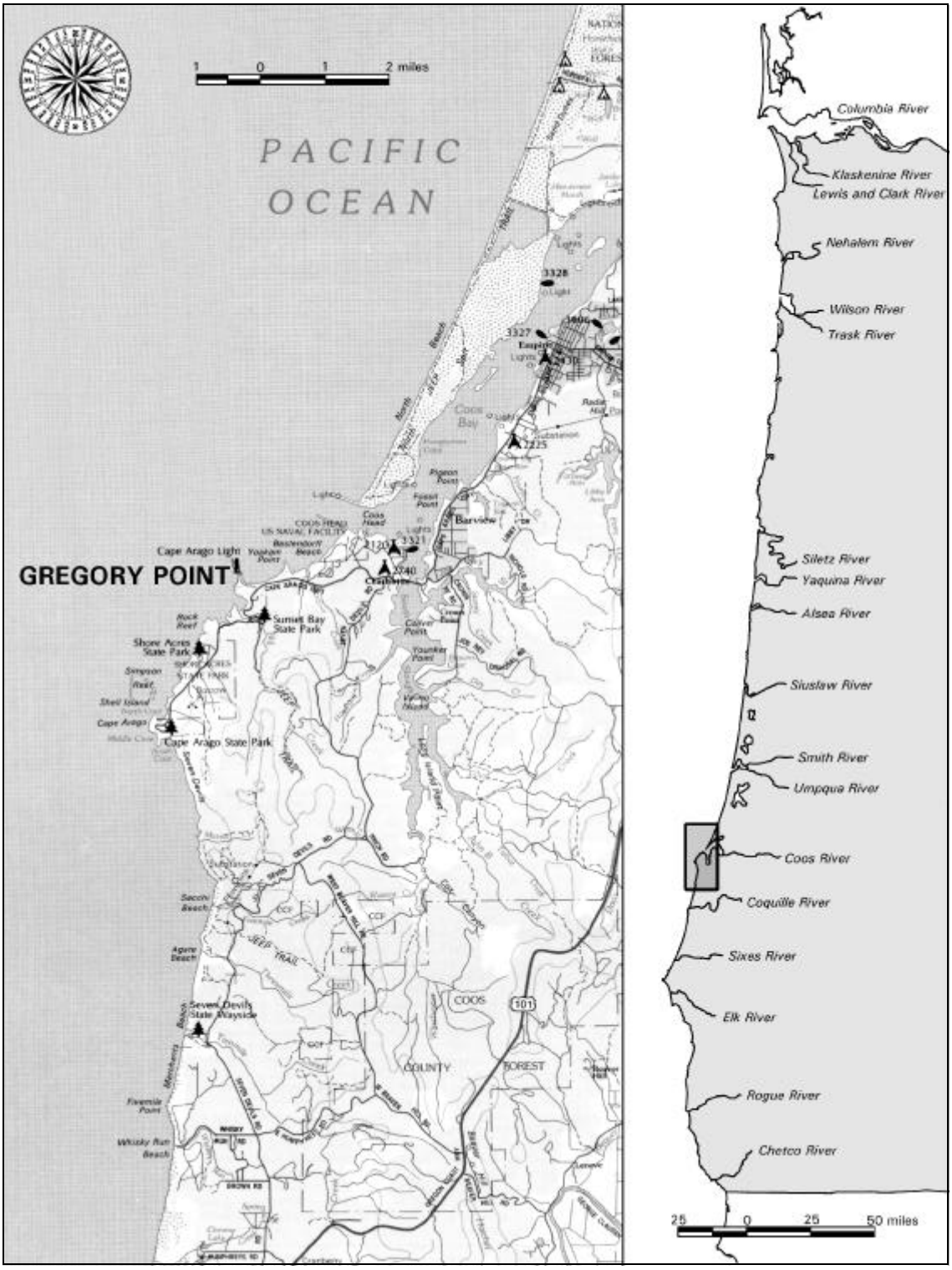

Figure 45. Location of Gregory Point, Oregon, as Shown on a 1996 DeLorme Topographic Map.

Cape Arago Life-Saving Station

The first life-saving station built on the Oregon Coast was the erroneously named Cape Arago Life-Saving Station, as Cape Arago itself was actually another two miles southwest of the station location (Figure 46). However, it was built next door to the Cape Arago Lighthouse (1866) so it took on the misnomer. The Cape Arago Station was one of the most impractically sited life-saving stations erected on the Oregon Coast. It was built in late-1878 on pilings in a small cove on Lighthouse Island (Figure 47). At this point in time, there were no permanent life-saving crews, just a full-time keeper. If there was a need to perform some kind of water rescue activity, the keeper would first have to be informed of the wreck, as the station was not in a location from which to watch for trouble. The keeper would then have to travel to the nearby town of Empire to find volunteers. He would round up volunteers and then bring them back to the life-saving station to launch the boat with the volunteer crew. The *Coos Bay News* chided the situation sarcastically on 22 January 1879, "No fear of the loss of life on our bar now . . . Mr. Lobree needn't put on that life preserver nor say those prayers. Hereafter he can just quietly throw himself into the arms of the man on shore."

Fortunately, it was a rare day when rescue operations were mounted from the Cape Arago Station. Entire years went by without any rescues. The logbooks are generally filled day after day with nothing more than solitary notes such as, "Had the

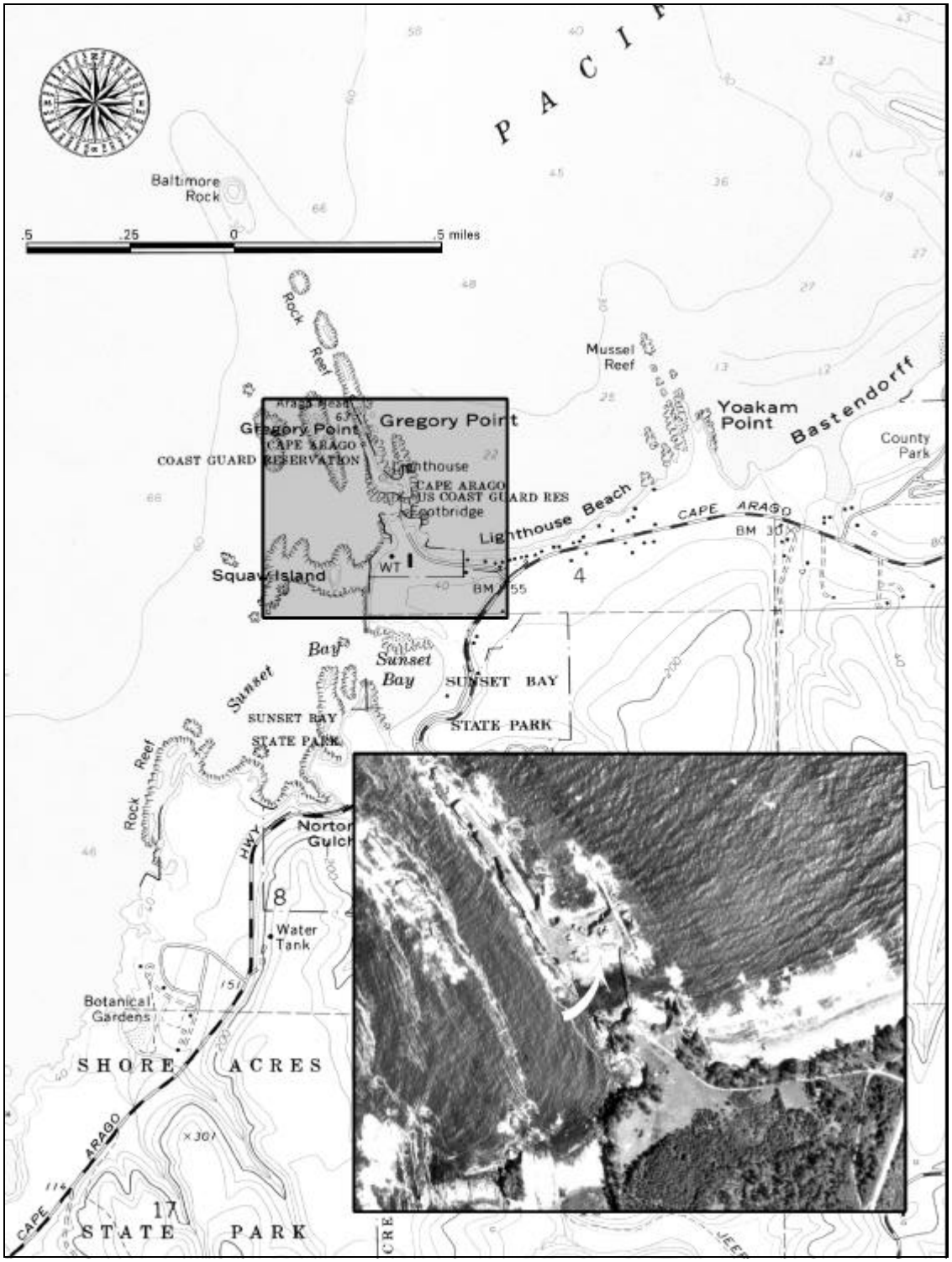

Figure 46. Aerial Photo of the Cape Arago Station Area in 1939 Superimposed Over the Cape Arago, Oregon, USGS Map (1973 Revision).

Figure 47. Cape Arago Station, 1885. Source: U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters (Life-Saving Service Photos: Personnel File).

boathouse open for ventilation" and "Cleaned House."[84] Later keepers made all-day trips on an average of once a week for "mail and supplies." An occasional steamer or schooner would pass by and the keeper would make note of it. On average, two or three ships would pass by the station on any given day during the history of the Cape Arago Station. A busy day would see ten schooners, two steamers and a bark sailing into and out of Coos Bay.[85]

This lack of excitement was not the luxury many keepers sought. In fact, the Cape Arago Life-Saving Station, later to become the Coos Bay Life-Saving Station, had

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[84]U.S. Life-Saving Service, "Logbooks of the Life-Saving Service," Cape Arago Life-Saving Station, National Archives, Pacific Alaska Region, Seattle, 1884-1902.

[85]Ibid., 31 January 1884.

14 keepers in 37 years, the highest turnover rate on the West Coast. Of those fourteen, four transferred to other stations and ten simply resigned. Isolation probably played the biggest factor at Cape Arago, but other common reasons would be low pay, no retirement plan, and health reasons.[86]

The design for the Cape Arago Life-Saving Station came from Francis Ward Chandler and is known as a Modified 1875-type station. At least 16 of the 1875-type stations were built on the Atlantic and Great Lake coasts. For Oregon, Washington and California, a modified version was drawn which altered some of the detailing and eliminated the lookout tower, substituting a dormer instead. This is the version that was built at Cape Arago.[87]

The 1875-type station was 19' wide, 43' deep and 1-1/2 stories tall. It was capped by a gable roof. The first floor was essentially a boatroom with a living room at the rear. It had an internal stair located at the back of the boatroom which led to a second floor divided into two rear rooms, a store room at the middle, and a large room at the front. A tall flag pole rose from its front gable above the boatroom doors.

As mentioned previously, the Cape Arago Station was a modified version of the 1875-type. In fact it had modifications unseen at any other life-saving station (Figure 48). The Life-Saving Service did build from a standard set of plans, but it was not unusual for builders to make alterations to suit the local materials and conditions. Cape Arago did not have a lookout tower or platform on its roof but instead substituted a

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[86]Noble, *That Others Might Live*, 64-65.

[87]Shanks, *The U.S. Life-Saving Service*, 214-18.

Figure 48. Detail of Cape Arago Station, 1885. Source: U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters (Life-Saving Service Photos: Personnel File).

balcony above the boatroom doors. This balcony can be found on the 1875-type clipped gable stations, but the Cape Arago Station did not have a clipped gable. To access the balcony, there was a door flanked by two windows. The 1875-type stations had the window but no door; the 1875-type clipped gable had the door but no windows; the Cape Arago Station had both the windows and the door.

The Cape Arago Station's gable stick work was simplified to a collar brace and king post pattern. Its diagonal bracing at the corner is unlike other stations in that they usually used either a diamond pattern or an X pattern; Cape Arago used a straight diagonal board. This detailing was the same on the Shoalwater Bay Life-Saving Station

and the Neah Bay Life-Saving Station, both built in 1877 in the Washington Territory, and probably provided the plans for the Cape Arago Life-Saving Station. Local contractors were found for the construction of the Shoalwater Bay and Neah Bay stations; however, a bid low enough could not be obtained for the Cape Arago station so the federal government was forced to build the station.[88]

Where the Cape Arago station diverged from all other stations was that the entire building was raised on pilings to place the boatroom above the high water line. The stilts were in turn braced by 8" by 8" diagonal braces 15' long.[89] It is believed all other 1875-type stations had a ramp from their boatroom; Cape Arago had none. Instead the surfboat was pulled into slings under the station building and hoisted up into the boatroom.[90]

One more peculiarity about the Cape Arago station was its location below a cliff in a cove. The local builder constructed a flight of stairs from the top of the cliff down to a small room off the back of the second floor, something not seen at other stations. This provided access directly to the second floor from the outside. There was also a flight of stairs leading from the living room down to the beach of the cove. Both of these stairs are later additions not built during the initial construction phase.

Since the keeper did not mount regular beach patrols, there was little to do other than station maintenance and making repairs after storms. Large repair or construction

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[88]George Richard Reynolds, "The United States Coast Guard in the Northwest: 1854-1900" (Master's thesis, University of Washington, 1968), 128.

[89]U.S. Life-Saving Service, "Logbooks of the Life-Saving Service," Cape Arago Life-Saving Station, 30 November 1885.

[90]Ibid., 31 July 1886.

projects were contracted out, but the keeper was responsible for maintenance. Keeper Abbott recorded in the 1884 logbook his work in May and June painting the station. He whitewashed the "foundation," rails and steps for three days; he "coal tarred" the lower frame for a day; he painted the roof for three days; and he painted the building itself for seven days.[91]

The logbooks are made up of a series of one-page, preprinted forms. The keeper was responsible for recording weather conditions throughout the day, beach patrols, the number of ships that passed, and general remarks. Two additional questions on the form were related to maintenance: "Is the house thoroughly clean?" and "Is the house in good repair?" Usually these questions receive a ubiquitous, "Yes;" however, after storms the question about good repair often received a "No." The station's location on the cove made it susceptible to pounding surf and logs carried in that surf.

On 10 January 1885, Keeper Abbott determined that the station was not in good condition and reported that, "The veranda is rotten all through, wetting and staining the front of the building, the floor is of tounged [sic] and grooved lumber and it is impossible to make it tight with putty or with caulking, a new one is badly needed, and should be covered with either zinc or canvas painted." This was one of the few repairs made at the station during its life by a contractor and it cost $55.00.[92]

Note the aerial car faintly visible on the left edge of the photo in Figure 47. The car ran out from the mainland to Lighthouse Island where the lighthouse and life-saving

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[91]Ibid., May-June 1884.

[92]Ibid., 12 May 1885.

station were built. There was a report by Keeper Abbott that on 24 November 1885, "a tremendous sea . . . carried away the Bridge that connected the Island with the mainland also the Ladders at both ends of the Bridge together with the Light Keepers Boat."[93] There is a notation on 26 November that Keeper Abbott "effected communication with mainland by means of rigging the Beach Apparatus. . . ." This is likely the aerial car visible in the photo as the photo dates to 1885. A new bridge was built, but it was carried away by "heavy surf" in November 1888.[94] Maintenance on the structure was such a headache, keepers referred to it as the "Bridge of Sighs."[95] The bridge that stands today (Figure 49) linking the mainland to Lighthouse Island is similar but not identical in appearance to the one in the circa 1910 photo (Figure 50). Undoubtedly, the bridge across the channel has been reconstructed several times.

On 24 June 1885, a deed was received by the Keeper William Abbott for a piece of land on South Slough as a location for an auxiliary boathouse.[96] Abbott reports in the 1885 logbook that on 17 August, the contractor had finished a boathouse on South Slough. Unfortunately, the 24 November storm that washed away the bridge also knocked the boathouse over onto its side; however, the rescue boats were saved. The boathouse was salvaged, rebuilt, and continued to be used at South Slough.

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[93]Ibid., 24 November 1885.

[94]Ibid., 22 November 1888.

[95]James A. Gibbs, *Oregon's Seacoast Lighthouses: An Oregon Documentary,* Bert Webber, editor (Medford, OR: Webb Research Group, 1992), 66-67.

[96]U.S. Life-Saving Service, "Logbooks of the Life-Saving Service," Cape Arago Life-Saving Station, 24 June 1885.

Figure 49. Bridge to Lighthouse Island, 1999. Source: Author.

Figure 50. Bridge to Lighthouse Island, Circa 1910. Source: Author's Collection.

Figure 51. Location of Former Cape Arago Station, 1999. Source: Author.

The Cape Arago Life-Saving Station was too small to house a crew and it was poorly sited; therefore, the location was abandoned in 1891. The station building continued to show up in the foreground of pictures of the Cape Arago Lighthouse. In the circa 1910 photo (Figure 50), the Cape Arago Life-Saving Station is still there; however, it is badly deteriorated and surrounded by logs. Without maintenance to the structure, the station was doomed to the elements (Figure 51).

Cape Arago Life-Saving Station at North Spit

The U.S. Life-Saving Service moved the operations of the Cape Arago Life-Saving Station from Lighthouse Island to the North Spit of Coos Bay in July 1891. As early as September 1890, Keeper Joseph Hodgson had been assisting in locating a site for

a new station.[97] According to the daily logbooks, by March 1891, a building contractor was involved in the project. Keeper Hodgson moved the boats and gear on 8 July 1891, to the new station on North Spit. On 1 August 1891, Hodgson "shipped" a crew of eight surfmen, and the station began patrols for the first time in its history. Keeper Hodgson oversaw the transition from a poorly located station with no crew to an infinitely better situated station with a full compliment of eight paid surfmen.

Even though the new station at North Spit was even further away from the land form known as Cape Arago (Figure 52), the station retained the original Cape Arago name and continued to be documented as the Cape Arago Life-Saving Station until mid-1902 when it became known as the Coos Bay Life-Saving Station.[98] Keeper Hodgson helped in siting the station approximately two miles from the entrance to Coos Bay on the north edge of the bay (Figure 53). The station house was placed on a small rise just off Hungryman Cove (Figure 54).

The move to the new location was a wise one. The life-savers found themselves in a much better position from which to launch rescues. On 20 October 1896, the steamer *Arago* ran aground on the rocks of the north jetty at the mouth of Coos Bay. Only 19 of the 32 passengers and sailors survived that morning; however, the rescue of the 19 was roundly praised. Captain Reed of the *Arago* lived to write the U.S.L.S.S. superintendent of the 12th District: "I must thank you for the lives of all of us that were rescued by the United States life-saving crew, for I believe it was through your efforts

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[97]Ibid., 8 September 1890.

[98]The *Annual Reports* continued to use the Cape Arago name for the station until the 1902-03 season when it was changed to the Coos Bay Life-Saving Station.

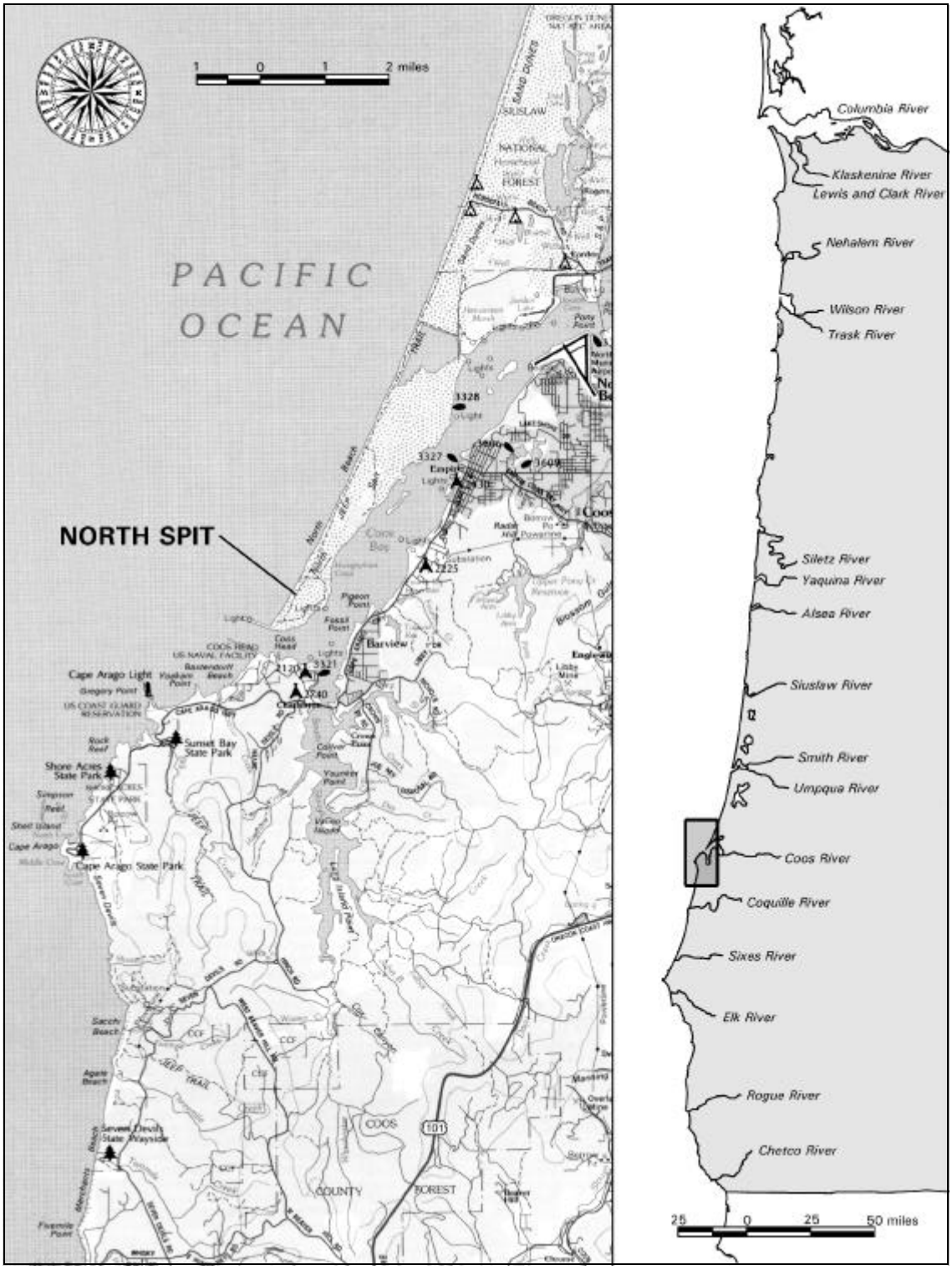

Figure 52. Location of North Spit on Coos Bay, Oregon, as Shown on a 1996 DeLorme Topographic Map.

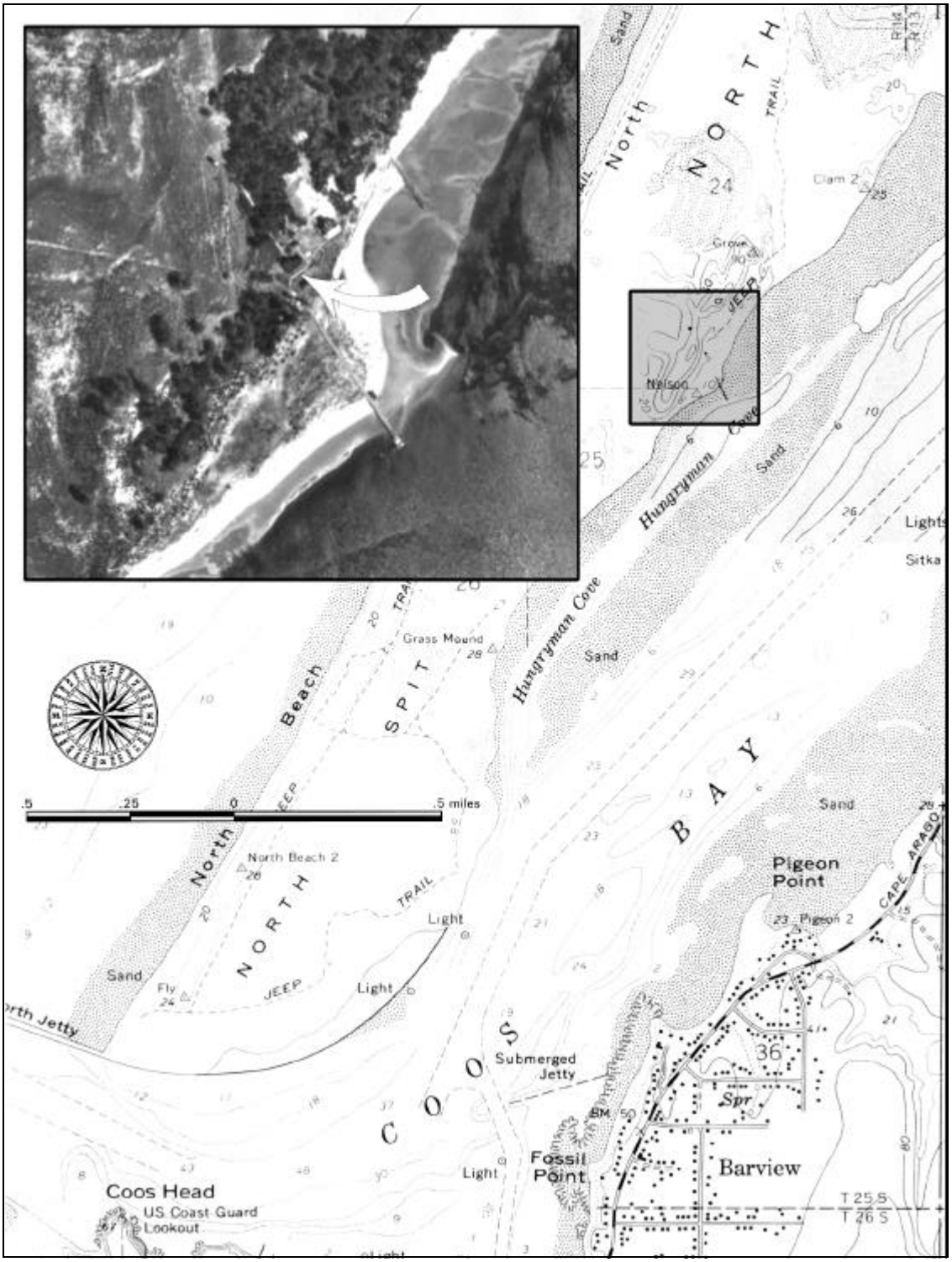

Figure 53. Aerial Photo of the Cape Arago Station Area on North Spit in 1939 Superimposed Over the Empire, Oregon, USGS Map (1970 Revision).

Figure 54. Coos Bay Life-Saving Station at North Spit, circa 1910. Source: Oregon Historical Society (OrHi #0028P207-006940).

that the life saving station was changed from Cape Arago, from where no lifeboat could have reached us that day or the next."[99]

The fully-staffed life-saving station was just part of the federal maritime improvements occurring at the mouth of Coos Bay. For many years, Oregon representatives to Congress had been fighting for federal money to enhance the entrance to the bay. Lumber and coal drove the economy of the area, and if the ships could not reach the goods, there was no money to be made. In June 1861, the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey began the formal charting of Coos Bay, finishing in 1866. However, the harbor improvements suggested in that survey did not get underway until 1879. The first stone was laid for a jetty across the South Slough on 6 April 1880. The Army Corps

[99]U.S. Life-Saving Service, *1897 Annual Reports*, 39.

of Engineers thought that blocking the South Slough would stop sediments from entering the mouth of Coos Bay. Unfortunately, the construction project went on for ten years before it was abandoned in 1890 as too impractical to justify the costs. Standard jetties were then designed to jut out 1,800 feet on either side of the harbor entrance.[100]

At this time, the Columbia River and Yaquina Bay already had their first jetties, so the designer of those breakwaters, James Polhemus, was brought in to supervise the construction of jetties at Coos Bay. The north jetty was started in 1890 and finally completed in 1901. The directed flow of water out of Coos Bay scoured out the bar crossing, deepening the channel from an average of 11 feet to 17 feet. Later dredging further deepened the channel. A south jetty was not completed until 1928.[101]

The improved entrance to the bay did not eliminate the need for the life-saving service, however. Wrecks continued to occur because of increased ship traffic, vicious crosscurrents at the entrance, storms, and larger ships. The wreck of the *New Carissa* in February 1999 is testimony to the still hazardous conditions at the entrance to Coos Bay. The most tragic wreck ever to occur at Coos Bay ensued on 12 January 1910.[102] The wreck of the *Czarina* took 23 lives and was described as the worst disaster in 25 years in the United States.[103] The official account of the wreck is presented in Appendix A.

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[100]Dow Beckham, *Stars in the Dark: Coal Mines of Southwestern Oregon* (Coos Bay, OR: Arago Books, 1995), 50-51.

[101]Ibid., 51-52.

[102]Nathan Douthit, *A Guide to Oregon South Coast History* (Coos Bay, OR: River West Books, 1986), 77.

[103]U.S. Life-Saving Service, *1910 Annual Reports*, 59.

Figure 55. Cape Arago Life-Saving Station at North Spit, 1898. Source: U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters (Life-Saving Service Photos: Personnel File).

The station house at North Spit (Figure 55) was built from the standard Marquette plans as described in Chapter III. In general, the house was divided by a central hallway and stair with the right half reserved for the keeper and the left half for the crew. On the main floor, the keeper's living room, office, kitchen, and pantry were to the right. On the left was the crew's living room and quarters. Upstairs, the right half contained bedrooms for the keeper and his family. On the left was the crew's locker room.

The boathouse was a standard Fort Point-type boathouse. It was located close by, most likely to the southwest, enabling quick access to the bar. The building was one-story with two bays and measured 24' wide by 40' deep. One bay held a surfboat and the other bay a lifeboat. The boathouse is thoroughly described in Chapter III.

A pair of water towers were built adjacent to the station house to capture runoff from the roof of the station house. In Figure 54, a washhouse can be seen to the left of the station house. A washhouse was necessary since the station house had no plumbing other than the hand pump to the kitchen sink. In 1892, the crew built a wharf in front of the station constructed of planks found on the beach.[104] During September 1893, the crew built a woodshed.[105] The wreck pole is visible to the left of the group in Figure 55. A tall flag pole rises over the station yard. A post topped by a bell box appears to the left of the station house. During June 1892, the crew built a handsome picket fence around the property.[106]

Many of the stations along the Oregon Coast had auxiliary buildings scattered around the vicinity. The majority of these structures were lookout towers and boathouses. The lookout towers were always positioned at the most advantageous site so as to be able to observe as much of the waterway and beach as possible. Usually this site was far too inhospitable or remote to build the station itself. Auxiliary boathouses were often built at supplemental locations so that if a rescue boat could not be launched from a principal location due to tide or bar conditions, an auxiliary boat could be launched from a different location usually outside of the entrance to the waterway, often from a beach.

The *Annual Reports* noted, "Near the point of the spit, and overlooking the entrance, is the service observation tower and a house that shelters a boat and other

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[104]U.S. Life-Saving Service, "Logbooks of the Life-Saving Service," Cape Arago Life-Saving Station, 25 February 1892.

[105]Ibid., 4 September 1893.

[106]Ibid., 2 June 1892.

equipment designed for the use of the life-saving crew in affording assistance to vessels that get into difficulty on the bar and in contiguous waters."[107] The boathouse was a simple, gabled-roof, two-bay structure with a wooden boardwalk to ease the movement of the boat carriage over the soft sand. Less is known about the lookout tower, though it was built during September 1893 and was probably similar to the one at the Umpqua River Life-Saving Station (see Chapter VII).[108]

The Cape Arago Life-Saving Station at North Spit, later known as the Coos Bay Life-Saving Station, was abandoned after 25 years in favor of the protection and convenience of the South Slough town of Charleston. The old station house was abandoned in 1916, but the water tanks were recycled and moved across Coos Bay to the new station site. The U.S. Navy occupied the old station in 1941 and used it as a direction finder station during World War II. At the end of the war it was returned to the Coast Guard and in 1953 sold to a private party as surplus. It burned sometime around 1967.[109]

Coos Bay Lifeboat Station

On 28 January 1915, the U.S. Life-Saving Service merged with the Revenue Cutter Service to form the U.S. Coast Guard. Most of the construction work undertaken by the Coast Guard after the merger and up through the 1920s involved repairs rather

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[107]U.S. Life-Saving Service, *1910 Annual Reports*, 59.

[108]U.S. Life-Saving Service, "Logbooks of the Life-Saving Service," Cape Arago Life-Saving Station, 18 September 1893.

[109]"Golden Years of Lifesaving," *Coos Bay World*, 21 September 1974.

than new construction.[110] However, on the Pacific Coast there was such a lack of stations that the building of new stations continued unabated. In what could have been one of the first stations built by the new Coast Guard in the United States, construction began in 1915 in Charleston to replace the Coos Bay Life-Saving Station at North Spit.

Charleston is on the south side of the entrance to Coos Bay (Figure 56). It is a seacoast fishing town; boats and docks dominate the landscape and modern oyster shell middens mark the entrance into town. The new station's location was probably somewhere near the site of the old auxiliary boathouse built for the Cape Arago Life-Saving Station when the station was located at Lighthouse Island. The new location was situated quite close to the entrance to Coos Bay and near a high promontory ideal for a lookout tower; two essential features the old station lacked (Figure 57).

The idea to build a new station developed as early as 24 April 1913, as that is when two parcels of land were acquired for the new site. Government machinery moves slowly and it took several years before drawings were made. The drawings are unique to this station and it is believed to be one of a kind. Some of the drawings for the new station are actually dated a few days before the formation of the Coast Guard, but all of the drawings are firmly labeled, "Coos Bay Coast Guard Station." It was not until September 1916 that the crew on the North Spit moved across the bay to the new Charleston location.

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[110]Shanks, *The U.S. Life-Saving Service*, 241.

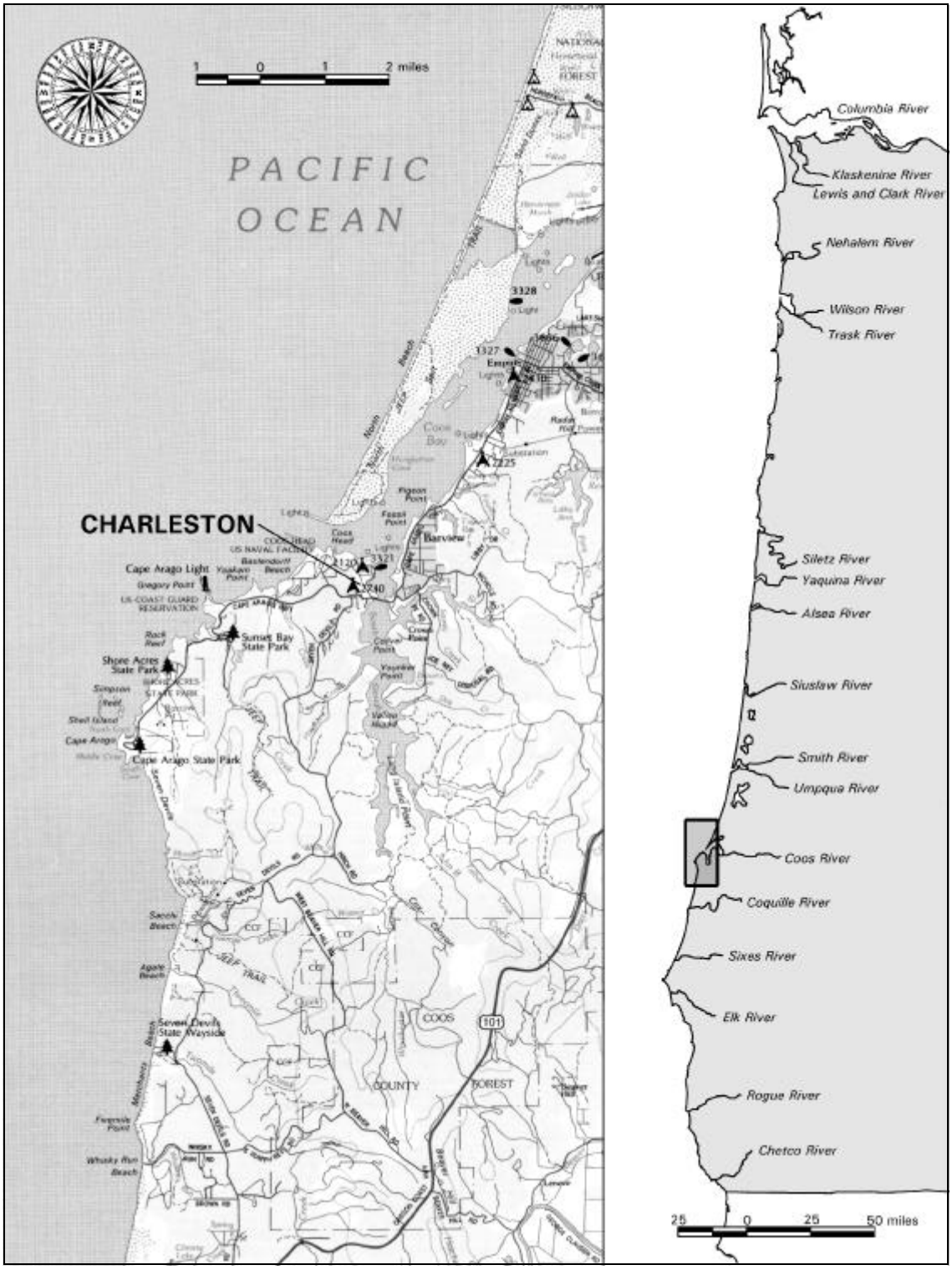

Figure 56. Location of Charleston on Coos Bay, Oregon, as Shown on a 1996 DeLorme Topographic Map.

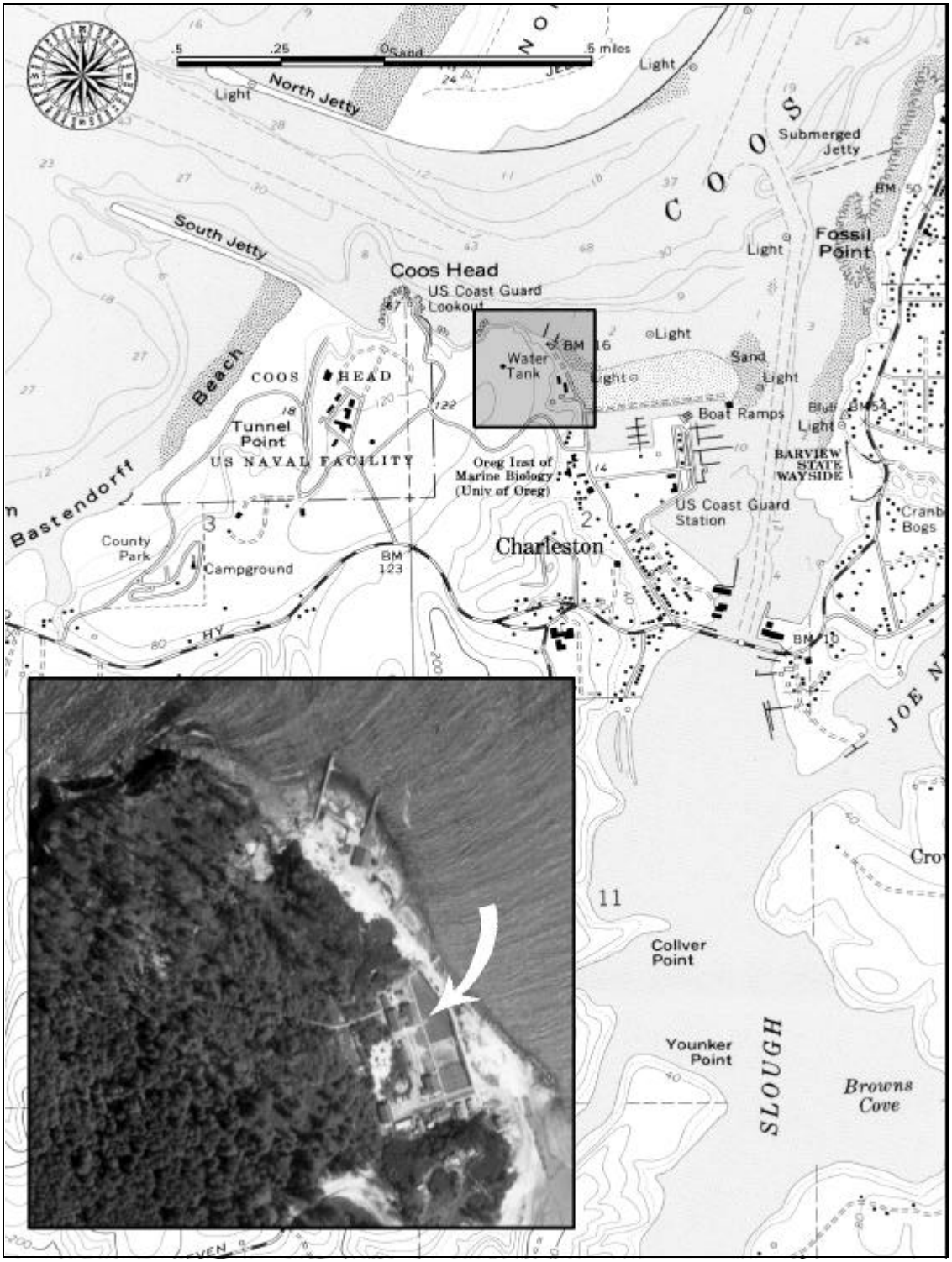

Figure 57. Aerial Photo of the Coos Bay Station Area at Charleston in 1939 Superimposed Over the Empire, Oregon, USGS Map (1970 Revision).

It appears structures were built and placed exactly as planned on the site drawing (Figure 58). When compared to period photographs, there appears to be not one variation by the builder (Figure 59). Part of the bluff behind the station was removed to enlarge and level the site. The keeper's dwelling was placed toward the south and the crew's dwelling to the north (left and right, respectively, in Figure 59). A woodshed was placed behind the crew's dwelling (Figure 60). The cistern water tank was positioned between the keeper's dwelling and the crew's dwelling. The tank was served by a pump house between the tank and the woodshed. A sewage settling tank was placed between and forward of the two dwellings. Its discharge pipe led into the bay and is visible in Figure 60 to the upper left. Wooden boardwalks connected the buildings. Sometime between 1917 and 1923, the two water tanks were moved from the old station on North Spit and placed on the carved out shelf on the bluff. By 1923 the entire compound was surrounded by a white picket fence.

The woodshed was a simple building 24' 6" wide by 12" 6" deep with a structure of 6" by 6" posts and sills and 2" by 6" studs. It was placed on 12" by 12" concrete piers and clad in shingles 5" to weather. It survived until at least 1954, but it is gone today. The pump house was 8' by 8' with a shed roof, two windows, and a door. It had a concrete floor and full foundation. The cistern water tank was 6' in diameter and 4' tall and was placed on a structure of 6" by 6" with 3" by 6" bracing, 12' in the air. The structure was 7' 8" square and rested on 16" by 16" concrete piers. The cistern water tank disappeared by 1951, and by 1954, a gabled roof building was built over the cistern, which has also been demolished.

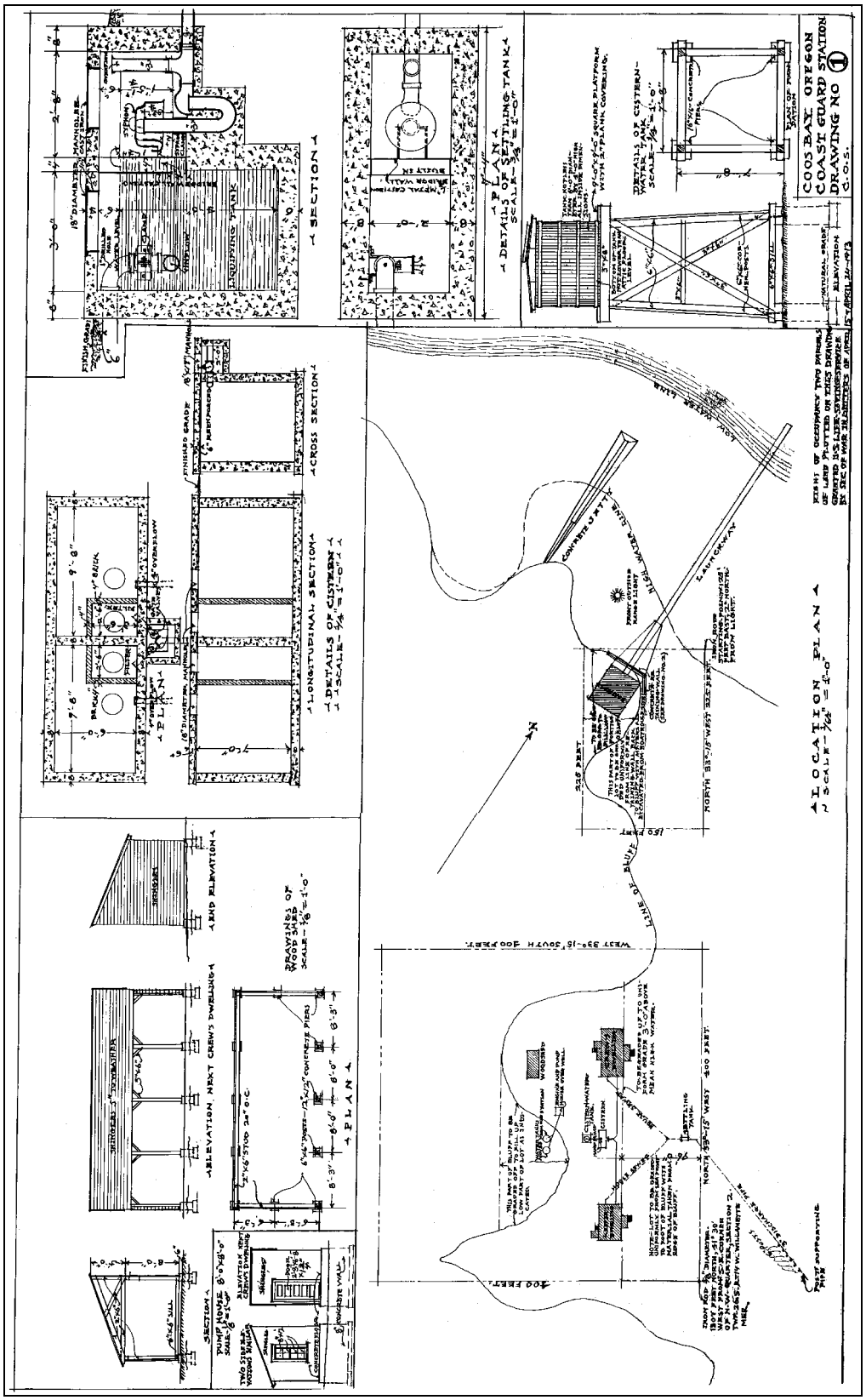

Figure 58. Coos Bay Lifeboat Station, Site Plan, 1915. Source: Oregon Institute of Marine Biology.

Figure 59. Coos Bay Lifeboat Station, circa 1916. Source: Oregon Historical Society (OrHi #654-A 98320).

Figure 60. Coos Bay Lifeboat Station, 1923. Source: U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters (Coos Bay File).

Fortunately, the keeper's dwelling, the crew's dwelling, and the boathouse have not suffered the same fate as the auxiliary buildings. The keeper's dwelling was a simple gable-roof structure, built on concrete piers. It was 46' 8" wide by 27' 0" deep and had a living room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom, and an office (Figure 61). Windows were double-hung, six-over-one, and the roof and walls were sheathed in shingles. The vestibule on the rear of the keeper's dwelling was enlarged sometime between 1923 and 1939, according to historic photographs.

The crew's dwelling was designed in the same simple style as the keeper's dwelling, but was wider across the front at 56' 6" wide by 27' 0" deep (Figure 62). It had three bedrooms for six of the crew members, a single bedroom each for the top two crewmen, a mess room, kitchen, bathroom, and a storm clothes room. Minimal detailing was the same as on the keeper's dwelling.

The crew's dwelling received a substantial addition sometime between 1923 and 1939, according to photographs. During that period, a building approximately identical to the crew's dwelling was built behind and parallel to the crew's dwelling and then connected at the center by a hyphen to create a H-shaped plan (Figure 63). This new "addition" became "the dorm" and the old crew's dwelling became "the office."[111]

It was common practice at stations for married crew members to build houses close to the stations. These small, one-story, gable roof structures are purely vernacular, built with local materials by local carpenters. Five are recognizable in Figure 63 to the

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[111]According to a site plan dated 1968, created by the University of Oregon, on file at the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology.

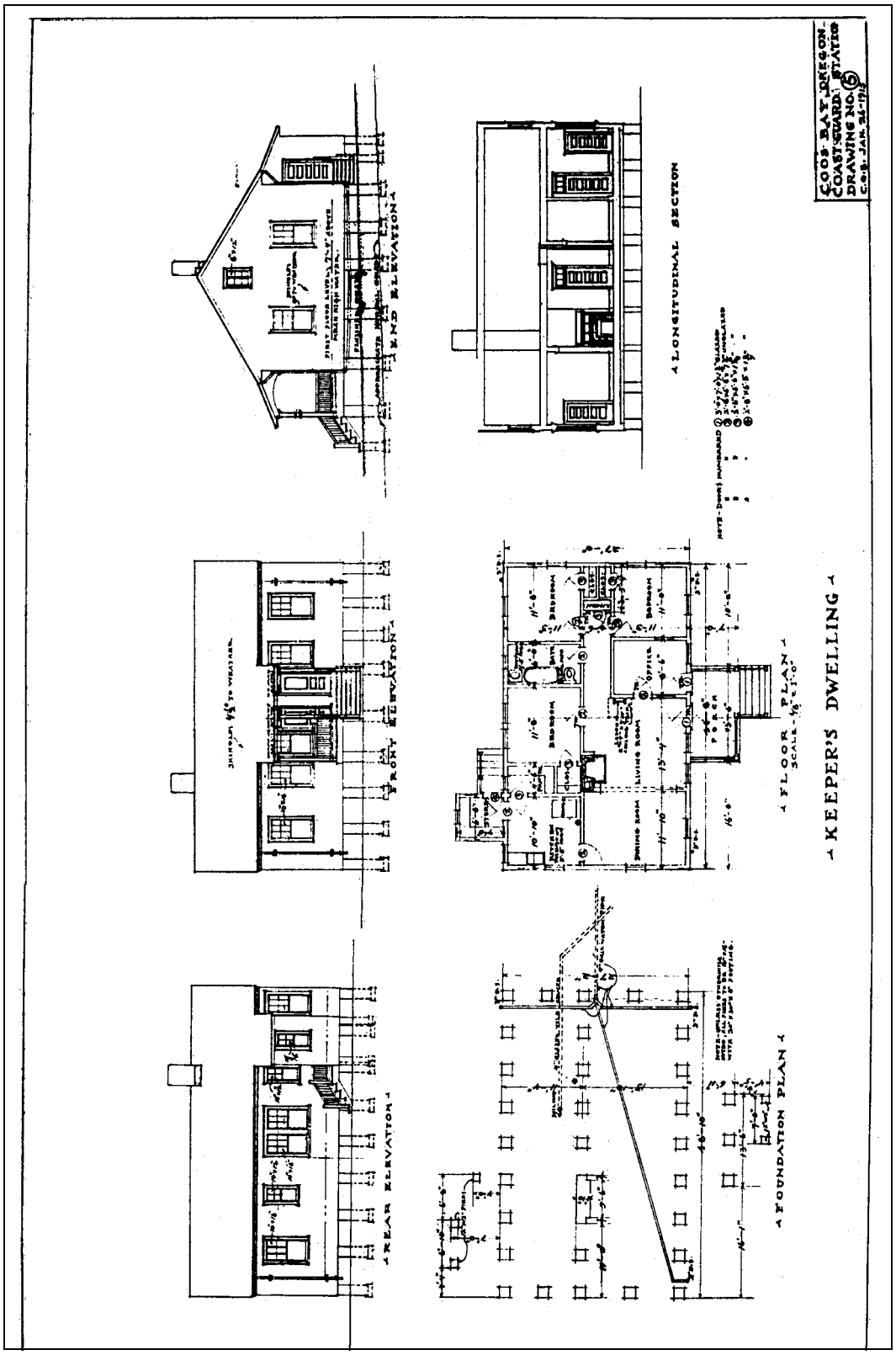

Figure 61. Coos Bay Lifeboat Station, Keeper's Dwelling, 1915. Source: Nautical Research Centre (#3-412).

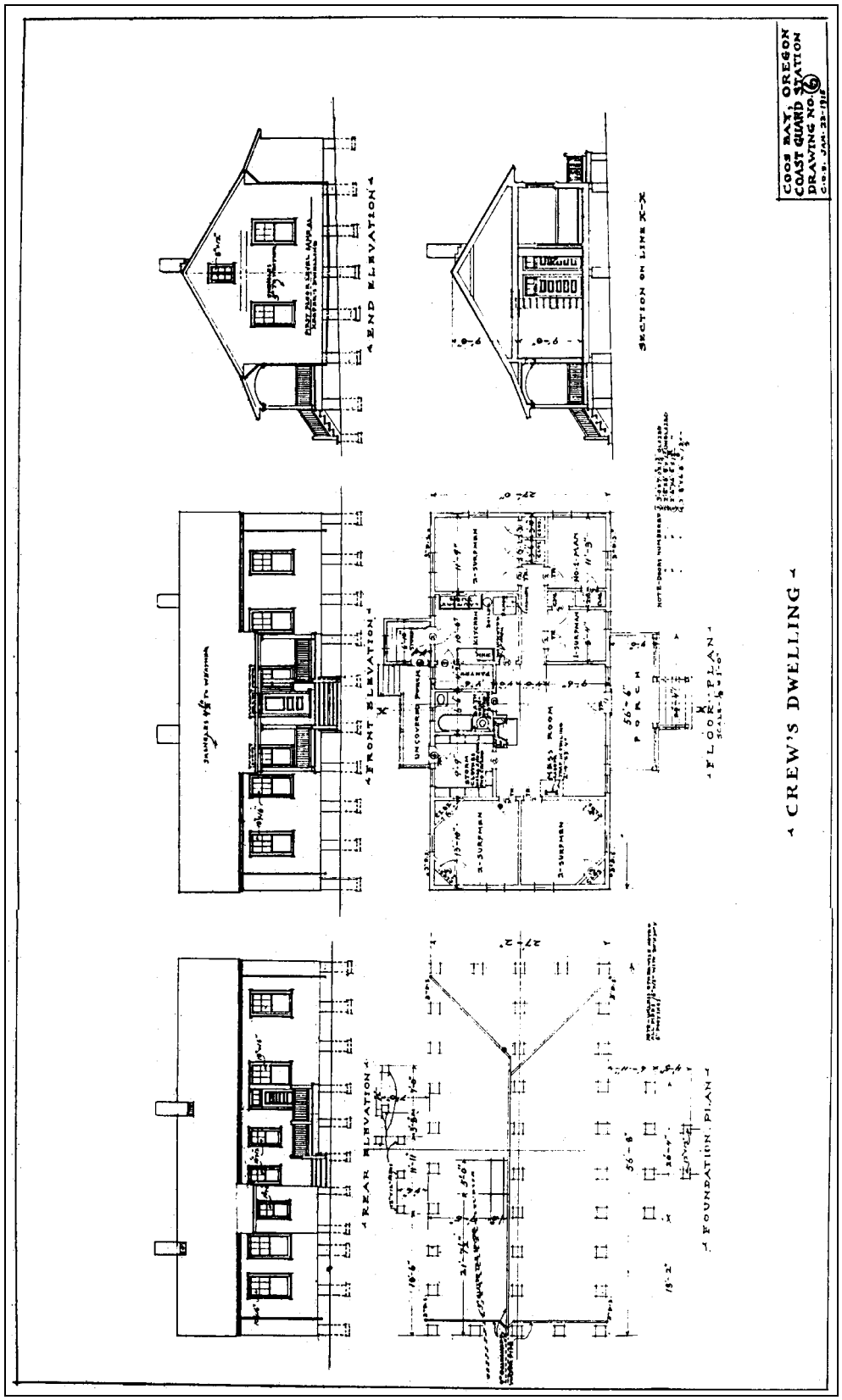

Figure 62. Coos Bay Lifeboat Station, Crew's Dwelling, 1915. Source: Nautical Research Centre (#3-413).

Figure 63. Coos Bay Lifeboat Station, 1954. Source: National Archives (RG 26-CGS, Box 2, Folder Coos Bay).

left, and one is visible under construction in 1923 in Figure 60. These dwellings have been lost over time, though they may have been moved and recycled elsewhere.

The boathouse was as unique as the dwellings for the keeper and crew (Figure 64). The Coos Bay Lifeboat Station boathouse is believed to be the only one built from the plans drawn. The building measured 40' wide by 50' deep and was three-bays wide and five-bays deep (Figure 65). In 1915, the bays stored one 34' motor lifeboat, one Dobbins lifeboat, one Monomoy surfboat, and one Beebe-McLellan surfboat.[112] Its distinctive features are the six buttresses on each side of the building, recalling the 1874-type stations with their side buttresses. Like the dwellings for the keeper and crew, the roof and walls of the boathouse were covered in shingles, 4-1/2" to

[112]U.S. Coast Guard, *1915 Annual Report*, 69.

Figure 64. Coos Bay Lifeboat Station, Boathouse, 1923. Source: U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters (Coos Bay File).

Figure 65. Coos Bay Lifeboat Station, Boathouse Ramp, 1923. Source: U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters (Coos Bay File).

weather on the roof, 5" to weather in the gable, and 6" to weather on the walls (Figure 66). Posts were 6" by 6", beams were 6" by 8", and rafters were 2" by 8".

Extending from the front of the boathouse was the 338' launchway (Figure 67). Only the upper portion of the launchway, where there were three sets of railroad tracks, was covered in planks. This portion was supported by a wooden framework of 12" by 12" members bolted to concrete piers. Once the three tracks merged, the remaining four-fifths of launchway was simply rails on wooden pilings. These wooden piles were replaced in 1940 with concrete piers when the boathouse underwent a general upgrade to the approaches around the boathouse. A large concrete jetty was built in 1916 to the west of the boathouse and launchway to protect them from the onslaught of storms and surf.

Sometime between 1923 and 1931, a carpentry shop was built adjacent to the boathouse to the west. The building still stands, but it has been rehabilitated into a guest house altering its original use, exterior, and interior drastically. The original lookout tower stood further to the west on a high promontory overlooking the entrance to Coos Bay. The tower has since been replaced with a modern lookout at the same location. A standard, Roosevelt-type, four-bay garage was built behind the keeper’s dwelling, circa 1940, and still remains today; however, its garage doors have been replaced, windows replaced, and a large entrance stair has been tacked onto its southern end wall.

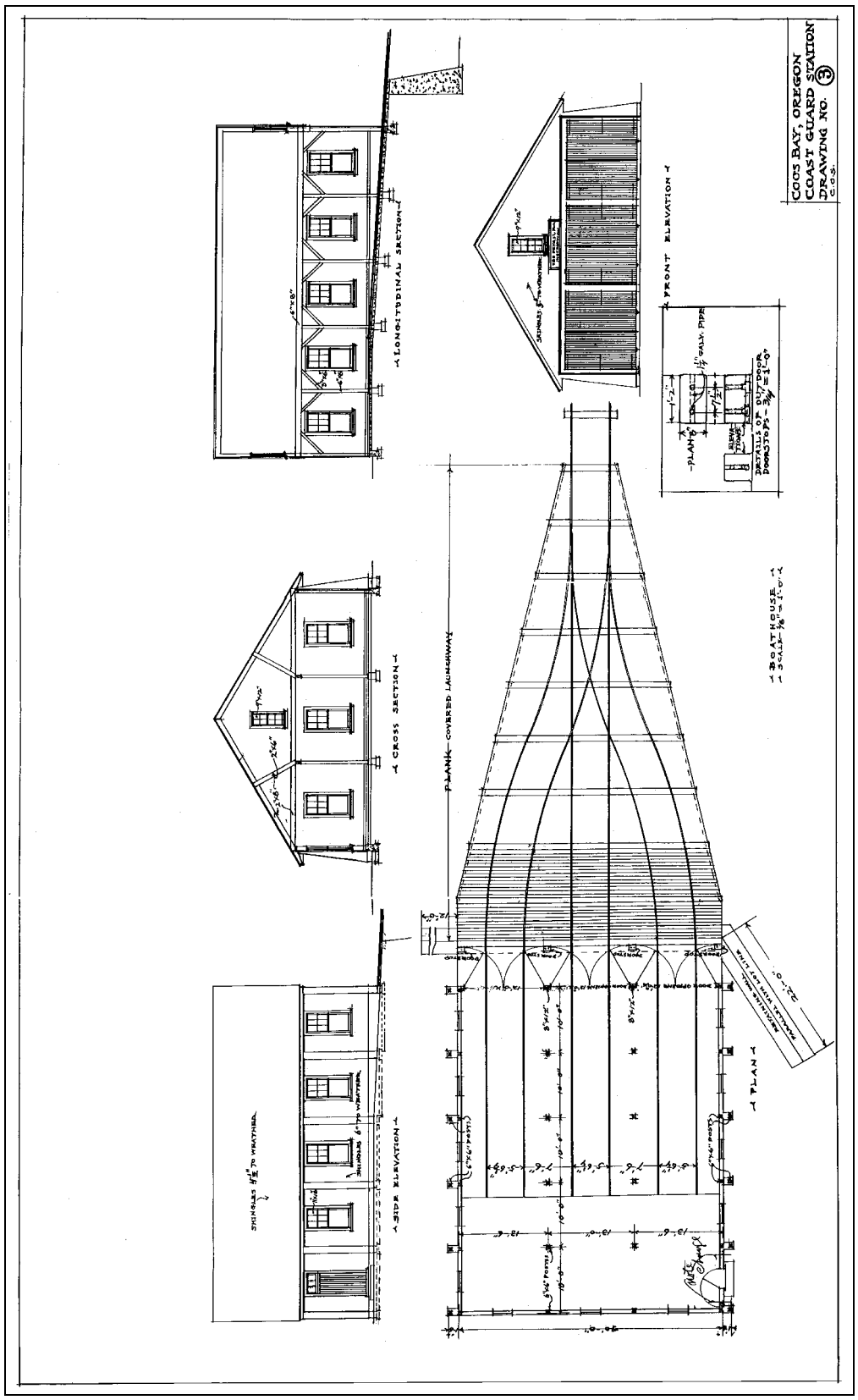

Figure 66. Coos Bay Lifeboat Station, Boathouse Plan, 1915. Source: Oregon Institute of Marine Biology.

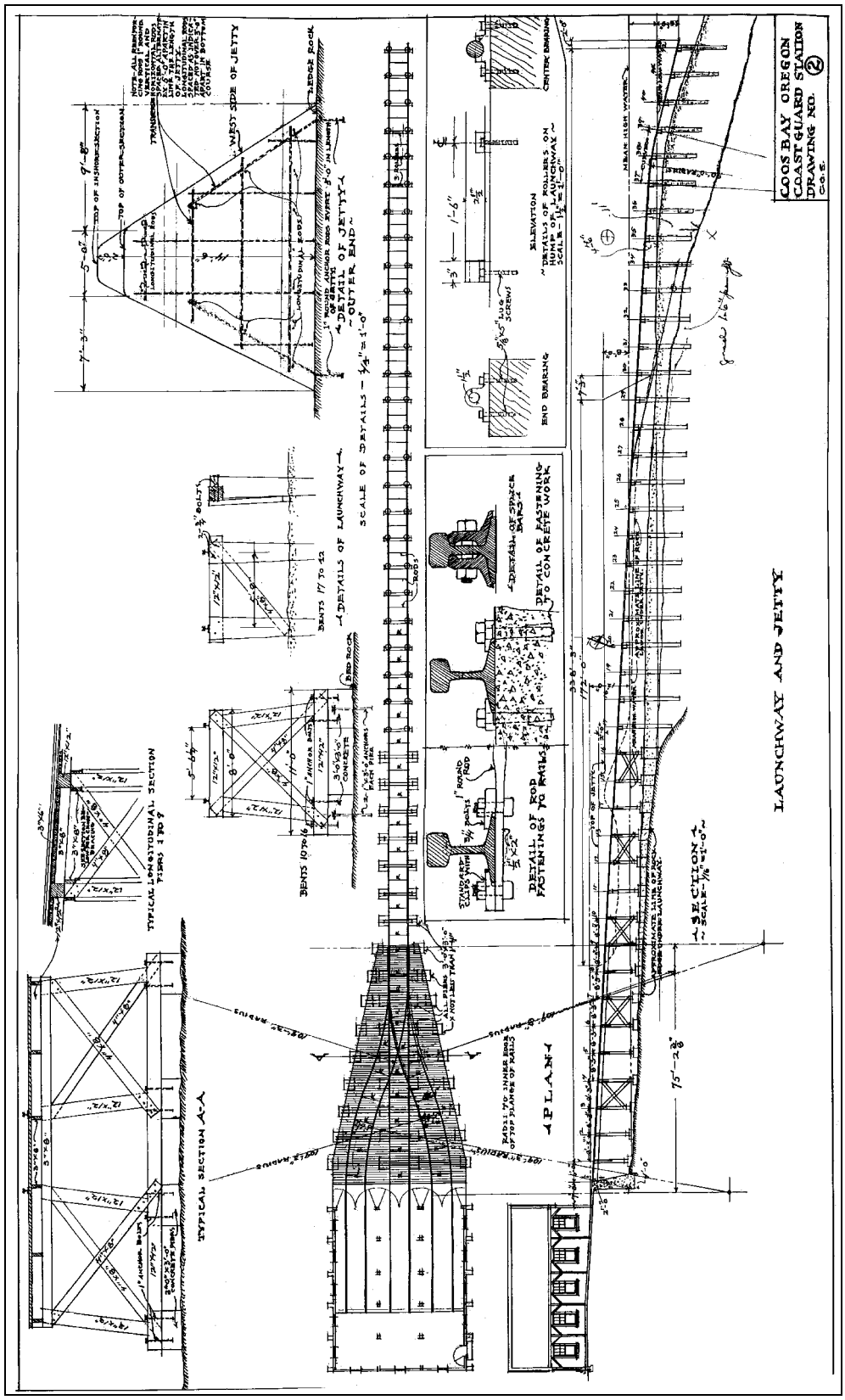

Figure 67. Coos Bay Lifeboat Station, Launchway Plan, 1915. Source: Oregon Institute of Marine Biology.

Preservation

Any remains above the beach sand are gone from the cove on Lighthouse Island where the Cape Arago Life-Saving Station once stood (see Figure 51). Not even a piling from the original station is visible. However, there is a chance for interpretation of the site through a photographic plaque display. The oldest known photograph of the station is shown in Figure 47. It was taken at a point that would make an interesting location for a plaque displaying the photograph along with history of the Cape Arago Life-Saving Station. However, the site is on restricted federal property, and a visitor needs permission to even reach the overlook point to the island. Only Coast Guard personnel are allowed to cross the bridge to Lighthouse Island.

Like the station on Lighthouse Island, the station at North Spit has been reported to have no above ground remains. This area also has extremely restricted access, due to the wreck of the *New Carissa* (1999), wildlife conservation issues, and its inaccessibility by vehicle. A water approach in a shallow-draft water craft would be the best means to investigate the old station site; however, the author was not able to make such a trip.

Unlike the Lighthouse Island and North Spit sites, there are physical remnants of the 1916 Coos Bay Lifeboat Station at Charleston. The boathouse remains nearly intact, the crew's dwelling has been altered, and the keeper's dwelling is visible. All three buildings are currently being used by the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology (OIMB), a facility of the University of Oregon.

The boathouse is the most intact of the three buildings. The building is in its original location. In 1975, the University of Oregon rehabilitated the boathouse and turned it into a lecture hall for OIMB. As designed by the University of Oregon Physical Plant, there were plans to build a two-story, lighthouse-like tower on the rear of the building to serve as an entrance. Instead, a much more modest projection was built on the back of the boathouse to serve as a lobby and to create an area for a men's restroom and a women's restroom (Figure 68). On the front of the boathouse, the doors were removed and replaced with multi-light inoperable windows (Figure 69). The eastmost bay received a three-sided bay window and the westmost bay has a door next to its fixed window. Inside, the sloped floor of the boatroom was terraced with a new floor over the old to accommodate level seating. A projection booth was added to the rear of the boatroom. There were plans to renovate the attic space; however, this was never performed, and the attic space remains as originally built.

The rails have been removed from the launchway but their impression in the wood of the decking remains. Where the decking ends, the concrete pilings continue on into the water and give an excellent sensation of what the launchway once was. A pump shed and large diameter water lines have been added to one side of the ramp.

Both the boathouse and the remains of the launchway should be maintained in their current configuration. Future adaptations of the boathouse should not be performed if they disturb the Coast Guard-era elements.

Between 1968 and 1970, the Coast Guard built new family housing on the old Coos Bay Coast Guard Station site. Fortunately, they did not destroy the dwellings of the

Figure 68. Former Boathouse (1915), Coos Bay Lifeboat Station, 1999. Source: Author.

Figure 69. Former Boathouse and Launchway (1915), Coos Bay Lifeboat Station, 1999. Source: Author.

keeper or crew. Instead, these buildings they moved south a couple of hundred yards to the site of a former Civilian Conservation Corps camp. This group of buildings became the core campus for the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology. The new Coos Bay Lifeboat Station was built to the east on the "new" waterfront on land reclaimed from the South Slough.

The crew's dwelling underwent a dramatic rehabilitation from dwelling to neurobiology research lab. The design came out of the office of Kruse & Fitch Architects of Seattle in 1968.[113] Several more alterations have occurred since, the latest being a large, just-completed, two-story addition to its south elevation. However, the crew's dwelling is still unmistakable from the exterior and should remain as such (Figure 70). At a minimum, the wood shingle siding, windows, and porch should be retained. The interior has been too heavily altered to offer any interpretive value.

The keeper's dwelling has been served an even worse life sentence than the crew's dwelling. It has been enveloped by a just-completed, two-story library complex (Figure 71). Only through photo comparison can the exterior of the former keeper's dwelling be distinguished. The new building does not differentiate the keeper's dwelling in any way on the interior. A plaque on the interior denoting what the building once was is the only means left to present the history of the former Coast Guard building.

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[113]Plan on file at the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology.

Figure 70. Former Crew's Dwelling (1915), Coos Bay Lifeboat Station, 1999. Source: Author.

Figure 71. Former Keeper's Dwelling (1915), Coos Bay Lifeboat Station, 1999. Source: Author.