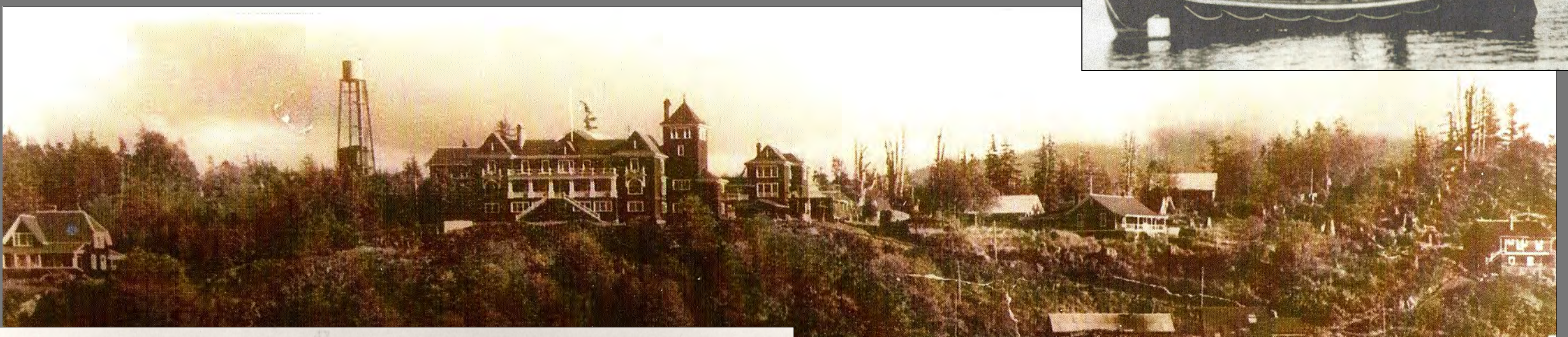
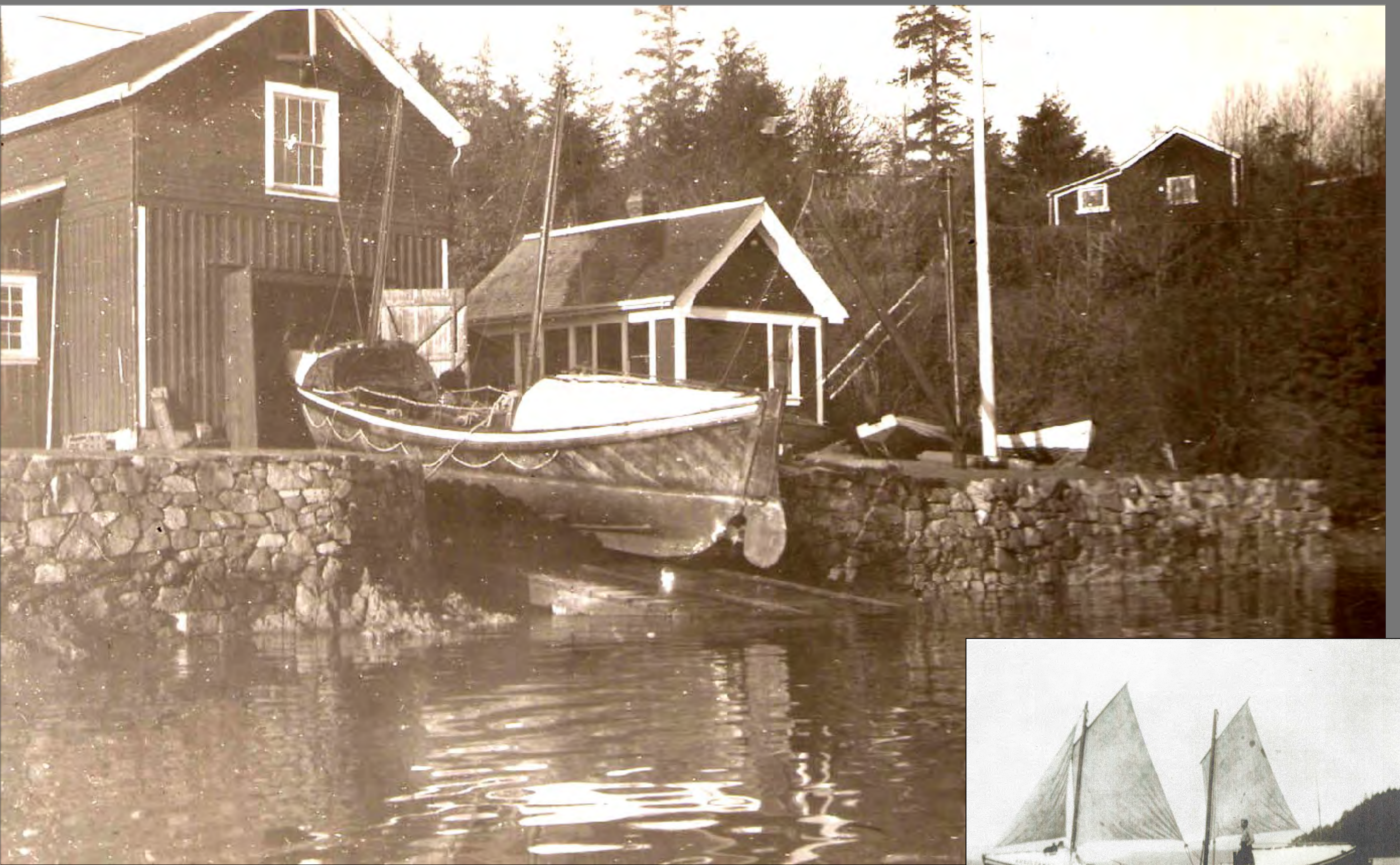


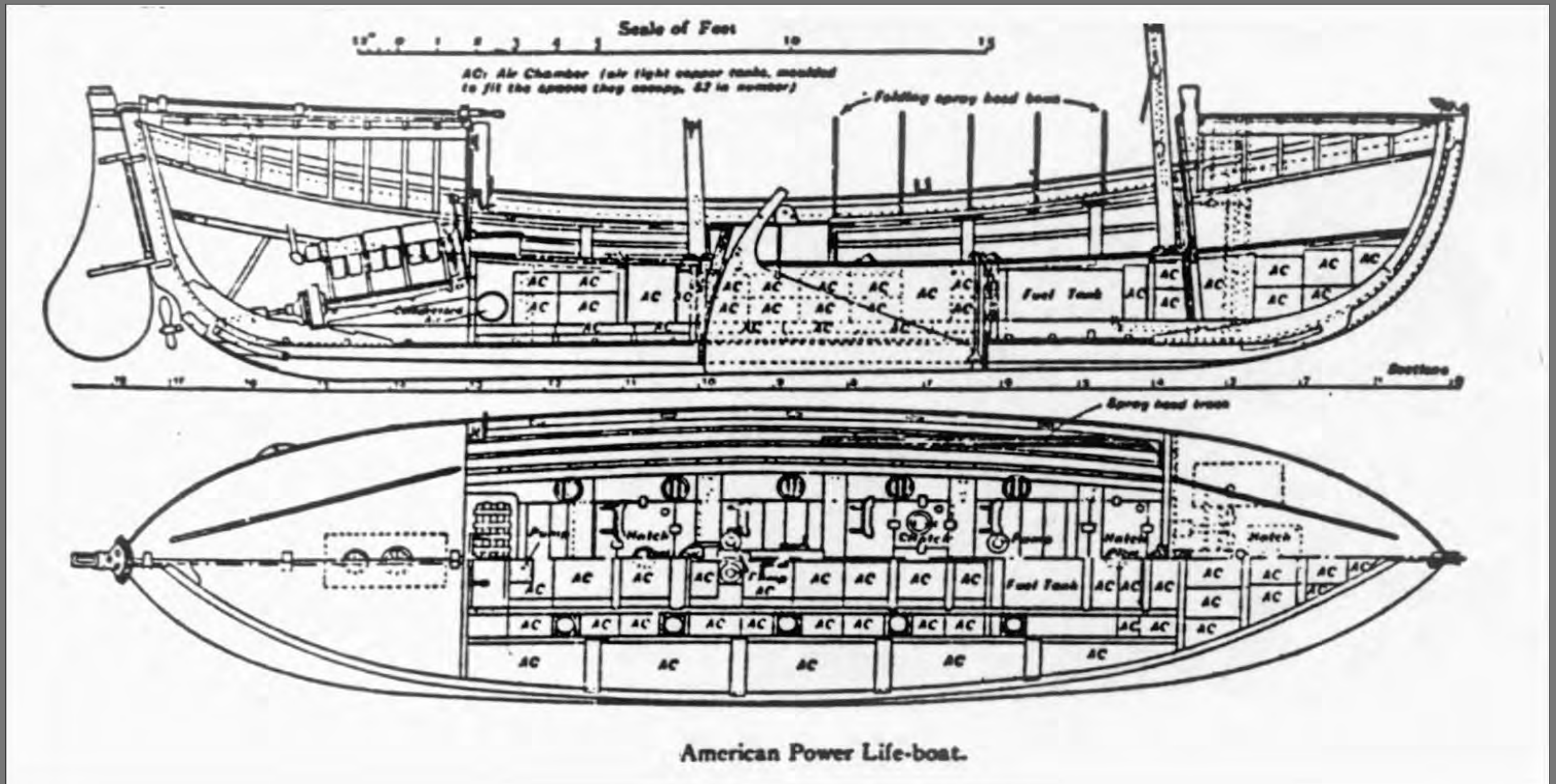
100 Years of Lifesaving at Sea

**THE ASSISTANCE:  
THE ORIGINAL  
MOTOR LIFEBOAT**



**The ASSISTANCE, the original Motor Lifeboat(s) 1908 - 1951**

In 1907, following the tragic loss of the SS VALENCIA the previous year and the resulting recommendations of two boards of inquiry, the Canadian Department of Marine & Fisheries ordered the latest in lifesaving technology which was in development by the US Life-Saving Service (USLSS). It was a 36-ft, self-righting and self-bailing, 'motorized' lifeboat with oar and sail-power. The boat, principally designed by Capt. H. McLellan of the USLSS, was the first purpose-built MLB design in the world; other motorized lifesaving craft being modified versions of pulling and sailing craft. The first MLB was constructed for the USLSS by the Electric Launch Company (ELCO) in Bayonne, New Jersey. The of the ELCO 'E'-type ('E' stood for 'Early') MLBs off the assembly line was delivered to Bamfield and named ASSISTANCE; thus it was the first true MLB in the world and the first of hundreds of variations on the type to follow. The ASSISTANCE cost \$11,000, more than all the other 30 lifeboats in Canada combined, and was assigned to the newly-constructed Dominion Life Saving Station at Bamfield Creek on the southwest coast of Vancouver Island. Unfortunately, after several call-outs over its first year, the ASSISTANCE drifted off her moorings in a severe storm and was totally wrecked. A second of the ELCO 'E'-type MLBs was ordered. This second '36-footer', as the style became known, was also named the ASSISTANCE and it was fitted with its predecessor's engine and fittings when it arrived in Victoria BC in January, 1910. The second ASSISTANCE provided over 40 years valiant service at Bamfield, 1910-1951.

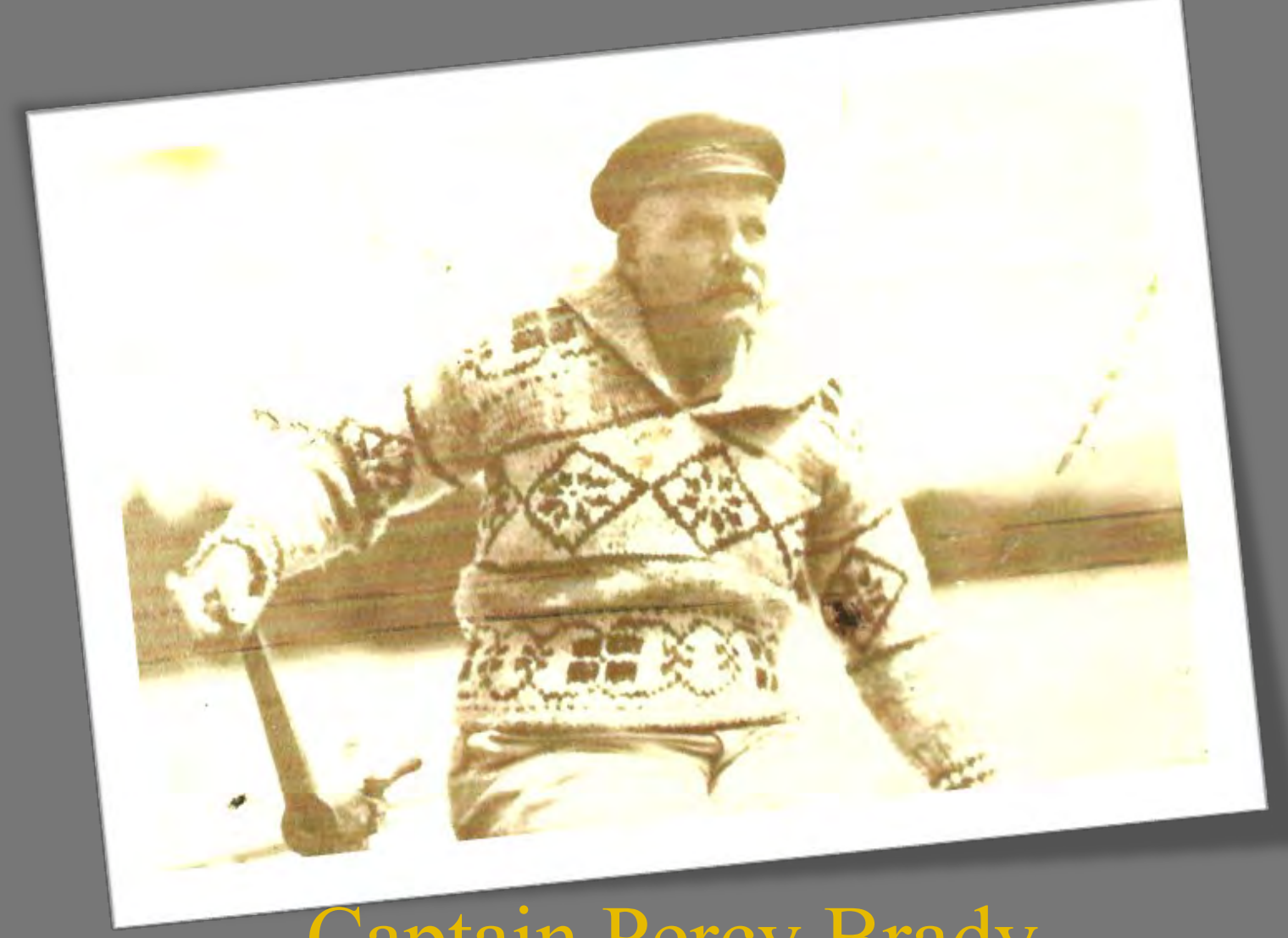


- ELCO 'E'-type specifications:
- Length overall: 36' 0"
  - Beam: 8' 7 1/2"
  - Draft: 4' 2 1/2"
  - Weight: 8 tons
  - Hull: Two layers of double-diagonal mahogany planking laid at 90 degrees to each other with a layer of tarred canvas in between.
  - Engine: Launched a Holmes Automatic 35-40-hp, gas; weight 1500 lbs
  - Max speed: 10 mph
  - Oars: 10, double-banked
  - Sails: Two masts with jib and fore-and-aft dipping lug sails
  - Watertight compartments: Eight, plus 112 separate copper air cases
  - Self-bailing: 7-in copper relieving tubes with one-way valves draining the cockpit.
  - Keel: Gun metal, 1500 lbs; retractable bronze centreboard

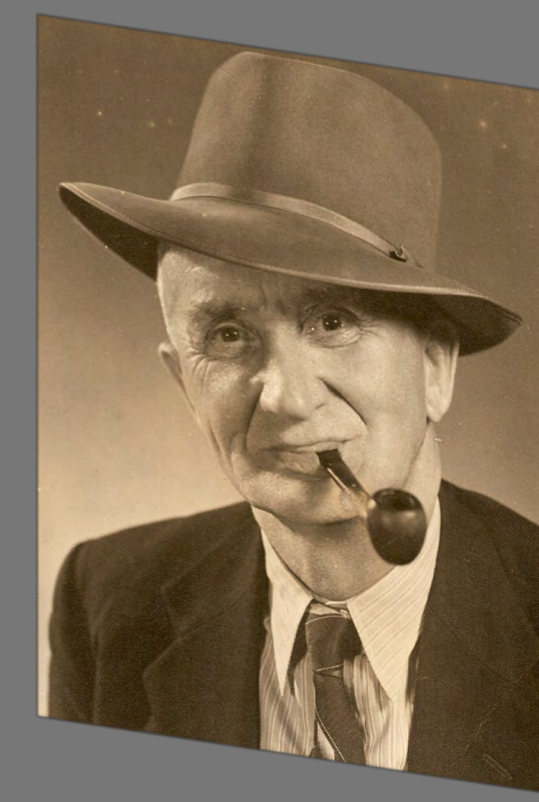
100 Years of Lifesaving at Sea



The Personalities 1908—2008



Captain Percy Brady



William Fullerton, Senior



John Logvinoff Officer-in-Charge

The first crew of the *Banfield Creek Lifeboat Station* was comprised of: Captain W. Gillen, coxswain in charge, Sidney Saunders, Engineer; and 6 seamen, J. Carmichael, H. Allen, E. B. Holman, H. K. Taylor, George Bates and D. Munro, all of whom were reported by the Colonist newspaper of December 7th, 1907 to be bound for Bamfield aboard the Dominion Government Steamer, Quadra.



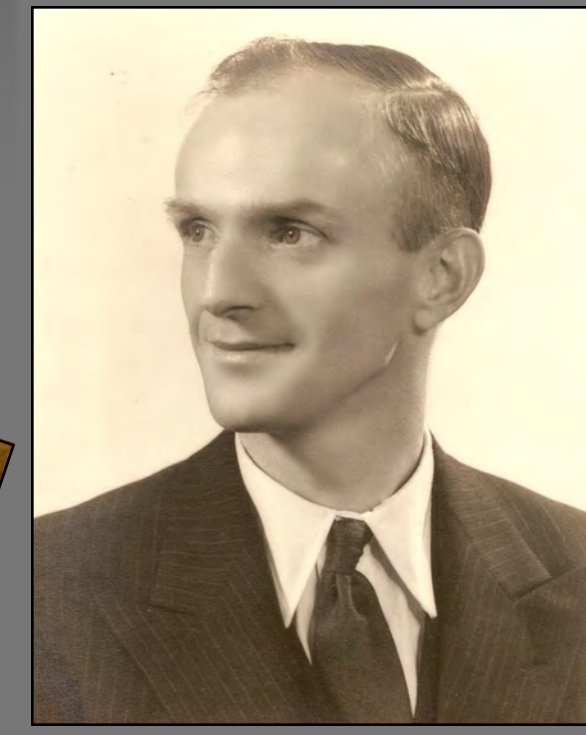
Walter Hegstrom



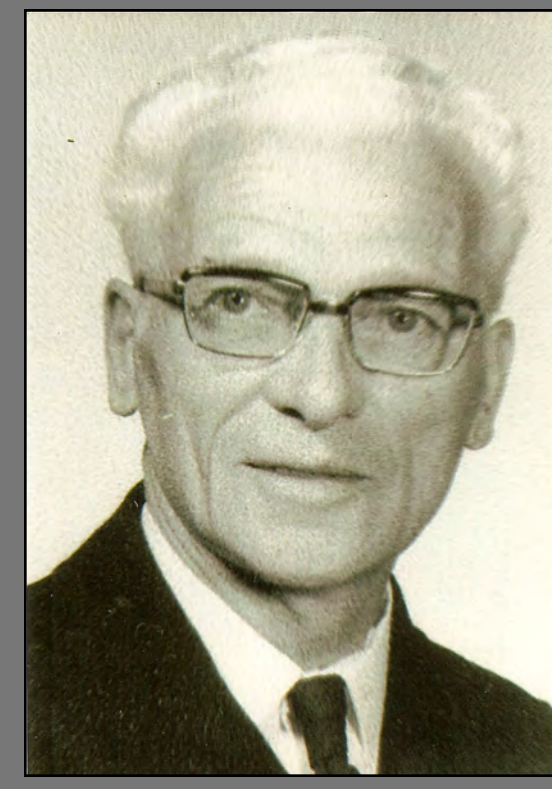
Cecil Greenstreet



Cyril Rock



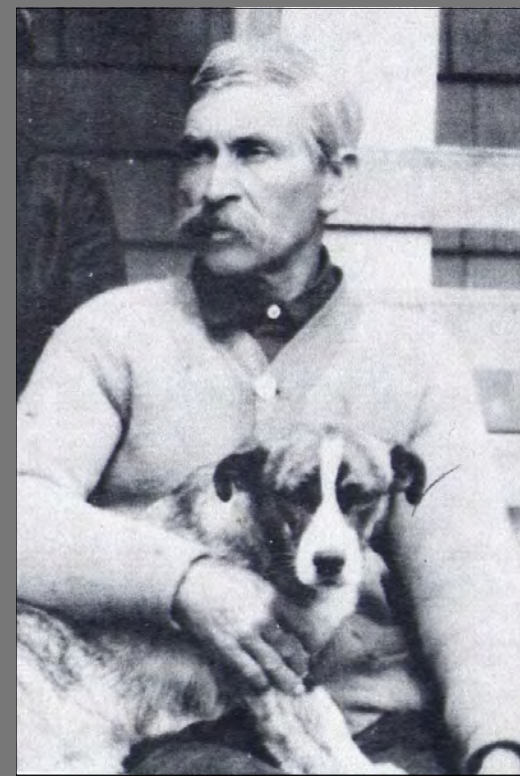
Billy Fullerton



Tom Mather



Eric Godson



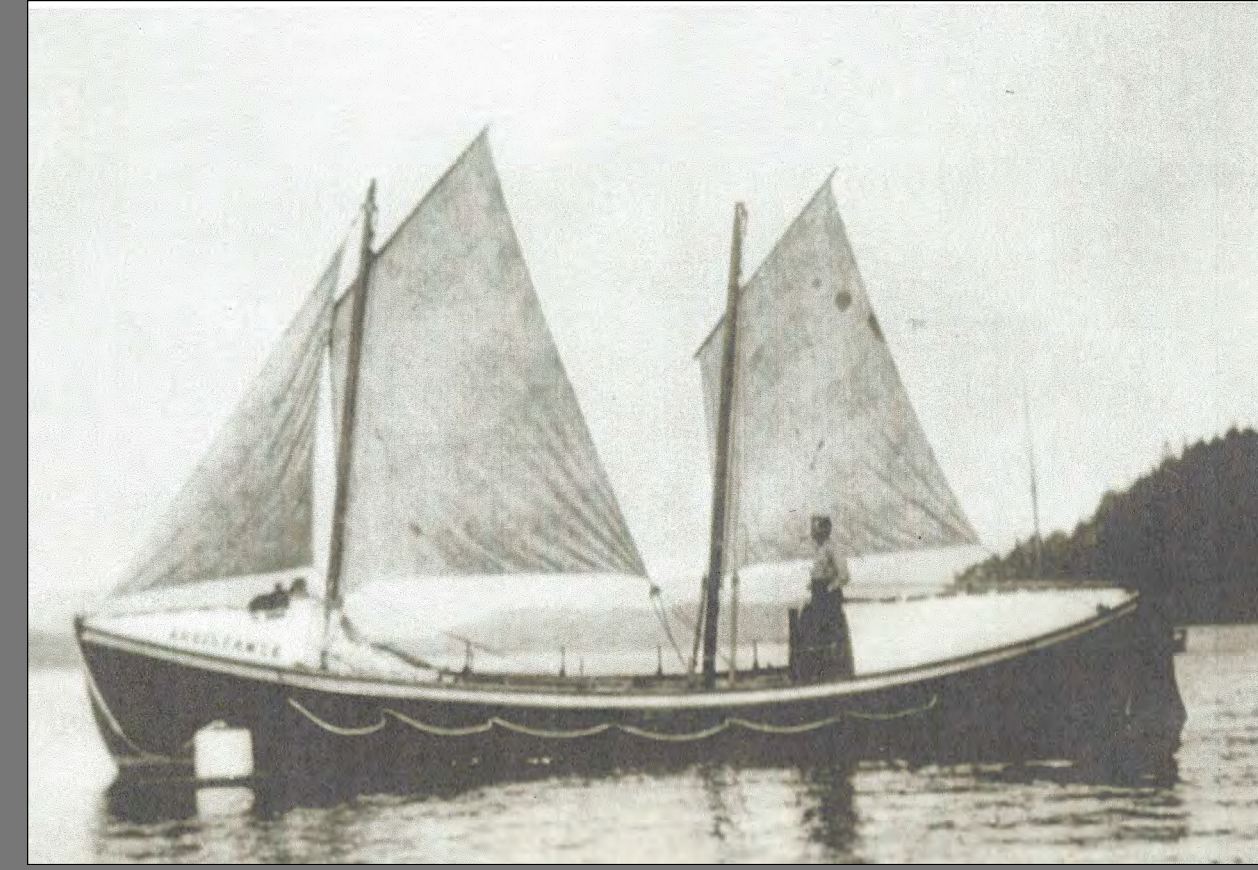
David Logan from Clo-oose



Bamfield Lifeboat Crew constructing slipway, 1908



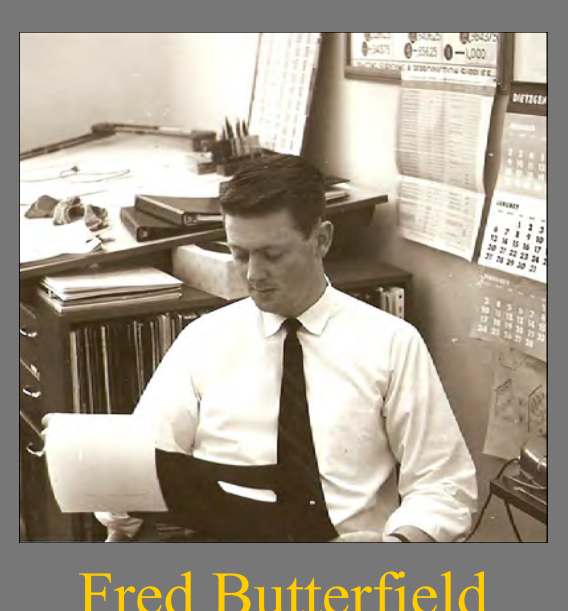
Sonny Logan



Cyril Rock, 1925, airing the auxiliary sails



Bamfield Lifeboat crew 1925 Photo by Fletcher



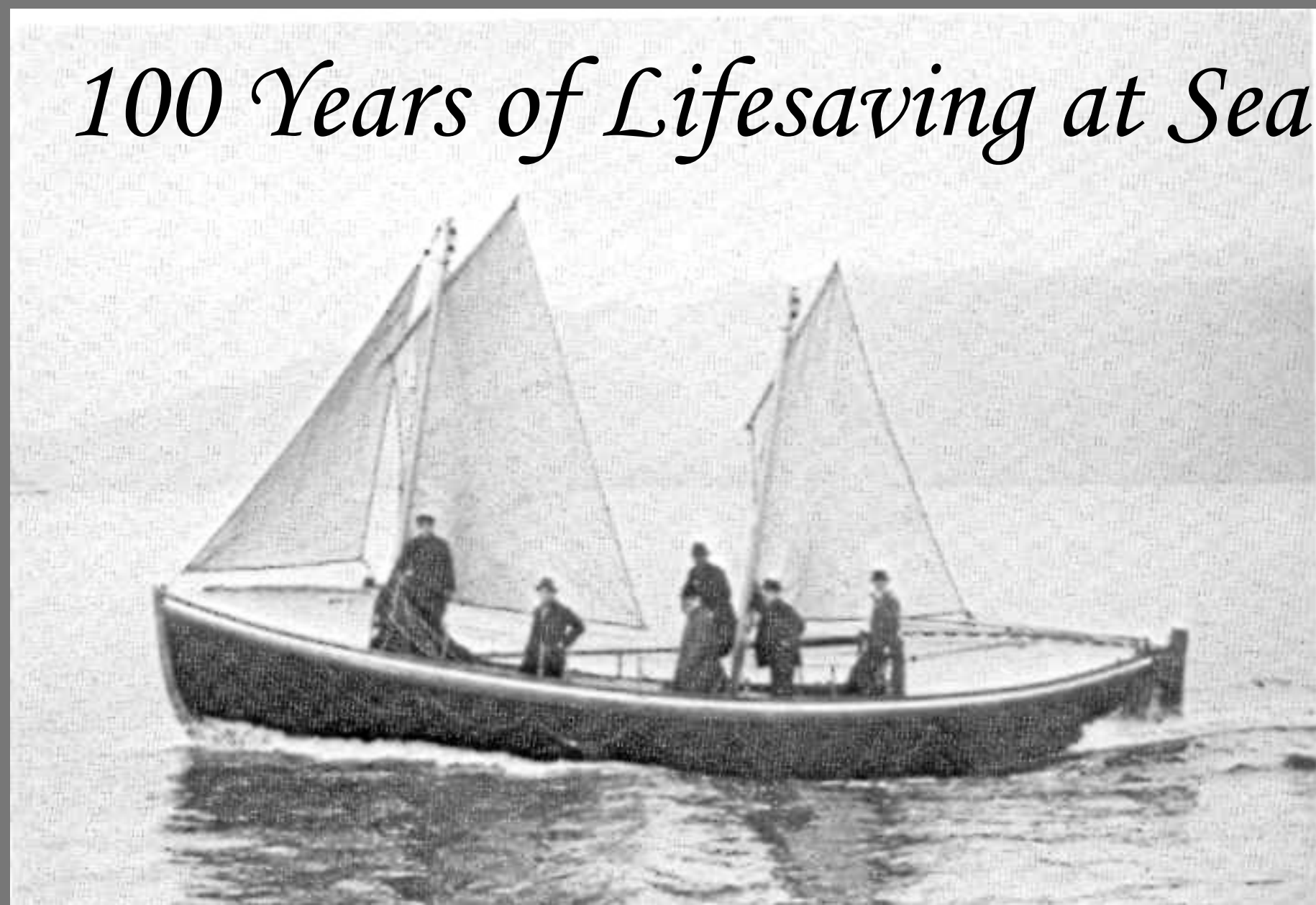
Fred Butterfield



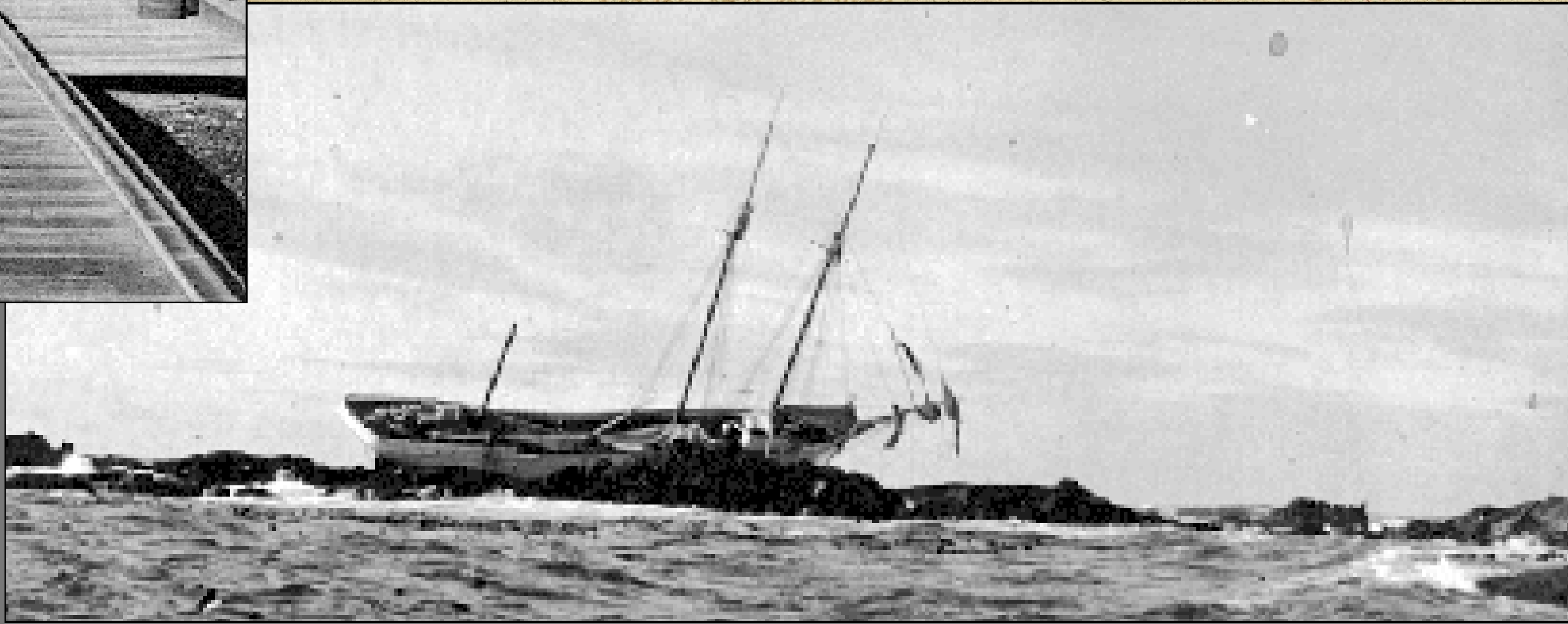
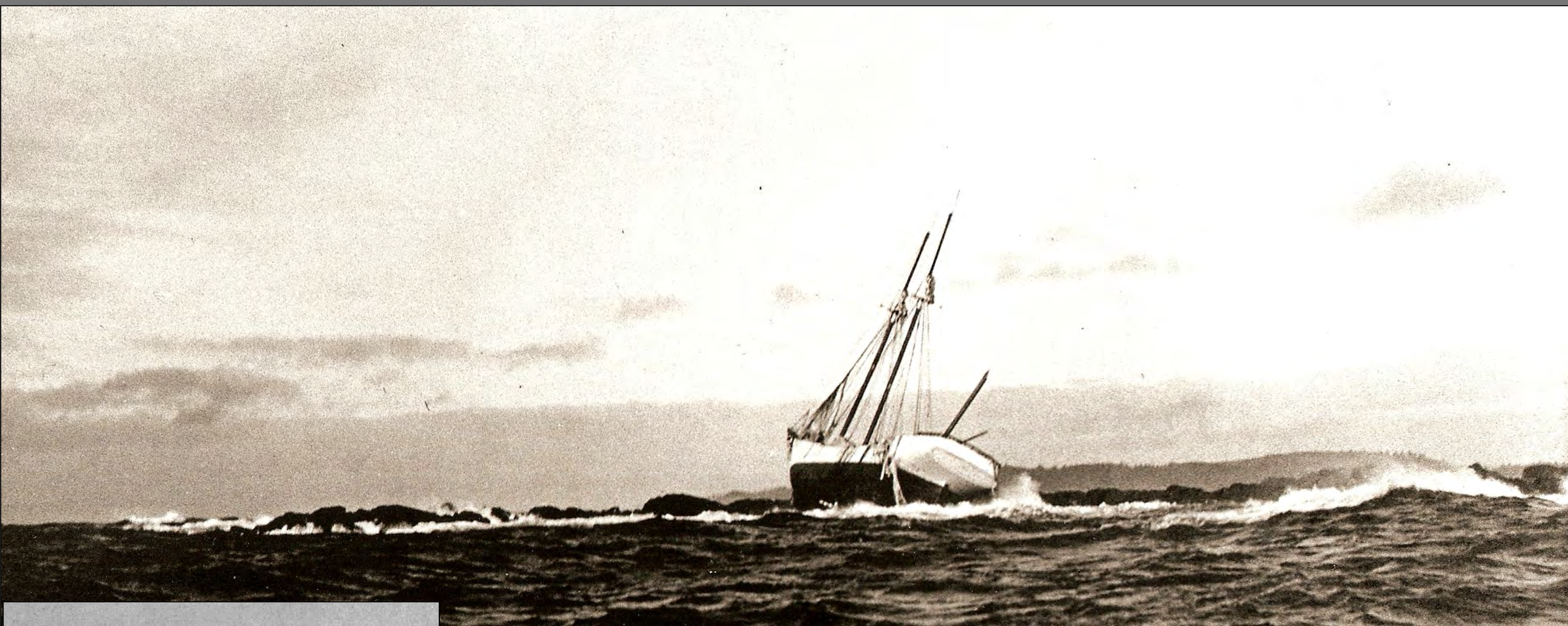
Martin Charles, Clifford Charles, Dave Christney, Bob Amos Photo courtesy Clifford Charles



100 Years of Lifesaving at Sea



# The Wreck of the Soquel January 22nd, 1909



## The Wreck of the Soquel

On the stormy night of January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1909, slightly a year after the arrival of the MLB *Assistance* at Bamfield, she broke away from her moorings in the middle of the night and drifted to a premature death on the rocky shores of "Robbers Island" in the present day Deer Group. Local legend has it that the high speed approaches the crew made to impress the local ladies gradually dragged the mooring's anchor into deeper water and that this, combined with a strong southeast wind, led to the lifeboat's demise. Realistically, crew fatigue was the most probable cause of the mishap, the *Victoria Colonist* reporting on the following day that,

*It seems that the child of Mr and Mrs Thompson of the Cape Beale lighthouse was ill and in need of medical attention and the mother and child were taken to Ucluelet (by the lifeboat) where the little one died. The lifeboat was not hauled out as usual, having returned after nightfall. A watch was left and when the light was missed the watchman failed to report it. A strong SE wind was blowing and nothing could be done until it moderated.*

Assuming that the lifeboat crew had run the gap at Cape Beale in this severe weather and then run the 15 nautical miles to Ucluelet and back in these horrendous conditions, this would mean that they had been underway in an open boat for close to eight hours, exposed to cold, wind and sea. It is also quite probable that the surge was too great to safely place the lifeboat on the slipway. A dejected Captain Gillen and his hapless crew of eight were told to report to the Marine Agent in Victoria at their earliest possible convenience. Unofficially there is little doubt that they knew their careers in the service were over but as fate would have it, their days as lifesavers were not.

Only days later during a howling blizzard on the night of January 22nd, 1909, the large (762 ton) four-masted American schooner *Soquel* ran afoul of Seabird Rocks at the entrance to Pachena Bay. The Master of the ill-fated schooner was Captain Charles Henningsen who, with his wife and infant daughter onboard, was completing his final trip at sea. In the tumultuous moments after the grounding, the *Soquel* was continually smashed by breaking seas. Sadly, several of her masts and spars careened on deck, taking the lives of both Henningsen's wife and daughter. In the chaos, several seamen made it onto the reef while others clung to the wreck. A feeble light was lit by those onshore which was seen by the light keeper at the recently constructed Pachena Point Lighthouse who relayed the distress by wire to Bamfield.

With no lifeboat available, Gillen and his crew boarded the Steamer *Leebro* (which, coincidentally, was in Bamfield to pick up the remains of the lifeboat) and sped to the scene of the disaster where, after several attempts with the ship's boats, during one of which they were nearly all lost, Gillen and his crew succeeded in recovering the majority of the stricken schooner's crew under the most perilous of conditions.

In the end, the lifesaving crew's valiant efforts at the wreck of the *Soquel* had little consequence on their inevitable fate. Eventually the first MLB was shipped on the *Leebro* to the Hudson's Bay Dock in Victoria's harbour where it drew the ire of a disgusted public and where she was declared a total loss and sold for scrap. On January 30<sup>th</sup>, the *Colonist* reported that "the lifesaving crew has been discharged. A lone caretaker will take charge of the station which has been abandoned. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*" It is doubtful that the station was "abandoned," however, for Gillen himself, in his final report regarding the rescue, possibly the final report of his lifesaving career, states that his intention was to bring the under-used Clo-oose pulling lifeboat to Bamfield. There would, however, be another crew to man her.



100 Years of Lifesaving at Sea

# Bamfield Lifeboat Station At Work



100 Years of Lifesaving at Sea



**The Banfield Lifeboat  
1951—1986**



CG 36 MLB "Banfield Lifeboat" constructed 1951, remained in service until 1989. Preserved on display in Port Alberni, B.C. A. Foxopous, photo.



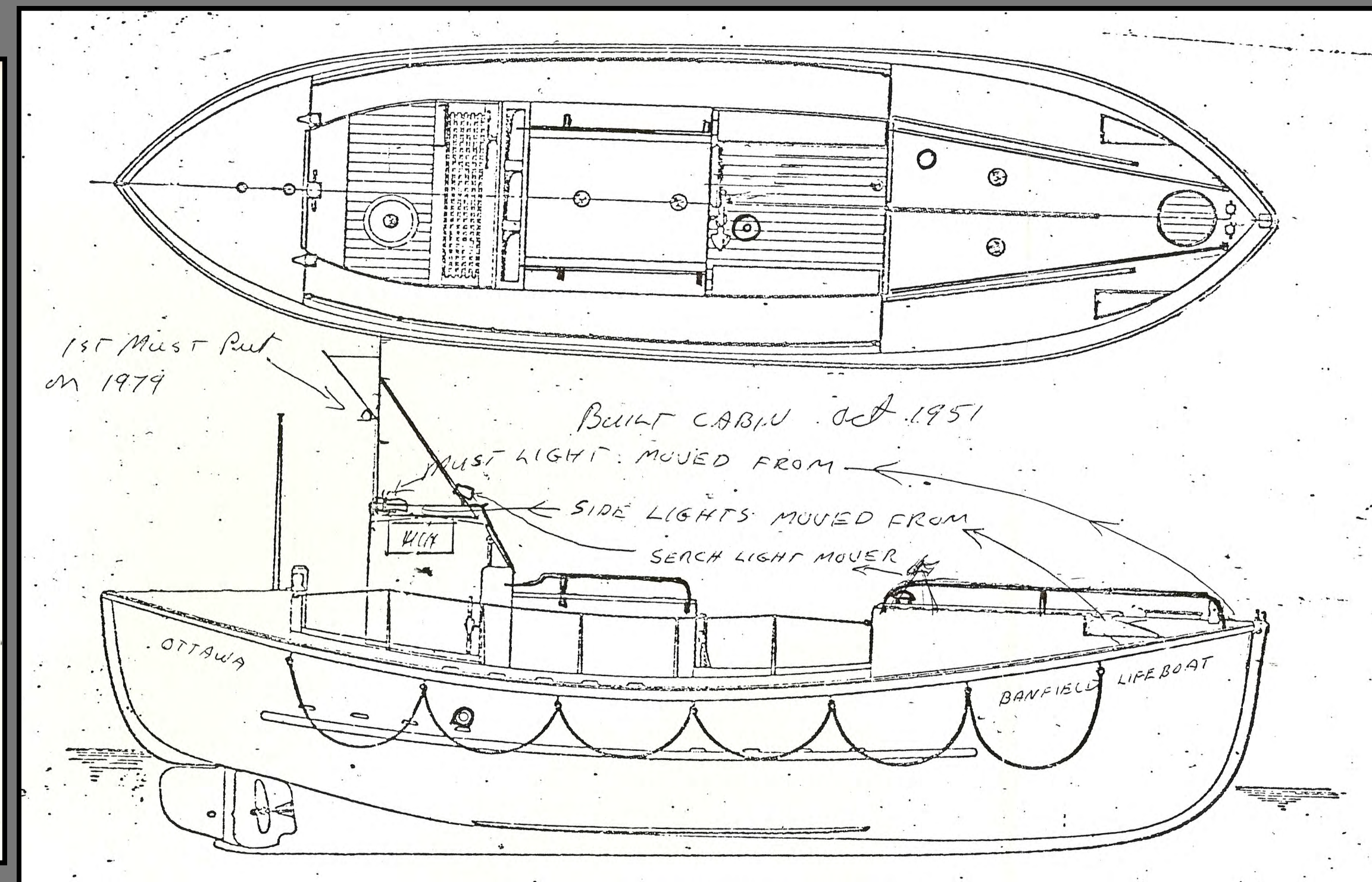
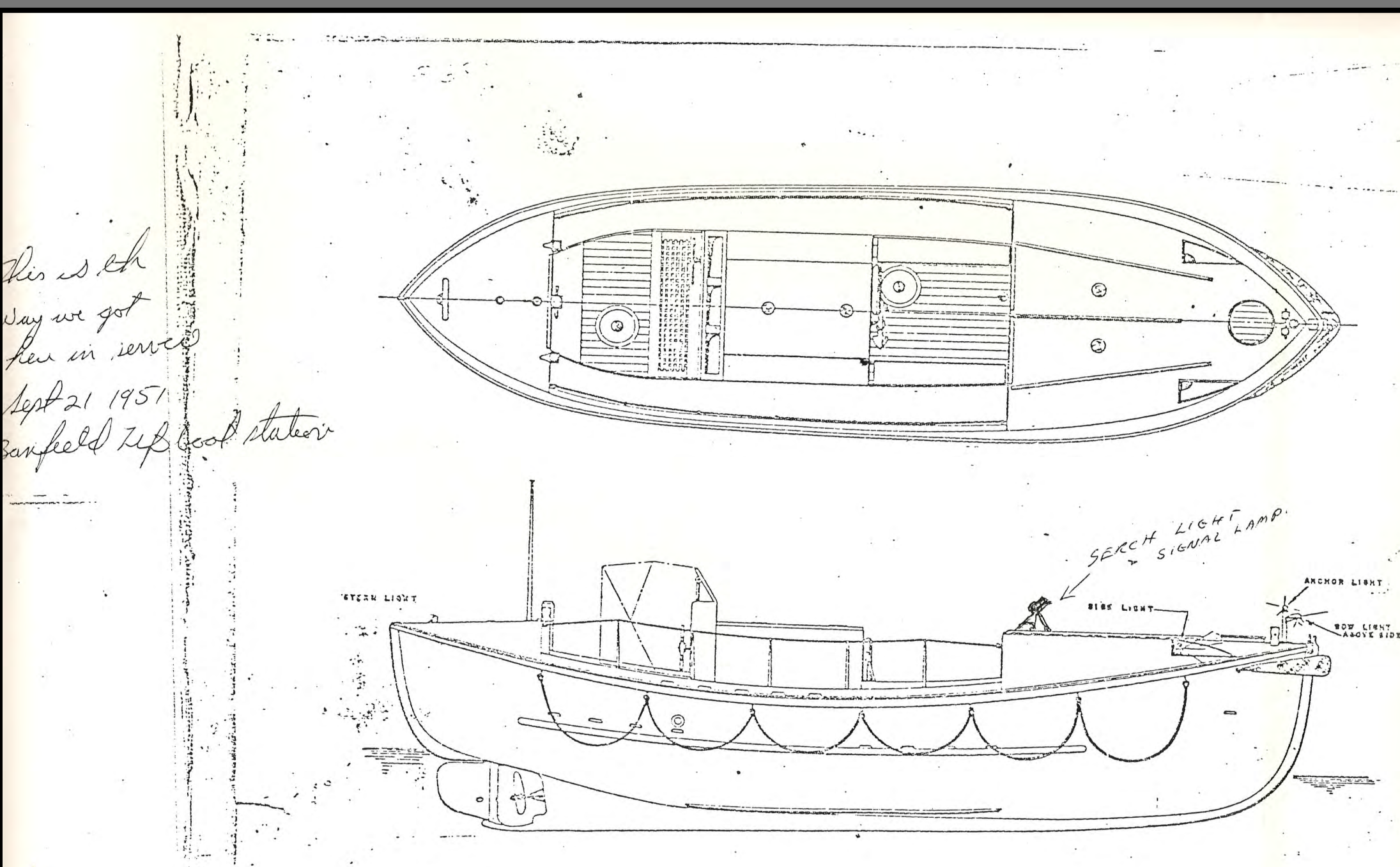
**The BANFIELD LIFEBOAT 1951-1986**

By the end of WWII, the ASSISTANCE was approaching four decades in service and, even with constant up-keep, the challenges of operations on the West Coast had taken their toll. In 1951 a new MLB arrived at the Bamfield Life Saving Station, the third since 1908, and one of three built for Canadian service by Chantiere Maritime in St. Laurent, PQ. At first glance, the new boat, a 'TRS'-type MLB called the BANFIELD LIFEBOAT, did not appear to be much different from the previous 'E-types'. It was a 36-ft displacement hull with a design pedigree from the British self-righting lifeboats dating back to the 1850s. There were distinct differences however. The engine was now housed in a small trunk cabin amidships, rather than the previous aft location, and the forecastle was much longer.

John Logvanoff, the coxswain at Bamfield, and the station engineer, Boris Hoskins, were impressed with the construction and lay-out of the new '36-footer'. They were, however, somewhat dismayed when, after almost 30 years of service in open lifeboats, they saw the new MLB still left its crew exposed to the elements. After all, commercial fishing vessels along the West Coast had been fitted with cabins since the turn of the century. So why wouldn't men tasked to operate in the worst of weather have the same protection? Taking the initiative, Logvanoff and his crew constructed a small enclosed wheelhouse on the new boat. The tacit understanding with superiors in Victoria was that the addition would remain "low profile".

However, the BANFIELD LIFEBOAT's new design feature was inadvertently placed front and centre when the crew rendezvoused with a US Coast Guard (USCG) '36-footer' out of Neah Bay, Washington. The USCG crew was so impressed with the Canadians' wheelhouse that they had official inquiries made between Washington and Ottawa for a copy of the design. Of course, Ottawa knew nothing about it; there was no such 'design'. In the end, after some red faces and the eventual recognition that John Logvanoff's wheelhouse was a sound idea, all of the Canadian MLBs were fitted with similar wheelhouses.

The BANFIELD LIFEBOAT served as the primary MLB at the Bamfield Life Saving Station from 1951 until 1969 and continued in service as a relief lifeboat for both Bamfield and Tofino until 1986. Today the BANFIELD LIFEBOAT is preserved by the Port Alberni Maritime Heritage Society under a shelter on Port Alberni's Harbour Quay.



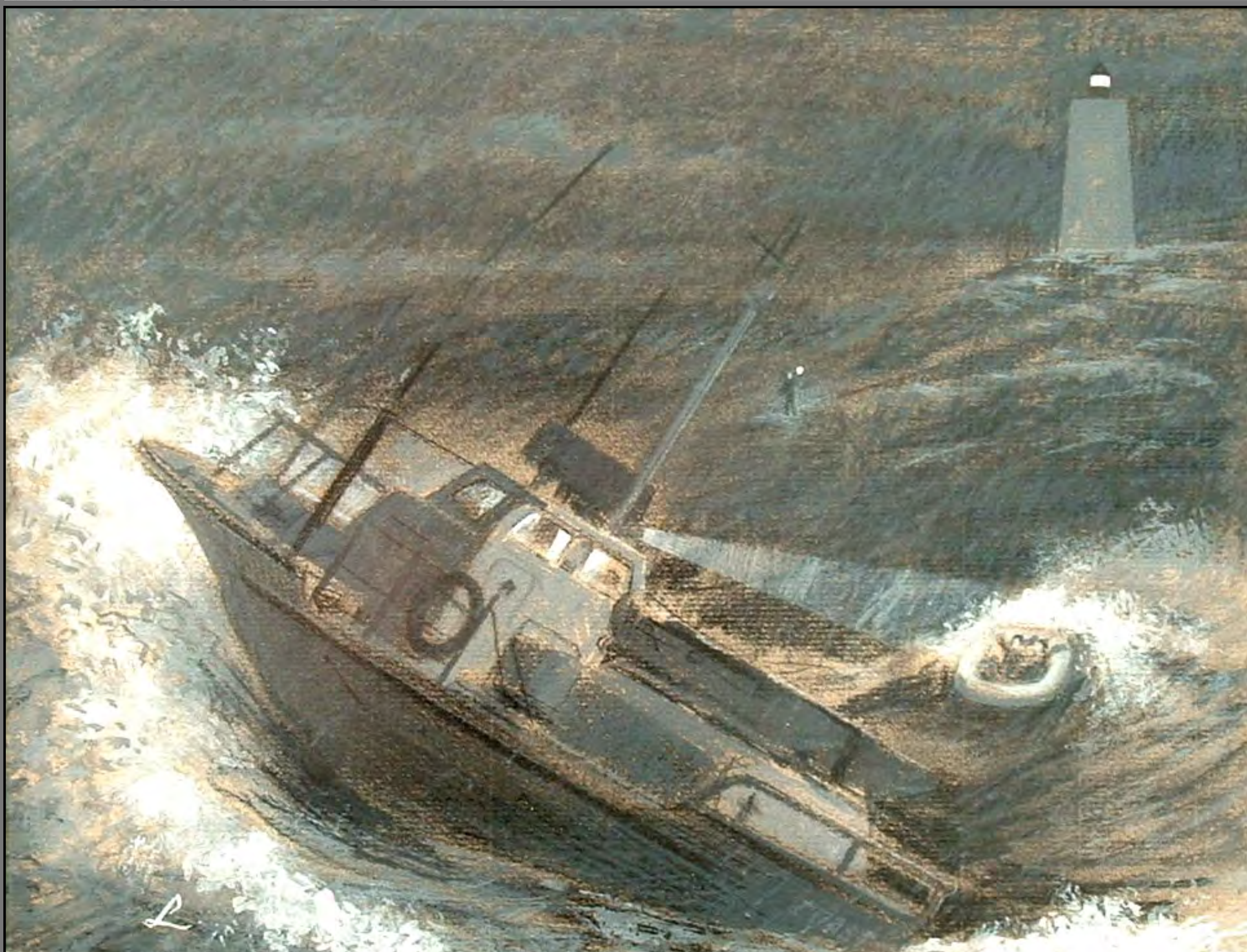
**BANFIELD LIFEBOAT specifications:**

- Length overall: 36' 10"
- Beam: 10' 8"
- Draft: 3' 4"
- Weight: 10 tons
- Hull: Red cedar, carvel-planked

- Engine: GM 4-71, 110 hp @ 1800 rpm.
- Max speed: 8 knots
- Range: 300 nautical miles
- Keel: Bronze, 1800 lbs



# The Loss of the Bruce 1 February 28th, 1976



**The Bruce 1**

On a stormy leap year's eve, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1976, the fishing vessel *Bruce 1* was on route to the herring grounds of Barkley Sound in a blinding snow storm when she was set upon the notorious rocks and shoals in front of Cape Beale, about 5 miles to the southwest of Bamfield. Before they knew it her crew of four found themselves abandoning ship as the wooden seiner rapidly began to disintegrate under the onslaught of the breaking seas. Two of the crew, the skipper Stan Beale and Randy West, ended up in the sea, clinging to a punctured liferaft. The other two, Reid Dobell and Rusty Waters ended up separated and clinging to semi-submerged rocks.

Mike Slater, the assistant light keeper at Cape Beale that night was taking his dog for a walk and sensed that something was awry; peering down over the 100' cliff in front of the light he heard calls for help and spotted a searchlight and other small lights in a location where no vessel or mariner had any reason to be. Immediately, he banged on the door of Alex Thompson, the senior keeper, who had noted the vessel's lights earlier and Thompson quickly rang Tofino Coast Guard Radio on the lighthouse circuit. Soon, David Christney, Coxswain of the Bamfield Lifeboat, *CG 104* and his crew of three consisting of Bob Amos, and the father and son team of Martin and Clifford Charles were underway in the 30 knot gale for the scene of the wreck.

When the crew of the *CG 104* arrived, a huge sea was running from offshore and visibility was poor; Christney was in communication with Keeper Thompson on the bluff above and soon they spotted a feeble white light in amongst the rocks. The light turned out to be the remnants of the *Bruce 1*'s liferaft which had been torn amongst the rocks. Still containing Stan Beale and Randy West, the raft was barely afloat and every few seconds a wave would break right over it. Christney pulled *CG 104* alongside and the lifeboat crew recovered the two survivors to the lifeboat where Bob Amos warmed them up in the engine room. The two men were incoherent with cold and it was a few more minutes before the lifeboat crew discovered that there were two more missing from the stricken vessel's crew.

The *CG 104* and her crew continued to search the scattered rock piles for any sign of the other two survivors with the aid of the light keeper and his assistant. The lifeboat's small inflatable was somehow launched by the Charles duo, poking into places where the big boat could not go. At one point, Martin Charles advised Christney that he was certain he could hear someone calling for help over the din of the breaking surf. Pulling up as close as they could to the bottom of a 30 foot high rock, they could see a man waving and yelling at the top. It was Reid Dobell, who had somehow scrambled up to relative safety. His only way off this rock, however, was up. Christney advised that a helicopter was on route from USCG Station Pt Angeles and would be on scene within an hour.

Instead of heading back to Bamfield with the two survivors, the crew of the lifeboat continued searching the immediate area for the fourth crewman, while standing by Dobell as best they could. Soon, the big Sikorsky, USCG HH 524-1461, was on scene, and with its powerful searchlight spotted Dobell, who had been lying in a crevasse at the top of the rock for many hours. Soon after its arrival, the helicopter and its crew, piloted by Lt Brian Mills, hoisted him to safety in a basket. The helicopter crew immediately set about searching for the fourth man, Rusty Waters, and its searchlight could be seen going back and forth at the base of the cliff and amongst the pinnacles and breaking waves. About one half hour after Dobell's rescue, however, the helicopter's searchlight suddenly went out and keeper Thompson's wife called out on the radio that the helo had gone down in the breakers below the light.

On the lifeboat, the crew was stunned. To rescue those onboard the downed aircraft Christney would have to take his lifeboat into the jaws of the beast. Working closely by radio with the light keepers above, he guided the lifeboat in, avoiding the white water. At one point an extremely large wave combed in, exposing an unforeseen rock.. Too late to make a move, the lifeboat, its crew and survivors were knocked sideways by a large breaker. Somehow, by mere fate alone, the same wave swept the *CG 104* over the rock relatively unscathed. Now they were in the relative calm at the base of the cliffs and they could see the helicopter, still afloat but being smashed with the surge. Again, the small inflatable boat was launched and the Charles jumped in. Not sure of what they would find, they literally drove the inflatable into the large open side door of the helo. To their astonishment, the entire flight crew of three and the even more exhausted Dobell were staring them straight in the eye. The lifeboat crew yelled "Let's get out of here," and within seconds the boat was full and underway to the relative safety of the lifeboat.

With six battered survivors onboard, Christney reluctantly headed back to Bamfield to the Outpost Hospital, with keeper Thompson providing bearings in the near white-out conditions so that they could make their way out of the rock piles into safer water.

Soon, the Bamfield crew was back on scene at Cape Beale, searching for Rusty Waters. Both Dobell and the light keepers had heard him calling out but in the din of the storm and the chaos of the rescue, he could no longer be heard. Sadly, in spite of all efforts, including a flare drop and an extensive search with two lifeboats, the last crewman of the *Bruce 1* was never found.



CANADIAN COAST GUARD STATION BANFIELD, B.C.  
in deep appreciation for rescuing  
crewmembers aboard USCG HELO HH-524 1461  
night of 29 February 1976

# Coast Guard 104, The Bamfield 1969—1999



## Coast Guard 104, The BAMFIELD 1969 - 1999

At the Ninth International Lifeboat Conference held in Edinburgh in 1963 the USCG presented their revolutionary new self-righting MLB design, the '44-footer'. This new rescue workhorse boasted a steel semi-planing hull, an aluminum superstructure, twin diesel propulsion and an almost unprecedented speed of 15 knots. So successful was the design that 44-footers would go into service in the U.S., Canada, the U.K., Ireland, Portugal, Italy, Norway, Tunisia and Iran and many remain in operation today in other parts of the globe.

The first Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) '44' was constructed by the USCG at their shipyard in Curtis Bay, Maryland and was commissioned at Clark's Harbour, Nova Scotia, in 1966. Seventeen more 44s would be built in Canada, including Bamfield's CG 104 launched in 1969 and one of three '44's built by the McKay-Cormack shipyard on Victoria Harbour. The Canadian version of the design was similar to the British 'Waveney'-type. Aluminum was used more extensively than in the US MLBs and spray guards were fitted to the hull. A distinctive feature of the Canadian boats was the enclosed wheelhouse which, while being a great improvement for winter operations, resulted in a rather compact space – about the size of two phone booths – with barely enough room for two seats. As one can imagine this could become a very challenging work environment when stuffed with three or four crewmembers attempting to conduct, and possibly co-ordinate, a search in rough weather.

The CG 104 arrived in Bamfield in 1969 and began a 30-year career responding to thousands of calls. In her final years the MLB was renamed simply BAMFIELD. Although it was limited to a top speed of 12 knots and wasn't the most comfortable of vessels in heavy weather, the BAMFIELD always returned her crew safe and sound, often from the worst of conditions. The old '104' was sold from service in 2004.



### CG 104 specifications:

- Length overall: 44' 10 1/2"
- Beam: 12' 8"
- Draft: 3' 2 1/2"
- Weight: 15.8 tons
- Hull: Corten steel
- Superstructure: Aluminum
- Engine: Originally, twin Cummins Type 300diesels.  
Repowered with twin 225-hp Caterpillar 3208 diesels.
- Max Speed: 12 knots
- Range: 300 nautical miles
- USCG Operating Limits: 30-ft seas; 20-ft surf or breaking seas;  
50-knot sustained winds

100 Years of Lifesaving at Sea



The Cape Calvert and Cape McKay 1999 - Present



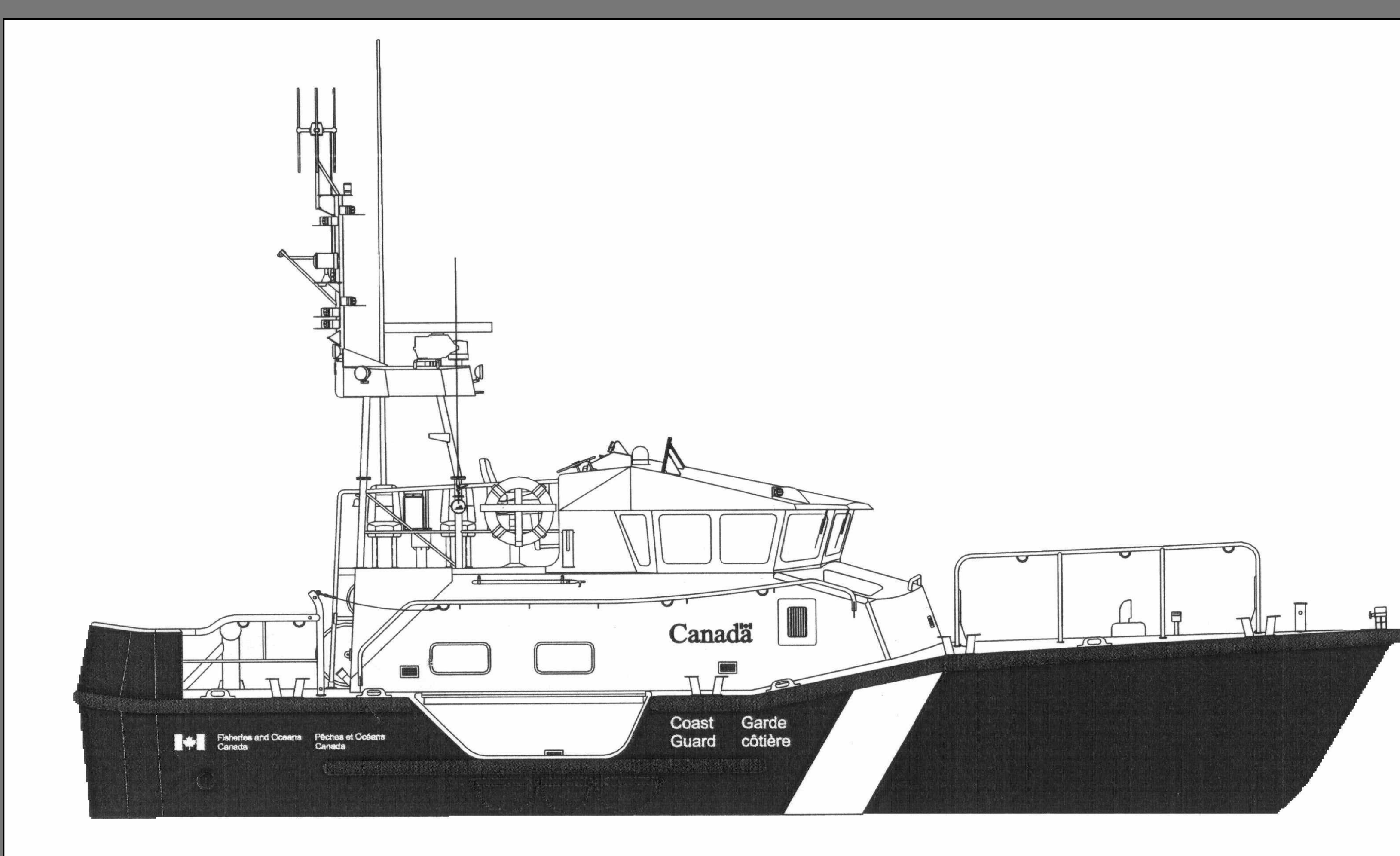
The CAPE CALVERT AND CAPE MCKAY 1999 - PRESENT

By the late 1980s, the USCG's 100-plus '44-foot' self-righting MLBs were approaching the end of their service lives so the USCG canvassed active surfmen from around the country, with thousands of combined hours of heavy weather experience, for recommendations on design features for the next generation of MLB 'surfboat'. The result was the 47-ft self-righting MLB known as the "47 footer."

The new design was all aluminum and, for the first time, came with a rapid-response specification of 25 knots. With continuous welding of the plate to the robust framing the '44' was designed for that capability in heavy seas and harsh ocean environments. Another unique feature for a self-righting MLB was the 'open bridge' design which provided the operator with both inside and outside control stations, a distinct advantage when maneuvering in close quarters or pulling someone out of the water. After the initial prototype, the USCG MLB 47-200, was launched in 1988. It was put through extensive evaluations and trials at Cape Disappointment, Washington and also was brought to Bamfield and Victoria for the CCG to assess. Five more pre-production boats were built for evaluation and testing in varying operational and environmental conditions all around the coastal United States.

In the mid-1990s the CCG was engaged in a major MLB replacement project and the USCG, at the request of the Canadian government, provided the design for the new self-righting '47'. This technology exchange continued a humanitarian legacy of design sharing between the two Coast Guards which commenced in the 1870s. In 1997, the contract for the first seven CCG 47-footers was awarded to the joint venture of MIL Systems and MetalCraft Marine, Kingston, ON. The second of these boats was the CCG MLB CAPE CALVERT and it arrived at Bamfield in 1999 (it's now in the relief fleet). In 2002 a second contract for 24 more of the MLBs was commenced at Victoria Shipyards in Esquimalt, BC. In 2004, one of these 'Phase 2' '47's, the CCG MLB CAPE MCKAY, arrived on station in Bamfield.

The CAPE MCKAY remains in service today part of the fourth generation in the proud tradition of self-righting MLBs and the fifth vessel at the Bamfield station since 1908. These MLBs have served mariners well along the notorious stretch of Canada's West Coast which has long been known as part of the 'Graveyard of the Pacific'.



'Cape'-class MLB specifications:

- Length overall: 47' 11 7/8"
- Beam: 15' 4"
- Draft: 4' 6"
- Displacement: 20 tons
- Hull/superstructure: Marine grade aluminum
- Engines: 2 x 450-bhp Caterpillar 3196 diesels; Twin Disc V-drive gears; Cardan shafts; 25 knots max; 22 knots service
- Range: 200 nautical miles
- Keel: Bronze, 1800 lbs
- USCG Operating Limits: 30-ft seas; 20-ft surf or breaking seas; 50-knot sustained winds



100 Years of Lifesaving at Sea

# The RHIOT School at Bamfield

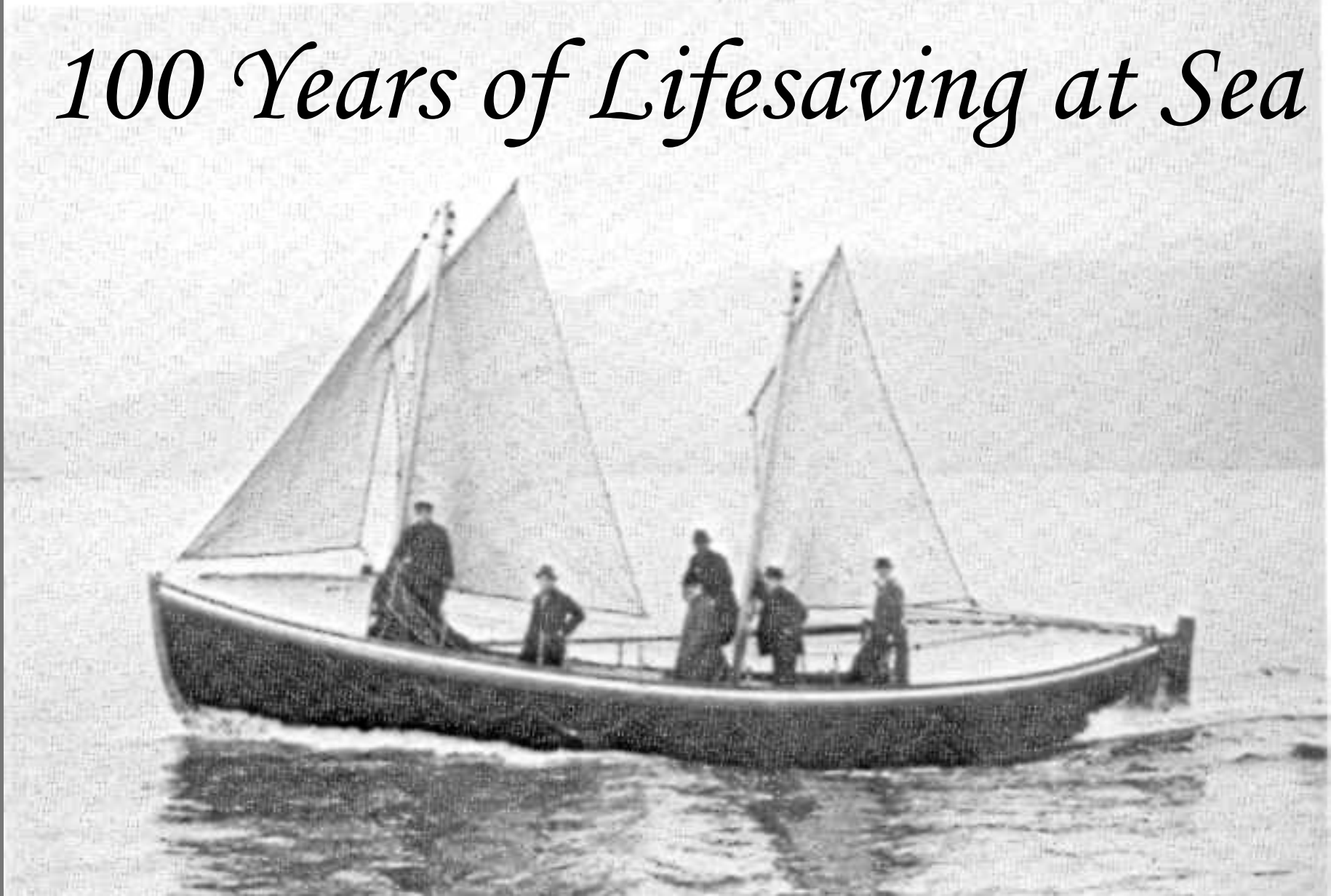


Photo credit: D. Brash, Victoria Times Colonist Newspaper



Photo credit: D. Brash, Victoria Times Colonist Newspaper



Photo credit: D. Brash, Victoria Times Colonist Newspaper



## The RHIOT School at Bamfield

Starting in the mid 1960's a new type of rescue craft was being used by maritime safety agencies all over the world. Smaller, faster, seaworthy and versatile, the rigid hull inflatable boat, or RHI, was a British invention which placed an inflatable collar on a rigid hull. Also known as rigid inflatable boats, or RIBs, early models had wooden or fiberglass hulls and were outboard driven.

Canada was no stranger to the development of the RHI. In the mid 1970's, the United World College's Pearson College of the Pacific in Victoria, B.C. began constructing Atlantic 21 RHI's based on the prototype design invented at their sister institution, Atlantic College in Wales.

It wasn't long before the Canadian Coast Guard began experimenting with the type and two of the Atlantic 21's were purchased by the CCG. David Hegstrom, long time Officer-in-Charge of the Bamfield Station was a big proponent of the RHI and he invited the international crews from Pearson College to bring their boats to Bamfield and take advantage of its qualities as a natural training ground for operating boats in all conditions.

The CCG continued to work and develop RHI's in conjunction with local manufacturers in Victoria and Vancouver and the region became one of the innovative hubs internationally for the design and construction of these boats. The CCG experimented with Avons, Zodiacs, Lucas Hurricanes and other makes, many of which came to Bamfield for trials. Given the expanding numbers of RHI's in the CCG fleet, including in the Inshore Rescue Boat, or IRB programme, it was decided in 1983 that a training course should be developed.

The first Rigid Hull Inflatable Operations Training (RHIOT) course took place in Victoria in the spring of 1985. In the fall of 1985, the course was moved to Bamfield so that students and instructors could take advantage of the local geography and sea conditions. By 1987, the RHIOT course had become well entrenched and the entire Bamfield Station received a major renovation including the alteration of the upper floor of the main boathouse into a classroom.

Today, the RHIOT course is taught nation-wide in every CCG region. The course continues to focus on RHI elemental and electronic navigation, maintenance, towing, search and rescue, boat handling and heavy weather operations. The CCG Pacific Region's RHIOT School at Bamfield continues to teach approximately 22 courses per year with over 130 students drawn from such agencies as the CCG, Coast Guard Auxiliary, Canadian Navy, DND, RCMP, Victoria and Vancouver Police, DFO, and Parks Canada. The RHIOT School at Bamfield has also hosted dozens of international students from the United States (USCG), Great Britain, Bermuda, New Zealand and Guam.



Photo credit: D. Brash, Victoria Times Colonist Newspaper

