

Citizens – Captain Edwin E. Bedford, USLSS

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C 1907 – Capt. Edwin E. Bedford and the U.S. Life Saving Station Crew - in their new white duck uniforms.

When Captain Edwin E. Bedford opened the White Lake Life Saving Station in March 1906, he was starting with the same experienced crew from the previous year: John P. Whelan, Lafe Pugh, Joseph Edlund, Charles S. Paget, Wilbert H. Sill, John A. Swenson and Julius A. Salmonson.

Edwin Eugene Bedford was born on 17 March 1854 on Beaver Island. He married Alice O'Neil (1858-1897) on 1 July 1882 in Brown County, Wisconsin. They had two children: Mary Ruth (1883-1920) and Alvin Eugene (1885-1974).

The 1900 census showed him as a widower with a daughter, Ruth, age 16, and a son Alvin, age 14. They were living in Crystal Lake, Benzie County at the time.

He was married for the second time to Anna Wilson - Swanston (1859-1923) on 27 December 1900 in Frankfort.

The Steamer Georgia of the Goodrich line made her first trip up to the Whitehall dock on Sunday, 16 June 1906. While going out through the piers, it ran into the Steamer Carrie Ryerson which was about to transfer some passengers to the big steamer. The collision occurred as the Ryerson was crossing the bow of the Georgia when the captain of the little boat miscalculated the distance between the approaching boats.

The crew of the Life Saving station maned the lifeboat and were quickly beside the Ryerson which began to leak badly through a hole which had been created in the planking by the Georgia. The passengers were quickly transferred to the lifeboat and then to the Goodrich steamer.

To prevent the Ryerson from sinking in the channel its captain D. Johnson, gave the signal for full speed ahead and the sinking boat wallowed along in the waterlogged condition until she was finally beached in about six feet of water just south of Sylvan Beach dock. She laid there with her damaged side out of the water until she could be raised and repaired.

The Ryerson was formerly owned by Captain David Wilson of this village who sold the boat to Mr. Hill of Chicago. He was interested in the development of a summer resort at Little Point Sauble. This was the Ryerson's first trip on her run between Pentwater and Muskegon in connection with the Goodrich boats.

John Swanson of the Life Saving Service crew became ill on the 6 April 1907 and was taken to the Franklin House where he received treatment for pneumonia. Unfortunately, he passed away on the 16 April 1907, at the age of 26 years. He was replaced at the station by Jesse Wizard.

In May 1907, Captain Bedford and his crew went to town in their surf boat to get supplies for the station. The trip was six miles and took fifty minutes to complete. The surfmen all looked very sharp in their new white duck uniforms.

On 6 November 1907, the Steamer Carrie Ryerson was brought to port in a disabled condition by the Steamer Lizzie Welch of Pentwater. The sea was running quite high, and the Ryerson was drifting helplessly off shore of Little Point Sable. She was on her way from Sturgeon Bay to Muskegon about 11 o'clock at night when the propeller shaft broke. Being there was no way to repair it, two of the crew were sent ashore in a small boat to get word to the lifesaving station here. After getting her into port, the Montague Iron Works worked to repair the shaft.

In February 1908 it was announced that John P. Whelan had been promoted to Captain or Keeper of the Plum Island station. There was no mention of his replacement at the time.

In mid-July 1908 Captain Bedford and his wife left for Point Betsey where he had been for many years before coming to White Lake. He was succeeded here by Captain Henry Curran of South Haven.

On October 1, 1908, it was announced that Jesse Wiard had resigned his position as surfman at the Life Saving station. He was replaced by Jerome Robinson.

Captain Bedford lost his second wife Anna on 26 August 1923 in Frankfort. He was married for the third time to Emma Jane Itches - Smith on 24 March 1927 in Benzonia. The marriage was short as she died on 9 January 1928 in Frankfort.

Bedford died on 11 April 1937 in Frankfort at the age of 83. He was buried in Crystal Lake Township Cemetery North, in Frankfort, Benzie County, Michigan.