

= Nathan F. Cobb =

The Nathan F. Cobb was a three @-@ masted schooner named after the shipbuilder and founder of Cobb ? s Salvaging Company whose many rescues of stranded ships help lead to the formation of the United States Life @-@ Saving Service . Despite its namesake 's history of shipwreck rescues , the Nathan F. Cobb capsized in heavy seas on 1 December 1896 en route from Brunswick , Georgia to New York with a cargo of timber and cross ties . The cook and a shipmate drowned when they were swept overboard in violent seas . The crew righted the vessel by removing the three masts and they drifted for four days until they became grounded on a sandbar off Ormond Beach , Florida . Rescue attempts led to the drowning of volunteer Ferd Waterhouse , whose body was never recovered , but no other crew members were lost . A plaque commemorates Ferd Waterhouse ? s rescue efforts . The Cobb Cottage , a structure built using materials salvaged from the ship , is part of Ormond Beach ? s Historic Trail .

= = History = =

Nathan F. Cobb of Rockland , Maine was a three @-@ masted , square rigged schooner constructed in 1890 . Information related to many ships built in Rockland between the years of 1837 and 1920 is generally sparse . In his six volume set titled Merchant Sail , William Armstrong Fairburn describes the landscape regarding construction and registration information for ships built in Rockland during the aforementioned era :

It is to be regretted that the desired data covering construction and registration at most Maine ports have not been preserved , recorded , and made available for inspection locally ; that the records still in existence ? and that have not been destroyed or lost ? are scattered ; the tabulations of the data on hand attempted during recent years by the P.W.A. (Pemaquid Watershed Association) are incomplete ; and that such records as have been made available are for vessels catalogued alphabetically instead of chronologically .

Fairburn cites Customhouse Records with recording information about 275 vessels registered as built in Rockland between 1837 and 1920 . Among the vessels listed is the Nathan F. Cobb , which ranged 167 @.@ 2 feet (51 m) in length , weighed 656 tons , drafted 12 @.@ 7 feet (4 m) of water and had a beam width of 35 @.@ 1 feet (11 m) .

= = Final voyage = =

On its last voyage the Cobb was scheduled to transport a cargo of timber and cross ties from Brunswick , Georgia to New York . On Tuesday , 1 December 1896 , after leaving port from Brunswick , the schooner fell victim to the strong winds and high seas associated with Nor 'easters . Gale force winds ripped the vessel 's sails from their masts and rough seas capsized the ship to its beam ends . The crew was able to right the distressed vessel by removing the main and mizzen masts , but this left the Cobb vulnerable since it was powerless and waterlogged . Despite the cabin being swept away by the sea , the ship 's hull was kept relatively intact during this sequence of events . Unfortunately , both a cook and a shipmate drowned in the violent seas . On the morning of 5 December 1896 the Nathan F. Cobb ran aground on a near shore sandbar roughly 1000 feet off the coast of Ormond Beach , Florida .

= = Rescue efforts = =

J.D. Price and John Anderson built the Ormond Hotel in 1888 and sold it to Henry Flagler in 1891 . While Flagler took over ownership responsibilities , he retained Price as the hotel 's manager . On the morning of 5 December 1896 , then Ormond Hotel manager J.D. Price , noticed the stranded vessel in the surf and gathered a group of people to assist in the rescue efforts . After learning of the disaster , Superintendent Hiram B. Shaw of the United States Life @-@ Saving Service 's Seventh Life @-@ Saving District , hastened to the scene to assess the situation . Shaw quickly telegraphed

for permission to have a life saving beach apparatus sent to him by train from Jupiter , Florida where the Jupiter Inlet Life Saving Station was located , approximately 180 miles south of Ormond Beach . This was quickly granted by General Superintendent Sumner Increase Kimball . Because of the proximity and travel time from the Jupiter Inlet Station to Ormond Beach , Shaw had his small surf boat wheeled down to the beach on a man @-@ drawn wagon . He then went into town to procure necessary equipment and rope lines for the rescue .

In total , about fifty people came together on the beach . Due to the tumultuous conditions , it was decided that no rescue attempts would be made until low tide at 11 : 00 a.m. The first rescue boat set out at nearly low tide . With a rope attached to its stern from shore , hotel painter Edward DeCourcy and another hotel staff member manned Shaw 's small rowboat . Although they successfully made it beyond the breakers , the rowboat succumbed to the strong southerly current ; missing the float line thrown from the schooner by five feet . They were forced to come in . Five more unsuccessful attempts were made to reach the grounded vessel .

Next , a small metallic dingy , known as an iron yawl , was carried down to the beach . Tom Fagen and Freed Waterhouse manned the yawl , in another attempt to reach the grounded schooner . Through skilled seamanship , they made it to the second set of breakers , only a short distance from the vessel . When they tried to reach the float line , a large wave struck them leaving their boat filled with water . The two men abandoned their yawl . Fagen managed to swim ashore and was met by volunteers close to the beach half @-@ drowned . Waterhouse decided against swimming to shore . When he saw that the yawl had flipped , he swam back to it and straddled the hull . The men on the shore began pulling the flipped boat in , but another wave broke on top of it throwing Waterhouse into the water and righting the yawl . Waterhouse climbed back into the boat and began getting pulled in again , only to be capsized shortly thereafter . This time Waterhouse surfaced , appearing dazed and grasping onto an oar . Shaw 's rescue boat was put back in the water , but Waterhouse had already gone under and presumably drowned to death a short time later . F Waterhouse 's body was never recovered , despite several searches .

Hiram B. Shaw had just returned to the beach when this casualty occurred . After supplying his small rescue boat with more rope lines , he and Edward DeCourcy removed their outer clothing and prepared to embark . The men on the Cobb , who had just witnessed Waterhouse 's drowning , prompted the captain of the schooner to give an impassioned address in which he said , " They have sacrificed one man in their efforts to save us ; now I 'll risk my life in an attempt to get ashore . " The captain tied a rope around his waist and jumped into the water , just as the rescue boat had set out from shore . After battling against the current and waves , he was met by Shaw 's rescue boat and clung to its stern until they reached land . Making use of the captain 's line , the men on shore tied a life preserver to it . One at a time , the five stranded crewmen pulled the flotation device out to the schooner , fastened it to their bodies and were pulled to safety by the people on the shore . After receiving a cup of hot coffee , a drink of whiskey and a blanket , the Cobb 's crew were taken to Coquina , Ormond Beach 's area hospital .

Upon hearing the story , General Superintendent Sumner Increase Kimball of the United States Life @-@ Saving Service wrote a letter of praise to Edward DeCourcy for his selflessness and bravery ; also acknowledging the many others involved .

= = Cobb Cottage = =

The Cobb Cottage was built using materials salvaged from the ship . William " Billy " C. Fagen was given permission to use the material to aid in the construction of the three bedroom cottage . Materials used from the wreck included railroad ties to form the exterior and railings for porch decorations . The schooner 's wooden name plate , with " Nathan F. Cobb " engraved into it , hangs over the fireplace . The house is now part of Ormond Beach 's Historic Trail .

= = Location = =

The location of Nathan F. Cobb 's wreck is designated by a sign to warn swimmers . It is anchored

in or near the water 's edge depending on the tide . The hull of the ship became visible for brief period in May 2004 after shifting sands and a very low tide coincided simultaneously . The sign is located at 29 ° 16 ' 38 " N 81 ° 1 ' 53 " W on Ormond Beach . Previously , a large boulder had been sent from Freed Waterhouse 's hometown of Cape Elizabeth , Maine , decorated with a bronze plaque commemorating his brave rescue efforts . This monument was prominently placed in the sand dunes near the site where the ship ran aground , but in July 1972 the plaque was vandalized and broken off . After the plaque was reattached to the boulder , it was relocated to the east side of the Casa Del Mar Beach Resort , where it currently sits . The sign is on the wall north of the steps leading up to the pool .

= = Newspaper coverage = =

Despite limited information about its service routes and construction , the Nathan F. Cobb was the subject of two separate New York Times articles during its short career . One article reported the wreck the day after it occurred , the other article came from 20 June 1892 and chronicled a disturbance between mates . The Cobb was still in tow only three miles outside Mobile Bay , beginning its route from Mobile , Alabama to New York , when mate Henry Shaffer jumped over board to avoid a beating . Another mate , J. Trott had already used a belaying pin to half kill another seaman on the schooner and Shaffer was fearful for his life . Shaffer began swimming towards a nearby light house and was picked up nearly five miles from where he jumped over board . The captain of the towboat reported that Captain Cookson of the Cobb , mentioned incidentally they had lost a crewman . Both Cookson and Trott already had pending charges against them for cruelty and marooning of sailors , stemming from an incident in May 1891 at Calcasieu Pass , Louisiana .

= = Forerunner of the United States Life @-@ Saving Service = =

Nathan F. Cobb was named after a ship builder , born in 1797 from Eastham , Massachusetts on Cape Cod . Cobb and his family moved from Eastham to Northampton County , Virginia before purchasing Sand Shoal Island , which later became Cobb Island . It was on Cobb Island , in 1839 , that Nathan founded Cobb 's Salvaging Company with his sons . They specialized in wrecking and salvaging stranded vessels along the shallow Mid @-@ Atlantic coastline . The Cobbs had a remarkable record ; not one person drowned in any of the rescue efforts for the 37 or more ships stranded off their island . The success of the salvaging company earned them the sobriquet " Rothschilds among the toilers of the sea " . Despite the company 's notable prosperity , the Cobbs were often praised for their humanity and general regard for human life , " Often a crew of ten or twenty would be landed on the island from stranded vessels without a penny , and they were tenderly cared for as though they were millionaires . " This practice was a rare creed among wreckers in the 19th century . The Cobbs and others like them transformed the act of salvaging which led way to the forming of the United States Life @-@ Saving Service ; this later merged into what is now the United States Coast Guard .