

WO-323  
U.S. Life-saving Station Museum  
Ocean City  
Public admission

1891

The early history of the life-saving service in Ocean City is traced back to 1878 when the first station was built on the periphery of the resort community between North Division and Caroline streets. Erected with its gable front doors facing the ocean, the story-and-a-half frame station followed a prototype designed by service architect, J. L. Parkinson.

As Ocean City expanded during the last decades of the nineteenth century the Life-saving Service decided to increase the size and improve the accommodations of the Ocean City station for the keeper and his crew. In 1891 a large tee-shaped frame station was built in front of the earlier building. According to the 1897 Sanborn Insurance map the first station was left free-standing and used to house a life-saving boat. But, in time, the old station was connected by a hyphen and converted to a service wing. The men who served as keepers of the early Ocean City stations were William T. West (1878-1889), Adelbert Soper (1890-1892), Joshua J. Dunton (1893-1906), and John B. Jones (1907-1914). The Life-saving Service occupied the buildings until 1915 when the U. S. Coast Guard took command of the facility. They used the buildings until 1962.

The U.S. Life-saving station, converted into a city museum after it was relocated in 1977, is the only extant station of its type in Maryland. Despite its reorientation, significant efforts were made at the time to preserve the original exterior and interior features. Photographs of the building on its former site indicate the exterior has changed little since the early twentieth century.

Built in roughly a tee-shape, the frame station is sheathed with a combination of board-and-batten and German siding. Distinctive original features include the king-post truss stick decoration within the eaves and the rooftop observation tower that tops the south end of the station. The interior retains much of its original beaded board walls and wainscoting.

HISTORIC CONTEXT INFORMATION

Resource Name: Ocean City Lifesaving Station

MHT Inventory Number: W0-323

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA:

1) Historic Period Theme(s):

ARCHITECTURE

TRANSPORTATION

2) Geographic Orientation:

EASTERN SHORE

3) Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

INDUSTRIAL - URBAN DOMINANCE  
(1870 - 1930)

4) Resource Type(s):

STANDING STRUCTURE

1. LIFESAVING STATION

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. WO-323

Magi No.

DOE  yes  no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic U.S. LIFE-SAVING STATION

and/or common U.S. LIFE-SAVING STATION MUSEUM

## 2. Location

street & number SW corner of the Boardwalk and South 2nd St.  not for publication

city, town Ocean City  vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Worcester

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name City Commissioners of Ocean City

301 Baltimore Avenue

street & number Ocean City Town Hall telephone no.: 289-8221

city, town Ocean City state and zip code MD 21842

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Worcester County Clerk of Court liber

street & number Worcester County Courthouse folio

city, town Snow Hill state MD 21863

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date  federal  state  county  local

pository for survey records

city, town state

# 7. Description

Survey No.

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move <u>1977</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The U.S. Life-Saving Station museum stands at the south end of the Boardwalk and north of South 2nd Street in the southern section of Ocean City, Worcester County, Maryland. The two-and-a-half story tee-shaped frame station faces south with the principal gable oriented on a north/south axis. Sited originally on the ~~south~~ side of North Division Street, the station was built to face the ocean. In 1977 the station was relocated to its present site and converted to a city museum.

Built in 1891, the U.S. Life-Saving station is supported on a concrete block foundation, and the frame building is sheathed with a combination of board and batten and German siding. Covering the gable roof as well as its numerous cross gables and dormers is a red asphalt shingle roof. The observation tower, which rises atop the south end of the building, retains a layer of red wood shingles.

The south side is a symmetrical elevation with a double-doors on the first floor and four-over-four sash windows lighting the second floor. The partially glazed double doors are hung on large metal hinges. Trimming the gable end is a king-post truss supported on small brackets. While the lower level of the building is covered with horizontal German style siding, the upper wall surface retains a layer of board and batten siding. The rooftop observation tower is covered by a gable roof with small two-over-two sash windows. Stick decoration is found in the observation tower gables.

The east elevation, now facing the ocean, is an asymmetrical facade with a large off-center cross gable and an adjacent dormer, both of which interrupt the eave. The cross gable is pierced by a pair of four-over-four sash windows and the eave is trimmed with the same king-post truss decoration. The adjacent dormer, filled with only a single four-over-four sash window, is treated in the same manner. The first floor is marked by an uneven placement of doors and four-over-four sash windows.

The west side features the leg of the tee with a shed porch filling the southwest corner. A replacement door is topped by a single pane transom. Like the other two sides the first and second floor are marked by four-over-four sash windows. A gabled dormer pierces the roofline above the porch and is decorated with the same king-post truss.

The north (rear) elevation is partially covered by the single story service wing. A narrow brick stack rises through the south gable end roof between the exterior wall surface and the king-post truss decoration. The service wing is finished with a similar combination of plain weatherboards and board and batten siding. A side porch is incorporated under the west roof slope.

(continued)

# 8. Significance

Survey No. W0-323

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
				HUMAN SAFETY

**Specific dates** 1891 **Builder/Architect**

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check: Applicable Criteria:  A  B  C  D  
 and/or  
 Applicable Exception:  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Level of Significance:  national  state  local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The U. S. Life-saving station museum in Ocean City is the only extant station erected by the United States Life-saving service in Maryland and therefore possesses local as well as state significance. Although the building was relocated to the south end of the boardwalk in 1977, the structure was restored with careful attention to the preservation of its historic exterior and interior features. Photographs of the building on its former site indicate the exterior has changed little since the early twentieth century.

### HISTORY AND SUPPORT

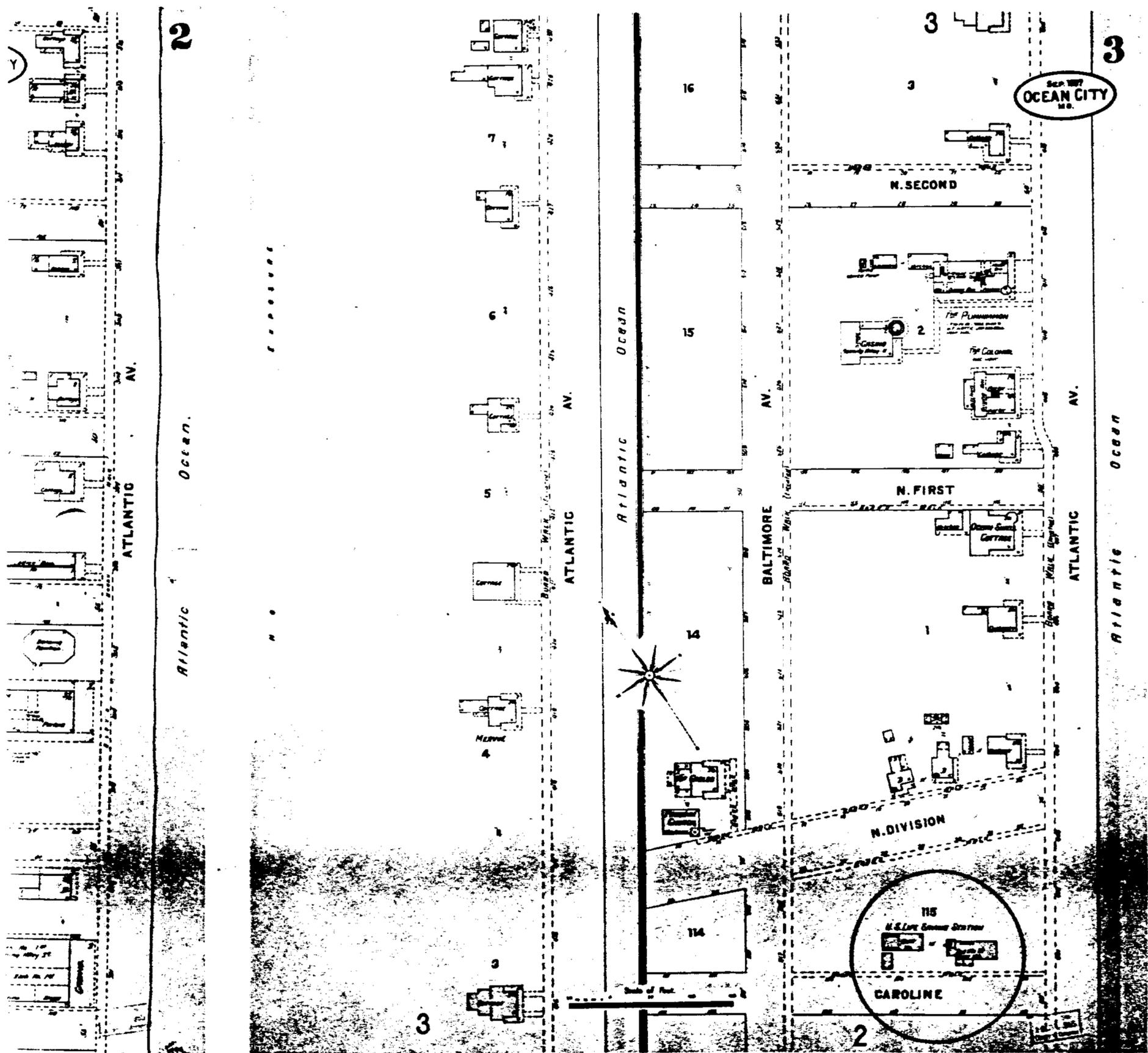
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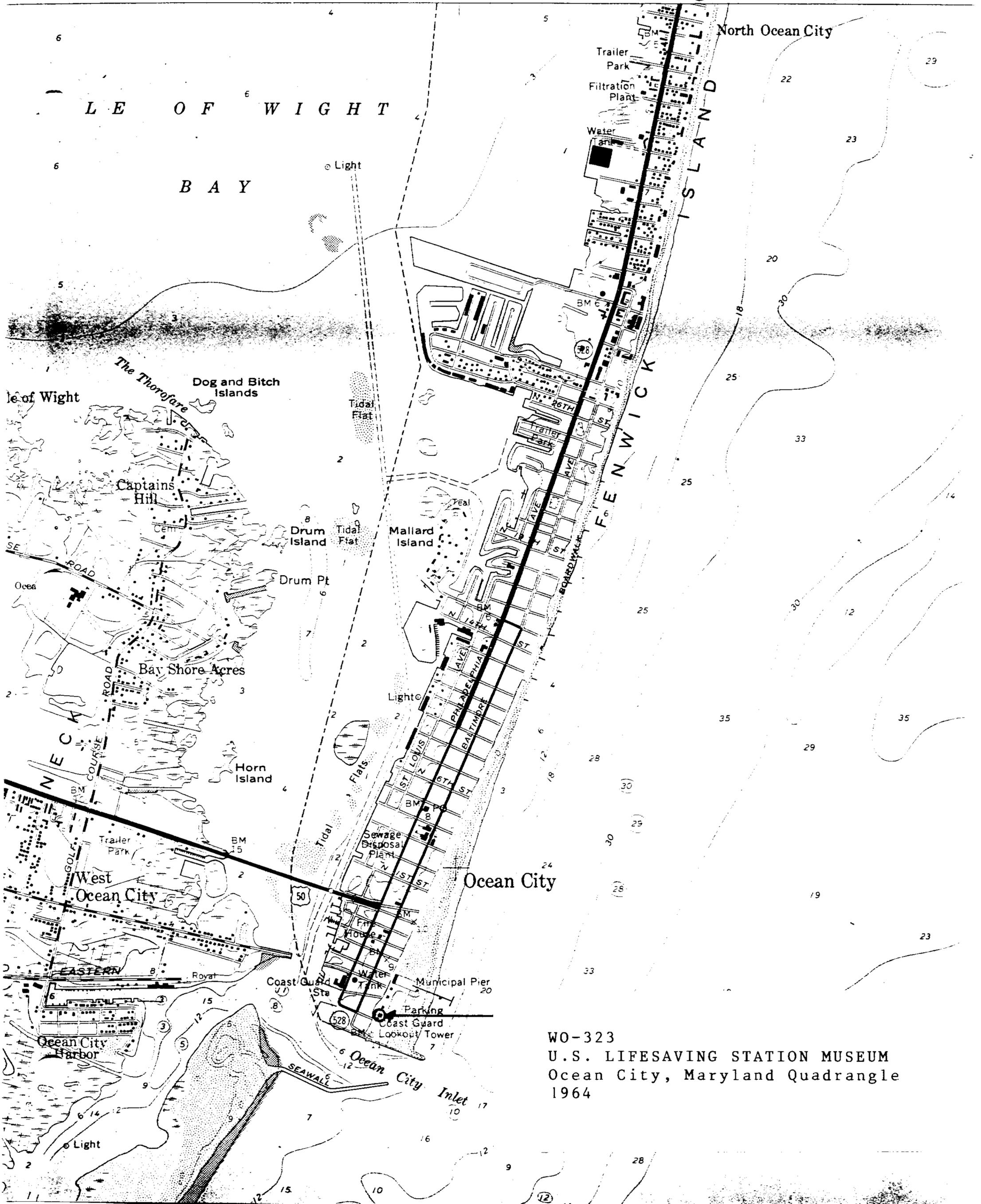


## U. S. LIFE-SAVING STATION MUSEUM DESCRIPTION (continued)

The interior has been reworked to accommodate museum installations but every effort was taken to preserve original features when the building was renovated in the late 1970s. Beaded board wainscoting trims the perimeter of several rooms. Rising in the center of the building is a narrow enclosed stair also trimmed inside with beaded board wainscoting. Access to the the observation tower is provided by a steep ladder fixed in the south second floor room.



ORIGINAL LOCATION



WO-323  
 U.S. LIFESAVING STATION MUSEUM  
 Ocean City, Maryland Quadrangle  
 1964