

Hendricks Head – Shep the Rescue Dog

Written by Keeper Charles Knight
September 24, 1932

During the early evening of September 10, a call for help came from a point in the river between 200 and 300 yards from this place. That it was heard at all, thanks are due to the lighthouse dog "Shep." He evidently heard it, rushed from the house to the nearest edge of the water, and set up such a vigorous barking that it called Mrs. Knight out to see what it was all about. She immediately passed the word for the keeper to sound the alarm on the station bell, and the brake release was thrown over so the bell would strike rapidly and constantly. The keeper then made his way to the Connor cottage, about 300 yards distant, to telephone, meeting Mr. Connor himself at the station gate. He then found Miss Hoatson, who having heard the bell had already telephoned the post office, and inquiring if, anything, more she could do. It was suggested that she call Cozy Harbor House, which is nearest to the boats tied up there at the float, which she did and also had Central get word to Five Islands. The bell alarm quickly brought people to the station in response.

It was believed that a small boat had become swamped in some manner, or capsized, leaving its occupants to struggle in the water. And to those helplessly grouped on the point and unable to see what was taking place out there in the gloom of the night, it was feared that help might arrive too late, and minutes seemed hours. Yet, in fact but a very short time had elapsed when from the direction of Cozy Harbor a dory, propelled by an oarsman who was standing erect and facing straight ahead, and who even a novice could have told was a past master at his art, appeared, coming at near steamboat speed. It was Capt. Osmond Brewer. The direction from which the shouting came was pointed out to him and he immediately disappeared and before he could reappear, towing astern a skiff with two occupants towards Cozy Harbor, Hiram Moore, another of Southport's best oarsmen came on the scene. Told that the trouble was in a direct line with Seguin, he too disappeared, but shortly returned with the information that all was well then. Meantime a powerboat had arrived from Five Islands.

It proved that a young couple had been out rowing; the oarsman had apparently "caught a crab" with the oars (lost control of oars), and they got away and the occupants were being helplessly carried out to sea. Their only chance for an immediate rescue, and perhaps for any at all, had depended upon attracting attention of this station. Thus their shouting had been fully justified. Nor was it unnatural that unused to the water as they were, they should have at first become somewhat panic stricken and consequently failed to state just what kind of trouble they were in. And learning that help was on the way they had largely maintained silence, the sound of the bell reassuring them their shouts had been heard.

Although this affair had so fortunate an ending, one hardly dares to think of what might have happened had it been a case of swamped or overturned boat, for even in the case of good swimmers, the water is too cold for very long distance swimming.

November 19, 1932 – If members of the Knight family walk as though they might feel a little puffed up nowadays as they pass over "lighthouse road," rest assured it is not because of anything special anyone of them has accomplished. Rather it is because of something which has befallen their dog, Shep. The Anti-Vivisection Society of New York has recently held its annual "Hero Day" affair, at which medals were awarded to certain distinguished canines present. Shep was not among those present, but he was especially distinguished – for he was awarded a medal just the same. So now he is a "medal dog," if you please. However, his popularity in Southport, especially among the summer visitors, had been demonstrated before this.