

Old Station Up, Up, And Away

(And We Said It Couldn't Be Done)

By PHILIP K. DODD and CHARLES C. ROBB

To the amazement of those who said it couldn't be done, and to the admiration of those who watched it happen, the Old Harbor Station was moved this week to Provincetown from its site of 80 years on North Beach in Chatham.

The station is currently resting on its barge in Provincetown Harbor, tied up between MacMillan Wharf and another pier to the south, waiting for the arrival of cranes from Chatham and the right combination of waves and weather at Race Point Beach, where it will be lifted off the barge and placed on a foundation to the east of the parking lot.

On Tuesday, nine days after an earlier attempt was called off when the barge did not make it from Vineyard Haven, Jack Corey and his men put on a real show for several hundred onlookers. The show had everything— drama, suspense, and derring-do by the Corey crew.

FIRST ACT

It began around 11 am, when the barge arrived off the beach, under tow by the tug "Taurus." At the water's edge a bulldozer was running into the light surf, scooping out a landing area for the barge. The dozen workmen had been at work since 7 am, making final preparations.

At 11:40 Mr Corey, president of Middlesex Contractors and Riggers of Lowell, and several of his men revved up an amphibious "duck," loaded it with cable, and drove into the water to carry the cable to the waiting barge.

The duck breasted the low breakers, headed out toward the barge, then turned back. It had been forgotten to leave one end of the cable ashore. The cable was secured to a bulldozer on the beach, and the duck started out again. Again it stopped short of the barge — the cable was too short. Another length was tied in ashore, the seaward end was at last secured to the barge, and a second bulldozer began to pull the barge shoreward. The cable dragged into a sand hump at the water's edge. A workman went to free it, and just as he arrived a wave broke high over the hump, dousing the workman.

It was the start of a difficult day.

Soon, however, the barge was ashore, snugged into its bulldozed berth, and the moving began.

A window high in the station tower swung open and a man climbed onto the roof. It was John Brock, husband of the National Park Service's project director, Marsha Fader. Mr Brock, assisted by his father, Albert Brock, strung three flags, the Stars and Stripes,

A Coast Guard flag, and the orange, white and green flag of Ireland, provided by Mr Corey.

High tide was due around 2 pm, and the workers moved fast. First the boathouse section of the station which had been separated from the main building, was lifted by one crane and swung aboard the shoreward end of the barge.

It was necessary to move the boathouse to the seaward end of the barge, to make room for the main building, and that proved to be a ticklish operation.

Various maneuvers were tried, one of which involved a workman in an exhibition of aerial acrobatics worthy of Barnum and Bailey, as he grappled heavy cables to join the gigantic hooks of the two cranes.

By artful crane work, the boathouse on its underpinning of steel girders was jockeyed to the outer end of the barge, and attention turned to the main stage — the station itself.

UP AT LAST

Each of the two 40-ton cranes hooked a side of the station. Their motors roared, but the station did not budge. On one of the cranes gears were slipping. A workman scooped a shovelful of sand, clambered into the engine room and poured sand onto the gears. Again the engines roared. Loud crunches were heard as the station rose from its foundation, and the 80-year connection was broken.

Cheers filled the air, and Mr Corey, standing on the barge, guided the 60-ton station towards the water with subtle hand signals to his two crane operators. Meanwhile Chatham fisherman Jack Our kept his old World War II landing craft pushing the barge shoreward to keep it steady.

All 90 feet of the barge were taken up when the station was gently dropped on. The station was blocked up, cables were lashed down, and the steel beams welded securely to the barge. Finally at 4 pm, with darkness setting in, an attempt was made to push the barge off, but the tide had left it high and almost dry.

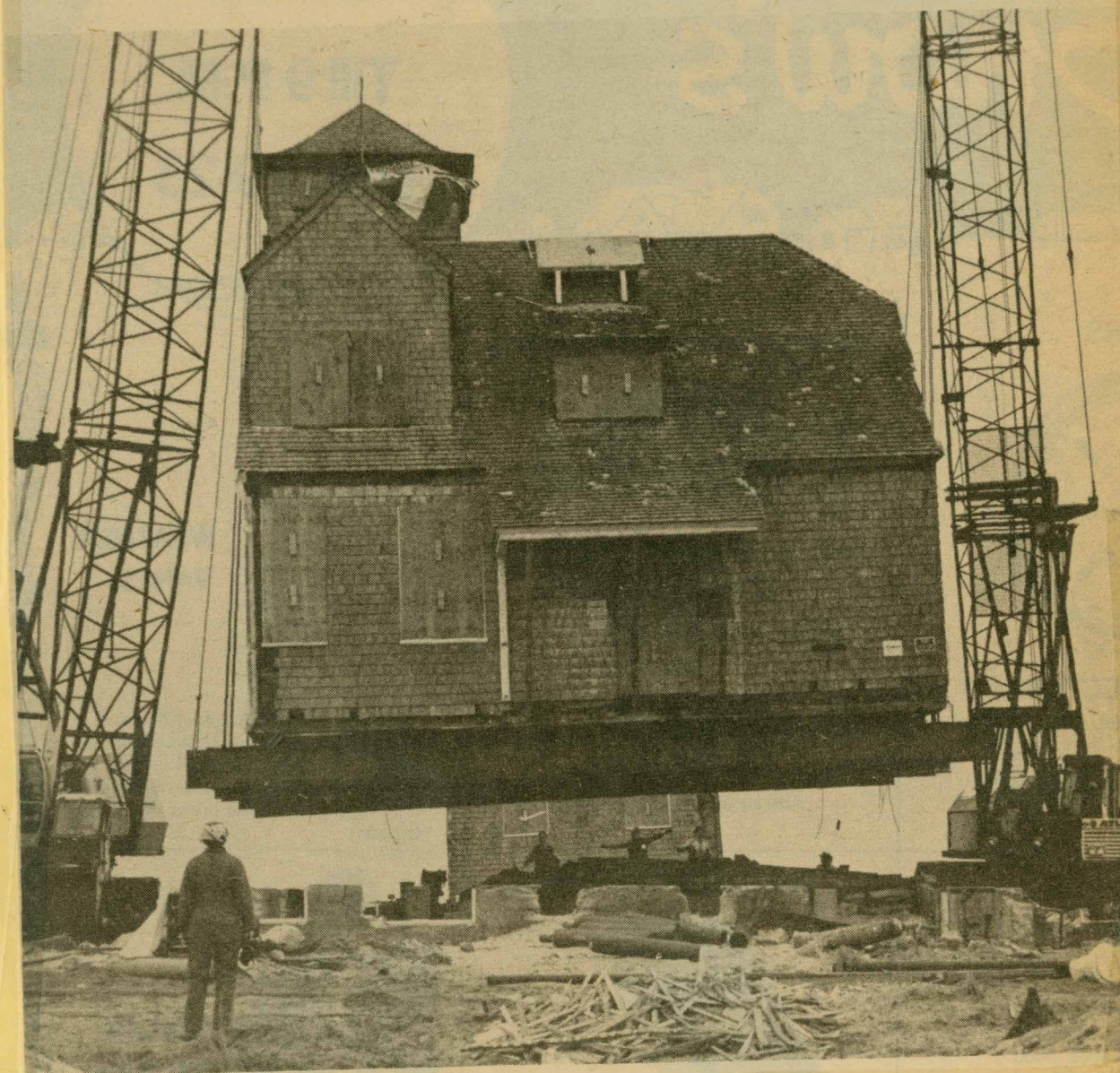
The two bulldozers lined up and started pushing. The tug and the landing craft started pulling. The barge didn't budge.

Mr Corey conferred with his subcontractor, Dan McCloskey of Waltham, and the decision was made to wait until the next high tide, at about 2 am.

FINALE

Even then, the barge proved balky, and Mr Corey and his crew had to improvise a new tactic. The crane booms were lowered on each side of the barge and the

Moving Day At North Beach



The initial lift-off.

cables connected under the landward end of the barge. With the cranes pulling and the bulldozers pushing, the barge began to inch away.

It was finally off the beach at 3 am, but then it grounded on a sandbar. The dozers started to build a bridge out to the sandbar to push some more, but the tug then earned its name, "Taurus," and pulled the barge off itself.

The tow to Provincetown went smoothly, and by 9 am, the Old Station was off Race Point, its next and final destination. The landing must await the dismantling and moving of the cranes from North Beach to Race Point. This could take place next week, depending on the weather.