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Lifestation rests in harbor, awaits cranes

By Jim Gilbert

The Old Harbor Lifesaving Station will remain between Macara's Wharf and MacMillan Wharf for at least another week while two giant cranes are moved from Chatham to Race Point and while National Seashore and moving company officials work out final moving plans.

The station was dramatically hoisted onto a barge last Tuesday, plucked off of its 80-year-old foundation on North Beach in Chatham and barged up the backshore to Provincetown. The Seashore plans to turn the station into a permanent lifesaving service museum at Race Point.

The new foundation is several hundred feet east of the Seashore's Race Point bathhouse.

Original plans for the building were to move it to its new home within a week. But, difficulties in moving the cranes off North Beach and in laying the new foundation have postponed the final phase of the move.

The problem with the new foundation was the result of poor work done by the foundation subcontractors, Cape Construction and Engineering of Sandwich, according to Marsha Fader of the

Seashore.

She inspected the site Tuesday and found the work was not up to specifications. Fader is an historical architect and project supervisor for the Seashore.

She said there were multiple problems with the new foundation, including poor workmanship and nonconformity with specifications and dimensions.

The foundation will have to be torn down, Fader said, and rebuilt. The poured concrete footings for the foundation, however, will remain. The rest of the foundation will be concrete blocks.

Fader said she will meet soon with Jack Corey, owner of the moving company, Middlesex Rigging of Lowell, and he will present moving plans for her approval.

The new foundation is 400-500 feet above mean high water at Race Point, which presents an interesting challenge for the movers. At Chatham, the building had only to be lifted and swung atop a barge beached just a few yards away.

The ground around the building at Chatham was also firm, unlike the soft beach sand surrounding the new foundation at Race Point. The only real

advantage to Race Point is that the beach is less exposed to ocean swells, giving the movers more latitude in choosing a work date and more time to complete the move.

Fader said the preliminary plans will be to move the building up the beach in a series of lifts. The building will be moved, the cranes relocated, the building moved again and so on until the station sits on the new foundation.

There are other details to be worked out. Fader said the Seashore will supervise closely the route used by Corey to bring his

cranes and other equipment over the dunes and beach grass to the work site. Already a path has been cleared to the foundation through the beach grass a few feet to the right of the bathhouse.

The dunes and grass at Race Point look very much like the North Beach environment. The only difference is that the beach at Race Point is accreting new sand each year. The move from Chatham was made necessary by severe erosion problems that threatened to make the station's new home a watery grave at the edge of the sea.

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Lifesaving station move tentatively set

The Old Harbor Lifesaving Station was not moved Wednesday from its temporary berth between Macara Wharf and MacMillan Wharf to a new foundation at Race Point because a tug was unable to reach Provincetown.

The move is tentatively set for today.

If necessary arrangements are made and if the weather cooperates, the building will be moved off the barge at high tide by

waiting cranes in place below the foundation and taken up the beach in a series of lifts.

The 80-year-old station was moved off its foundation on North Beach in Chatham about two weeks ago. It is the last remaining intact lifesaving station on the East Coast.

It will be turned into a lifesaving service museum by the National Seashore, which

for today

is footing the \$119,000 moving bill. The move was made necessary by severe erosion threatening the barrier beach in Chatham where the building used to stand.

Besides the failure of the tug to come to Provincetown two other problems beset the moving operation this week.

During the day Monday the barge pulled free from its mooring lines east of MacMillan Wharf in high winds and drifted parallel to the beach. One piling at Macara's Wharf was ripped out.

No damage was done elsewhere, however, and by Tuesday the barge was once again secure in deeper water. At noon Tuesday two movers were next to the barge in an amphibious craft welding the steel frame beneath the building in

preparation for the final leg of the journey this week.

The second problem is that the new foundation at Race Point is still not ready to receive the station. The first foundation was laid three weeks ago but had to be removed, except for the footings, because it failed to meet the necessary specifications, said Marsha Fader, the historical architect supervising the move and restoration of the station for the Seashore.

Fader said if the cement foundation has not cured by the time the last leg of the move is started, the station will just be moved as close to the foundation as possible. When the foundation is set the building will be placed on it.



Barge carrying lifesaving station floats parallel to beach after a mooring line to Macara's Wharf snapped. Station was moored alongside wharf.