DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

LIGHTHOUSE SERVICE

SUPT. of LIGHTHOUSES, FIRST DISTRICT. DEC 10 1931 PORTLAND, MAINE.

FIRST DISTRICT

Hendricks Head
(Station, Depot, or Vessel)

Suicide Near Station.

Dec. 8, 1931

SUPERINTENDENT OF LIGHTHOUSES,
Portland, Maine.

Sir:

You have doubtless read of this in the newspapers. But altho I do not believe it occurred on this reservation, Mr. Luther advises me to make report to you.

Have been adding this late Fall to garden, removing sod, rocks, and spading up-sods and rocks going into grading- especially along driveway. Thus on Dec. 1, as I had not quite completed spading a spot from which sods had been removed and a freeze up of the ground that night seemed imminent, I kept at it until lighting up time- so that I did not leave for the post office (exceptional) until 4:40 PM (returning at 5:25 PM). Post office is 7/10 mile distant by fair road. Two thirds the way there I passed a Mrs. Brewer near her home (nearest occupied house to us on this road), and close by the post office a woman whom I could not recognize in the gathering darkness, and as she didn't recognize me I checked the "good evening" I was about to speak. At post office I found postmaster and his wife (Mr. and Mrs. Pinkham) interested in that woman. They knew she had walked all the way from Boothbay Harbor, about 6 miles, and had told Mrs. Pinkham she was going to Hendricks Head to do some sketching. Thus Mrs. Pinkham thought I might see her. But as she had also said she had come from Pennsylvania, and as we have no friends there, nor had any word come from you authorizing us to put up a visitor, I had promptly judged this in error, and had thought it far more likely that she was going to Mr. E. C. Marr's (son of former keeper), who lives about a quarter of a mile off the lighthouse road (about a half from it). But I was interested and kept a close watch for the woman on my way back. However, as my errands at the post office had consumed 15 to 20 minutes, I recognized that she should have had time to reach station perhaps even before I left the store. Inasmuch as a mean, cold, penetrating NW'ly wind was blowing, I cut across the arc in the road between the Bond and Connor places, thus gaining a lee from the hill, but at all times, despite the darkness, I had that section of road in view, and as I regained the road by the station gateway I glanced back over it. Seemed to have a feeling as of some one close by. But saw no one. Nor was the woman at the light when I got here. Should I have started back to search for her? It did not seem to me I was justified in it. I knew she would not be molested. Her bearing had seemed normal- as tho she was going somewhere, knew just where- and might even fear the approach of a strange man in the darkness. The road to the station was clear. So I made no effort to hunt her up, assuming she had gone to Mr. Marrs, Mr. Brewers or some other house. But, as the Pinkhams had evidenced such interest, should have called them by 'phone had I had one. That she was insane or a possible suicide did not occur to me

In the afternoon of Dec. 2, a visiting party of two ladies and a gentleman came to light. One lady had been here before. And I assumed the other might have been the woman of the night before. But before they had left the yard, sheriff from Boothbay Harbor arrived in quest of the missing woman. I pointed out the woman in the auto and he said she was not the one. Suggested he make inquiries at the other houses, and he left to do so. But as I was lighting up, saw post master and some boys searching along shore and bushes both near and on reservation. I promtply

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started to assist in the search. Their thought was that she might have undertaken to walk along the rocks in the night, had fallen, was hurt and laying about. Such a thought had not occurred to me. We had not heard any call whatsoever. Morning of Dec. 3 I searched near low tide along the shore with the thought of a possible suicide in mind, and observed Mr. Osmond Brewer making a most systematic search with his dory. My boy (17 years old) aided in the search. Two or three points were especially suspected, and given especial attention. She was eventually found just off the second. I could not credit that a woman leaped in the night in the teeth of a stingingly cold northwesterly gale into icy waters with no great depth to them, (so but that she could have scrambled out had she hit them). I've been in them in before now and found the cold unbearable even in the summer time (have accidentally fallen in in winter). It seemed to me the woods was the place to look, as, at this season, I would think suicide by poison the more likely. Then there was the strong chance that an appearance of suicide had been assumed for some reason but with the woman met by some party with boat or auto and "flown." However, Mr. E. C. Marr located the footprints of a woman near a swimming pool, about 3/10 mile above here, and also under a spruce tree near the spot where she presumably leaped into the water. I located what seemed the same tracks leading onto this reservation. But the shoes made by my two daughters left a quite similar track.

On Dec. 4, the sheriff seeming to have abandoned search hereabouts I did likewise. We were awaiting his efforts to trace where she had come from. But on the 5th, both my boy and I made an extensive search along the shores- giving especial attention to every likely spot. We found nothing. Sunday, however, Postmaster Pinkham instituted a search in the PM, and a member of his party found something strange in the water just off shore, fifty yards, or abouts, above reservation. I was on my way to them, when met little girl running to ask me to bring the boat hook. Before I got up there- Mr. Pinkham taking boat-hook, he asked me to bring dory. Boy and I got there with dory as soon as we could, but in meantime a passing motor boat had come along, hooked onto body thru help of station boat hook and dragged into a cove off Connors place. Boy and I remained until coronor came to be of any possible help. But a crowd had soon collected.

I viewed the body quite scrutinizingly hoping to learn if I had ever seen the woman before. But her face had been disfigured thru pounding surf or eating of crabs just enough to render her unidentifiable even if seen before, I judged.

Her preparation had been methodical and painstaking. She had walked from Boothbay Harbor, evidentally toting in some concealed way an electrical flat iron with her. For she had this bound to her body with a stout 2" black leather strap about her waist, which also held her pocket book. By boy says she had also bound one arm so she could not use it. Her hair was gray and came about to her shoulders, but her teeth seemed all her own. And it would seem she had been sound physically to have made the tramp and carried out alone all this. We all think she jumped in at the spot just off which body was found. And this could have happened: She jumped in there- tide carried her body somewhat out into the Bay, and she been thrown back by the severe NW'ly gale of Saturday, not quite abated Sunday, when she was found. She did not float.

E. L. Knight
Keeper.