

# The Incredible Tale of Richard Etheridge and the Courageous Pea Island Lifesavers

Have you heard the remarkable story of Richard Etheridge and the heroic Pea Island Lifesavers? Prepare to be captivated by the forgotten tale of these brave individuals who risked their lives to save others amidst the treacherous waters of North Carolina's Outer Banks.

Richard Etheridge, an African American, defied all odds and became the nation's first black keeper of a United States Life-Saving Service Station. In an era marked by prejudice and discrimination, Etheridge's achievements are a testament to the strength of his character and unwavering determination.

The Pea Island Lifesaving Station, located on the coast of North Carolina, was responsible for rescuing shipwreck survivors and preventing maritime disasters. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Outer Banks were a perilous place for seafarers due to the area's unpredictable weather and treacherous shoals.



## Fire on the Beach: Recovering the Lost Story of Richard Etheridge and the Pea Island Lifesavers

by David Wright (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 852 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 352 pages



Etheridge's story begins with his birth into slavery in 1842, but it is his emancipation and subsequent enlistment in the Union Army during the Civil War that set the stage for his extraordinary journey. Serving as a part of the United States Colored Troops, Etheridge's experiences instilled in him a sense of duty and the desire to protect and save lives.

After the war, Etheridge returned to the Outer Banks, where he applied for a position at the Pea Island Lifesaving Station. Despite facing racial prejudice, Etheridge's undeniable leadership skills and expertise earned him the role of keeper in 1880.

The story of the Pea Island Lifesavers reached its peak on the night of October 11, 1896. The schooner E.S. Newman, loaded with lumber, ran aground during a violent storm. The crew desperately clung to their lives as the ship disintegrated in the raging waters.

Overcoming the odds, Etheridge and his crew launched their surfboat into the furious sea, battling powerful waves and strong winds. Guided only by their courage and skill, they managed to reach the stranded crew and successfully save every single individual aboard the sinking vessel.

This incredible feat of bravery and determination was an unprecedented achievement, as successful rescues in such treacherous conditions were exceedingly rare during that era.

However, the remarkable story of the Pea Island Lifesavers remained largely forgotten until the late 20th century. Due to both their race and the covert nature

of their work, the accomplishments of these courageous individuals were overshadowed and underreported.

It was only through meticulous research and efforts to uncover historical records that the remarkable tale of Richard Etheridge and the Pea Island Lifesavers was finally brought into the limelight. Their story serves as a reminder of the unsung heroes who risked everything for the greater good, regardless of the obstacles they faced.

Today, the legacy of Richard Etheridge and the Pea Island Lifesavers lives on. Their courage and determination continue to inspire individuals from all walks of life, proving that bravery knows no boundaries.

In , the story of Richard Etheridge and the Pea Island Lifesavers is a powerful testament to the indomitable human spirit and the triumph of courage over adversity. By recovering their lost story, we not only honor their memory but also shed light on the history of countless other unsung heroes who have played a significant role in shaping our world.

*Keywords: Richard Etheridge, Pea Island Lifesavers, North Carolina, Outer Banks, United States Life-Saving Service Station, African American, bravery, history, courage, resilience*



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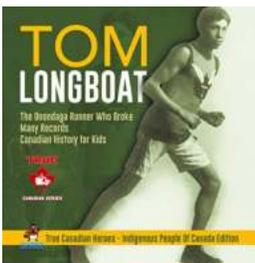
From the Civil War to the turn of the century, this is the true-life story of the original coast guard, and one crew of African American heroes who fought storms and saved lives off North Carolina's outer banks.

Fire on the Beach recovers a lost gem of American history. It tells the story of the U.S. Life-Saving Service, formed in 1871 to assure the safe passage of American and international shipping and to save lives and salvage cargo. A century ago, the adventures of the now forgotten "surfmen" who, in crews of seven, bore the brunt of this dangerous but vital duty filled the pages of popular reading material, from Harper's to the Baltimore Sun and New York Herald. Station 17, located on the desolate beaches of Pea Island, North Carolina, housed one such unit, and Richard Etheridge—the only black man to lead a lifesaving crew—was its captain.

A former slave and Civil War veteran, Etheridge recruited and trained a crew of African Americans, forming the only all-black station in the nation. Although civilian attitudes toward Etheridge and his men ranged from curiosity to outrage, they figured among the most courageous surfmen in the service, performing many daring rescues. From 1880 to the closing of the station in 1947, the Pea Island crew saved scores of men, women, and children who, under other circumstances, would have considered the hands of those reaching out to help them to be of the wrong race. In 1896, when the three-masted schooner E. S. Newman beached during a hurricane, Etheridge and his men accomplished one of the most daring rescues in the annals of the Life-Saving Service. The violent conditions had rendered their equipment useless. Undaunted, the surfmen swam

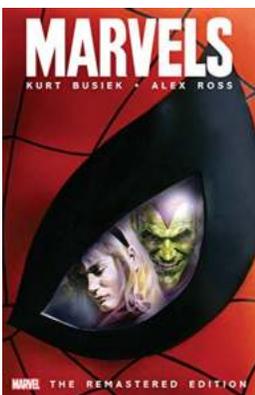
out to the wreck, making nine trips in all, and saved the entire crew. This incredible feat went unrecognized until 1996, when the Coast Guard posthumously awarded the crew the Gold Life-Saving Medal.

The authors depict the lives of Etheridge and his crew against the backdrop of late-nineteenth-century America—the horrors of the Civil War, the hopefulness of Reconstruction, and the long slide toward Plessy v. Ferguson that followed. Full of exploits and heroics, *Fire on the Beach*, like the movie *Glory*, illustrates yet another example of the little-known but outstanding contributions of a remarkable group of African Americans to our country's history.



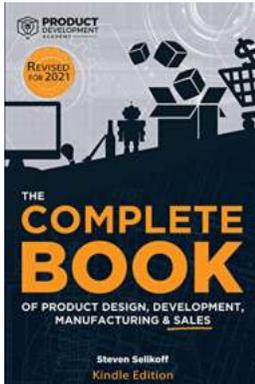
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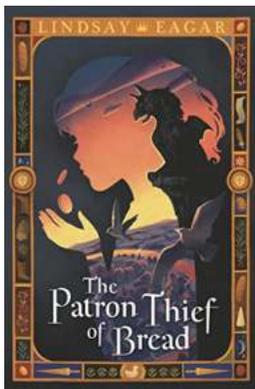
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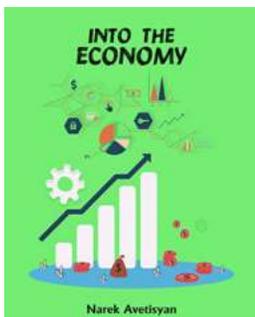
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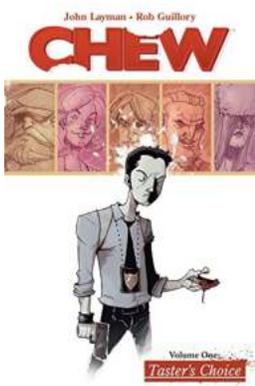
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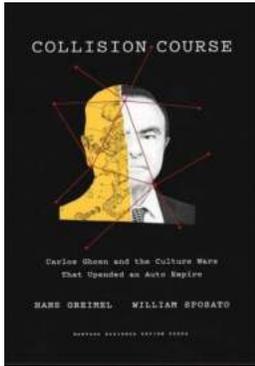
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