

The Beacon

PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION OUTSTANDING NATURAL AREA

VOL. 11, ISSUE 4

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2017

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS AT THE LIGHT STATION

Hops for the Top Sunset Tour - Saturday, October 14 from 4 pm - 7 pm

We've lost our top! The top 30 feet of the tower was removed in 1949 due to earthquake damage and we need your help to restore the lighthouse to its former glory. Join us for an evening on the bluffs where we will be serving up hot homemade chili and local brews as you enjoy the sunset. Sponsored by Firestone Walker Brewing Company. One raffle ticket is included with admission (raffle prizes provided by SLO Roasters coffee, SLO Yoga, Cutruzzola Vineyards and more). To purchase tickets visit our website: piedrasblancas.org

\$33/person 21+ (includes pint glass), \$25/person 21+
\$15/person under 21



Golden Hour Photography Tour - October 28 and November 4 Two Saturdays only, from 4:30 pm - 7 pm

Are you a photographer who is interested in getting that perfect sunset shot of the lighthouse? The Piedras Blancas Light Station Association is hosting two special afternoons for photographers. This is a rare opportunity that allows you to spend time scouting locations so you get a beautiful vantage point during "the golden hour" of sunset. You must stay on trails at all times. There will be two experienced photographers available to answer questions about the light station and photography throughout the event. This tour will provide beginner photographers with the opportunity to learn about composition, lighting, and landscape photography techniques. Amateurs welcome. Commercial photography prohibited. Tickets are available on our website: piedrasblancas.org

Entry gate open 4:30 pm - 5 pm for check in.
\$25/person. Reservations are required.



Free Hike In Tour - Wednesday, December 27 from 10 am - 2 pm



Begin your hike at the elephant seal viewing area parking lot 1 mile south of the light station. Walk the 1.5 mile trail to the light station at your leisure. Docents will be available at the light station to answer questions as you enter the buildings and hike the 1/2 mile nature trail around the lighthouse. The light station will be open from 10 am - 2 pm so please begin your hike early enough so you have time to enjoy the light station as well. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy. Restrooms and a gift shop are available at the light station. Sorry, dogs are not allowed on the trail or on the grounds.

For reservations or more information on any of these events, email us at:
PiedrasBlancasTours@gmail.com



The Beacon is a joint publication of the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association and the Bureau of Land Management. The PBLSA is a nonprofit partner of the BLM and provides support for the restoration, conservation, interpretation, and stewardship of the unique natural, historical, and cultural resources at the Piedras Blancas Light Station. © Copyright 2017



SUMMER INTERNS ADD ENTHUSIASM AND HUMOR TO THE LIGHT STATION

We were lucky to have two spirited interns at the light station this summer. Mike Holley and Brenna Hare joined us from the American Conservation Experience and helped with everything from trail trimming and webcam washing to planning events and giving tours. They hit the ground running in the thick of the busy summer season and we are grateful for their hard work and enthusiasm. We think Mike earns the distinction of the most unique bio we've ever seen.

A Jolly Holley by the Sea!

By Mike Holley

Oh what a silly nut Mike Holley is,
got a BS in the Outdoor Rec. biz.
He bounced and bopped and made his way
from North Carolina, Saudi Arabia and even Norway.
A little time here and a little time there,
he even spends a little time flying through the air!
Of all the colors his favorite is blue,
He eats every food, even sardines too!
Mike's a touch of a dreamer, a magic-bean buyer
just the sort a lighthouse would hire.
He got the job, a post by the sea
a lighthouse keeper he was meant to be.
Plant restoration and trimming the trails,
looking for spouts and watching for whales,
climbing the stairs to clean the lamp,
and pausing at the gate to chat with a tramp,
giving scholastic tours with a story and a view
of a world gone by that so very few knew.
When the day is out and his duties are done
he surfs in the ocean looking for fun.
If the waves are flat he'll take to the hills
to look for bobcats and wild mountain thrills.
And once he returns in the foggy dark night
he mustn't forget to tend to the light.
So the days pass by and by,
only to pause for a pint and a pie.
Oh what will come next for the old nut by the sea,
Certainly anything can happen, anything can be!



HAVE YOU SEEN OUR WEBCAM?

Since it was installed last year, many visitors have written to say how much they enjoy the live 270 degree view from the light station. Depending on the time of year, you may see elephant seals lounging on the beach, waves crashing on rocks, flowers in bloom, and beautiful sunsets.
www.piedrasblancas.org/webcam

Brenna is a recent graduate of Humboldt State University where she received her B.S. in Environmental Science along with a minor in Rangeland Resource Science. During her final year at HSU she discovered her passion for native plant restoration and soil microbiology. Currently, she is preparing for graduate school, where she hopes to conduct her thesis research on the effects of soil carbon additions on native plant propagation success rates. Ultimately, Brenna hopes to work as a restoration specialist for a nonprofit, where she feels she can put her research and passion to use restoring degraded landscapes.

The internship at Piedras Blancas has provided her with the opportunity to gain experience in a variety of fields. Her main focus has been in developing new marketing materials, expanding the light station's social media presence, planning special events, and soon she will be conducting a vegetation survey to monitor restoration progress. This internship is a wonderful opportunity for her to gain experience working with various stakeholders including, and most importantly, PBLSA.



LIGHTHOUSE NEIGHBORS

Point San Luis Lighthouse

(58 miles south of PBLS)

Located in Avila Beach. For a complete listing of guided tours and special events and to reserve a ride on the shuttle, visit: PointSanLuisLighthouse.org or call 805-540-5771

Point Sur Lightstation

(65 miles north of PBLS)

From November through March tours are offered at 10 AM on Saturdays and Sundays and at 1 PM on Wednesdays. During the summer there are additional days and times. For a complete listing of tours: PointSur.org or call 831-625-4419

Point Pinos Lighthouse

(90 miles north of PBLS)

Located in Pacific Grove, open Thursday through Monday, 1 PM - 4 PM. For more information: ci.pg.ca.us/lighthouse



FROM THE KEEPER'S READING NOOK

A GLIMPSE AT THE PAST, CALIFORNIA COAST TRAILS

In 1911, author and naturalist, J. Smeaton Chase took off on a journey along the entire coast of California by horseback. His trip is recorded in a book first published in 1913. Luckily for us, it has been reprinted and is available for any history fan to enjoy. *California Coast Trails* eloquently captures the journey of J. Smeaton Chase and his horse, Chino, as they travelled through San Simeon and Piedras Blancas in 1911.

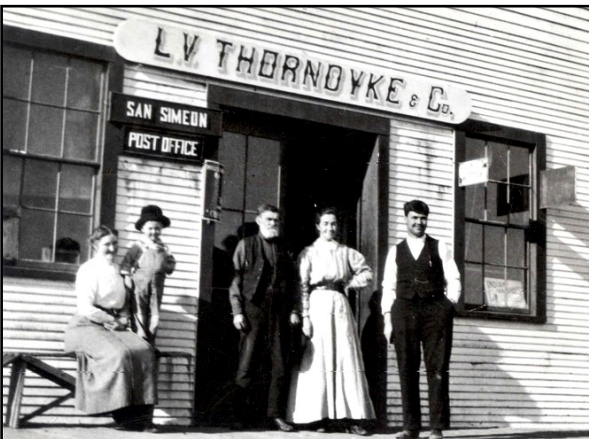
"The coast now curves to the pretty bay of San Simeon, fringed with islets of rock round which the sea coiled in dazzling whiteness of spray.... It was near evening before we came to the village of San Simeon. This once promising little port has dwindled under the caprices of Fortune and local landowners until now only one small coasting steamer calls unpunctually at its wharf. I found myself the only guest in a hotel that would have housed the whole population, with room to spare. But my host (an old Maine seaman, and for twenty years in the lighthouse service on this coast) and his good Welsh wife made amends by their friendliness for the physical drawbacks of this place.

I rode out the next day to visit the lighthouse at Piedras Blancas, six miles up the coast. A rattling wind breeze blew from the sea, and Chino appreciating the freedom from saddle-bags and blanket-roll, let himself out at his best... The lighthouse is a high white tower, handsomer than most of those on this coast. I found there, besides the keepers, a lot of frank-eyed frolicking children whom from their dress I took to be all boys until by chance I found it was otherwise. The spot is a lonely one, but there seems to be something in the nature of the lighthouse service, some spiritual ingredient, that keeps its people hearty and wholesome."

The light station as it probably looked when Chase visited in 1911.



Above: Chase's trusty companion, Chino.

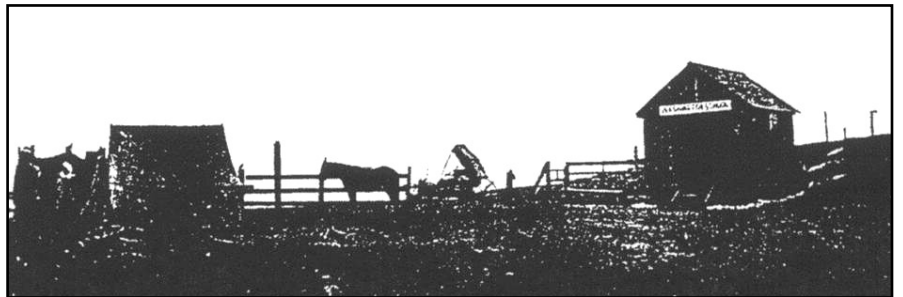


Above: Maude, Roger (baby), Lorin, Margaret and Lorin, Jr. in front of the Thorndyke Store.

"I was respectfully amused at the primitive appointments of the Piedras Blancas School which we passed....The schoolhouse was a tent of ten by twelve feet, and the furniture consisted of three small tables, evidently of kitchen antecedents, two plank benches, a chair and desk for the teacher, a nail keg for an emergency scholar, a demijohn for water, and a tin cup, a square yard of blackboard and a handful of books, apparently fourth-hand. It was vacation season, and a trip of cows sniffed at the crannies in hope of scenting hay. The only sound beside the cry of plovers was the sober voice of that wise old teacher, the sea, thirty yards away: and I wondered whether it might not be instilling into those children of the lighthouse, who come here for their simple schooling, some fine lesson of reverence and wonder that may one day blossom into poetry or art."

Those of you who are familiar with Piedras Blancas Light Station history will recognize the former lighthouse keeper, Lorin Thorndyke, and his Welsh wife, Margaret, as the hosts of the hotel in San Simeon where Chase stayed.

The young children frolicking at the light station were likely the children of Peter Ditlevson, who was assistant keeper at Piedras Blancas around 1910-1916. Ditlevson was a widower who had three children. In 1910, Peter Ditlevson petitioned re-establishment of the former Washington School, which had lapsed because of the lack of students in the area. In the spring of 1911 a temporary tent was set up while a schoolhouse was constructed. Thanks to J. Smeaton Chase, we have a description of the tent school.



Above: Washington School. Photo courtesy of Debbie Soto's book Glimpses of a Bygone Era.

Do yourself a favor and curl up with a copy of *California Coast Trails* and experience the coast in 1911.

POINT SAN LUIS LIGHTHOUSE: OUR NEIGHBOR TO THE SOUTH

Lighthouse Update by Jack San Filippo, Program Manager

The Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers have had an amazing spring and summer. Executive Director Deb Foughty has overseen a multitude of programs and she continues to lead the nonprofit and direct the operation of the site.

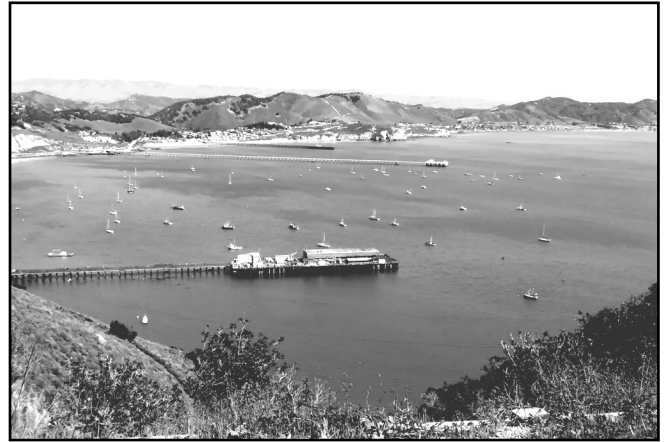
The tour program has been expanded to include a tour specifically for visitors who come via ocean, and the hiking program overseen by the Pecho Coast Trail Guides now includes a new hike on Mondays to the Pecho Coast along the Rattlesnake Trail. The regular trolley tours continue Wednesday and Saturdays along with the normal hikes to the lighthouse.

There have been multiple Signature Events held this year so far, including Make Merry at the Lighthouse and the Victorian Mother's Day Tea. The events featured fine foods, wines and teas, docents in period attire, and great live music. There will be a Signature Event held this October to celebrate Halloween at the Point SLO Lighthouse.

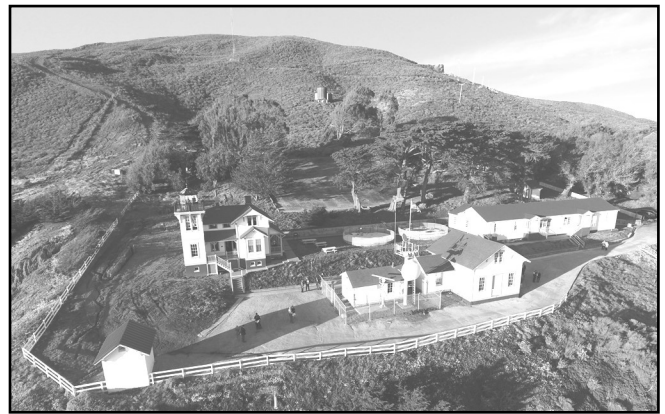
Point SLO Keeper's purchased a new trolley which enhances the charm of the fleet. Volunteers for the lighthouse will vote soon to decide on a new name for the trolley-- which will join the current trolley "Lucy" in shuttling guests to and from the station.

Restoration projects abound at the station, with recent projects including the new paint job on the tower, the restoration of the stairs to the front of the lighthouse, and the recent completion of an extensive ADA compliant ramp for those with walking disabilities. The ADA ramp also coincides with a newly finished Guide Book developed by the Point SLO Lighthouse Keepers for the hard of hearing. The Lighthouse is working hard to be as inclusive as possible for all visitors, and improving accessibility is a major part of this.

To learn more about the Point San Luis Lighthouse please visit the website at PointSanLuisLighthouse.org. From there you can connect to our twitter, Facebook, and YouTube pages where we update weekly with lighthouse news, fun videos, and photos of our beautiful coastline.



*On the way to the lighthouse, visitors enjoy sweeping views of San Luis Obispo Bay.
Photo by Jack San Filippo*



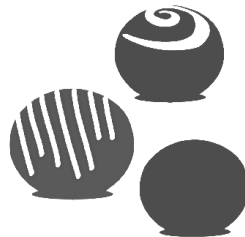
*Aerial view of the light station grounds. The lighthouse is the two-story Victorian-style building on the left.
Photo by Todd Bartolome*

COOKING AT THE LIGHTHOUSE

Maude Rogers Thorndyke, was the daughter-in-law of PBLS Head Keeper Captain LV Thorndyke. She married his son Lorin, Jr. in 1908 and they ran various businesses in San Simeon. She assembled a cookbook using a small ledger book to write in and pasted in the recipes she'd clipped from magazines and newspapers. The last section of her cookbook had recipes for doughnuts, candies and puddings. Here is an unedited recipe (note the reference to Ghirardelli's chocolate and Dairy Delivery milk).

Chocolate Roll Fudge

2 C sugar
1 Tbl corn syrup
1/3 C ground chocolate (Ghirardelli's)
1 C milk (Dairy Delivery)
1/8 tsp salt
1 Tbl butter
1 tsp vanilla
Chopped nuts, raisins, figs or dates



Lorin Thorndyke, Jr. and his wife Maude.

Heat sugar, chocolate, corn syrup and milk over a low flame until sugar is completely dissolved. Boil gently to soft ball stage, or 236 degrees F and cool. When fudge is lukewarm add butter and vanilla and beat until creamy. Then knead on a plate for 5 or 6 minutes. Divide into four parts and pat out into rolls 4 or 5 inches long. Chopped nuts, raisins, figs or dates may be kneaded into fudge or rolls covered with chopped nuts or coconut.

Excerpted with permission from Beverly Praver's cookbook "Dinner at the Lighthouse" available in our gift shop.

LIGHT STATION VOLUNTEERS ARE SUCCESSFUL PHILANTHROPISTS

Lisa Tanzman and Elaine Mermelstein have been light station volunteers since 2002 and are often seen helping at our special events. As successful local business owners of CCU Merchandising (www.ccumerch.com), Lisa and Elaine work closely with the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association to find high quality items at the best prices to ensure the gift shop remains profitable. Since 1987, they have also run a successful nature camp for underprivileged youth. Celebrating its 30th anniversary, the nonprofit Camp Erutan (nature spelled backward), provides a free opportunity for kids in need to spend time in the outdoors participating in activities to help heal and mend. The camp is focused on helping children in or leaving foster care by providing a safe and loving environment where they can build self-confidence, form bonds with other children and adults, and provide resources to help them transition from foster care into independent adulthood. Whenever possible, they reunite siblings who have been split up in the foster care system and give them a week to be together. For more information, visit their website: www.camperutan.org



Happy campers!

WRECK OF THE CASCO, 1913

As any lighthouse lover knows, lighthouses were constructed to help mariners safely navigate. Most visitors to the Piedras Blancas Light Station learn about *Harlech Castle* and *Sierra Nevada*, two ships that wrecked in 1860, prior to completion of the lighthouse in 1875. Did any shipwrecks occur after the lighthouse was built? Yes; one was the wreck of the *Casco*, which occurred off Piedras Blancas in 1913. Until recently, we had no photographs of the *Casco*. Now, thanks to research efforts by Robert Schwemmer, NOAA maritime history expert, we know what the *Casco* looked like.

The *Casco* was a commercial steam-driven schooner built at Marshfield, Oregon, in 1906. The hull was wood, the length 160.8 feet and beam 36.4 feet. Her home port is listed as San Francisco. She struck an unnamed submerged rock about 1.5 miles north of Point Piedras Blancas on June 6, 1913, during a strong north wind with clear skies. The case is listed as an "act of God." The vessel was beached at latitude 35°39'N and longitude 121°17'W. There were 19 people on board and no fatalities. She had no cargo on board when she went down.



*The Casco lies in a wreck just north of Piedras Blancas Light Station.
Photo credit: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. W.R. Evans, Collection DO3 8, 802p, SAFR 21374*

The *Casco* is referred to as a screw steamer (or screw steamship) because it was powered by a steam engine, using one or more propellers (screws). The term was used to distinguish this type of design from the paddle steamer. A couple of larger, well-known, screw steamers that wrecked in the Atlantic Ocean were the *RMS Titanic* and *RMS Lusitania*.

The Piedras Blancas Light Station is grateful to Robert Schwemmer for his assistance over the past 16 years in providing information about shipwrecks that occurred in the Piedras Blancas area. Robert Schwemmer is currently the West Coast Regional Maritime Heritage Coordinator for NOAA-Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. He coordinates and conducts archaeological surveys and research for the five National Marine Sanctuaries located along the Pacific West Coast. To view the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary's Maritime Heritage Shipwrecks database go to: www.montereybay.noaa.gov/maritime/losses.

NEW ITEMS ADDED TO OUR ONLINE GIFT SHOP

Looking for a unique gift this holiday season? We have custom ornaments (shown here), etched wine glasses, shot glasses, t-shirts, fleece jackets and vests just to name a few. An engraved brick installed at the light station makes a fun gift, too! Prices include tax and shipping and all the proceeds stay here at the light station. Happy shopping!

Visit our online shop: piedrasblancas.org/gift-shop



PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION TOURS

Tours are offered year-round on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. From June 15 through August 31, tours are offered daily except Wednesdays and Sundays. There are no tours on federal holidays. Tours last about 2 hours and include the historic Piedras Blancas lighthouse and support buildings along with a half mile interpretive trail that provides spectacular ocean views and opportunities to view wildlife. Meet at the former Piedras Blancas Motel located 1.5 miles north of the light station at 9:45 AM.

Please do not wait at the gate to the light station!

For information, email piedrasblancastours@gmail.com
or call 805-927-7361

Groups of 10 or more
please make advance
arrangements.

\$10 for adults, \$5 ages
6-17, no fee for children
5 and under.

Tours may be
cancelled on the day
of the tour due to
inclement weather.



Dress warmly and wear comfortable
walking shoes. Sorry, no pets!

PBLS Association
P.O. Box 127
San Simeon, CA 93452-0127
805-927-3719
membership.pblsa@gmail.com



All memberships include our quarterly newsletter. Your dues help with the maintenance and restoration of the Piedras Blancas Light Station.

- ___ \$50 Friend of the Lighthouse
(1 complimentary tour)
- ___ \$100 Acting Keeper
(2 complimentary tours)
- ___ \$250 Assistant Keeper
(4 complimentary tours)
- ___ \$500 Principal Keeper
(engraved brick)
- ___ \$1000 Superintendent of Lights
(engraved brick & private tour for up to 6)

***Help restore
and preserve
Piedras Blancas
Light Station
by joining PBLSA***

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please make check payable to PBLSA
You may also join online at piedrasblancas.org

Thank you for your support!

PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 127
SAN SIMEON, CA
93452-0127