

The Beacon

PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION OUTSTANDING NATURAL AREA ~PART OF THE CALIFORNIA COASTAL NATIONAL MONUMENT~

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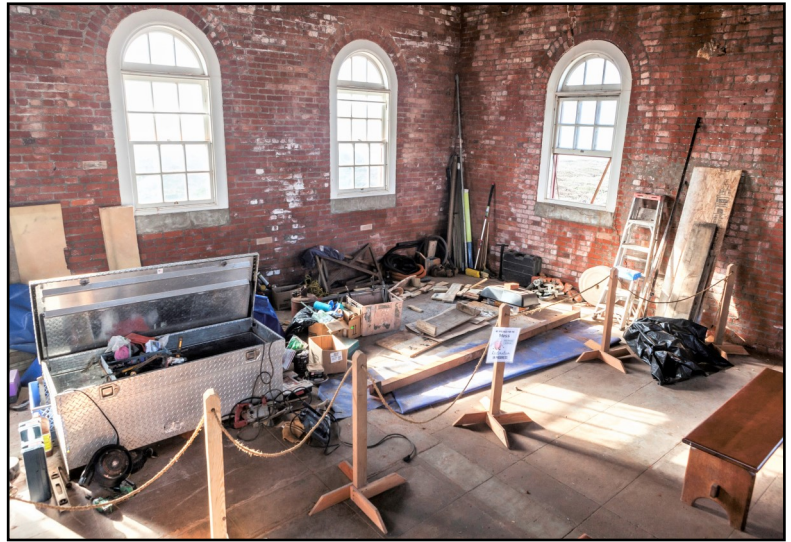
FOG SIGNAL BUILDING RETROFIT UNDERWAY

For the last three months, visitors to the light station have dodged scaffolding and construction equipment as the final phase of a comprehensive restoration of the Fog Signal Building is in full swing. Built in 1906 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the Fog Signal Building (FSB) is an unreinforced brick structure with a timber roof.

Technically a “seismic retrofit,” the plan to stabilize the FSB was put together by Shoreline Engineering, Inc. of Morro Bay. The construction work is being done by Wellsona Iron & Engineering of Paso Robles. The funding and project management is handled by the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association.

Efforts to stabilize the building began in February, 2017, when Wellsona Iron & Engineering beefed up the perimeter foundation of the FSB with rebar and concrete.

The current retrofit includes fabrication and installation of steel beams that will brace the building in the event of an earthquake. Workers are also repairing and reinforcing numerous cracks in the masonry structure. New roof shingles and rain gutters will also be added.



Above: During restoration, visitors have been able to go inside the building while on their tours.



One of the many challenges of restoring a historic structure is dealing with problems that appear only after construction begins. The FSB is no exception. For example, it took Wellsona workers two weeks to replace rusted steel plates hidden underneath the roof beams.

Another consideration of working on historic buildings is careful preservation of the structure's historical integrity and appearance. No attempt is being made to disguise any of the crack repairs to the FSB. Visitors of Piedras Blancas Light Station will be able to witness the building's history in its mesh of proud wrinkles and read the many ways that time has shaped its character.

Left: When support beams were inspected, rusted steel plates were revealed. They had to be jackhammered out and then replaced with stainless steel plates.



Right: Cracks were filled with high tension grout.



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 2018



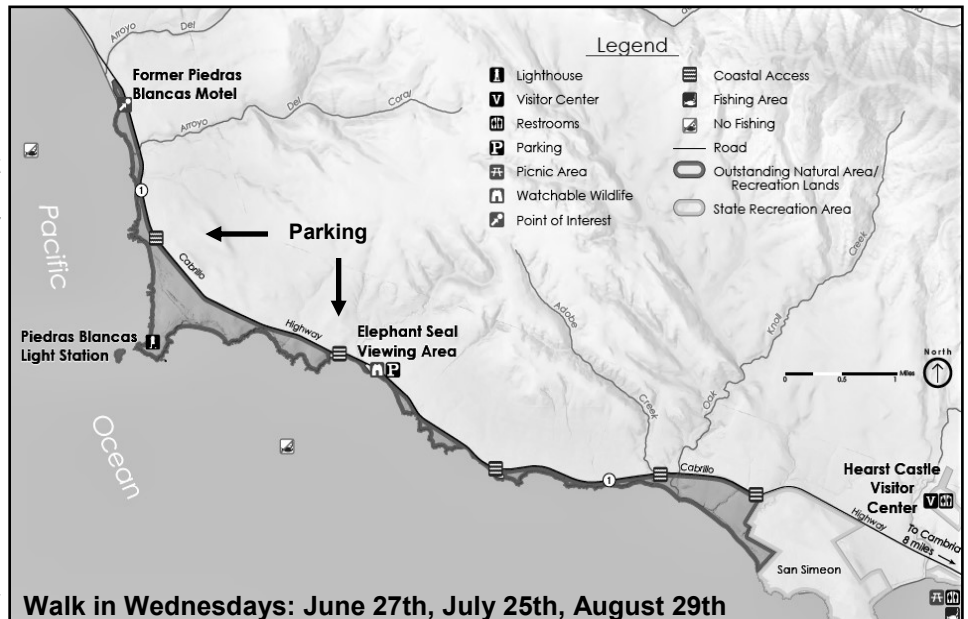
JOIN US FOR “WALK IN WEDNESDAYS” THIS SUMMER

Back by popular demand, join us for a free self-guided hike and open house on the last Wednesday of June, July, and August. The light station will be open to all hikers from 10 am - 2 pm. You are welcome to arrive/leave at any point within that time frame. There is no charge for entrance, though we happily accept donations.

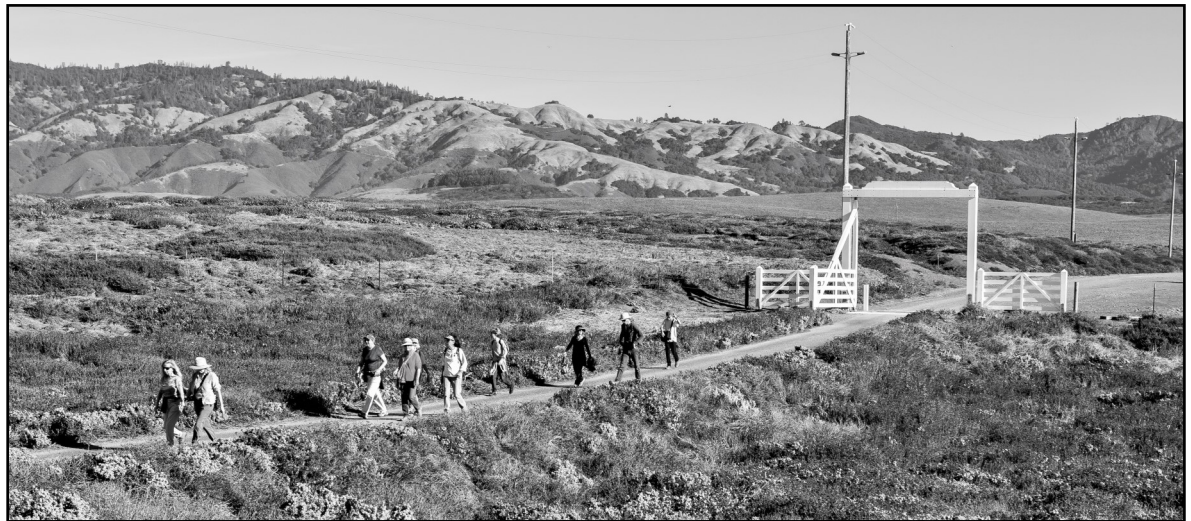
The hike: Currently, there are two trailheads on California State Park property from which to access the light station. The first trailhead, and easiest to find, is from either of the two parking lots for the elephant seal viewing area, located approximately 1.5 miles south of the light station access road. From either parking area, you will hike on the trail north for approximately 1.5 miles to our access road, turn towards the light station and come right in! The trail is clearly marked and well maintained. The slightly more challenging trailhead to locate is about .5 miles north of us and is a small gravel parking lot on the west side of Highway 1. There are no signs, but there is a left-hand turn lane if you are driving northbound. Using this trailhead will shorten your hike considerably, with only a .5 mile hike to our access road. The hike itself is entirely self-led. You can walk at your own pace, on your own timeline, and enjoy some fresh air and exercise. Round-trip hiking distance, including the .5 mile trail around the light station, is about 4 miles from the elephant seal parking lots and about 2 miles from the north lot. The trails are mostly flat and easy. Be sure to stay on the trail at all times.

The Open House: Once you reach the light station, you are free to wander the site at your own pace. There will be docents and staff available to answer questions and point out some of the wildlife. There will be a picnic area and our gift shop will be open. We sell water in our gift shop, but we do not offer food. You may bring whatever food and drink you like.

Safety reminders: There are ticks and poison oak along the trail. *On both the trail and at the light station, no smoking (including marijuana) and no pets are allowed.* Please stay on the trail. Be sure to maintain a 50 foot distance from all marine mammals as required by the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The light station is managed by the Bureau of Land Management as a historical and ecological preserve, and was recently added to the California Coastal National Monument. This is a NO DRONE ZONE. For more information, email us at: PiedrasBlancasTours@gmail.com



Walk in Wednesdays: June 27th, July 25th, August 29th

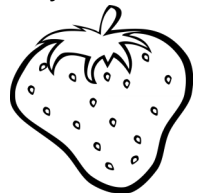


COOKING AT THE LIGHTHOUSE

This recipe is from Donna Thorndyke Schneider, the granddaughter of former PBLS Keeper Lorin V. Thorndyke, Jr.

Strawberry Fritters

1 quart strawberries	1 tsp vanilla
1 beaten egg	1 1/2 C flour
1/4 C sugar	3 tsp baking powder
1 Tbls butter, melt	Dash of salt



Wash and hull berries. Chill. Beat together egg and milk; stir in sugar, butter and vanilla. Combine flour, baking powder and salt; stir into egg mixture, beating until smooth. Dip berries into batter one at a time and deep fry in 375° hot oil till golden brown. Drain well, dust with powdered sugar. Note: This batter can be used for any fruit cut to bite size.

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

HAVE YOU SEEN OUR WEBCAM?

Since it was installed in 2016, many visitors have written to say how much they enjoy the live 270 degree view from the light station. You may see lounging elephant seals, blooming flowers and beautiful sunsets! Check us out: piedrasblancas.org/webcam

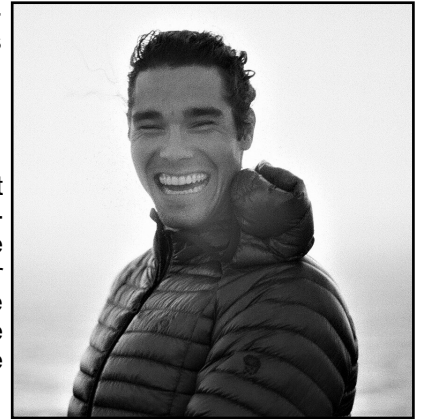
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

A Paso Robles native, Christine Buckley has recently discovered her new found passion for lighthouses...and their keepers. After returning home from a year abroad in Australia, Christine was charmed by the beauty and liveliness of Piedras Blancas Light Station and doubly so by her serendipitous encounter with the “assistant to the assistant lighthouse keeper” and intern, Mike Holley. Despite her true zeal for the latter she has since been roped into volunteering her precious Saturdays shoveling decomposed granite, picking up trash along the road, volunteering for special events and, occasionally, chaperoning tourists around the bucolic property. However, her favorite duty of all is grabbing some Windex, climbing the stairs to the top of the tower, and cleaning the lens with the boy who inspired it all.



HAPPY TRAILS TO INTERN MIKE HOLLEY

Mike arrived at the light station in July 2017 as an intern through ACE (American Conservation Experience). His hard working, positive personality energized the light station and he was a favorite among our tour visitors. An avid BASE jumper, skydiver and daredevil by nature, Mike has been offered a job opportunity in Norway where he will be supervising a sky diving operation. Lucky for him, his girlfriend and better half, Christine, will be joining him and working the administrative side of things. The adventure continues this fall when they return to North Carolina where Mike will attend Appalachian State University's College Student Development and Counseling graduate program. We will miss his uncanny humor and smiling face around the light station, but we are excited to see where life takes him.



Please note: While our volunteers have access to the top of the tower for maintenance and cleaning, unfortunately, the top of the light station is not accessible on public tours.

TRIVIA TIME

Which lighthouse survived a 1964 tsunami and has high tides that strand occasional visitors?

- A. Point Sur
- B. Santa Barbara
- C. Battery Point

What lighthouse is the oldest on the west coast of the United States and is the Spanish word for pelicans?

- A. Point Arguello
- B. Alcatraz Island
- C. Piedras Blancas

Which lighthouse is the last to be built on the west coast and has a Native American name that means “mirage”?

- A. Farallon Island
- B. Patos Island
- C. Anacapa Island

Answers: Battery Point in Crescent City, CA; Alcatraz Island built in 1853; Anacapa Island built in 1932 is named for the Chumash word “ennepah”.

Find us on Facebook and Instagram for news and upcoming events: @PiedrasBlancasLightStation



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)

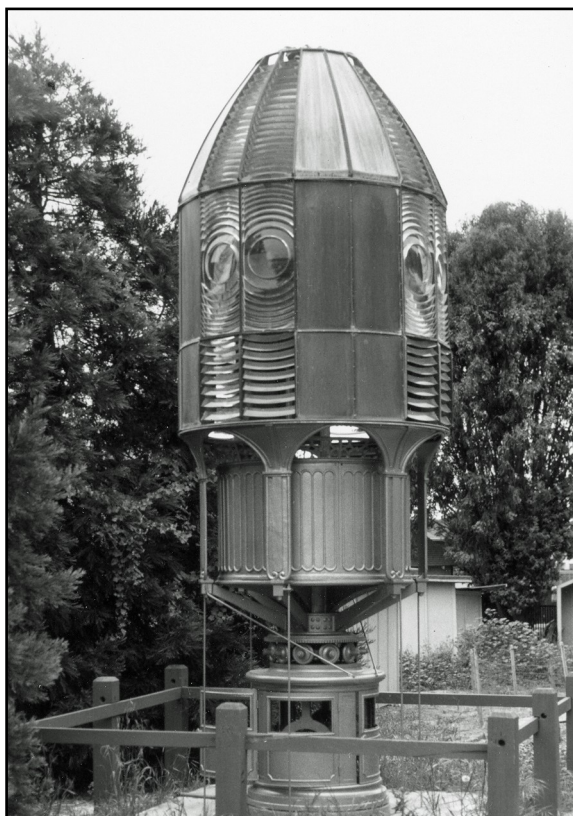
Located in Pacific Grove, open Thursday through Monday, 1 PM - 4 PM. For more information: pointpinoslighthouse.org



HISTORY OF PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION'S FIRST ORDER LENS IN CAMBRIA

An earthquake on December 31, 1948, caused significant damage to the Piedras Blancas First order lens. According to Bert Breedlove, who was the PBLS Officer-in-Charge at the time, "The old lens was disassembled piece by piece, numbered, and neatly stacked." It was decided that the tower did not get much damage, but the lens and lens frame were beyond repair and too heavy. The Coast Guard loaned the lens to the Cambria Lions Club and it was reassembled next to the Veterans' Memorial Building on Main Street.

From 1949-1990 the lens was on display in the open, with no enclosure to protect it. An article in the August 16, 1990, issue of *The Cambrian* reported, "After decades of exposure to the elements, the Piedras Blancas lighthouse lens is going to be restored."



From 1949-1990 the lens was on display out in the elements.

A five-member team from the United States Coast Guard delicately dismantled the lens and placed the pieces in custom crates for tracking to Monterey to be restored. The men worked from three tiers of scaffolding and a center metal panel. The chief officer said, "It's trickier and trickier as the top pieces are peeled off." Assistance was provided by the Lions Club. California State Parks provided scaffolding and Village Lumber donated use of a forklift and discount priced lumber.

There was a meeting at the Piedras Blancas Light Station about restoration and maintenance of the lens. It was attended by Norman Francis, Jr. who lived at the light station when his father was Principal Keeper. Francis had returned to the area to help efforts to protect the lens. People at the meeting included representatives from the Lions Club, Cambria Historical Society, Cambria Chamber of Commerce, and many other groups. Several possible sites for displaying the restored lens were discussed, but none agreed upon at that time.

The Friends of the Piedras Blancas Lighthouse Lens, a nonprofit organization, was formed to find a site and solicit funds to construct a weather proof structure to protect the lens. In March, 1993, a steel framework was constructed to house the historic lens. However, the beacon was not ready for display yet. Unfortunately, the Coast Guard had run out of funding for the project and sent the parts back to Cambria for volunteers to finish the work. What was originally estimated to be a six month project, ended up being a four year labor of love. In 1994, the lens was reassembled within a protective glass enclosure, illuminated by outside lighting. Plans were underway to install a small electric bulb to replicate the light that once came from a wick fueled by lard oil. It was estimated that thousands of volunteer hours went into the restoration project, donated by Coast Guard volunteers, Lions Club members, and many local volunteers. Alex Lazarevich, a retired master machinist, spent hundreds of hours machining parts.

Lampist Jim Woodward is inspecting the lens in April 2018. We will publish updates in upcoming issues of *The Beacon*.



Note the angled glass pieces and ornate inner workings of the lens.



The lens is currently enclosed in a glass building on Main Street in Cambria.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ALABAMA ENJOY A VIRTUAL VISIT

Last year, Susie Bagwell, a second grade teacher at Priceville Elementary School in Decatur, Alabama, happened across the YouTube video "Rocky the Lonely Lighthouse", made by BLM about Piedras Blancas Light Station. She reached out to us and PBLS manager Ryan Cooper hosted a FaceTime lesson of the light station for her classes. Ms. Bagwell also purchased a commemorative brick for the walkway at the base of the light station and her students were kind enough to make magnets for our nonprofit to sell in the gift shop.

This year, Ms. Bagwell's students enjoyed another virtual lesson about the light station where they learned about natural history as well as what life was like for keepers and their families in the early 1900s.



Right: Ryan demonstrates the clothes wringer as Intern Mike holds the iPad during a recent FaceTime lesson for students in Alabama.

NOT ALL FRESNEL LENSES ARE CREATED EQUAL

Frenchman Augustin Fresnel (fruh-nell) designed his multi-prismed lenses in 1822 and his technology found its way to America in the 1850s. The lenses were ranked in six sizes called orders. Each order had a different size and intensity:

First Order- This lens is the most powerful and largest of the six and holds over 1,000 prisms and stands up to 12 feet tall and 6 feet in diameter. They were primarily installed at lighthouses along the foggiest coasts. Piedras Blancas Light Station had this size lens as does Point Sur.

Second Order- Marks coastal headlands and the approaches to bays.

Third Order- Covers wide bays and are located on large lakes and coastal inlets.

Fourth Order- Marks prominent headlands, points and shoals in large bays. The lens at Point San Luis is a Fourth Order lens.

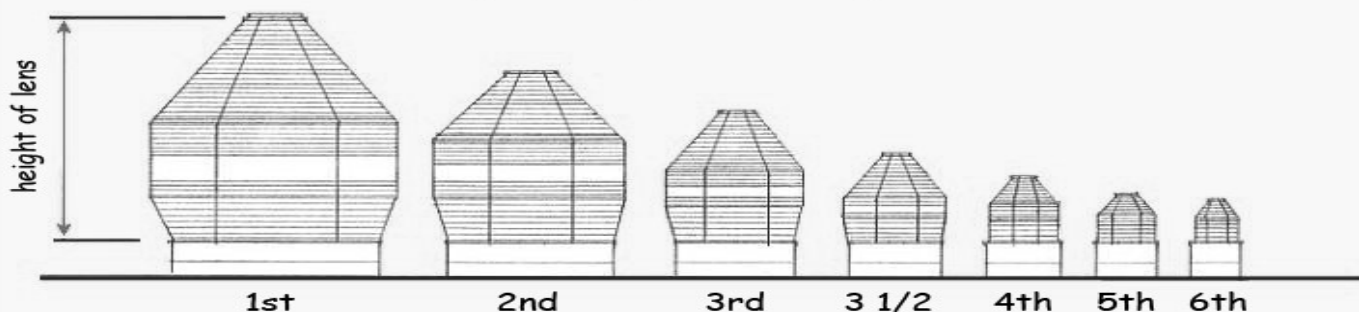
Fifth and Sixth Order- Warns of existing obstructions in rivers or marks piers or wharves. The sixth order is only one foot wide and is used in channels and harbors.

Fresnel's invention improved existing lights by increasing their brightness, distance, efficiency and recognition. Most of the lenses contain hundreds of glass prisms which were ground, cut and polished. They are truly works of art, sparkling like jewels when lit at night.



Augustin Fresnel

Height Comparisons of Fresnel Lenses



LOOKING FOR A UNIQUE GIFT? WE HAVE AN ONLINE GIFT SHOP!

We offer custom ornaments, etched wine glasses, shot glasses, mugs, 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. You may also join or renew your membership online. Visit us at: 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
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