

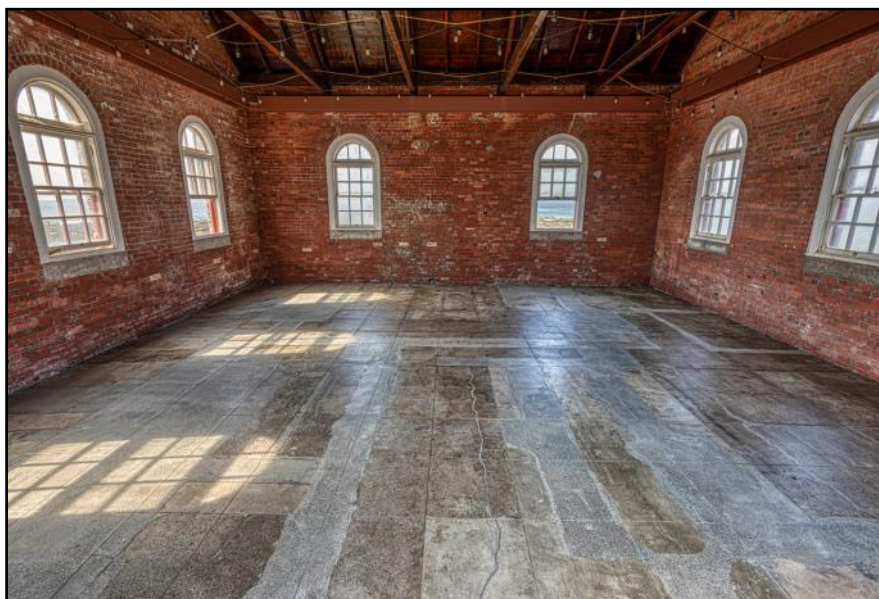
The Beacon

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

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FOG SIGNAL BUILDING GETS A NEW FLOOR WITH AN OLD LOOK



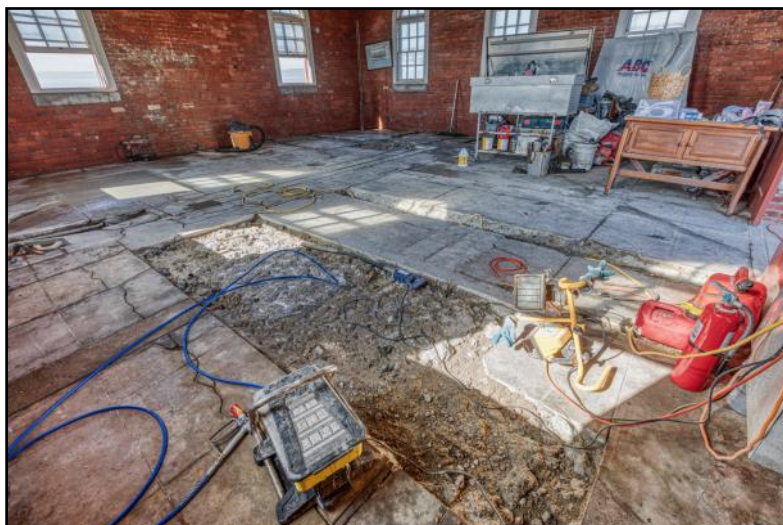
Above: The completed floor showing 114 years of history.

A long and loving restoration of the 1906 Fog Signal Building came closer to completion in late February when Wellsona Iron & Engineering of Paso Robles finished complex and extensive repairs of the concrete floor. The meticulous work took 10 weeks.

Instead of pouring a new slab over the old floor, workers jackhammered out sections of failed concrete and refilled them with a special high strength mix. Rusted steel pipes and buried iron drain lines that crisscrossed under the floor needed to be removed. Due to ground settling and decades of vibration from heavy machines, a vast network of cracks had to be carefully opened up, stabilized, and refilled with a special grout. Then the entire floor was ground to an even surface and scored with the original gridwork of 2 x 2 foot squares. Several coats of transparent sealer were applied.

The restored floor is now an important interpretive feature of the Fog Signal Building. The visible meshwork of repaired cracks, conduit channels, and segments of replaced concrete tell stories of the building's past and how it was adapted to changes in technology and use over its proud 114 year history.

Begun in 2010, the Fog Signal Building restoration has passed through several phases of significant and costly work. All that remains now is the design and installation of an interior lighting system.



Above: Dan Murphy patches the floor.

Left: The floor after damaged sections were removed.



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 2020



PEEK AT THE PAST: STEPHEN AND CAROLINE MORSE, LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS

The first Principal Keeper at Piedras Blancas Light Station was Stephen H. Morse, born in Massachusetts, 1839. He transferred from the Farallon Island Lighthouse to Piedras Blancas in December 1874, even though the Piedras Blancas light was not illuminated until February 15, 1875. His salary was \$800 a year. From National Archive documents we know the first years at Piedras Blancas were filled with challenges. On June 1, 1879, Morse wrote the following letter of resignation: *"I most respectfully resign my position as Principal Keeper of this station (Piedras Blancas) to take effect on July 1, 1879 on account of sickness. In case that I should get better I would respectfully ask for another light."* He died in San Francisco on July 15, 1879, at the age of 40.

Fortunately, we have recently learned more about Stephen Morse. As a young man he was a mariner. He was a veteran of the Civil War and then quartermaster in the U.S. Navy. At the time of the 1870 census he worked in a flour mill in San Francisco. In 1871 Stephen began his lighthouse career as First Assistant Keeper at South Farallon Lighthouse and was promoted to Principal Keeper in 1873.

On November 10, 1869, Stephen married Caroline Drinkwater in San Francisco. Caroline was born in Virginia and was around 17-18 years old when they married. Stephen and Caroline Morse had three children: Bertha Grant Morse (1871-1956), William Shelley Morse (1874-1957), and Ida Belle Morse (1878-1960). Ida might have been the first baby born at Piedras Blancas Light Station, although that distinction might go to William because he was born in December of 1874, the same month and year that Morse began working at Piedras Blancas. We now have a better image of life at the light station during the early years. When Bernard Ashley came on board as 2nd Assistant Keeper in 1878, he brought his wife and baby daughter. They had a second child while at Piedras Blancas. In addition to the keepers and their wives, there were babies and toddlers living in the dwelling.

After Stephen's death, Mrs. Morse lived and worked in San Francisco, where she raised her children. It must have been challenging to support three children on her own. Her jobs included working in a bakery and as an "elevator tender" in the U.S. Appraisers Building.

But Caroline's experience with lighthouses was not over. On December 1, 1905, a Santa Barbara newspaper, *The Morning Press*, carried the following announcement: *"Mrs. Caroline Morse of San Francisco is the new keeper of the Santa Barbara Lighthouse. The appointment was made by H.T. Mays, Commander, U.S.N. Inspector of the Twelfth District of the Lighthouse Establishment...Mrs. Morse is not new to the service. She is the widow of Stephen H. Morse, keeper of lighthouses on the Pacific Coast."* Caroline Morse succeeded another woman, Mrs. Julia Williams, who was keeper of the Santa Barbara Lighthouse for 40 years. Caroline retired in 1911 because of poor health but lived another 10 years in Santa Barbara. On January 15, 1921, she died. Her body was taken to San Francisco to be interred beside her late husband.

VISITORS CELEBRATED OUR 145TH BIRTHDAY

On Saturday, February 15th, it was a jovial mood at the light station as our lucky visitors were treated to birthday cake during our regularly scheduled tours. One group even sang "Happy Birthday." See you for our 146th!



Mr. Morse and Family, Farallon Island Lighthouse. Photo circa 1873



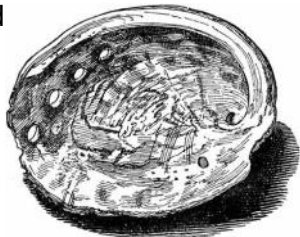
Right: Holly Gant serves cake to happy tour guests.

COOKING AT THE LIGHTHOUSE

The rocks along the coast near the lighthouse teamed with abalone in the 1800s. In 1906, Head keeper Lorin Thorndyke's son, Lorin Jr., bought an abalone-drying operation on San Simeon Point and had 20 divers working for him.

Abalone Chowder

4 slices bacon, diced
6 abalones, pounded and cut into small cubes
1 large potato, peeled and diced
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 1/2 cups hot water
3 cups hot milk
1 tablespoon butter
Salt and pepper to taste



Lightly brown the bacon and pour off all but 2 tablespoons of the drippings. Add the abalone, potato, onion and garlic. Sauté until golden brown. Add the hot water, cover the pan and simmer until the potato is tender. Add the hot milk and butter. Salt and pepper to taste.

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

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



We are fortunate to have some great new volunteers join our ranks. Welcome to Ken and Patti Smith!

Ken and Patti fulfilled their retirement plan and moved to Cambria from Westminster, CA, in August 2019. They enjoy walking, hiking, volunteering and cooking. You may see Ken busy with a maintenance or plant project while Patti is a cheerful presence in our gift shop.

Interested in joining Ken and Patti and our other friendly volunteers? Drop us a line - we would love to meet you! Email our volunteer coordinator, Jodie Nelson, at jnelson@blm.gov

TRIVIA TIME

How tall is the Piedras Blancas lens?

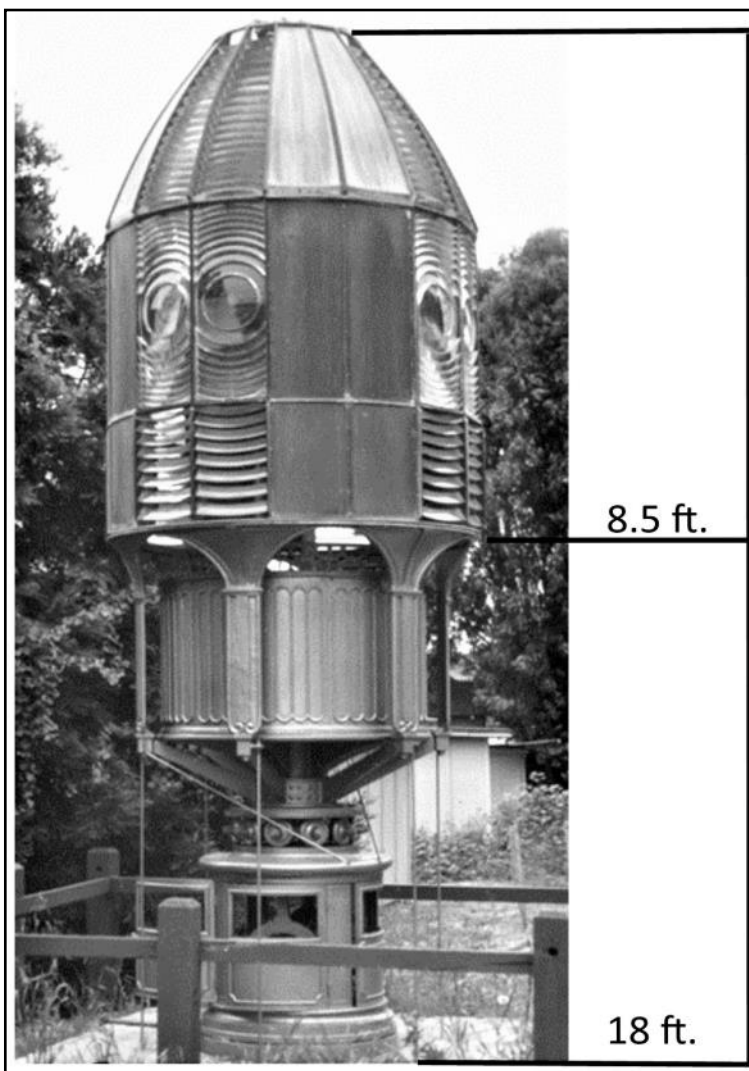
From the base of the pedestal to the top of the lens is 18 feet. The glass section is 8.5 feet high. It is a first order Fresnel lens.

How many glass prisms are there?

According to numbers taken by lampist Jim Woodward, there are 272 prisms, including bullseyes. Keep in mind, there were originally more; half the panels were removed in 1916.

What is the biggest Fresnel lens?

The first order lens is the largest and most powerful, reaching to 12 feet high and more than 6 feet in diameter. Used primarily as a seacoast light, its beam is visible over 20 miles out to sea. The sixth order is the smallest lens, being only about one foot wide and used in harbors and channels.



TAKE A PEEK AT THE LIGHTHOUSE ANY TIME

Since our live webcam 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 elephant seals on the beach or a beautiful moonrise.

Check us out: piedrasblancas.org/webcam

MEET THE NATIVES



Douglas Iris (*Iris douglasiana*) also called the Pacific Coast iris, is one of three species of the genus *Iris* native to the west coast. It is a fast growing, drought tolerant perennial that boasts purple flowers in early spring. It is found in coastal ranges from Santa Barbara to mid-Oregon and is common in coastal grasslands, prairies and mixed evergreen forests below 325 feet (100 m). They grow 12-18 inches tall and spread to 24 inches across. While they prefer shade and moist soils, this iris is found in full sun at the light station. The Douglas iris was first collected near Monterey by Scottish botanist and explorer David Douglas who discovered it and named it after himself. Parts of the iris have been used by many Native American cultures for food and medicinal tea, and the strands of the leaves were made into long thread for rope.

CRITTER CORNER

The Northern Harrier is a common year-round resident at the light station. Harriers are very distinctive hawks, long-winged and long-tailed, usually seen flying low over the ground in open country. As they fly, they scan the ground looking for small mammals and birds. Mature males are gray in color while the females are shades of brown and both have distinctive white rump patches. Harriers make sharp turns and skim tops of bushes and are frequently seen flying low over the ground between the light station and the highway. Their maneuverability was the inspiration for the name given to the military jet.



COVID-19 RESPONSE

At the time this issue of *The Beacon* was published, California was under a shelter in place order and the light station was closed. Our last public tours were held March 19th and we hope we will be able to reopen for our summer crowds. But in the meantime take a peek at our webcam or do some online shopping in our gift shop. Piedras Blancas Light Station will continue to be a stalwart beacon and we will see you again soon.

PAINT & SIP WITH BLENDFEST WAS A HIT

In February Piedras Blancas transformed into a make-shift paint studio for 22 guests who participated in Blendfest's Paint and Sip excursion. Blendfest is a yearly festival put on by the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance that focuses on wine blends from this region. Guests were able to enjoy painting their own example of Piedras Blancas Light Station while being guided by two professional painters from Art Social 805. Our current intern, Veronika, was able to join in on the experience and commented, "it was wonderful how everyone brought their own creativity to their canvases, and I think everyone had a good time." This was the first time that Piedras Blancas has had this event here, and will consider doing it again next year.



Right: Participants enjoyed an afternoon painting their own versions of the lighthouse.

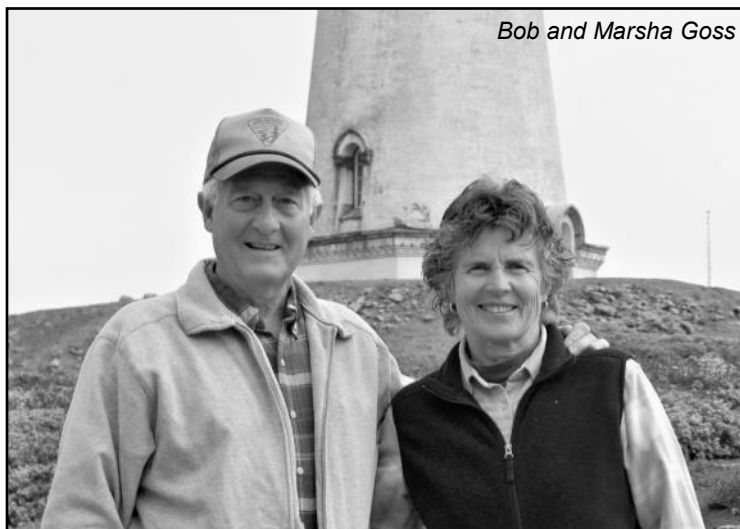
IN MEMORIAM: BOB GOSS, PBLs VOLUNTEER 2002-2011

The Piedras Blancas family lost an admired member of its ranks in January 2020. In February a group of volunteers gathered at the light station to remember Bob. It was a happy, upbeat remembrance, a true party remembering a good man. Below are some thoughts on Bob Goss by those who worked side by side with him in the early days of our volunteer program.

Bob and Marsha Goss were among the first BLM volunteers at Piedras Blancas Light Station. Bob could fix anything. He did construction, painting, plant restoration, and helped with tours. He lives on in the significant progress made during the first decade of BLM management at PBLs. We miss you and love you, Bob.
Carole Adams, volunteer.

Bob Goss truly was an amazing man, a man of so many talents, strengths, and energy. All those labor-intensive hours over years pulling ice plant was beyond the abilities or even desires of most of us, but the positive and spectacular results are a testament to all who were such a remarkable team during that period. To Bob and Marsha, as well as to you all, I say "Thank you!"

Richard Rowlett, naturalist and former member of the gray whale census team.



Bob and Marsha Goss



Above: Abel Martinez places engraved bricks to commemorate Bob's service and friendship.

Bob was always my go-to guy because he was talented in so many ways, and always did a good job. I loved him.

John Bogacki, Park Manager PBLs, 2001-2006.

Bob and Marsha Goss were our good neighbors in Cambria, but our friendship grew at the Piedras Blancas Light Station. As volunteers we worked side by side, enjoyed our lunch break conversations, shared ideas, and I learned a lot from Bob because he was such a multi-skilled volunteer with many talents. Bob was a very pleasant man with a special warm smile. I was most fortunate to call Bob Goss my friend and fellow volunteer at PBLs!

Abel Martinez, volunteer.

Mark you calendars!

**Walk In Wednesdays this summer on the last
Wednesdays of June, July and August.
Visit our website for details.**

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)

Summer Hours (April-September) Saturdays and Wednesdays 10 am and 2 pm, Sundays 10 am. Visit their website: PointSur.org or call 831-625-4419

Point Pinos Lighthouse

(90 miles north of PBLs)

Located in Pacific Grove. Open Saturdays 10 am - 4 pm and Thursdays through Mondays 1 pm - 4 pm. For more information: PointPinosLighthouse.org



JOIN OUR MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS ON THE 4TH WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH

The Piedras Blancas Light Station Association meets every 4th Wednesday of the month at 6 pm at Mechanics Bank in Cambria. The public is always welcome to come and listen, ask questions or voice concerns.

The board consists of people from varied backgrounds and education who live in different parts of the county. We are always interested in speaking with anyone who is interested in becoming a board member.

Please send us an email if you are interested or have questions: contact.pblsa@gmail.com

Meeting minutes are published on our website under the About Us page.

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 two 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 advanced
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
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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!



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and Instagram:
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PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT
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