

The Beacon

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

VOL. 15, ISSUE 1

JAN - MAR 2021

LIGHT STATION CAPTURED BY INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION



Thanks to the recent flights of SpaceX Crew Dragon and the 50th Anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission, there has been a renewed interest in space travel. For the last 20 years the ISS has been flying 25,000 miles above the Earth. This photo was taken in 2008. You can see submerged reefs, the sandy ocean bottom, and Highway 1 snaking along the coast. Unlike most parts of California, our stretch of coastline remains virtually unchanged in the last twelve years or for the last 50 years for that matter. To spot the ISS flying overhead, go to spotthestation.nasa.gov

MOVING FORWARD IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

As most of you are aware, we closed the light station in March 2020 to protect our staff, volunteers, and visitors from the spread of COVID-19. We have been working closely with our BLM leadership and paying close attention to state mandates and direction from San Luis Obispo County's public health office to ensure that visits to the light station will not exacerbate the spread of the virus. The health and safety of our staff, interns, volunteers and visitors is our paramount concern. As we begin to think about reopening, many of the changes you will see will reflect how COVID-19 affects our community in the coming seasons. The changes will hopefully be temporary, and we will continue to follow best management practices as we move forward. For future tour information and updates please visit our website.



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 2021



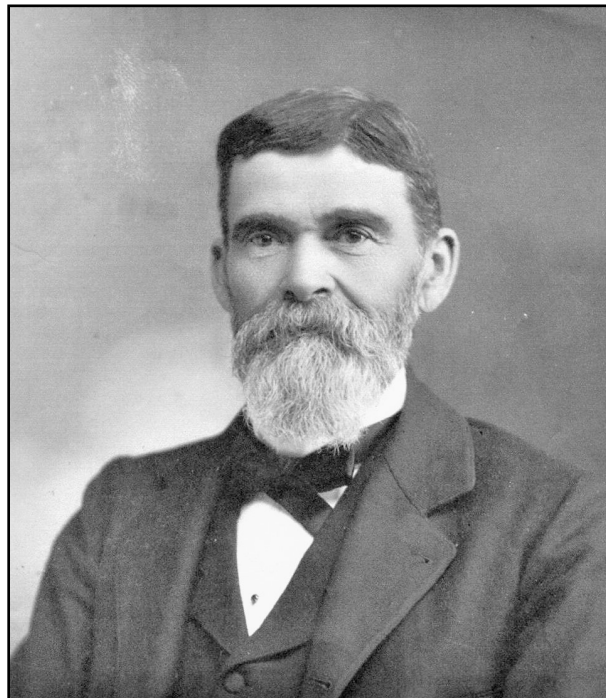
PEOPLE FROM THE PAST: L.V. THORNDYKE

Lorin V. Thorndyke was the longest serving Principal Keeper at Piedras Blancas Light Station, 1879-1906. Thorndyke replaced the first Principal Keeper, Stephen Morse, on August 19, 1879.

Information obtained from Lighthouse Friends website, and the U.S. Lighthouse Society, tells us that Thorndyke began his lighthouse service career in 1875 as Second Assistant at Cape Mendocino. Through a series of transfers, he quickly moved up the ladder to Principal Keeper.

Cape Mendocino 1875-1877 - Second Assistant
Cape Mendocino 1877-1878 - First Assistant
Año Nuevo 1878-1879 - First Assistant
Point Bonita 1879 - First Assistant
Point Piedras Blancas 1879-1906 - Principal Keeper

We recently acquired personnel records from National Archives, dated 1904, just after the transfer of lighthouse service from the Department of Treasury to the Department of Commerce. These records enhance our previous knowledge of L.V. Thorndyke.



1. What is your full name? (Do not use initials, but spell out each name and state whether Mr., Miss, or Mrs.
Example: Mr. John Richard Doe.)
Mr. Lorin Veazy Thorndyke

2. How do you write your name on the pay roll? *L.V. Thorndyke*

In Part 1 of the records, Thorndyke states his middle name as "Veazy." Mr. Lorin Veazy Thorndyke was his full name. L. V. Thorndyke was how he wrote his name in payroll records. He was born January 26, 1839. He listed no other family members as civil servants of the United States Government at that time. However, we know one of his sons (Lorin V. Thorndyke) worked at Trinidad Lighthouse 1900-1901 and at Oakland Harbor Lighthouse 1901-1902. His other son (John Emory Thorndyke) was briefly appointed acting assistant keeper at PBLS in August 1903.

When asked if he was appointed through a civil service examination, he responded, "Appointed before position was classified." His occupation prior to entering civil service was listed as "sailor." His education was listed as "public school." In answer to the question, what special qualifications do you have, he replied, "Tinker." His salary was \$800 a year. His position was considered, "competitive."

Sailor

Tinker

Thorndyke's letter of resignation was dated July 11, 1906, and was sent to the Light-house Inspector, San Francisco. It is short and to the point: "You will please accept my resignation and send a man to relieve me as soon as possible. Very respectfully, L. V. Thorndyke, Keeper"

His final date of employment was August 31, 1906. He was 40 years old when he became Principal Keeper at PBLS and he served 27 years, resigning at age 67.

Placard to be kept hung up in the sitting-room or main hall of the keeper's dwelling.

DWELLING, TOWER, GROUNDS, BOAT SHEDS, AND ANY AND ALL
BULDINGS AND PROPERTY AT LIGHT-HOUSE SITES.

Keepers are required to keep the grounds around the light-house towers, dwellings, and other buildings in their charge, in neat and proper order. Slovenliness will not be tolerated. In case the land is adapted to cultivation, the keepers are expected to cultivate it, and if enclosed to keep the enclosures in good order. The grounds about the house and tower are to be kept free from shrubs, bushes, weeds, old barrels, pieces of plank, boxes, &c., and the yard or immediate surroundings of the buildings must be kept cleared of all such articles, and in good order at all times. These duties are no less incumbent upon the keepers than those prescribed for keeping the light burning, apparatus clean, &c.

Those keepers who exhibit a proper zeal and industry, and who seem to desire to put and keep their grounds in good order by attending to their cultivation and enclosure, &c., will be aided as far as possible by the Light-house Board officers, in effecting necessary improvements upon the premises....

By order of the Light-house Board:

W.B. SHUBRICK,
Rear Admiral, U, S. Navy, Chairman

Right: Excerpt from Instructions and Directions
to Light Keepers, September 1871

Washington City, September 5, 1870

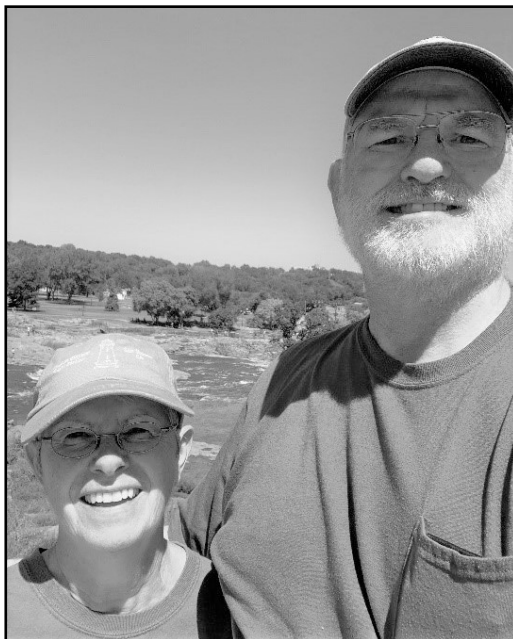
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Former volunteers Roger and Cathy Shipp say hello from their new home in Nebraska

Since leaving California in March, Roger and Cathy have begun their new adventures in the Midwest. They miss all their friends at the Piedras Blancas lighthouse. Hopefully, they will be able to visit next summer after everyone is vaccinated. Both have recovered from the virus and are feeling great.

In July they bought a house in Papillion, NE (same town they lived in 20 years ago). They are thrilled that they live within 15 minutes of their children and grandchildren. Even with COVID-19 restrictions they can see their family much more than when they were half a continent away. As you can see from the picture below, the weather is a bit colder than that of the central coast, but they say they are adapting. Roger has learned how to use a snow blower.

They joined the city's new sports facility to keep active. Pickleball is Roger's new obsession and Cathy walks the indoor track every day. Roger and Cathy like to take day trips to see the spectacular wildlife and natural wonders. They recently visited the Loess Bluffs National Wildlife refuge to see the bald eagles and snow geese that were in the area. Thanks for the update, Roger and Cathy!



Interested in joining our friendly volunteers? Drop us a line - we would love to meet you! Email our volunteer coordinator, Jodie Nelson: jrnelson@blm.gov

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

SHOP ONLINE AND SUPPORT PBLs

Even though we are closed our online gift shop is always open! 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 memorable gift, too!

Visit us at: piedrasblancas.org/gift-shop

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. *Due to COVID concerns we are holding virtual Zoom meetings. Please email us if you would like to participate.*

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.

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





AN EXCITING PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AT HISTORIC PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT STATION!

Position: Program Associate, Piedras Blancas Light Station Association (PBLSA)

Compensation: \$20/hour, maximum 64 hours/month

This part-time position reports to the PBLSA board chair and works closely with the treasurer for financial and office management. The Program Associate also assists light station staff, volunteers and visitors. Anticipated start date of May 1, 2021.

Since 2004, the PBLSA has been an active 501(c)(3) nonprofit partner of Piedras Blancas Light Station, a unit of the California Coastal National Monument operated by the Federal Bureau of Land Management. The association supports the restoration, preservation, and interpretation of the light station. Our board of directors are passionate about the light station and our stewardship of one of the Central Coast's most prized and precious historical and natural resources.

Duties:

- Office management, financial tracking, and administrative support for the PBLSA Board of Directors.
- On-site gift shop management and inventory selection and control.
- Membership communication and fundraising development, research, and advancement.
- Website maintenance and social media promotion and oversight.

For a complete job description, go to: www.piedrasblancas.org/jobs

Qualifications:

- Extensive administrative and office management skills preferred.
- Strong computer skills and proficiency in Microsoft and Quicken.
- Strong organizational, analytical, writing and oral communication skills and ability to perform multiple tasks with limited supervision.
- Website design and social media experience preferred.
- Grant writing and fundraising background beneficial.

Application Deadline: March 1, 2021

Please send resumé and cover letter to David Cooper, Chair, PBLSA, at: contact.pblsa@gmail.com

COOKING AT THE LIGHTHOUSE

"This is a recipe for Irish Soda Bread that I made for the potluck at Piedras Blancas Lighthouse." - Maryann B. Mullen, BLM Volunteer

Irish Soda Bread

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 3 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 2/3 cups buttermilk
- 1/4 cup margarine, softened
- 1 large egg, beaten
- 2 Tbsp. caraway seeds
- 1 cup raisins



Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl mix together flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Stir in buttermilk, margarine and egg; mix well. Add raisins and caraway seeds. Equally divide dough into 2 pieces; place each piece in a greased 9 inch pie pan. ("Cut a cross in the top of each loaf to let the devil out" that is the way I was taught!). Bake until golden brown, 30-40 minutes. Cool before slicing. Makes 2 loaves.

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

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



After nearly ten years working for PBLSA I am moving back to my hometown of San Diego. When my husband and I moved up here in January 2010 we were amazed by the natural beauty and we enjoyed the slower pace of the central coast. Soon I began volunteering at the light station pulling weeds, assisting on tours, and working in the gift shop. Luckily for me the association needed a part-time employee to manage the gift shop and handle bookkeeping and administrative tasks. The job later entailed designing and maintaining our website, adding a live webcam, and writing our quarterly newsletter. In 2018 I had the honor of being one of a handful of volunteers to clean the Fresnel lens which was a highlight of my time here.

Writing this newsletter was a challenge at first and I must thank Carole Adams for her guidance and feedback in the beginning, as well as her continued submissions of varied pieces on the history of the light station. I consider it a privilege to work in such a unique and beautiful spot and will always remember the kindness and camaraderie of our volunteers, staff, and board of directors. I look forward to watching the progress of PBLS and hope the beautiful ornate top of the lighthouse will one day be replicated to complete my favorite lighthouse in California.

Warm regards,
Holly Gant

CRITTER CORNER



What's in a howl? Coyotes are smart adaptable canines who help keep the rabbit and rodent populations under control. They are found throughout North America. Their yapping and howling calls are a well known sound associated with the west. People typically overestimate the number of coyotes they hear. Researchers at Texas A&M University played recordings of 1-4 coyotes howling and yipping and asked people to estimate how many individuals they thought they heard. Listeners consistently overestimated the numbers of coyotes by nearly two-fold. The way their howls change pitch and pass through the surrounding environment often sounds as though there are as many as a dozen coyotes howling at once. Group size in most areas is 5-6 adults in addition to pups born that year and urban groups of coyotes are smaller. Typically coyotes howl to communicate with

each other and establish territory and may bark when defending their den or meal. They rarely howl when they have downed prey as that would draw unwanted attention from competing coyotes and predators.

MEET THE NATIVES



Sea pink or sea thrift (*Armeria maritima*) can be found in coastal areas across the Northern Hemisphere. Thrift prefers dry, sandy, saline conditions along ocean bluffs, ridges, and exposed grasslands. This compact evergreen perennial grows in low clumps and sends up long stems that support globes of pink pompom flowers. Thrift blooms profusely from spring through summer and grows to 11 inches tall and 4-12 feet wide. It adds a beautiful pop of color along the central coast and bees love it.

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
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!



Find us on Facebook
and Instagram:
PiedrasBlancasLightStation



PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHT
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