

# The Beacon

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

VOL. 15, ISSUE 3

JULY - SEPT 2021

### CROSSING THE BAR: REMEMBERING ABEL MARTINEZ



On May 27, 2021, Abel Martinez, beloved Piedras Blancas Light Station volunteer, crossed the bar. Abel and his wife, Toni, have been volunteers since 2002, and he will be missed by all who knew him. Abel loved the light station and was passionate about promoting stewardship of this special place. We can honor his memory by continuing to preserve and protect Piedras Blancas.

As Jodie Nelson, BLM Recreation Planner, so eloquently stated on the day Abel died: *"He is at peace, but we will miss him dearly. I can't begin to describe what Abel meant to Piedras Blancas. As I drove to the light station today, the sun illuminated the lighthouse and the day was beautiful, the sea was translucent and deep blue, the fog remained at bay, and the wind never picked up. Abel was with us today and will always be a presence we feel at Piedras Blancas. Our hearts and thoughts are with Toni and her family and friends."*

The expression "crossing the bar" comes from a poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson. The expression can be interpreted to mean "crossing the sandbar" out into sea, serenely transitioning from life into death.

The world is a better place because Abel passed through it.



### COME VISIT US! FULL SCHEDULE OF SUMMER TOURS NOW UNDERWAY

Great news! The Light Station is now open for our usual schedule of summer tours, reservable online by clicking the Buy Tour Tickets link at [piedrasblancas.org](http://piedrasblancas.org). Tours are self-guided, allowing visitors to take their time and enjoy the beautiful views or linger to read more about the fascinating history of the lighthouse. Knowledgeable volunteers are stationed along the walking trail and near the lighthouse and outbuildings to answer all of your questions. Reserve now to visit us on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, or Saturday. Meet at the former Piedras Blancas Motel, 1.5 miles north of the lighthouse at 9:45 a.m., where one of our staff will check you in and lead the caravan to the lighthouse. Reservations are required in order to keep tour groups manageable. As always, the health and safety of our staff, interns, volunteers, and visitors is our paramount concern. After Labor Day, the tour schedule will return to Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday only. We are closed Sundays and Wednesdays year-round.



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



## PIEDRAS BLANCAS LIGHTHOUSE RESERVATION

In 1866 (155 years ago) Piedras Blancas was set aside as a lighthouse reservation. On June 6th, 1866, a letter was sent from the Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., to the President of the United States requesting that 13 unoccupied public lands located within the states of California, Oregon, and the territory of Washington be reserved for lighthouse purposes.

On June 8th, 1866, the President ordered: "Let the land within described be reserved for lighthouse purposes as recommended by the Acting Secretary of the Interior."

(signed) Andrew Johnson, President of the United States

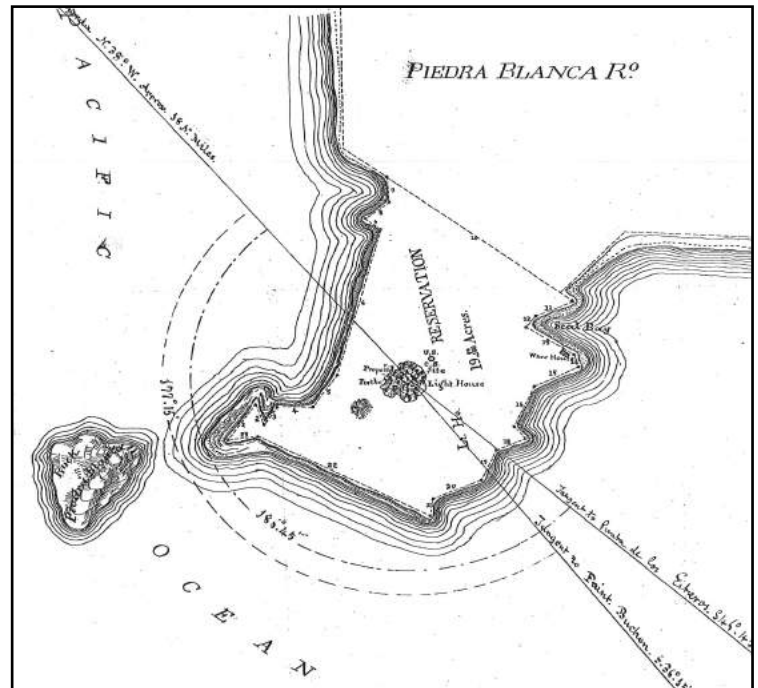
The first tract of land listed in this order under California was Piedras Blancas.

- From 1874-1910, the light station was managed by the Lighthouse Establishment.
- From 1910-1939, the U.S. Lighthouse Service managed the site.
- In 1939, management of lighthouses was transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard.
- In 2001, the reservation reverted back to the Department of the Interior.

In 2001 (twenty years ago) the Bureau of Land Management began managing Piedras Blancas Light Station. On October 12, 2001, the following announcement appeared in the Federal Register:

*DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, Bureau of Land Management. Public Land Order No. 7501: Partial revocation of Executive Order Dated June 8, 1866 and Withdrawal of Public Land for Piedras Blancas Light Station. Summary: "This order partially revokes an executive order insofar as it affects 19.9 acres of public land withdrawn for lighthouse purposes. The land is no longer needed by the United States Coast Guard for the purpose for which it was withdrawn." Effective date: October 12, 2001.*

The Bureau of Land Management's task was to assure long term protection and preservation of historic Piedras Blancas Light Station and associated values.



1872 map. Note the site was referred to as a "L.H. RESERVATION."

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

The Piedras Blancas Light Station Association meets every 4th Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. Due to COVID concerns, we are currently holding virtual Zoom meetings. Please email us if you would like to participate. 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 in becoming a board member or have questions concerning the Light Station: [contact.pblsa@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://PointSanLuisLighthouse.org)  
or call 805-540-5771.



#### Point Sur Light Station

(65 miles north of PBLs)  
Summer Hours (April-September) Saturdays and Wednesdays 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., Sundays 10 a.m. Visit their website: [PointSur.org](http://PointSur.org) or call 831-625-4419.

#### Point Pinos Lighthouse

(90 miles north of PBLs)  
Located in Pacific Grove. Open Saturdays 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. and Thursdays through Mondays 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. For more information: [PointPinosLighthouse.org](http://PointPinosLighthouse.org).

## SPOTLIGHT ON OUR VOLUNTEERS: TIM POSTIFF

Tim joined the Piedras Blancas Light Station volunteer family in 2007, as part of the tour training class preparing to begin giving mid-week tours in 2008.

Tim became an indispensable member of the public tour team and the school outreach program. Tim was always eager to help as guide or assistant, or as an enactor during living history tours. He also helped prepare interpretive elements, like the slideshow on display in the lighthouse. Tim also researched historic and technical topics and wrote informative articles used in the *Beacon* and for tour training.

Tim's mathematics background came in handy when he studied the old light station site maps, determined where historic structures once stood, and marked the locations so we can all better imagine what was where. The sites of the keepers dwelling, the Keeper's cottage, the rain shed, and the original barn were outlined by Tim.

Always willing to help, Tim also set up records for volunteer hours and tour numbers. The alumni records, so important in keeping contact information for those who lived and worked at the light station in the past, was set up by Tim. He also maintained the roster of BLM volunteers.

But Tim is not just a brainy guy. He was also willing to get dirty, pulling non-native plants or helping with a variety of other projects.

Tim served for many years on the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association board, where his intelligent, thoughtful, and gentlemanly manner were real assets.

Recently, Tim moved from the area. We miss you and wish you well, Tim. Thank you for everything you did for the Piedras Blancas Light Station!



### COOKING AT THE LIGHTHOUSE

#### Nine-Inch Rhubarb Pie

4 cups cut rhubarb  
1 cup sugar  
2 Tbs. flour  
1 tsp. cinnamon  
1/4 tsp. nutmeg

1 double piecrust  
2 Tbs. butter  
1 tsp. cream  
1 tsp. sugar



Mix rhubarb, sugar, flour, spices in bowl; pour into pie tin with bottom crust in place. Dot butter around rhubarb mixture. Place top crust and crimp. Drop cream over crust and rub gently, lightly sprinkle with sugar. Poke steam holes in top crust. Bake in hot oven, 400° nearly 1 hour.

Excerpted with permission from Beverly Praver's cookbook *Dinner at the Lighthouse*, available in our giftshop.

### SHOP ONLINE AND SUPPORT PBLs

Forgot to buy a souvenir when you visited the lighthouse? Our online gift shop offers custom ornaments, etched wine glasses, shot glasses, t-shirts, fleece jackets and vests, plus a lot more. And don't forget, an engraved brick installed at the light station makes a great way to honor any lover of lighthouses!

Visit us at [piedrasblancas.org/gift-shop](http://piedrasblancas.org/gift-shop)

### THE BOOK NOOK:

#### RECOMMENDED LIGHTHOUSE LITERATURE

Want to introduce your child or grandchild to the fascinating history of lighthouses and lighthouse keepers? Take a look at these books in our gift shop on your next visit.

#### ***A Lighthouse Saves the Day* by Robert Lieber**

A board book about the creatures and people who live near and depend on lighthouses.

#### ***Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie***

by Peter and Connie Roop

Recommended for ages 7-10, this book tells the true story of a little girl who saved the day!



## HOLDING FIRM

By Kristen Norton

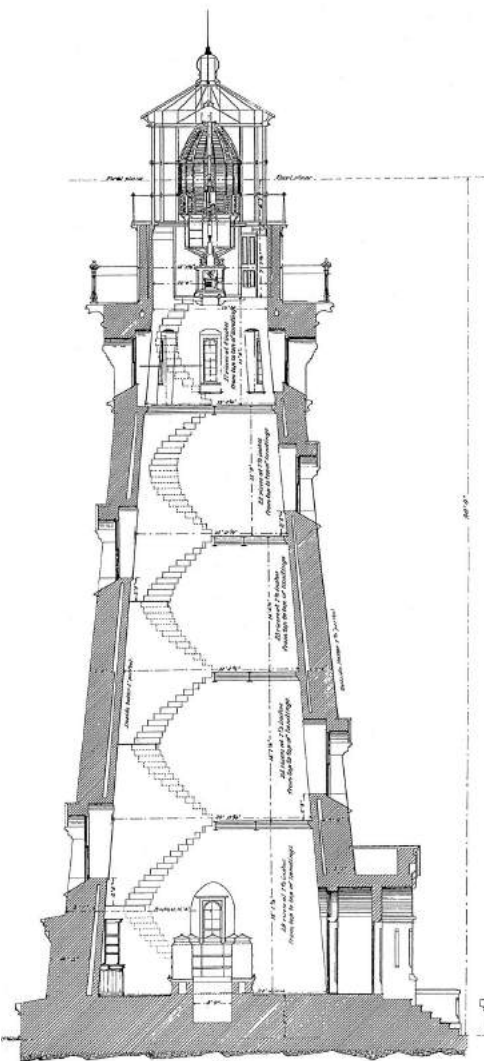
Round and round and round go the iron stairs,  
the iron railings, round and round to the top —  
from San Francisco they came to be installed piece by piece,  
as up rose the tower, brick by brick, course  
by course, higher and higher, all the way up to views  
of land and sea and sky, views of rocks and birds  
and whales; yes, these stairs, these iron stairs  
carried me, just last year, and carried you,  
my ancestor, more than a hundred and fifty years ago —  
up you went, stair by stair, first one up, pride of place for  
you, the builder, the supervisor, months and months  
of work in your hands as you walked stair by stair,  
hand to finished walls, to stand at the top, to look,  
to dream of captains who'd never walk these iron stairs  
but who'd look to the tower, to the light, to the keepers,  
to the builders, with gratitude — yes, these iron stairs  
carried you, carried crew, carried keepers, holding firm  
through earthquake and gale, holding firm these many years  
for workers, for visitors, holding firm for you and for me —

*Kristen Norton is the great-great-great granddaughter of Sidney J. Ashley, Captain, U.S Army Corps of Engineers, and Supervisor of Construction for Point Arena Light Station (1869) and Piedras Blancas Light Station (1874). Kristen is currently writing a book about her family history, including the role S.J. Ashley played as master mason of construction of Piedras Blancas Light Station.*

*Kristen visited Point Arena Light Station in January 2020, which inspired the poem, "Holding Firm," reprinted here. This poem won first place in the Point Arena Light Station 150th + 1 Anniversary Writers Invitation and was first printed in the Independent Coast Observer, April 30, 2021.*

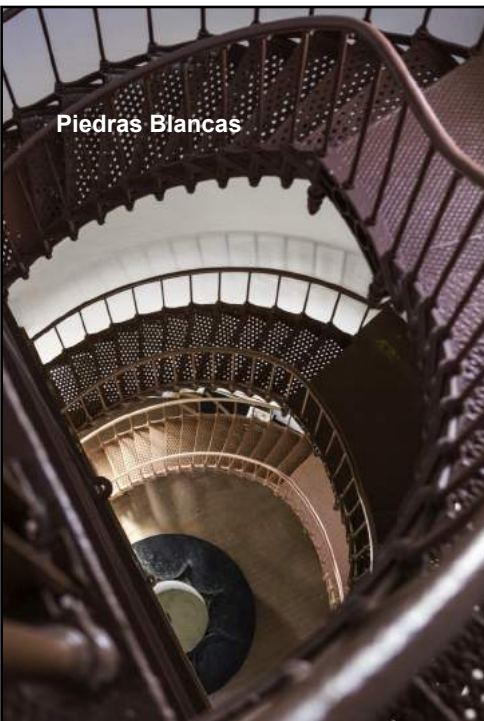
*Although the poem was written about Point Arena, the feeling is just as appropriate to Piedras Blancas.*

*Reprinted by permission.*



### SEE THE LIGHTHOUSE ANYTIME

Check out our live webcam to get a 270° view of the light station grounds, the beach, and the nearby ocean.  
[piedrasblancas.org/webcam](http://piedrasblancas.org/webcam)



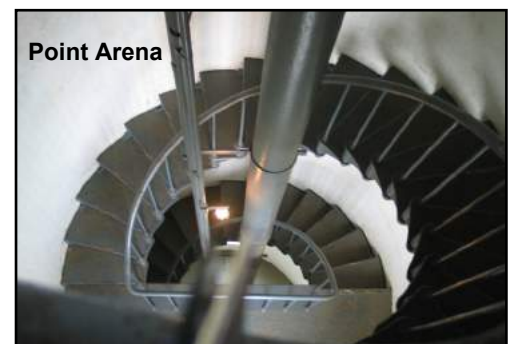
## LIGHTHOUSE STAIRS

When visiting lighthouses, it's interesting to notice the stairs. Are they placed right next to the wall or out a little? Do they have handrails on one side or both? Are the interior walls conically shaped or cylindrical? Are the stairs ornate or plain?

At Piedras Blancas, both the shape of the exterior and the interior is conical and the stairs are set out a little from the wall.

*Left: At Piedras Blancas, there is space between the steps and the wall, and there are handrails on both sides of the stairs.*

*Right: In the Point Arena lighthouse, there is less space between the steps and the wall and no outer handrail.*





## CRITTER CORNER: MINER BEES

*Anthophora abrupta*

When most of us hear the word “bee” we think of the European honey bee, producer of the honey we enjoy as a sweetener. But there are many other kinds of bees, including native bees, that don’t live in white boxes.

Miner bees (also called mining bees, chimney bees, ground bees, and other names) are native bees that build nests in underground tunnels. They prefer clay or other well-draining soils, and have also been found nesting in the cracks of old stone or log buildings.

They are sometimes called chimney bees because each female builds a nest by digging a tunnel and building a “chimney” aboveground with the loose soil. Even though nests are found in clusters, each tunnel is separate, with each female only providing for her own nest and future offspring. Only one generation at a time is found in the nests. The offspring overwinter in the prepupae stage and emerge as adults in the spring.

Miner bees are smaller than honey bees. They are sometimes mistaken for bumble bees because they are black and yellow summer bees. Most are harmless to humans; they are non-aggressive and fast moving. They do not produce honey, but they are important pollinators, as both male and female bees collect nectar from many species of native flowers.

Commercial honey beekeepers are increasingly moving their hives to U.S. public lands. Scientists warn that millions of introduced honey bees pose a risk to native bee species, outcompeting them for pollen and altering fragile plant communities.



Above: A cluster of miner bee tunnel openings along the Boucher Trail, Piedras Blancas.

Below: A miner bee at the opening of a tunnel.



## MEET THE NATIVES: CALIFORNIA EVERLASTING

*Pseudognaphalium californicum*



Native to the west coast from Washington to Baja, this fragrant plant is common in California coastal chaparral, but can also be found in other habitats. The flowers form from spring to early summer; the blossoms are white to pink and are egg-shaped.

California everlasting is an annual, biennial, or short-lived perennial. Plants grow to 2-4 feet tall and 2 feet wide. The leaves are sticky. As the leaves dry, they release a delightful scent, reminiscent of maple syrup.

The name, *Pseudognaphalium*, is from the Greek word *gnaphalon*, meaning lock of wool, which refers to the woolly appearance of the leaves.

This lovely native plant provides needed habitat for American Lady butterflies.

## 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. Make your reservations online through our website, [piedrasblancas.org](http://piedrasblancas.org). Meet at the former Piedras Blancas Motel located 1.5 miles north of the light station at 9:45 a.m.

**Please do not wait at the gate to the light station!**  
For information, email [PiedrasBlancasTours@gmail.com](mailto: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  
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805-927-3719  
[membership.pblsa@gmail.com](mailto: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 checks payable to PBLSA  
You may also join online at [piedrasblancas.org](http://piedrasblancas.org)  
**Thank you for your support!**



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