

Old Point Loma



By George Worthylake

Point Loma Lighthouse in the 1890s. Photograph courtesy of the San Diego Historical Society, Photograph Collection.

To: Secretary of the Treasury

From: Coast Survey Office, November 22, 1851

Sir: In conformity with the instructions of the Treasury Department, I have caused a survey to be made for the sight [sic] of a light-house at Point Loma, near San Diego, California, for which an appropriation was made by Act of Congress, approved September 28, 1850. I send herewith a sketch showing the locality proposed for the light, and its relation to the Harbor of San Diego and to its approaches . . . The light, which is recommended, is one of the first order, or a sea-coast light, to be placed on the bluff in the position marked, in a tower, say twenty five feet high. The range will thus be 31.7 statute miles, and the light will be visible beyond the Coronados [islands between California and Mexico], and over a section of the horizon of about 187 degrees.

A small harbor light is recommended on Ballast Point . . . as a leading light up the bay. Its elevation may be fifteen feet.

I append the report of A. M. Harrison, by whom the . . . survey of Point Loma and its vicinity was made . . .

The considerable height of the point at which this light-house is to be placed induced me to withhold the report of Mr. Harrison, and any recommendation concerning it, until I had consulted with him as to the propriety of interference from fog. He re-affirms his opinion of the propriety of the site, after considering this objection.

In recommending lights for the western coast, I have not advised that any of them be revolving lights, except in the case of Point Conception; conceiving that, at present, until facilities for repairs of machinery and the number of lights are increased, it is inexpedient and unnecessary to resort to such a distinction.

Very respectfully yours,
A. D. Bache
Supt. U. S. Coast Survey



he 1850s were a period of flux for the nation's aid to navigation systems. During the 1850s, the Lighthouse Board replaced the inept 5th Auditor of the Treasury and brought about a change of rules and regulations. Keepers of light stations now had to be able to read and write, something which wasn't required under the old regime. The new board also modernized the system of aids to navigation in this country. One of the most important changes was the introduction of the Fresnel lens which had been invented in 1822 and installed in most maritime country's light stations.

The 1850s saw the expansion of the United States to encompass the west coast. The Gold Rush of 1849 transformed sleepy villages into bustling cities. It was due to the Gold Rush, and numerous shipwrecks, that Congress authorized funds in the early 1850s to establish various aids to navigation on the west coast. Eight of the aids were light stations to be established in California and the Oregon Territory. One of those light stations was to be constructed at the Port of San Diego at Point Loma.

The Baltimore firm of Gibbons and Kelly was awarded the contract to construct the first eight west coast light stations. They loaded their vessel, *Oriole*, with all the necessary supplies to construct the light stations except material for

the outer walls; they were authorized to use brick, rubble stone, or granite, whichever was plentiful in the location of each station.

San Diego's Point Loma is located at the end of a long finger of land that protects the harbor from the west. This peninsula extends south, gently rising to 422-feet above the ocean. The top is a narrow spine with steep slopes to the ocean on the west and to the harbor on the east. The view from the light station has been rated as one of the great harbor views of the world.

When the light station was constructed, the area was virtually uninhabited. A small settlement called Roseville was a short wagon ride away with San Diego a considerable distance by wagon or horse. There were probably some people living at nearby Ballast Point engaged in whaling and fishing. There were no roads, only crude trails. Prior to the United States Government establishing Point Loma, there was no light station in the area. During the Mexican period, there is evidence that a small lantern was suspended from a stake at Ballast Point.

Although the contract for the construction of Point Loma, and the other seven west coast light stations, was authorized by Congress in 1848 (in the bill establishing the Oregon Territory), it wasn't until September 28, 1850 that funds were actually designated to construct these light stations. However,

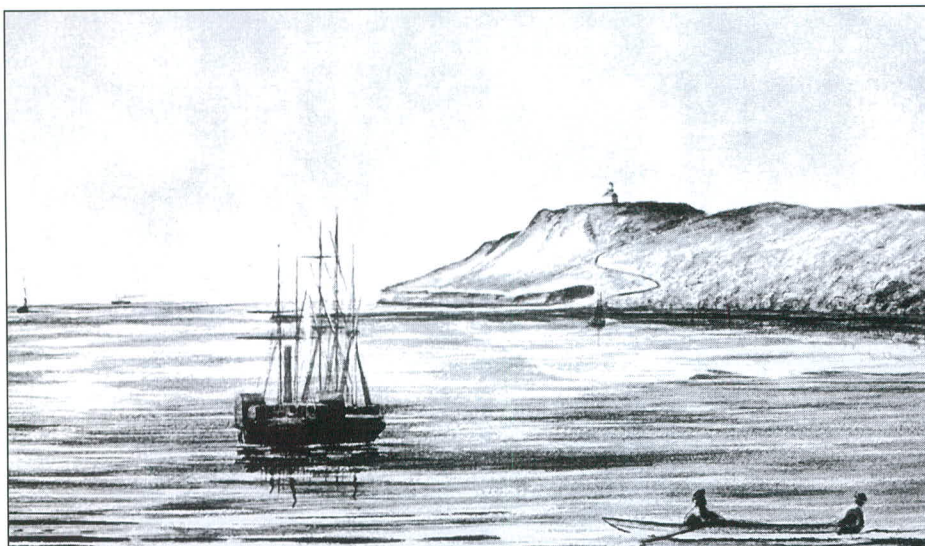
awarding the contract was delayed by scandal in Washington (see "1852: Dark Clouds Over The Pacific Coast" in *The Keeper's Log* Volume 12, Issues 2 and 3) and then altered due to the creation of the new Lighthouse Board in 1852.

The new Board divided the country into twelve districts — the west coast being designated the 12th Lighthouse District. The direct supervision of light stations fell to the various Collectors of Customs. Those Collectors who had light stations in their district also held the job of Superintendent of Lighthouses. O. S. Witherby, the Collector for San Diego, was appointed Superintendent for the Point Loma and Point Conception light stations.

The exact sites for the eight light stations was determined by Coast Survey. On May 29, 1851 the *San Diego Herald* announced "the officers of the U. S. Coast Survey are now actively engaged in the survey of the Harbor preparatory to the selection of a site for the Government Light House at this point."

Chief Topographer for the Survey Party, A. M. Harrison, wrote to the Superintendent of the Coast Survey, A. D. Bache, recommending a location at the end of the peninsula. He stated that materials could be landed at La Playa, a small landing site four miles away, and they could easily be hauled to the site from there. He also mentioned the fog was thick during periods of his stay. Mr. Bache wrote back asking if the fog might interfere with the light, as the location was 422-feet above the water. Mr. Harrison thought there may be some obscuring, but the site selected was the best in the area as it would serve as a coastal light, as well as a light which could be seen from the harbor. Thirty-six years later the station was relocated to a point near sea level due to the fog.

Once the Congressional investigation regarding the west coast light stations was completed, Gibbons and Kelly began gathering supplies for the mission. They were awarded \$15,000 for each of the California light stations and \$31,000 for the one at Cape Disappointment in the Oregon Territory, due to its remote and isolated location. With an extension, the contractors had until May 1, 1854 to complete the stations.



A drawing by Major Hartman Bache of San Diego Harbor and the Point Loma Lighthouse shortly after it was constructed. Major Bache was with the Army Topographical Engineers. He surveyed the location for the first west coast light stations and later became the District Superintendent.

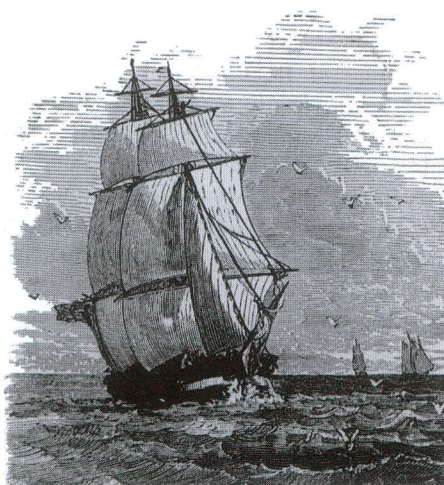
The 1,223-ton bark *Oriole* was purchased and loaded with materials and 28 workmen: 14 mechanics, 2 bricklayers, 2 carpenters, 1 painter, 1 blacksmith, 1 plasterer/bricklayer, 2 stone masons, and 5 general workmen. Roger Mahon was engaged "to superintend the building of [the] eight lighthouses [foreman]," William Timanus was appointed as contractor's agent to keep the books and make all disbursements and purchases, and William Hemmick was hired as a clerk.

The materials, as earlier noted, included everything necessary for the construction projects except material for the external walls and lime.

The *Oriole* sailed from Baltimore on August 12, 1852 and arrived in San Francisco on January 29, 1853, having gone around Cape Horn. An advance party landed the previous month and started laying foundations for the Alcatraz and Fort Point Light Stations. Within a few months, both San Francisco Bay light stations were completed and construction on the Southeast Farallon Island Light Station began. Next came Point Loma and a separate group sailed north to start the Cape Disappointment Station. They were truly disappointed as the *Oriole* broached at the dangerous entrance to the Columbia River and sank with all supplies for the remaining four light stations. Fortunately no lives were lost. The contractor immediately began a search for replacement supplies.

Although the Coast Survey party had concluded that the logical place for the light station was near the end of Point Loma, the contract with Gibbons and Kelly merely said "San Diego." The contractors objected to the Point Loma location because of the cost of building roads and bridges to haul materials to the site. After considerable dispute with the Lighthouse Board, and rejecting an option to drop their contract, Gibbons and Kelly finally went ahead with construction in April 1854. In later years, the contractor was given an extra \$15,000 to pay for the extra expense of road construction.

On April 7, 1854 the schooner *Vaquero* arrived in San Diego with supplies and within a week work began. The schooner landed brick, cement, lime, and lumber at Ballast Point. From there, the material was



hauled up to Point Loma over a two mile long road that had taken 18 of the contractor's men 35 days to construct.

Bricks were used to construct the tower and sandstone was used for the walls. Tiles from an old Spanish fort were used to line the floor of the basement. In later years, the introduction of the tiles may have caused the light station to be erroneously called the old Spanish Lighthouse.

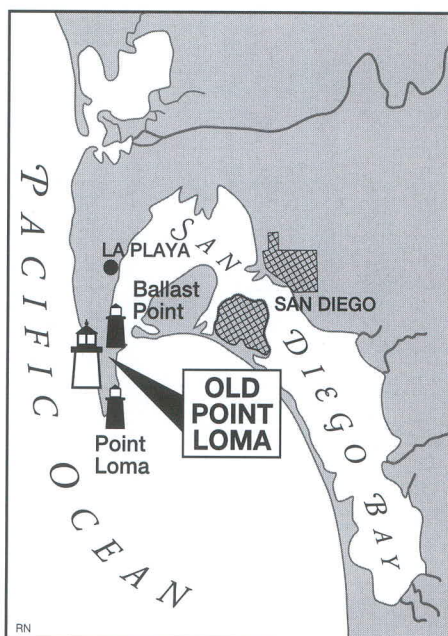
Because there was no water at the light station site, the builders had to haul the water necessary for construction from La Playa, a distance of about 7 miles. The design for the Point Loma Station was identical to most of the first eight constructed on the west coast. A reporter from the *San Diego Herald* who visited the site gave a description of what the structure would look like when

completed. "The walls will be 20 feet high from the foundation, and the entire building 20 feet wide by 30 feet long. There will be a cellar of 6 feet in the clear, the main building will be 9 feet 2 inches in the clear, and the attic 3 1/2 feet. The 'tower' will be situated directly in the middle of the building and will be 10 feet in diameter, thus leaving on each side rooms of 14 by 20 feet. A spiral stair case will lead through the tower to its height, which is to be 33 feet from its base, thus there will be an elevation of 433 (actually 462) feet from the level of the sea. A kitchen and other out offices are also to be erected of wood in the rear, and when completed will form a useful ornament."

The building was completed prior to August 26, 1854, as the San Diego Collector of Customs wrote to the Lighthouse Board on that date that he had accepted the light station on behalf of the government. The total cost was nearly \$30,000, more than any other west coast light station except Cape Disappointment.

When the initial specifications were made, they included the installation of the Argand lamp and reflector system, to be furnished and installed by the contractor. However, between the time the contract was let and the work began, the new Lighthouse Board took over. One of the Board's first acts was to send to Europe for every Fresnel lens they could find. A change order was sent to Gibbons and Kelly informing them not to install the reflector systems; the government would be sending Fresnel lenses as the optics. Because of the reduction in the scope of work, \$1,002.74 was deducted from the amount to be paid for the Point Loma Light Station.

The initial survey for Point Loma recommended a "first class seacoast light" for Point Loma. However, that description related to a crude designation which categorized light stations into 1st, 2nd, or 3rd classes using the old Argand System. Because the Lighthouse Board was now ordering Fresnel lenses, there was initially some confusion as to the size of the lens for Point Loma. Clearly, a 1st Order lens would not fit in the lantern room constructed at Point Loma.



Adding to the confusion was the ineptitude of the first two inspectors assigned to the west coast. The third inspector, Major Hartman Bache, was transferred from an east coast district to take charge of the west coast. He arrived on June 30, 1855 and soon sorted out what was necessary to complete the west coast light stations. A 3rd Order lens was ordered for Point Loma. The lantern room and 3rd Order lens constructed for the Humboldt Bay Station were shipped to Point Loma. The apparatus was sent south under the direction of Samuel Franklin, who was instructed to make the necessary changes to the tower enabling the installation of the new lantern room and lens.

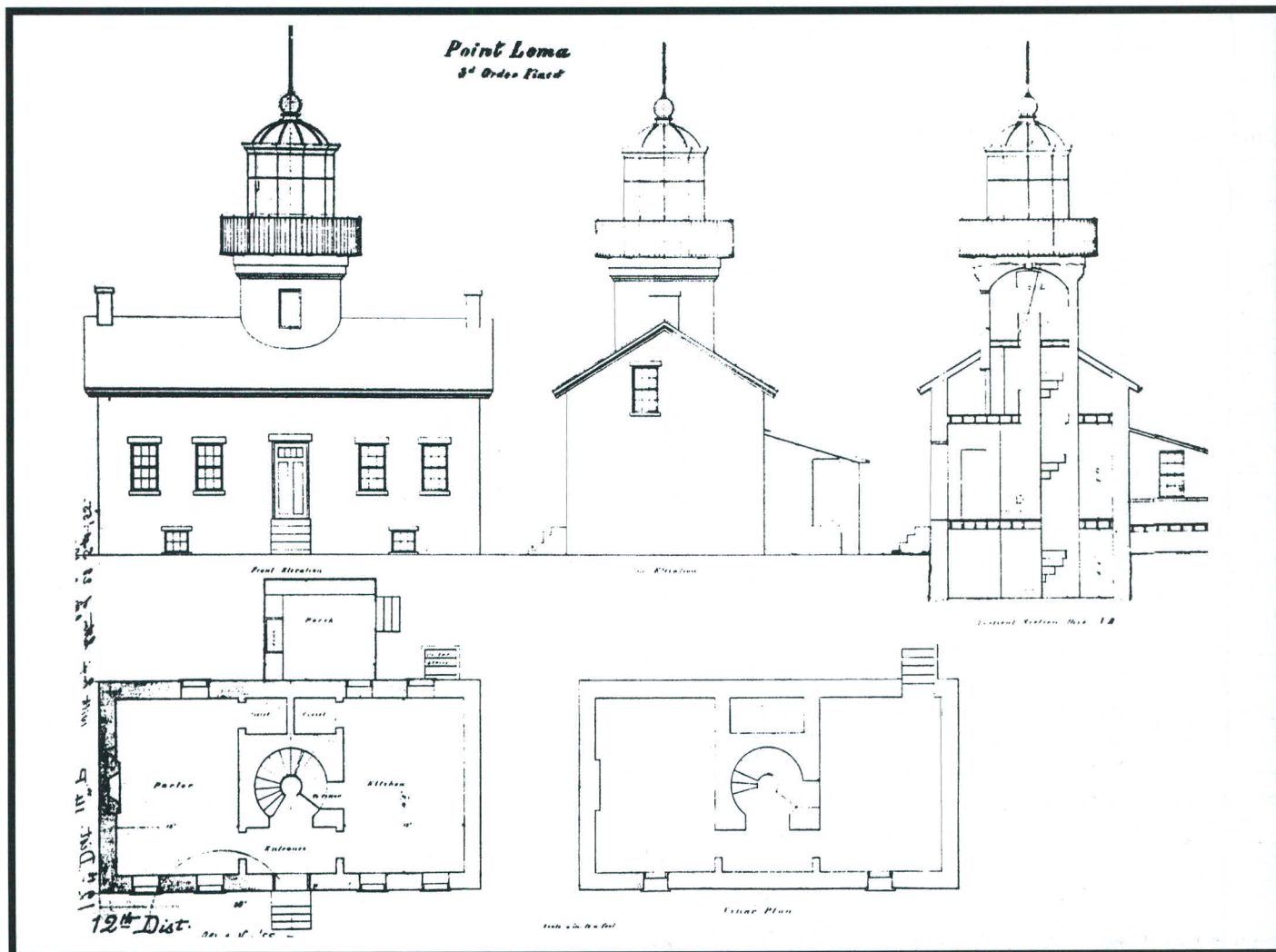
On August 11, 1855, the San Diego *Herald* reported: "The *Schr. Gen. Pierce*, Capt. Badger, which arrived on Friday morning last (August 3), brought down the lantern and other fixtures for the Lighthouse on Point Loma, which will be

put up immediately, under the superintendency of Messrs. Smith [stone mason] and Franklin, who came as passengers on the schooner for that purpose. Although the work will be commenced at once, we understand that it will require some two or three months for its completion, on account of the alterations and repairs necessary to be made on the house. We may expect to see the light in operation about the first of November."

The original lanterns installed by Gibbons and Kelley were an old "bird cage" style favored by the 5th Auditor of the Treasury. The dome was crudely hammered copper and the windows small 9 by 12 inch panes of glass. The new Lighthouse Board wanted 'modern' lantern rooms more in keeping with the European style, and ample enough to allow the larger Fresnel lenses to be installed.

Major Bache visited Point Loma on September 5 and reported:

The coping course of stone [at the top of the tower] had been removed, and, after raising the tower two bricks in height, to give the domical arch sufficient thickness, were replaced, and cramped with iron. The holes for the uprights of the lantern, and the channels for the brackets of the gallery [walkway], had been cut to receive them. The sleeping drum and iron manhole, to replace the one of wood, deficient in size, were also set in the domical arch — the top of which was leveled off and well coated with cement. The lantern and lighting apparatus, which had reached the lighthouse, with slight exceptions, in perfect order, were in course of cleaning, preparatory to putting up. The dwelling is of stone, and, with the exception of the mortar, which is very bad, is quite a creditable piece of work. The tower is of brick. The mortar is not



only bad, but the brick itself of such poor quality, that in places they have wasted away to a depth of a quarter of an inch to two inches. The pointing, both in the dwelling and that part of the tower exposed to the weather is entirely gone. Directed the deficient bricks in the tower cut out and replaced by good ones, and then so much of it as rises above the roof of the dwelling, as well as the brick eaves of the latter, plastered or rough-cast with cement; also the stone work of the dwelling pointed anew.

Major Bache also ordered the construction of a cistern and the tin roof of the dwelling painted red. The cistern, with only a capacity of 1,240 gallons was not adequate for the keeper and his family. As a temporary measure Bache suggested using casks of water leaving the question of an additional cistern for future consideration.

Bricks to repair the tower were obtained from a local brickyard and Harvey Ladd was hired as a mason. He had come to San Diego with the Mormon Battalion a few years earlier.

Around the first of October, Franklin, the mechanic brought south to install the new lantern, departed for Point Conception to install that lantern. Joseph Smith stayed behind to instruct the new keeper on the workings of the lens and lamp.

The San Diego *Herald* reported "those employed in putting up the light deserve credit for the manner in which the work has been accomplished and the short time occupied in doing it."

Major Bache instructed the first keeper at Point Loma, James Keating, to display the light on November 15, 1855. That night, Keating lighted the wicks of the lamp for the first time and as the night darkened, the glow from the 3rd Order lens became more brilliant until it was seen by the citizens of San Diego — a sight they would see for the next 36 years, except during periods of fog.

During the next few years, ships reported seeing the light from Point Loma at distances as far as 25 and 39 miles. We doubt that the light from a 3rd Order lens could be seen that far, except as a reflection off low cloud cover. To see a light with an elevation of 462 feet at 35 miles, the observer's eye must be at a height of 488 feet above sea

level. A height not possible on a ship.

When Major Bache was at San Diego and the lantern was being installed, he found the zig-zag road the contractor had constructed from Battery Point to the light station inadequate. He recommended a road be constructed from La Playa, seven miles away. \$1,500 was appropriated in 1857 to construct the road.

Locating keepers in a sparsely populated area like San Diego was a difficult task, and keeping them after they were hired was even more difficult. Low pay was one culprit, isolation another. In the mid 19th century most head keepers around the country received \$600 per year. Keepers at seasonal stations in the Great Lakes received less than that, and on the west coast, due to the Gold Rush, head keepers received \$1,000, with first assistants drawing \$650. As mentioned, Point Loma's first keeper was James Keating.

His assistant was George Tolman. Tolman had been in the Army and was discharged in the San Diego area. On January 29, 1855 he was appointed assistant keeper. But in the latter part of November he learned that his salary started when the light station first displayed a light, on November 15, 1855 some ten months after he was appointed. Tolman wrote to the Secretary of the Lighthouse Board complaining that between January and November he couldn't have taken another job as he was appointed assistant keeper at Point Loma, further, he was led to believe his salary started when he was appointed, and he had run up a sizable board bill. Apparently, receiving no relief, he resigned on January 29, 1856 one year after he was appointed.

Keeping Assistants was a difficult task. First of all the character of many of the unemployed and untrained people living



Point Loma in 1874. Note the stone walls are not stuccoed or whitewashed in this photograph. You can see two women at the corner, and, if you look carefully, a woman in the doorway. They are probably Mrs. Israel, her niece, and the Assistant Keeper's wife. Photograph courtesy of the San Diego Historical Society, Photograph Collection.

on the west coast in the mid 19th century was questionable. But, even retaining inadequate assistants was tough. Keeper Keating complained: "I have been unfortunate in respect of assistants. There comes a strange one every month."

Naturally, Keepers tended to remain in their position longer than assistants. First, they were in charge and secondly, they earned more money. Early on, both principle and assistant keepers tended to stay at one light station. However, as the service expanded and became more sophisticated, keepers could request transfers. Many assistants, after serving successfully at a station, might be appointed to a higher assistant ranking at another station or even to the position of keeper when a vacancy occurred. The last keeper at Point Loma lasted 19 years and then transferred to the "new" Point Loma station when it was completed.

The life of keepers at remote stations, like Point Loma, revolved around their families as well as their government duties. Point Loma had only one cistern for many years. Located in the basement, it was connected to the rain gutters along the edge of the roof. However, at 1,240 gallons it was too small to hold a year's supply of water, and on the west coast it only rains during the three or four

winter months. When the station ran low of water, barrels had to be hauled from La Playa or from a well at the junction of what is now Rosecrans and Midway Streets. Of course the wagon had to navigate a road with pot holes, ruts, and a rather steep grade. The journey was 7 to 10 miles.

In 1883 a huge concrete catch basin, or apron, was constructed in front of the light station and two cisterns were added.

During its active period, Point Loma was much the same as the other early west coast stations. Eventually the living quarters were found to be inadequate. By the 1870s, when the keeper had three children, his wife, a niece, the assistant keeper, and the assistant keeper's family residing in the quarters, it was obviously inadequate. In 1875 two rooms were made in a portion of the wood and oil house as quarters for the assistant. The shed was constructed of rough-cut lumber and lined inside with cloth and paper; it was not an ideal situation. Eventually, the inside walls were lined with tongue and groove boards. In 1886 the keeper fitted up a room in the wash house to accommodate the assistant's family. In 1875 a barn was constructed and in 1881 a boat house was built at Ballast Point to house the station boat that had been acquired in 1868.

For many years the exterior walls of the light station were left natural, but in 1879 they realized that the weather was having an effect on the soft sandstone. To countermand the erosion, the west and south walls were covered with a heavy coat of Portland cement-mortar and painted with a stone colored paint. Over the years the Light List described the structure as grey and yellow sandstone, with a red lantern. The 1888 Light List described a different structure saying it was a "low white tower rising from a white dwelling, lantern black."

During its years as an active aid, and later, the light station reservation was visited by many people. People brought picnics to Point Loma, watched the whales travel off shore, and admired the beautiful view. In 1874, a reporter for San Diego's *Union* wrote this account of the station:

The lighthouse upon the extreme point of Point Loma is some fourteen miles from San Diego and is approached by one of the most beautiful drives in the world, to those who enjoy the cool, bracing breezes . . . The buildings consist of a very neat and commodious dwelling house surmounted by a tower fifteen feet high, also several immense sheds erected by the gov-



Point Loma in 1880. The buildings at left are a barn, wood shed, and assistant keeper's house. Photograph courtesy of the San Diego Historical Society, Photograph Collection.

ernment for the purpose of catching rainwater enough during the rainy season to fill the cistern. These roofs are very flat and are arranged with spouts, etc. Water and wood are items of considerable importance here, both having heretofore been brought from San Diego. We were conducted through the entire establishment by the gentlemanly keeper, Mr. Israel, and his wife, who is his assistant in the care of the light, which is very ingenious. Everything is scrupulously clean; the glass reflectors of the lantern fairly dazzle the eyes. There is a small room in the tower, below the light, for the accommodation of the watchers, and here they pass the long hours of the night, watching alternately the light of the huge lantern, which is a welcome beacon to the 'toilers of the sea' who may be within reach of its rays. The light, which is 480 (actually 462) feet above the ocean can be seen upon clear nights a distance of sixteen or eighteen miles. The roar of the wind about the tower is almost deafening, and necessitates the voice being raised to the highest pitch whilst conversing within.

The vegetation around the lighthouse is very meagre, consisting of very low scrubby sage brush. Mrs. Israel told us that she had endeavored in vain to make a few of the most hardy flowers and vegetables grow, but the position was too much exposed to admit cultivation . . .

The keeper most prominently associated with the light station was Robert Israel. He was a chair maker by trade from Pennsylvania. He joined the Army during the Mexican War, and, after the war, settled in San Diego where he married Maria Arcadia Machado de Alipas, a member of an old San Diego family. He was appointed assistant keeper at Point Loma in 1871 and two years later became keeper. Mrs. Israel served as Assistant Keeper for three years. It is not known if she stood nightly watches, but there is some information that she did — seated near the stairwell where she could see that the light was burning brightly while she knitted or worked on one of her shell-work picture frames.

Captain Israel served at Point Loma for 20 years. When the light was determined

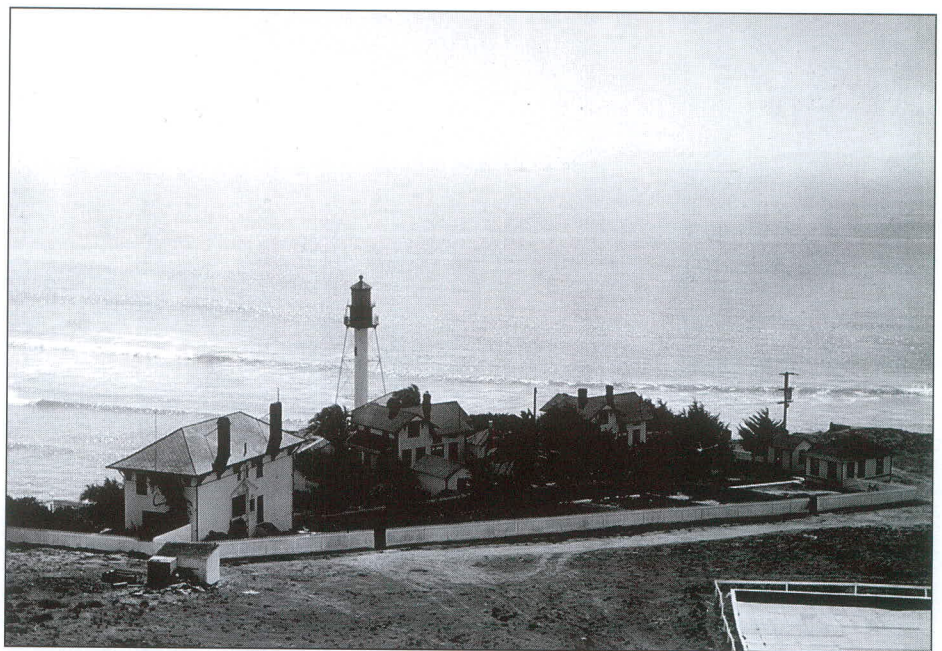
to be too high above the layers of fog which frequent the area, a new station was constructed at the base of the cliff, near the waters edge. This occurred in 1891 and Keeper Israel relocated to the new station as keeper. However, one year later he got into an argument with authorities and quit.

For most of its years as an operational light station, Point Loma displayed a fixed white light. With the growth in the San Diego area, and numerous white lights popping up, the Lighthouse Board decided a more distinctive characteristic was needed. On April 1, 1889 the characteristic was changed to fixed white varied with flashes, alternately red and white, with one minute intervals between flashes. Rather than replace the fixed lens, which gave a steady white light all around the horizon, the Lighthouse Service installed flash panels which rotated around the inside of the lens. One panel was clear and the other red glass. A weight driven clockworks rotated the new panels so that the light station displayed a fixed white light with a periodic white, then red, flash.

Due to complaints from the mariner that the Point Loma light was often obscured by fog, the Lighthouse Service was aware of the need to relocate the light. In the late 1880s, plans began to formulate to construct a light station at the very tip



The 'new' Point Loma tower. From an old Post Card.



The new Point Loma Light Station showing three sets of quarters and a barn at right. The flat concrete area at right is a water shed to collect water for the cisterns. Circa 1931 photograph from the U. S. Lighthouse Society archives.

of Point Loma. There was some difficulty in obtaining the necessary land from the War Department, as they considered the area ideal for construction of a fort should war break out. However, the Lighthouse Service prevailed and the new station was completed and operational in 1891.

The abandoned light station fell into disrepair. Over a period of time the out-buildings disappeared. Vandals also began chipping away at the light station; windows were broken and pieces of the structure carted away. By 1913 the structure was in terrible condition and the Commander of Fort Rosecrans declared it an attractive nuisance and ordered it torn down.

However, the old building had become a favorite of tourists because of the view from the tower. Then the commanding officer proposed fixing the structure up and converting it into a military radio station. At the same time, a movement was underway to honor explorer Juan Cabrillo, who 'discovered' what is now the west coast of America, with a statue. An organization called the Order of Panama was established and proposed a statue be erected near the old light station. The spot they selected was on Army ground and at a location for which the Army had plans. Everyone finally agreed that the old light station should be torn down and the

statue erected in its place. As a result, a Presidential Proclamation of October 10, 1913 set aside one-half acre around the light station. But the Order of Panama never completed their project and soon disbanded. However, the light station remained, now on land dedicated to be a National Monument and the responsibility of the Army.

In 1915 the Army spent \$360 repairing the structure and reported further repairs were necessary. The light station continued to deteriorate, although still popular with visitors to the point. In 1916 the Army noted that the old light station was one "of considerable historical interest." Since there were no rest room facilities in the area, visitors used "the basement and some of the . . . rooms rendering the building unsanitary."

Eventually to discourage further deterioration, the Army had some military families live in the light station and in the 1920s used it for a radio station.

By 1930 the wooden kitchen extension had fallen off, the lantern was encased in a wooden structure and the gallery was surrounded by a wooden handrail to protect visitors. About this time the commanding officer of Fort Rosecrans notified the Chamber of Commerce that the Army had no funds for historic preservation, the

light station was an eyesore and attractive nuisance and he planned on razing the structure. The Chamber acted swiftly to raise some funds toward restoring the light station and beautifying the grounds, but the effort fell short and the plan came to naught.

In 1931, the Ninth Army Corps set aside some funding and repaired the holes in the roof, replaced windows and placed iron bars over them, and painted the structure inside and out. These repairs stabilized the light station until 1933 when the Cabrillo National Monument was created and turned over to the National Park Service. Immediately upon receiving the Cabrillo National Monument, the Park Service set about restoring the light station. The building was carefully examined and drawings were made by the Historic American Buildings Survey and deposited in the Library of Congress. Park Service architects and engineers restored the structure to what they believed was the original condition. Rotten wood was replaced, the lantern was reconstructed, new floors were installed throughout, and the basement was totally refurbished. Some concessions were made for safety purposes. The window and door sashes were replaced by metal sashes, the stair treads of the tower were replaced with metal treads, and the building was wired for electricity. By 1935 the restoration work was completed. In that year, the custodian of the light station and the monument used the lower south room for an office, operated a tea room in the lower north room, and lived in the building. With the outbreak of World War II, Point Loma was declared off limits. The Navy used the light station as a signal tower to direct naval ships into San Diego Harbor. Approaching ships flashed a code, which if correct, caused the submarine nets across the harbor entrance to be withdrawn. The building was used for storage after a new signal tower was constructed south of the light station.

In 1946 the Army returned the National Monument and the light station to the Park Service. The Park Service found that the old light station needed to have the floors refinished, to be repainted inside and out, and to have the lantern sandblasted to remove the camouflage paint. The cost for



Point Loma in 1897, nine years after it was abandoned. Note the shabby appearance and the boarded up windows. Photograph courtesy of the San Diego Historical Society, Photograph Collection.

these improvements was \$3,706. The work was completed and the old concessionaire took up where he left off.

The park and light station became more and more popular over the years and by the mid 1950s the park was the most visited National Monument in the country, partly due to the light station.

In 1956 the Park Service established a "Mission 66" program to upgrade all facilities within the National Park System. At Cabrillo, this meant a new visitor center with an auditorium and offices. However, for a spell the old light station was also used for administrative purposes. In 1966, the Park finally realized that the light station should be used to tell its story and an attempt was made to restore it to the period when the Israels lived there. This initial restoration and interpretation project was completed in 1968.

By the 1970s the tower was starting to show major cracks and was declared off limits. In the 1980s much of the tower was taken down and reconstructed; wasted metal in the lantern was replaced and the structure was repainted. As an aside: During this period, Wayne Wheeler was serving as Assistant Chief, Aids to Navigation Branch of the Twelfth Coast Guard District. He received copies of correspondence sent to state senators requesting that the old 4th Order Fresnel lens from Table Bluff, California be returned from the Cabrillo National Monument to the Humboldt Bay area. Wayne contacted the Superintendent of the Cabrillo National Monument and learned that they did indeed have the lens, and that it wasn't historically correct for the Point Loma Light Station.

An agreement was reached to return the 4th Order lens if an historically correct 3rd Order lens could be secured in return. Shortly thereafter, Wayne located a fixed 3rd Order lens from the Mile Rock Light Station and had it transferred to Point Loma. The Table Bluff Lens was sent to Humboldt Bay Maritime Museum.

Most recently, a team from the National Park Services Cultural Resource unit at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia traveled to Point Loma and spent a considerable amount of time researching the light station. Also researched was what furnishings would have been in the structure during the Israels tenure, and how they would have been placed. Please see the following article "Something New at the Old Point Loma Lighthouse" by Debbie Stetz.



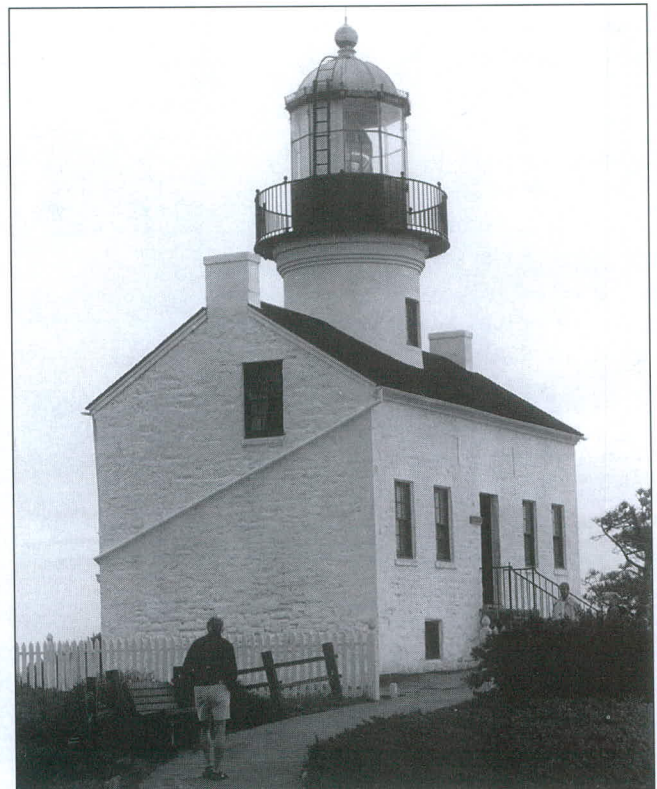
Point Loma circa 1931 showing the windows installed in the lantern room by the Army. Photograph courtesy of the U. S. Lighthouse Society archives.



Above - Point Loma during its 'Tea Room' days in 1917. Photograph courtesy of the San Diego Historical Society, Photograph Collection.

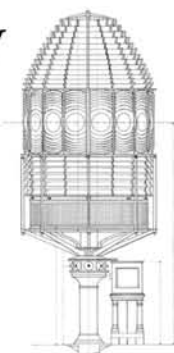
Below left - Point Loma prior to the Park Service restoring the structure. Photograph courtesy of the San Diego Historical Society, Photograph Collection.

Below right - Point Loma as it appears today, note the 3rd Order Fresnel lens in the lantern room. Photograph courtesy of the U. S. Lighthouse Society archives.





Join the U.S. Lighthouse Society Today or Give the Gift of Membership!



Restoration & Preservation



Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse, MD

The U.S. Lighthouse Society has donated to many lighthouse preservation projects throughout the U.S. Most recently we were honored by being presented with the Preserve America Stewardship Award from The White House for our restoration work at Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse.

*To learn more visit
www.uslhs.org
or
call Headquarters at
415-362-7255*

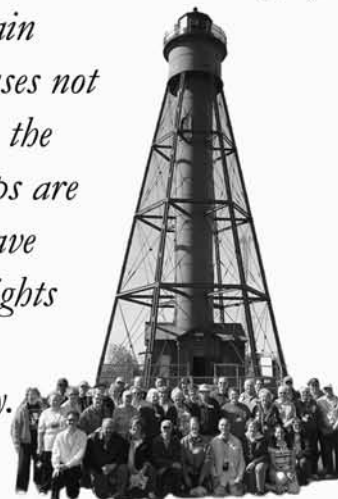
Help Support Our Important Mission!

Education



The Keeper's Log magazine is the only one of its kind and has been published quarterly since 1984. Receive this award-winning publication as a benefit of membership.

The Society organizes domestic and international lighthouse tours. Many of our excursions gain access to lighthouses not normally open to the public. These trips are a great way to have fun, see lots of lights and learn about lighthouse history.



Tinicum Lighthouse, NJ