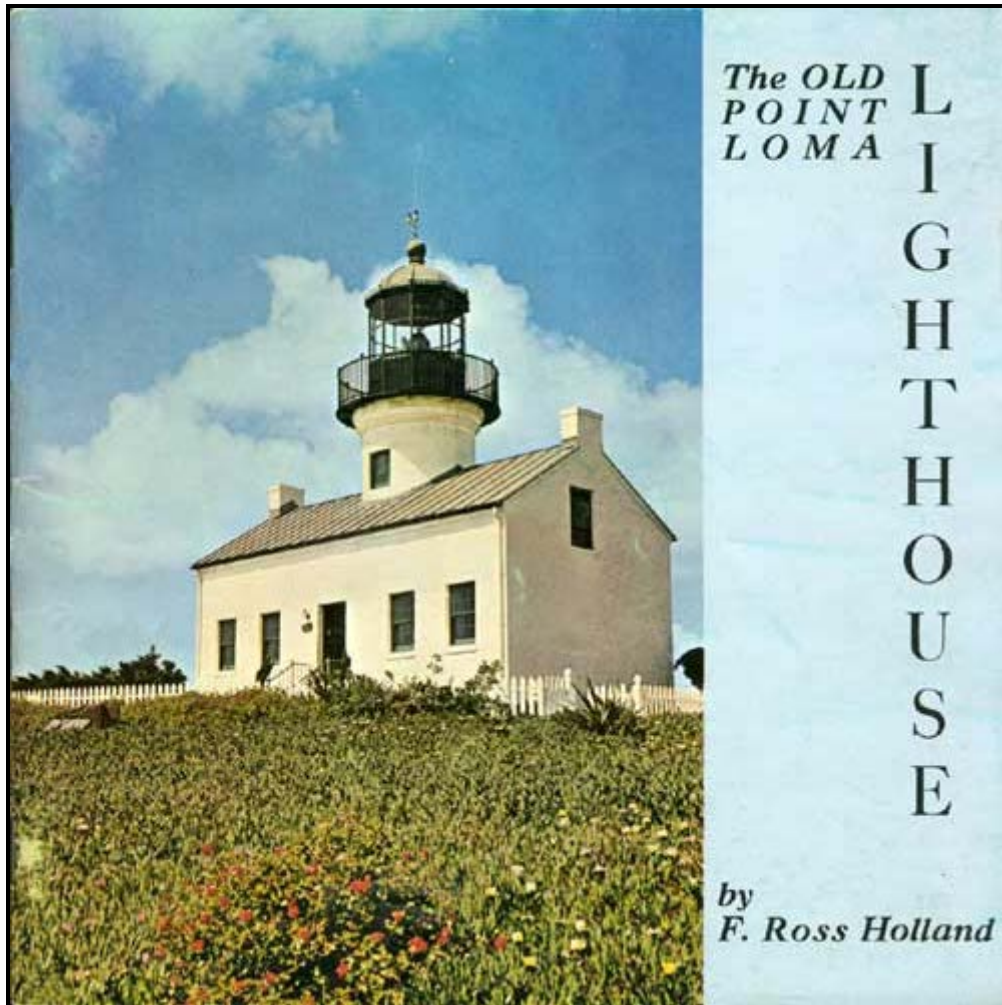


CABRILLO

The Old Point Loma Lighthouse

Symbol of the Pacific Coast's first Lighthouses



THE OLD POINT LOMA LIGHTHOUSE

Symbol of the
Pacific Coast's first
Lighthouses

By
F. Ross Holland, Jr.

1968

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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"The lighthouse and lightship appeal to the interest and better instinct of man because they are symbolic of never-easing watchfulness, of steadfast endurance in every exposure, of widespread helpfulness. The building and the keeping of the lights is a picturesque and humanitarian work of the nation." George R. Putnam

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INTRODUCTION

In 1854 a contractor's crew from the eastern United States came to San Diego to build the port's first lighthouse. They worked hard and built well, for the brick and sandstone structure they erected survived the onslaught of storms, earthquake, neglect, and vandalism, and today still stands, with most of its original material intact.

For 36 years this 19th century lighthouse, resting near the end of a long, high peninsula called Point Loma, guided ships along the coast of California and into San Diego Harbor. But the real story of this Cape Cod structure is not that of a lighthouse faithfully performing its task; all lighthouses do that. The real significance of the old structure is in its creation. The lighthouse was one of the first of eight lighthouses built on the United States' Pacific Coast. Since all eight were built by one firm under one contract, the old building stands today as a symbol of the nation's first successful effort to obtain navigational aids for the newly acquired west coast.

Deepening the interest and importance of the old building are the circumstances under which the construction of the eight lighthouses occurred. Fundamental changes were taking place relative to this country's aids to navigation. In essence, the United States' lighthouses and the Lighthouse Service were being modernized in the 1850's, and many of the problems of modernization were reflected in the establishing of the Pacific Coast's first lighthouses.

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CABRILLO

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THE SETTING

Point Loma is a long finger of land protecting San Diego Harbor on the west. Standing near the end of Point Loma one has the sensation that it juts out into the Pacific Ocean. Point Loma is a high ridge of land, its crest ranging from about 300 feet above sea level to 420 feet where the old lighthouse rests. On its western side, where the Pacific Ocean crashes furiously against its edge forming a rugged coast line, Point Loma slopes gently back several thousand feet and then rises sharply to the undulating crest. On the bay side it falls off precipitously to about 100 feet above sea level where once again it gently slopes to the water's edge.

The view from Point Loma has been rated one of the three great harbor views in the world, taking in a vast panorama of sea, islands, coast, harbor, land, and mountains. A rugged, rocky coast formed by the not so gentle Pacific, and a picturesque scene of the old, but still active light station give an air of solitude despite the encroachments of civilization. In the center of this last semblance of the past is Cabrillo National Monument, and within the Monument is the oldest structure on Point Loma—the old lighthouse.

When the lighthouse was built in 1854 Point Loma was virtually uninhabited. The small settlement at Roseville was barely part of Point Loma, and there probably was fishing and whaling at Ballast Point. But these were the only places of human activity. There were no roads; only trails, probably originally used by the native Diegueno Indians, sliced through the chaparral.

The view from Point Loma was as spectacular then as it is today. To the north and east small clusters of houses and other buildings could be seen here and there. The main part of San Diego was still in Old Town, then nothing more than a village. The present center of San Diego was just getting a start. Much of North Island was under water, especially at high tide. The shores of the harbor were less regular than today, and rowboats once tied up where Highway 101 now runs.

During the Spanish and Mexican periods in California history there was no lighthouse at San Diego, nor at any other spot along the west coast. It is reported, however, that when a supply ship was expected from Mexico a lantern was hung on a stake at Ballast Point. Until the Americans came, as a result of the Mexican War and the Gold Rush, no thought was given to permanent aids to navigation for the Port.

ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUND OF THE LIGHTHOUSE SERVICE

To understand the problems of building the west coast's first lighthouses one needs to know something of the administrative history of the United States' aids to navigation. Prior to the

American Revolution the individual colonies erected, maintained and operated the lighthouses within their territories. But on August 7, 1789, shortly after the establishment of the Federal Government, Congress passed an act assuming for the central Government responsibility for lighthouses and other aids to navigation. Between 1789 and 1795 the states turned over their lighthouses to the Federal Government. Until 1820 the duty of supervising lighthouses and other navigational aids was vested in the Commissioner of Revenue and the Secretary of the Treasury. In 1820 the Fifth Auditor of the Treasury Department was given the task of supervising all aids to navigation. During the reign of the Fifth Auditor as Superintendent of Lights, it is apparent that aids to navigation failed to receive vigorous leadership.

Complete dissatisfaction with lighthouse administration was expressed in 1851 when Congress appointed a board to study the lighthouse problem. A long report resulted which recommended, among other things, that a permanent Lighthouse Board be appointed to administer navigational aids in the United States. Congress acted on this recommendation in 1852, and a nine-member board was established with the Secretary of the Treasury as president and Admiral William B. Shubrick as its first chairman. The board divided the country into twelve districts, the Pacific Coast being the 12th Lighthouse District. An Inspector was appointed in each district and "charged with building the lighthouses, with keeping them in repair, and with the purchase, the setting up, and the repairs of the illuminating apparatus."

The direct supervision of lighthouses devolved upon the various Collectors of Customs, and those collectors who had lighthouses in their district held also the appointive job of Superintendent of Lighthouses. By 1854, O. S. Witherby, the Collector of Customs for San Diego, was appointed Superintendent of Lights for Point Loma and Point Conception.

LENSES AND ILLUMINANTS

Until the 1850's, nearly every lighthouse in the United States used a number of Argand lamps and parabolic reflectors for illumination. These lamps were placed "side by side around the circumference of a circle," and the number of lamps used depended upon the arc of the horizon it was desired to illuminate. For years a bulls-eye magnifying lens was used on each lamp, but these lenses were practically useless, and in 1840 they were removed, leaving the reflectors.

This system, which had become known as the American system, had but one virtue—the lamps were inexpensive. But their faults were legion: They were complicated, they used a vast amount of oil, they required constant attention, and, most important of all, they produced relatively little light.

In 1822 Augustin Fresnel, a French physicist, developed a lens apparatus which was to revolutionize lighthouse illumination. A Fresnel lens is like a glass barrel whose outer surface is made up of prisms and bulls-eyes. In a revolving or flashing light, the bulls-eyes are surrounded by curved, concentric prisms, concentrating the light of a central lamp into several individual beams, radiating like the spokes of a wheel. In the fixed, or steady light, the bulls-eyes become a continuous "lens belt," with the prisms parallel to it, producing an uninterrupted, horizontal sheet of light.

Fresnel lenses were classified into seven orders. The order was determined by focal distance—that is, the distance from the illuminant to the lens. Orders of Fresnel lenses are as follows:

ORDER	FOCAL DISTANCE OVERALL LENS SIZE		
	Millimeters	Inches	Diameter in feet
First	920	36.2	6.0
Second	700	27.6	4.5
Third	500	19.7	3.17
Three & Half	375	14.7	2.4
Fourth	250	9.8	1.5
Fifth	187.5	7.4	1.17
Sixth	150	5.9	.83

The United States was slow to adopt the Fresnel lenses, and for years a controversy raged in this country over the merits of the old and new systems. Finally, in 1841, the United States purchased its first Fresnel lens and installed it at Navesink Light, New Jersey, to test the new system. The Fifth Auditor conducted the experiment with all deliberate speed (the accent being on deliberate); 10 years later there were only three light stations in the country which had Fresnel lenses. On March 3, 1851, Congress expressed confidence in the new system by approving an appropriation bill which included permission for the Secretary of the Treasury to place the Fresnel lens system in new lighthouses, in lighthouses not having lenses, and in lighthouses requiring new ones. Congress' wisdom was supported a year later when the board, created to study the lighthouse system in the United States said: "The Fresnel lens is greatly superior to any other mode of lighthouse illumination, and in point of economy is nearly four times as advantageous as the best system of reflectors and Argand lamps." In May 1852 the first chairman of the Lighthouse Board said the "Fresnel Lens in useful effect, brilliancy and economy is superior in its different orders to any combination, number and size of the best parabolic reflectors."

Despite this strong support for the Fresnel lens, the Fifth Auditor of the Treasury clung tenaciously to his Argand lamps and as late as 1852, in what was one of his last acts as general superintendent of lights, recommended that the proposed lighthouse at San Diego be illuminated with twelve lamps and twelve 16-inch reflectors. His reluctance to give up Argand lamps explains, to a great extent, the slowness of the United States in adopting the infinitely superior lighting system.

With the establishment of the Lighthouse Board in 1852, however, the proponents of the Fresnel apparatus were in the saddle, and they were anxious to carry out the intention of Congress and install the new system. The board soon began to place Fresnel lenses in lighthouses, and by 1859 the Argand lamp and reflector system had been almost entirely replaced throughout the country. Despite the higher initial cost of the system, the Fresnel lenses, because of their lower consumption of oil, paid for themselves within a few years.

Perhaps the outstanding characteristic of the Fresnel equipment was that it was next to impossible for a lighthouse keeper to make a mistake. As one historian succinctly summed it up:

The adoption in this country of the Fresnel Lenticular apparatus made it possible for a light keeper of average capacity to keep a good light, and impossible for him to keep a bad one, unless by violation of plain rules and avoidance of routine duties.

SOURCE OF LIGHT

For many years the lamps in American lighthouses burned whale oil. In the early 1840's this was still a satisfactory fuel since the price was only 55 cents per gallon. Soon afterwards, however, the supply of sperm oil began to diminish, and at the same time the use of sperm for manufacturing purposes increased. The result was a steady rise in price, and by 1854 sperm oil brought \$1.38 per gallon. This increase was of concern to the Lighthouse Board, and it soon began to look about for a substitute fuel.

The Board turned first to colza, or, rapeseed oil. In 1852 Lt. Washington A. Bartlett, USN, was in France contracting for the lenses for the proposed Pacific Coast lighthouses, and while there he gathered information on the use of colza oil as an illuminant. Subsequent tests by the Lighthouse Board revealed that colza oil was ideally suited for lighthouse purposes; it was as good as sperm and cost only half the price. By the late 1850's, colza oil was being introduced in United States lighthouses. In 1861, 5,000 gallons were purchased, and in 1862, 12,000 gallons. There was a fly in the oil, however. Not enough rape (wild cabbage) from which rapeseed was obtained, was grown in the United States to supply the needs of the Lighthouse Board. The board at first had thought that by creating a market, farmers would be encouraged to grow more of the plants. But the farmers failed to follow the script and grew only enough of the plants to provide for the lighting of homes and by no means enough for general adoption in the lighthouse service.

Meanwhile, further experiments were being conducted with lard oil because of the interest of Chairman of the Committee on Experiments Joseph Henry, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. Professor Henry personally conducted the experiments with lard oil and reported that he found it to be highly satisfactory in the Fresnel apparatus and in the Franklin lamp "in which the combustion is carried on at a high temperature" Moreover, lard oil yielded more light than sperm oil. Tests had been run on lard oil before, but as a fuel it was found unsatisfactory because the first experimenters, as Professor Henry later found, had used too low a combustion rate. As a result of Henry's report, lard oil was soon introduced, and by 1867 it had supplanted sperm oil as the principal illuminant in light houses. Colza oil continued to be used in smaller lamps.

In the 1870's, experiments were once again conducted for a better fuel. This time the substance tested was kerosene, a mineral oil refined from petroleum. It was found satisfactory and began being substituted in 1880. By 1885 it was in general use in lighthouses. In 1880 the Lighthouse Service purchased 48,000 gallons of mineral oil. Nine years later the annual purchase totaled over 330,000 gallons as compared with 16,000 gallons of lard oil in the same year. Varieties of refined petroleum remained the principal illuminant in most west coast lighthouses until the 1920's. The new Point Loma lighthouse, for example, was converted from kerosene to electricity in 1926.

A distorted account of the use of whale oil as a fuel in the Point Loma lighthouse has been perpetrated by many writers. It has been contended that whale oil obtained from the shore whaling establishments at Ballast Point was used at the nearby Point Loma lighthouse. Such was not the case. Oil for all lighthouses was purchased under one contract by the Lighthouse Board, and it had to meet exacting specifications. Moreover only sperm oil was used, and the sperm whale was not taken by the San Diego shore whalers or other shore whalers on the Pacific Coast.

SELECTION OF LIGHTHOUSE SITES ON THE WEST

Shortly after Mexico's cession of California to the United States, pressures from west coast shippers on their Congressmen and the urgings of Federal officials such as General Persifor F. Smith strongly underscored the desire and need for navigational aids on the west coast. In 1848, Congress had authorized several lighthouses for the Pacific Coast in the bill establishing the Oregon Territory, but the sum provided was wholly inadequate. It was 2 years later that Congress finally made a realistic effort to get the west coast lighted. On September 28, 1850, the 308th anniversary of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo's discovery of the California coast, Congress authorized a number of lighthouses for the west coast. Six lighthouses were for California: at Alcatraz Island and Battery (or Fort) Point in San Francisco Bay; on Farallon Islands off San Francisco; at Point Pinos near Monterey; at Point Conception; and at San Diego. Three lighthouses were authorized for the Washington coast at Cape Flattery, Cape Disappointment, and New Dungeness.

Once Congress designated the places where lighthouses would be established, the selection of the actual sites on the west coast was left in the hands of the Coast Survey. On May 29, 1851, the first issue of San Diego's first newspaper, the *Herald*, carried the announcement that

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.

The following month the Chief Topographer of the party, A. M. Harrison, wrote to the Superintendent of the Coast Survey, A. D. Bache, recommending a spot near the end of Point Loma, 422 feet above sea level, as the site for the lighthouse. He said materials could be landed at La Playa and easily hauled to the site. It would be necessary to bring all materials for the structure from some other place, he noted, since there was "nothing in the region which could be turned to advantage." As an afterthought, Harrison said that during his stay the fogs were frequent and heavy. Bache wrote back to Harrison inquiring as to whether the high point recommended would not result in the fog too frequently interfering in the normal functioning of the light. Harrison replied that fog might be somewhat of a problem, but the Point Loma site was still the best one. Bache then concurred and transmitted the site recommendation to the Secretary of the Treasury. It is interesting to note that 40 years later, in 1891, the Point Loma light was moved to a much lower point, solely because of the fog which often obscured the higher light. Bache's hunch was correct. In Harrison's defense, however, it should be mentioned that the site he chose was the only one which would permit the lighthouse to serve as a coastal light and to some extent as a harbor light, both of which San Diego needed.

Ownership of the selected site caused little concern; it already belonged to the Federal Government. In 1852 the Secretary of War recommended to President Millard Fillmore that a military reservation be set aside which was

To include that portion of the Peninsula lying on the west side of the entrance to the Harbor, which shall be included between the southernmost point of the peninsula (Punta de Soma Loma) and a line drawn across said peninsula from the harbor to the Ocean at the distance of one and a half miles above Punta de Guanos [Gujarros].

The President approved the recommendation, and he ordered the establishment of the reservation. This reservation included the Point Loma lighthouse site which the Coast Survey had selected; the site, however, was not officially reserved for lighthouse purposes until

CONTRACT AND CONTRACTORS

After some difficulty, the Secretary of the Treasury was able to locate a firm interested in building lighthouses on the west coast. The firm was composed of two partners, Francis A. Gibbons and Francis X. Kelly, both of Baltimore, Maryland. The agreement these two entered into with the Government, dated April 20, 1852, stipulated that the lighthouses to be constructed were to be at Alcatraz Island, Battery Point (Fort Point), Southeast Farallon Island, Humboldt Harbor, Monterey, Point Conception, and San Diego on the California coast and at Cape Disappointment at the mouth of the Columbia River. The specific site of each place was to be designated by the U.S. Coast Survey. For each of the California lighthouses, the contractors were to receive \$15,000, payable as each lighthouse was completed and accepted, and for the Cape Disappointment Lighthouse, they were to receive \$31,000; in other words the eight lighthouses were to cost \$136,000. The lighthouses were to be completed by November 1, 1853, but in a supplement to the contractors, the time was extended to May 1, 1854.

The contractors soon began laying plans to construct the lighthouses. They purchased in Baltimore a barque named the *Oriole*, 1,223 tons burden, to transport materials and workers to the west coast. They hired 14 mechanics in Baltimore: 2 bricklayers, 2 carpenters, 1 painter, 1 blacksmith, 1 plasterer and bricklayer, 2 stonemasons, and 5 workmen. In addition, William H. Hemmick was employed as clerk and disbursing agent, Roger J. Mahon was "to superintend the building of [the] eight lighthouses," and William J. Timanus was appointed to act as contractors' agent, keeping the books and making "all disbursements and purchases connected with the work"

Material for the lighthouses, which included everything for building them except brick and lime, was collected and loaded aboard the *Oriole*. The ship departed Baltimore Aug. 12, 1852, and arrived in San Francisco January 29, 1853; an advance party had arrived the previous month and began laying foundations for the Alcatraz and Fort Point Lighthouses.

With the arrival of the main party work began in earnest and within a few months both lighthouses in San Francisco Bay were completed. Following the construction of the one on Farallon Islands, work began on the Point Pinos Lighthouse. The contractors next set their sights on the Cape Disappointment Lighthouse, but misfortune befell them when the *Oriole* sank in the mouth of the Columbia River and took with her all the material for the remaining four lighthouses. Fortunately, no lives were lost. This disaster, of course, delayed the contractors; but as rapidly as they could, they gathered more material and went about completing their contract. To expedite work they placed the construction of the Cape Disappointment and Humboldt Harbor Lighthouses under the supervision of Mahon, while Timanus was designated to supervise work at the Point Conception and San Diego Lighthouses.

SITE FOR SAN DIEGO'S LIGHTHOUSE

The location of the Point Loma lighthouse was a matter of dispute from shortly before the arrival of the construction crew on the west coast in January 1853 until nearly the end of that

year. Although the Coast Survey party had concluded that the logical place 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 a road and bridges to haul materials to the site. After considerable disputing with the Lighthouse Board, and rejecting an option to drop their contract, Gibbons and Kelly finally went ahead with construction in April 1854.

BUILDING POINT LOMA LIGHTHOUSE

While the hassle over the location of the Point Loma lighthouse was going on, local people were beginning to wonder when the contractors were to commence operations in San Diego harbor. As the lights farther north were completed, jealousy began to manifest itself; and in 1853 the editor of the local paper complained: "The appropriation was made by Congress some three years ago, and as yet, there has not been a blow struck." It was to be nearly a year after this remark before that first blow was finally struck on a lighthouse for Point Loma.

At last, on April 7, 1854, the schooner *Vaquero* arrived from San Francisco with materials for the lighthouse at Point Loma, and within a week work was begun. Bricks, cement, lime and lumber were landed from the *Vaquero* at Ballast Point and then hauled to the top of Point Loma over a road which had taken 18 of the contractors' men 35 days to construct. The bricks were used to construct the tower; sandstone for the dwelling was obtained on Point Loma, apparently being quarried near Ballast Point. Tiles for the basement floor were obtained from the ruins of the old Spanish Fort Guijarros situated at the hilt of Ballast Point. Upon the chaparral covered summit of Point Loma water was not available; consequently, in order to moisten their mortar and plaster, the builders had to haul water from a well at La Playa, a distance of about 7 miles. During the construction a reporter for the San Diego *Herald* visited the site and talked to Timanus, who gave him a description of the structure contemplated:

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 to 20 feet. A spiral staircase 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 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.

Unfortunately, no accounts of the actual activities in the construction of the lighthouse exist, and no reliable record can be found stating precisely when the structure was completed. Unquestionably, the work was completed prior to August 26, 1854, for on that date the Collector of Customs in San Diego wrote the Lighthouse Board that the Inspector had examined and received the lighthouse on behalf of the Government.

Initially the Point Loma lighthouse, like all the other lighthouses except Cape Disappointment, was to cost \$15,000. It wound up costing nearly \$30,000.

LIGHTING THE LIGHTHOUSES

In the meantime, Lt. Washington A. Bartlett, USN, had been dispatched by the Secretary of the Treasury to France to contract for the manufacture of illuminating apparatuses for the Pacific Coast lighthouses. Shortly after arriving in Paris he entered into a contract with Sautter & Co. to manufacture two, third order illuminating apparatuses: one for the Fort Point lighthouse and one for the Alcatraz Island lighthouse. The one for Alcatraz cost about 24,324 francs.

Bartlett reported the costs of two orders of the Fresnel system as follows:

	1st Order	3rd Order
Lens	\$6,000	\$1,600
Lamps (3)	400	250
Frame and extra pieces	750	260
Lantern and extra pieces	4,000	1,760
	\$11,150	\$3,810

Bartlett requested and, at the recommendation of the Lighthouse Board, was granted permission to contract with Sautter & Co. for the other six illuminating apparatuses for the Pacific Coast. He purchased first order lenses for Point Loma, Point Conception, the Farallons, and Cape Disappointment; a second order light for Point Pinos; and a third order one for Humboldt Harbor.

In April 1853 the first two lenses ordered, the ones for Fort Point and Alcatraz, arrived in New York and were immediately transshipped to San Francisco. They were received by the collector in that city around the first of October. The other lanterns and lenses did not arrive until over a year later; the first order Point Loma lens and the third order Humboldt Harbor lens did not arrive until early 1855.

When the decision was reached to install the Fresnel lens system in the Pacific Coast lighthouses, the building contractors were relieved of responsibility for the illuminating apparatuses. For a time the collector in San Francisco felt that the contract required Gibbons and Kelly to furnish "artisans" to put up the illuminating equipment. However, due to the delicacy of the new system and the possibility that the contractors would send poor workmen who might permanently damage the equipment, the collector recommended installing the illuminating apparatuses under a separate contract, using local talent. The Lighthouse Inspector for the west coast, Capt. Henry W. Halleck, concurred with him. The Lighthouse Board also felt that it was incumbent upon the contractors to install the Fresnel system, but they did not press their contention too vigorously, and, consequently, from the beginning the lighting systems in the Pacific Coast lighthouses were added by separate contracts.

The first Fresnel lens installed and lighted on the west coast was that at Alcatraz Island. It was exhibited on June 1, 1854. Removed from the lighthouse in 1902, the lens was later displayed at the Panama-Pacific Exposition and thereafter was apparently placed in storage. It was declared surplus in 1947 and acquired by C. H. Ohlson of Alameda who later donated it to Cabrillo National Monument. The lens is now part of the park's study collection.

CONFUSION OVER POINT LOMA'S LIGHT

It should be kept in mind that developments taking place regarding lighthouses on the west

coast were playing against a background of administrative change in this country's management of its aids to navigation. The Lighthouse Board wasn't established until October 1852, and all lights on the California and Oregon coasts were "under the special direction of the Secretary of the Treasury until transferred, December 22, 1852, to the Lighthouse Board." Probably partially due to this administrative limbo and partially due to converting to the Fresnel lens system, some confusion resulted as to the order, or size, of these early lights.

Although Point Loma wound up with a third order lens, early reports and papers concerning west coast lighthouses are sprinkled with references to a first order system for that light. It all began when A. D. Bache, as Director of the Coast Survey, recommended a first class seacoast light for Point Loma. He was obviously thinking in terms of the Argand lamp and parabolic reflector since his recommendation was made in 1851 before the advent of the Lighthouse Board, and since the contract let for building the eight lighthouses at first called for the illuminating apparatus to be lamps and reflectors. When it was finally decided to install the Fresnel system, the Lighthouse Board, perhaps thinking in terms of equality of orders between systems, let a contract to L. Sautter in Paris for a first order lens for Point Loma.

Actually if the Board wanted a light equivalent to the best lamp and reflector arrangement, it needed only to secure a third order Fresnel lens. Fresnel had conducted comparative experiments and satisfied himself that his third order lens was better than a first class reflector system. Lt. Washington A. Bartlett, the Lighthouse Board's agent sent to procure lens in Paris, stated that a third order Fresnel lens was better than any reflector seacoast light on the United States' Atlantic coast except the Boston Light, and it was the equal of that light.

With the general administrative confusion befogging the country's lighthouse service, it is no wonder that mix-ups occurred, especially regarding illuminating apparatuses. After all, between the two contending groups, the struggle over lighting systems symbolized so dramatically the difference between the moribund, old administration of the Fifth Auditor of the Treasury and the progressive, new administration of the Lighthouse Board.

After the construction of the lighthouses the lighting of them moved at a snail's pace. Although the delay can be blamed to a great extent upon the problem of getting the Fresnel lenses to the west coast, a complicating and important factor was the ineptitude and lack of interest of the first and second lighthouse inspectors assigned to the Pacific Coast. The third inspector was Maj. Hartman Bache, who had competence, energy, and knowledge; he had been transferred from a lighthouse district on the east coast. To him should go a great share of the credit for getting the west coast lighted.

Shortly after he arrived on the Pacific Coast on June 30, 1855, Bache began to take action. He decided to make the Point Loma lighthouse a third order rather than a first order light, since the tower was only large enough to support a third order apparatus and that size was all that was necessary for the purpose the light was to serve. Toward the end of July, Samuel Franklin was dispatched southward with the third order lantern and lens originally intended for Humboldt Harbor. He was instructed to make what changes were necessary in the Point Loma tower so it would receive the lantern. With him went Joseph Smith, who apparently was a mason. On August 11, 1855, the San Diego *Herald* announced:

The Schr. *Gen. Pierce*, Capt. Badger, which arrived on Friday morning last (Aug. 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 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.

Major Bache visited Point Loma on September 5 and reported:

The coping course of stone 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, 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.

In addition he ordered the cistern, which had been reported as not holding water, to be "raised by laying a pavement of brick in cement, and then coating the entire interior with the same material." The cistern would hold only 1,240 gallons, a quantity wholly inadequate to supply the keepers for a year. As a temporary expedient he suggested using casks to hold extra water, "leaving the question of an additional cistern for future consideration." He also ordered the tin roof of the dwelling painted red.

Bricks to repair the tower were purchased locally from Thomas Whaley's brickyard at La Playa. Harvey Ladd, who had come to San Diego with the Mormon Battalion, was hired as a mason. Work progressed well, and around the first of October Franklin left for Point Conception to install the lantern there. Joseph Smith was left at Point Loma to wind up the work and instruct the keepers in the operation of the illuminating apparatus.

On seeing the work accomplished the San Diego *Herald* said, "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 ordered the keeper, James Keating, to display the light on November 15, which was 10 days short of a year since the *Herald* had complained about the slowness of getting a light "for the little stack of brick on Point Loma."

At 15 minutes before sunset on November 15, 1855, the light keeper traced the lucerne around the wicks of the lens' lamp, and the Point Loma lighthouse blinked to life for the first time. As the night blotted out the day the soft golden glow became more prominent, and the good people of San Diego saw for the first time what they were to see every night, except in times of fog, for the next 36 years.

If there was doubt in anyone's mind about the adequacy of a third order Fresnel light as a coast light, it was erased within a few months. Two weeks after the Point Loma light was first exhibited a ship captain reported to Major Bache that he had seen the light at more than 25 miles. Three months later the skipper of the *Golden Gate* said he saw the light at 39 miles.

While the lantern was being placed on the tower at Point Loma Major Bache had recommended building a road from La Playa to the lighthouse. Such a road, Bache felt,

would better facilitate the hauling of supplies and, at times, water from La Playa to the site. The necessity of the road was apparent, and in fiscal year 1857, \$1,500 was spent to construct one. The road used by the builders had run from Ballast Point in a zig-zag fashion up to the crest of Point Loma at a place almost even with Ballast Point. The La Playa road ran back from the lighthouse along the crest of Point Loma for about 2 miles and then began a straight, gradual descent to La Playa.

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CABRILLO

The Old Point Loma Lighthouse

Symbol of the Pacific Coast's first Lighthouses



MANNING THE LIGHTHOUSE

There were problems getting the lighthouses built, and lighted, and there were problems securing personnel to tend these important aids to navigation. Locating keepers was not an easy task, and holding them once they were hired was even more difficult. The villain in the case was low pay.

In the beginning a first order light rated a principal keeper and two assistants, while second and third order lights called for a principal keeper and one assistant. Only a principal keeper was allowed for fourth and fifth order lights.

Principal keepers, regardless of order of light, received \$1,000 annual salary. First assistant keepers received \$650, and second assistant keepers \$500. Everyone, from the keepers up to the Lighthouse Board itself, considered the salaries inadequate, but Congress would do nothing about raising them.

Keepers were usually appointed about the time the individual lighthouses were completed. Perhaps at the time it was thought that once the structures were completed the illuminating apparatus would be installed immediately.

The Point Loma lighthouse furnishes a good example of the result of the imperfect understanding of the size of Fresnel illuminating apparatuses as it affected personnel. It was first contemplated that the Point Loma lighthouse would have a light of the first order; consequently, about 6 months after the structure was completed a principal keeper and two assistants were hired. But when the light was changed to one of the third order there was a concomitant reduction in personnel allowance, which, on the surface at least, meant someone had to go. However, both assistants were retained until January 1, 1856, when the second assistant tendered his resignation, which was accepted on the 17th. He gave no reason for leaving, but undoubtedly he was disturbed by the two factors which upset most of the keepers; low pay and effective date of employment. With his departure the position of second assistant was discontinued.

The first assistant keeper, George Tolman, had been most upset over the effective date of employment. Tolman had been in the Army and served in the Yuma-San Diego area. Upon discharge he settled in San Diego and on January 29, 1855, was appointed first assistant keeper at the Point Loma lighthouse. In the latter part of November he found out that his salary was to begin on the day the lighthouse was put into operation—on November 15, 1855—and was not retroactive to his date of appointment. He was indignant at this intelligence and immediately wrote directly to Lt. Edmund Hardcastle, Secretary of the Lighthouse Board, expressing his unhappiness. He identified himself as having served a few years before in the same regiment with Hardcastle in the New River area east of San Diego. Tolman said he had understood at the time that his pay was to begin on the date of appointment. Since he had one job he could not take another, and on the basis of his understanding about salary he had in the meantime run up a sizeable board bill. Unfortunately, the action taken by the Board is not known, but it is unlikely Tolman received back pay. At any rate he resigned his

light keeper's job on January 29, the first anniversary of his appointment.

Getting principal keepers for the lighthouses was to some extent a problem, but the main difficulty was in filling the lower paying assistant keeper positions. The ones attracted to the jobs came for the most part from a rather unstable segment of society. Four months after the lighting of the Point Loma lighthouse the keeper, James Keating, complained: "I have been unfortunate in respect of assistants. There comes a strange one every month."

At the Point Loma lighthouse the principal keepers tended to remain longer than the assistant keepers. During the 36 years the lighthouse was in operation there were 11 keepers and 22 assistants. The last keeper was on duty for 19 years and transferred to the new lighthouse when it began operating. Undoubtedly the difference in pay greatly explains the difference in tenure.

The light keeper was usually nominated for the position by the local collector of customs. The Lighthouse Board either endorsed or did not endorse the nominee. Official appointment was made by the Secretary of the Treasury. By the 1890's the procedure was for the light keeper to remain on duty for three months, after which period he was given an examination by the District Inspector. If the inspector was satisfied, he certified the fact to the Lighthouse Board. The Secretary of the Treasury then gave the keeper a full appointment.

As time went on though, lighthouse jobs began to take on more and more the form of a career service. Toward the end of the 19th century transfers of personnel between lighthouses began to take place, and keepers began to be appointed from the ranks of assistant keepers. For example, David Splaine served in several lighthouses on the Pacific Coast, including the one on Point Loma, as assistant keeper. By the time of the establishment of the lighthouse at Ballast Point he had gained enough experience and was appointed first keeper of that light station.

DUTIES OF THE KEEPERS

The work of a lighthouse keeper was not too difficult, and some keepers had outside activities. The first keeper of the Point Loma lighthouse, for example, operated a shipyard—San Diego's first—and in 1857 launched the first vessel built in the city. That the keepers would have time for other activities was recognized, at least negatively, by the Lighthouse Board when it provided that the keepers could not carry on any business which kept them away from the lighthouse for a prolonged period of time.

Instructions provided that regular 4-hour watches were to be maintained, and so as not to have the less desired watches fall entirely upon one man, the watches were to be alternated daily. In practice, however, it would appear that this rule, at least at Point Loma, was not adhered to, since reportedly the keepers stood 24-hour watches, changing at midnight.

The work itself was not difficult physically, and no great amount of imagination was required to successfully operate a lighthouse, provided one could read. In justifying higher pay for keepers to attract a better educated group (that is, those who could read), the Lighthouse Board remarked that there were ample instructions to guide the keepers if they could but understand them. Just before the lighting of the Point Loma lighthouse the District Inspector gave the principal keeper copies of *Lighthouse Establishment Instructions* and *Instructions and Directions for the Management of Lenses, Lights and Beacons*, as well as a copy of the current *Light List*.

Other publications available to the keeper included *List of Illuminating Apparatuses, Fixtures, Implements, Tools, Miscellaneous Articles, and Supplies in General Use in the U. S. Lighthouses, Light-Beacons, and Light-Vessels ...; Instructions and Directions to Guide Light-House Keepers and Others Belonging to the Lighthouse Establishment; and Management of Lens Apparatus and Lamps*. In his administrative duties the keeper could draw assistance from the *List of Blank Forms, Circular, Pamphlets, Placards, and Books*.

Obviously, the principal task of the keepers was to see that the light was exhibited at sunset and kept burning brightly until sunrise. To perform the main job effectively it was necessary for the lighting equipment to be in good condition, and the keepers were instructed to have "everything put in order for lighting in the evening by 10 o'clock a.m., daily." In carrying out this regulation, work at light stations with two or more keepers was divided into two "departments." One keeper had to clean and polish the lens, clean and fill the lamp, "remove all dust with the brushes from the frame-work of the apparatus, fit wicks if required, and if not required trim carefully those already fitted to the burner and see that everything connected with the apparatus and lamp is perfectly clean, and the light ready for lighting at the proper time in the evening."

The other keeper had to "clean the plate glass of the lantern inside and outside; clean all the copper and brass work of the apparatus, the utensils used in the lantern and watchroom; the walls, floors, and balconies of the lantern . . . the tower stairways, landing, doors, windows, window-recesses, and passages from the lantern to the oil cellars." In performing their work in the lantern the keepers were instructed to wear linen aprons to prevent the possibility of their coarse clothes scratching the lens. Indeed, when the lens was not in use or being worked on, a special linen cover was draped over it to protect it from dust, the sun, and the possibility of scratching.

The various printed instructions, of course, spelled out the routine of a keeper's job, such as washing the lens every 2 months with spirits of wine and polishing it annually with rouge, and alternating the lamps inside the lens every 15 days. Any questions about his work could be answered by carefully perusing the instructions available. If a keeper dropped oil on the lens, instructions told him to use spirits of wine in cleaning it off. If he did not know how to trim a wick or adjust a lamp, a step by step detailed description was available, including a picture of what the lamp flame should look like. Little was left to the discretion or, for that matter, the imagination of the keeper, and a neat workable lighthouse could be kept with only a modicum of intelligence and imagination. All the keeper needed was the ability to read and to comprehend what he read. Physically he needed to bring to the job a certain amount of energy.

Once the routine work connected with the light was accomplished, the keepers could turn their attention to maintenance, which for the most part consisted of repairs of a minor nature to the equipment and structures. Major repairs were normally taken care of through contract and were usually provided for by special appropriations from Congress as specifically requested by the Lighthouse Board.

LIFE OF THE KEEPERS

In addition to maintenance of Government property, the keepers also concerned themselves with personal endeavors peculiar to their job location. For many years the lighthouse at Point Loma possessed only one cistern—the one in the basement—and it was too small to hold a year's supply of water, obtained by run-off of rainwater from the roof; consequently, when

the keepers ran out of water they had to haul barrels by wagon from a well at La Playa or from a well near what is now the junction of Midway and Rosecrans Streets. The 7- to 10-mile journey was over roads liberally dotted with chuckholes; the steep ascent to the top of Point Loma added to their problems. The number of trips a year depended upon the annual rainfall. Even with the addition in 1883 of a huge concrete catch basin in front of the lighthouse and a cistern at each end to hold water, these problems were not ended. Annual rainfall was simply not always adequate to meet needs.

Generally, weather was not a special problem for the occupants of the lighthouse. Point Loma gets its share of strong winds and squalls, but really violent storms are rare. These are not completely unknown, however. On October 2, 1858, a severe gale mercilessly lashed the San Diego area for 6 hours. Several ships in the harbor dragged their anchors and were driven aground. A couple of wooden structures (including the newspaper editor's house) in Old San Diego were toppled, and "So fearful was the gale at Point Loma the Lighthouse keeper, Capt. Keating, was obliged to leave at 12 o'clock M., fearing the tower would fall." Fortunately, though, the lighthouse was not harmed. Four years later an earthquake rocked San Diego, and this time the lighthouse was damaged. The extent or type of injury is not known. It must not have been too serious since the Secretary of the Lighthouse Board felt he had authority to order immediate repairs without first consulting the Board.

The lighthouse keepers on the west coast sometimes, where feasible, kept gardens. At Point Loma a potato patch, for a while at least, was maintained. Located just north of the lighthouse and then moved to a 1-1/2-acre site near the present Bennington Monument in Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, the patch contained only potatoes; lack of water prevented growing anything else. The last keeper's wife, Mrs. Israel, kept a tomato vine growing and bearing year after year only by careful nursing and protection.

Normally, supplies such as oil, wicks, mops, brooms, and equipment were brought to lighthouses quarterly. The procedure described as occurring in the 1890's at a New England lighthouse was probably duplicated numerous times over the years on the Pacific Coast. On arriving at a light station the supply vessel anchored and a party landed and made its way to the lighthouse. After a brief social period and exchange of pleasantries the keeper produced his worn out brushes, mops and brooms, broken tools, and decrepit lamps, and they were exchanged for new ones. The old items were taken back to the vessel, and when the ship was far out at sea were dumped overboard; the captain of the supply vessel did not want them to be washed ashore to be again offered in evidence.

Probably in the 1880's, certainly prior to 1890, the Lighthouse Board began supplying portable libraries to the keepers. The books were arranged in cases which "make rather a neat appearance when set upright on a table, and they only need be closed and locked to be ready for transportation." Each contained about 50 volumes of a mixture of historical and scientific books, poetry, and good novels, and a Bible and a prayer book. The libraries were usually exchanged at the quarterly inspection.

Another innovation of the 1880's was the introduction of a uniform for the light keepers. In 1883 dress and fatigue uniforms were prescribed, and the following year the Lighthouse Board put the regulations into effect, giving the first uniform free to each keeper. On May 1, 1888, regulations regarding the uniform were issued. The uniform consisted of trousers, vest, and a double breasted coat. The coat had five large yellow metal buttons on each side. The material for the uniform was dark indigo blue jersey or flannel. The cap was of cloth with a visor. The yellow metal lighthouse badge was worn in the middle of the front of the cap.

POINT LOMA AS AN ACTIVE LIGHTHOUSE

During its active period the pattern of development of the Point Loma lighthouse was not very much unlike that of the other light stations on the west coast; that is, over the years the dwelling and tower were found to be inadequate for the necessities of an active station, and barns, sheds and other buildings were added from time to time.

At first, living space was not a special problem; at least there are no indications of complaints during the early years of the lighthouse. But as time went on the four room dwelling became just too small. By the 1870's, quarters had become obviously inadequate, and in 1875 two rooms were fitted up in a portion of the wood and oil storehouses as a dwelling for the assistant keeper. This shed was built of rough unseasoned lumber and was lined inside with cloth and paper. Cracks in the walls made it rather uncomfortable living quarters, despite the highly touted balmy climate of Southern California. Later the inside walls were lined with tongue and groove boards, but in 1877 it was still described as unfit for quarters. Additional repairs must have been made in 1880 for the structure was still being used as a dwelling for the assistant keeper. How long this building served in that capacity is not known, but in 1886 the keeper fitted up a room in the wash house for the accommodation of the assistant keeper's family.

Other buildings were added from time to time. In 1875 a barn was constructed near the lighthouse, and in 1881 a boat house was built at Ballast Point to house the lighthouse boat which had been acquired in 1868. At the same time a winch for hauling up the boat was installed.

The lighthouse structure was not painted the usual white until later in its active life. For many years it was left unpainted, but by 1879 it was realized that the action of the weather was causing the soft sandstone to disintegrate. Repairs were necessary, and preventive action was called for: the west side and south end walls were covered with a heavy coat of Portland cement-mortar, after which they were painted with two coats of stone-color paint.

Over the years the *Light Lists* had the Point Loma lighthouse described variously as grey and yellow sandstone and having a red lantern. The *Light List* for 1888 had the description altered for the first time, It said "Low white tower, rising from white dwelling, lantern black." The lighthouse, then, was not painted the "traditional" white until 1887.

During its active years the lighthouse was often visited by local residents. Sometimes they came to watch the shore whalers from Ballast Point harpoon the migrating California gray whales just beyond the kelp beds off Point Loma. Groups of young people packed picnic lunches and journeyed to the lighthouse for a pleasant outing. There was at least one instance of the lighthouse barn being used for a dance by the local young people.

In 1874, a reporter for the *Union* left an 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 government for the purpose of catching rain water 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 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 a 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 of cultivation. . . .

The one keeper most prominently associated with the lighthouse was Captain Robert D. Israel. He was a Pennsylvanian and by trade a chairmaker. He joined the army during the Mexican war and after duty in Mexico settled in San Diego. He married Maria Arcadia Machado de Alipas, a member of an old San Diego family. He first came to the lighthouse in 1871 as assistant keeper and 2 years later was promoted to keeper.

Mrs. Israel served as assistant keeper for 3 years, but it is not known whether her husband made her stand her regular watch at night or not. Some say he did and that Mrs. Israel whiled away her watch-hours knitting. She would sit in her rocker on the first floor as near the stairwell as possible. A circular hole in the deck of the tower permitted the light from the lamp inside the lens to beam downward providing just the light Mrs. Israel needed to do her knitting.

Mrs. Israel turned her hand to other decorative artwork. With various small shells her children collected from the tidepool area below the lighthouse she made beautiful and intricate floral designs. These designs were placed in heavy wooden frames which were decorated principally with chiton shells and fragments of abalone shells. Abalone shells, incidentally, with their vari-colored pearllike interiors could be shaped into a great variety of attractive adornments. One of the assistant keepers, David Splaine, carved buttons for his little daughter's topcoat from the shells; two of these buttons are in the museum collection at Cabrillo National Monument.

Captain Israel served as keeper of the Point Loma lighthouse for nearly 20 years. When the light was moved from its promontory on top of Point Loma to the ocean's edge in 1891, he moved with it. He was keeper at the new lighthouse for nearly a year when a disagreement—the facts of which have been obscured by time—made him feel he must resign. On January 9, 1892, George P. Brennan was appointed keeper of the Point Loma lighthouse. Captain Israel returned to Point Loma in January 1908. He died that same month and, as a veteran of the Mexican War, was buried in what was then called the Fort Rosecrans Post Cemetery.

POINT LOMA AS AN OPERATING LIGHTHOUSE

During the first 34 years of its existence the Old Point Loma lighthouse exhibited a fixed white light beaming in all directions. But later the Lighthouse Board felt that the light needed a more distinguishing characteristic in order for it not to be confused with other lighthouses

in the vicinity or other lights which happened to be along the coast. On April 1, 1889, the characteristic of the light was changed to "fixed white, varied by flashes, alternately red and white, interval between flashes one minute."

Normally a flashing characteristic in a Fresnel lens is obtained by rotating the lens. But the Point Loma lens had not been designed to rotate; rather, it was fixed in place. Conceivably the lens could have been redesigned to rotate, or the old lens could have been replaced with one which rotated. Either modifying the lens or exchanging it would have been an operation which took a week or more to perform—quite a long time for a lighthouse to be out of service. There is no historical evidence that either event occurred. Actually what probably happened was that a rotating red shield outside the lens was used. Many of the early Fresnel lenses were designed by the manufacturer to flash. These used a shield; some a solid shield that blanked out the light to obtain a simple flashing characteristic; and some a red shield to obtain a flashing red and white effect.

The flashing red and white light continued to be the characteristic of the Point Loma lighthouse even after it was moved to the ocean's edge. It is interesting to note that when the lens was made for the new lighthouse certain panels of the lens were made with red glass. As events turned out, though, this lens was never used at Point Loma. The lens was such a work of art that it was displayed at the Paris Exhibition where it won a prize and again at the Columbia Exposition in Chicago where it vied with Little Egypt for attention. At this latter fair the lens won another medal and consequently was never installed at Point Loma. By the time the Exposition was over, the new Point Loma lighthouse already had a lens and the prize-winning one ordered for it was sent to the Chicago Harbor lighthouse where it is today.

At about the same time the characteristic of the light was changed, Captain Israel reported receiving orders to reduce the lamp from three concentric wicks to two. This maneuver saved one-half gallon of fuel a night. Since kerosene was then selling for 14 cents a gallon, it meant that at the Point Loma light station the Government was saving a whopping \$25 a year in fuel, and the only effect the eliminating of the wick had was to cut the candlepower of the light from 158 to 73. This, of course, endangered ships and sailors at sea. Captain Israel was disgusted and complained that the light could barely be seen. How long the order remained in force is not known.

POINT LOMA'S NEW LIGHTHOUSE

In the late 1880's the long designed plans to move the light began reaching fruition. For years it had been recognized that the light was too high—indeed, it was the highest lighthouse in the United States—and that the lighthouse was often obscured by high fog, while the rest of the coastline was distinctly visible, and was thus of little practical value as an aid to navigation. A new site was selected at the tip of Point Loma some 30 feet above the sea—about 400 feet lower than the old lighthouse.

In 1882 the wheels of the machinery of government began to turn. With the exception of the lighthouse reservation, the Army controlled all of the land on Point Loma, and the Secretary of the Treasury applied to the Secretary of War for land to erect two new lighthouses. In 1889 the army transferred the requested land to the Lighthouse Board on the condition that it "be vacated at such time as the needs of [the War] Department require."

Bids for building the new sea coast lighthouse were immediately received and opened in August of the same year. Construction was soon begun, and most of the buildings were

finished by June, 1890. Some difficulty was experienced in securing the right size lens, but a third order one was finally obtained and placed on the metal skeleton tower. On March 23, 1891, the lower light went on for the first time. Three years later a harbor light, situated at Ballast Point, was erected.

THE ABANDONED LIGHTHOUSE

With the moving of the light the Old Point Loma lighthouse fell on evil days, and for the next 40 years it was to know few good times. The out-buildings remained for a while, but in time they disappeared. Vandals did their work on the lighthouse itself; windows were broken and pieces of the old building were carted away. By 1913 it was in a dilapidated condition, and the commanding officer at Fort Rosecrans recommended that it be torn down.

The old building had become a favorite tourist spot because of the magnificent view from the old tower. By this time the old ruins had acquired the cognomen "Old Spanish Lighthouse." How and why this inaccurate name became attached to the building is not known for sure. One historian has contended that the name came about for two reasons: (1) tiles from the old Spanish Fort Guijarros were used in the construction of the building, and (2) the keepers married women of Spanish descent and as a result only Spanish was spoken about the light station, Spanish dress was worn, Spanish dishes prepared, and in general a Spanish air prevailed about the place. It is true that tiles from the old Spanish fort were used in the basement of the lighthouse, but that is hardly a reason to refer to the structure as Spanish. One wonders, however, whether there was a Spanish atmosphere about the place or not. None of the early visitors to the lighthouse mentions any Spanish trappings. Moreover, the grandson of the long time keeper, Robert Israel, reports that during the years he lived with his grandparents his grandfather discouraged Mrs. Israel from inculcating the children with even the semblance of her Spanish heritage. He chided her especially severely when she spoke Spanish to the children. Captain Israel felt that since California belonged to the United States the children should be raised as Americans, not foreigners; after all, they would have to make their way in the world as Americans.

Evidence indicates that the term "Old Spanish Lighthouse" is of 20th Century origin. In 1913 the commanding officer of Fort Rosecrans pointed out that, although erroneous, the lighthouse often had that name applied to it. Thus his statement indicates that although a popular name, the term "Old Spanish Lighthouse" had not been in use long enough to have completely supplanted the facts. Consequently, it would appear that the maritime historian Jerry MacMullen was correct when he contended that the name came into being in the early 1900's because of a local Negro guide named Ruben who had little regard for facts and sought only to make his tour more appealing by romanticizing the old ruins which blemished Point Loma. At any rate this writer has not seen, nor has he heard of anyone who has seen, a reference to "Old Spanish Lighthouse" during the active years of the structure.

CABRILLO NATIONAL MONUMENT

Nevertheless as the "Old Spanish Lighthouse" the ruins attracted many visitors and vandals. Vandalism, coupled with lack of upkeep, caused the building to become an eyesore. Around 1913 the commanding officer at Fort Rosecrans proposed repairing the building and converting it into a military radio station. However, about the same time other wheels were

turning, and a movement was underway to erect a memorial to Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, the discoverer and explorer of the west coast of the present United States. The Order of Panama, an organization dedicated to commemorating California's Spanish heritage, was spearheading the drive for the memorial, and they proposed that it take the form of a statue 150 feet tall to be placed "on that noble and commanding cape, Point Loma which is . . . the first land ever seen by a civilized man on the Pacific verge of the United States."

Point Loma, though, was under jurisdiction of the War Department and, consequently, the Order of Panama had to negotiate with the Army for a site for the Cabrillo statue. The first site selected was 300 feet south of the Old Point Loma lighthouse. But the Army had plans for that particular spot, and as a result recommended the site on which the lighthouse stood. In a meeting between the Commanding Officer of Fort Rosecrans and the Memorial Committee it was agreed that this site was most appropriate. The old lighthouse ruins would be obliterated and on the spot the huge statue of Cabrillo would be erected. The Committee even consented to letting the Army establish its radio station in the pedestal of the statue.

As a result of this activity a Presidential Proclamation dated October 10, 1913, was signed setting aside one-half acre of ground surrounding the Old Point Loma Lighthouse as Cabrillo National Monument, and the Order of Panama was given permission to erect their heroic statue. The Order of Panama had anticipated the signing of the Proclamation and had held formal dedication ceremonies at the lighthouse on the previous September 26.

The Order of Panama never carried through with their plans, and in time they became a defunct organization. The old lighthouse remained, part of a National Monument and the responsibility of the War Department.

In 1915 the Army spent \$360 repairing the old building and reported that further improvements were contemplated. About this time Mrs. Elizabeth T. Arnold proposed that the old lighthouse be turned over to the California Federation of Women's Clubs. The Army turned thumbs down on this saying that several military installations were planned for the vicinity of the lighthouse. The Army said it would, however, have no objections to the ladies placing a plaque on the old structure. But nothing ever came of the suggestion, and the lighthouse continued, in its shabby condition, to receive many visitors. In the fall of 1916 the Army noted that the old building was one 'of considerable historical interest...." Since there were no restroom facilities and the visitors used "the basement and some of the . . . rooms rendering the building unsanitary," the Army recommended constructing a concrete comfort station. But nothing came of that proposal.

In an effort to stabilize the condition of the old lighthouse and perhaps rehabilitate it somewhat, the Army encouraged soldiers and their families to live in it. Undoubtedly this move at least had the effect of halting temporarily the decline of the old structure. The Army also used the building as a radio station around the mid-twenties. But all of the activity was of a transitory nature, and after each use the lighthouse resumed its downhill march toward extinction.

By 1930 the wooden lean-to in the back of the old building had fallen away. The large concrete catch basin in the front of the building was still there, and two large lumps on the edge denoted the cisterns. The framework of the lantern was enclosed in a wooden structure, and there was a wooden rail around the gallery to keep visitors from falling off.

The old lighthouse was a sad and forlorn sight. Captain Fenton Jacobs, commanding officer at Fort Rosecrans, notified several Chamber of Commerce people that the old lighthouse was an eyesore and in danger of being razed. He said the Army received no money for the preservation of historic sites, and unless private funds were raised the old building was

doomed. A group from the Chamber of Commerce banded together to raise money by subscription from a few interested citizens to restore the old lighthouse and beautify the grounds. There was a brief flurry of activity and several businesses evinced interest in the project. But like many other efforts related to the Monument, this plan also came to nothing.

In 1931 the Ninth Army Corps found funds to renovate the old lighthouse. Holes in the roof were patched, windows were replaced and iron bars put over them, and the building was repainted inside and out.

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

These repairs were enough to stabilize the lighthouse until 1933 when Cabrillo National Monument was turned over to the National Park Service. The Presidential Reorganization Act of 1933 took most of the national military parks, national battlefield sites, and national monuments from the jurisdiction of other agencies, such as the War Department, and placed them under control of the National Park Service.

Upon receiving Cabrillo National Monument, the Park Service immediately began laying plans to rehabilitate the old lighthouse. The building was examined minutely, and drawings of it were made for the Historic American Buildings Survey and deposited in the Library of Congress. From the historic record and the building's own story the architects learned a great deal. They began to restore the building to what they believed was its original condition. Rotten wood was replaced, the leanto was rebuilt, the flooring was renewed throughout, and the metal lantern crowning the tower was reconstructed. Certain modern concessions were made because of the intended use of the building. Electrical fixtures and plumbing were installed. Window sashes and doors were made of metal for fire protection purposes. The basement was completely refinished, and the wooden treads and risers in the tower stairway were replaced with metal.

The restoration work was completed in 1935 and the concessioner, who was also custodian of the Monument, set up his operation in the lower south room. Later he operated a tea room in the lower north room. The concessioner also lived in the building.

Many people came to the Monument to see the restored lighthouse structure and climb the tower to enjoy the magnificent view.

THE LIGHTHOUSE GOES TO WAR

In 1941 visits to the Monument were abruptly shut off because the military felt the purposes of wartime security precluded non-military activity on Point Loma. During World War II the lighthouse was used by the armed forces. At first the Navy used it as a signal tower. Ships coming to San Diego were signaled from the lighthouse. If they flashed back the correct sign, the submarine nets stretching across the entrance into the harbor were pulled aside to admit the vessel. This signal station lasted for about a year until another tower was built just south of the lighthouse. Thereafter the old building was used primarily for storage purposes.

Finally in 1946 the Army decided to return the Monument to the National Park Service, and on November 11, 1946 the public was again welcomed. A team from the National Park

Service arrived in the spring of 1947 to inspect the old lighthouse. They found that three pieces of plate glass in the tower needed to be replaced, floors needed refinishing, the inside and the outside of the structure needed repainting, and the outside of the lantern needed to be sandblasted to remove the Army's camouflage paint. It was estimated that the cost for this work, including labor and supervision, would be \$3,706. The Army was more than willing to have the building repaired to the complete satisfaction of the National Park Service. The work was accomplished, and the former concessioner took up where he left off when he was interrupted by the war. The lighthouse, with a fresh coat of white paint, was reopened and it resumed its role as the centerpiece of Cabrillo National Monument.

Today the old Point Loma lighthouse stands as a symbol of the first successful efforts to obtain aids to navigation for the west coast. But more important, as it stands overlooking the beautiful and busy San Diego Harbor, the old lighthouse is one of modern man's links with the past. The lighthouse is a witness to man's progress and testimony to a giant step he took on the road to providing better and more reliable navigational aids to make the life of the sailor less dangerous.

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APPENDIX

KEEPERS AND ASSISTANT KEEPERS OF THE OLD POINT LOMA LIGHTHOUSE

KEEPERS	Date Appointed	Date Vacated	Salary
James P. Keating	Dec. 28, 1854	Feb. 1, 1859	\$1,000 Removed
H. C. Wiley	Feb. 1, 1859		1,000 Salary reduced to \$800 on Sept. 1, 1859
J. N. Covarrubias	Oct. 9, 1859	Mar. 13, 1860	800 Resigned
Joseph Reiner	Mar. 13, 1860	Nov. 16, 1860	800 Resigned
James P. Keating	Nov. 16, 1860		800 Resigned
W. C. Price	Feb. 16, 1861	Nov. 23, 1867	1,000
J. D. Jenkins	Nov. 23, 1867	Apr. 24, 1871	1,000 Removed
Isaac Swain	Apr. 24, 1871	May 20, 1871	1,000 Declined
Enos A. Wall	May 20, 1871		
James J. Ferree	Mar. 5, 1872	June 27, 1873	1,000 Resigned
Robert D. Israel	June 27, 1873		1,000 Salary reduced to \$800 on Jan. 1, 1880
George P. Brennan	Jan. 29, 1893		800 Keeper of the new Point Loma light

ASSISTANT KEEPERS

George B. Tolman	Jan. 29, 1855	Jan. 29, 1856	\$650 Resigned
Anthony Genan	Jan. 29, 1855	Jan. 17, 1856	500 2nd assistant position discontinued
Julius Semen	Apr. 28, 1856		650 Salary reduced to \$500 on Sept. 1, 1859
W. C. Price			500 Resigned
Thomas Susk	Dec. 6, 1859	Dec. 31, 1859	500 Resigned
J. J. Serano	Dec. 30, 1859	Mar. 13, 1860	500
W. C. Price	Mar. 13, 1860		500
S. Fields	Feb. 16, 1861		500
C. P. McAleer	Mar. 7, 1865		\$625
Lewis McCoy	Feb. 5, 1867	Nov. 23, 1867	600 Resigned
Eliza Jenkins	Nov. 23, 1867	May 20, 1871	600 Removed

Robert D. Israel	May 20, 1871	June 27, 1873	600 Promoted
Mary A. Israel	June 27, 1873	Feb. 15, 1876	625 Removed
A. G. Walker	Feb. 15, 1876	May 19, 1876	625 Transferred
J. S. Craig	May 19, 1876	Aug. 13, 1877	625 Resigned
John Stone	Aug. 13, 1877 NOWRAP	July 30, 1881	625 Salary reduced to \$600 on Jan. 18, 1880. Resigned
Victor H. Richet	July 30, 1881	Nov. 14, 1883	600 Resigned
James Maloney	Nov. 14, 1883	Sept. 15, 1884	600 Resigned
Philip Savage	Sept. 15, 1884	Aug. 14, 1886	600 Resigned
*David R. Splaine	Aug. 14, 1886	Apr. 15, 1889	600 Transferred
Thomas W. Anderson	July 15, 1889	Oct. 25, 1891	600 Resigned
Haydon B. Cartwell	Oct. 28, 1891	Feb. 23, 1894	600 Resigned

*Appointed first keeper of Ballast Point Light on December 1, 1894.

The above list was compiled from the following records of the National Archives:

"Record of Lights, Keeper's Names, &c" v.1

"Record of Lights, Keeper's Names, Birthplace, Whence Appointed, Annual Salary, &c." v. 1A, 1853-1870

"Lighthouse Appointments, 1843-1880, Treasury Department," v.2

"Keepers of Light Stations, 1864-1886, no. 3, Division of Appointments, Secretary of the Treasury."

"Keepers of Light Stations, Dist. 5-13, 1862-1900, Division of Appointments, Secretary of the Treasury."

"Keepers of Light Stations, Divisions of Appointments, Office of the Secretary of the Treasury," Series V, vol. 6.

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CABRILLO

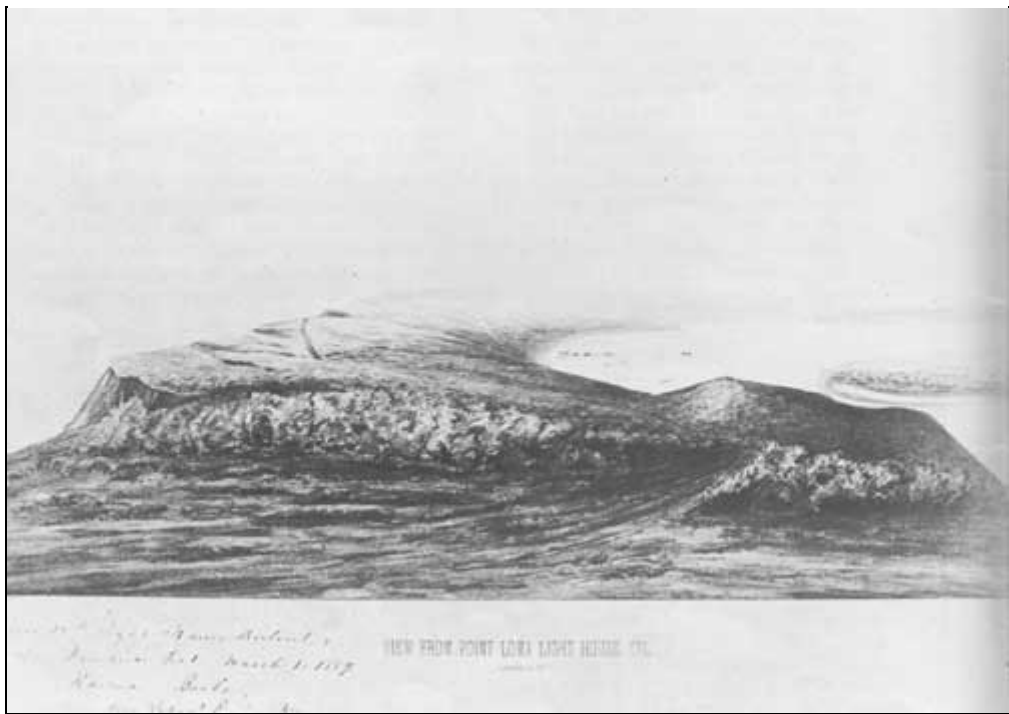


The Old Point Loma Lighthouse

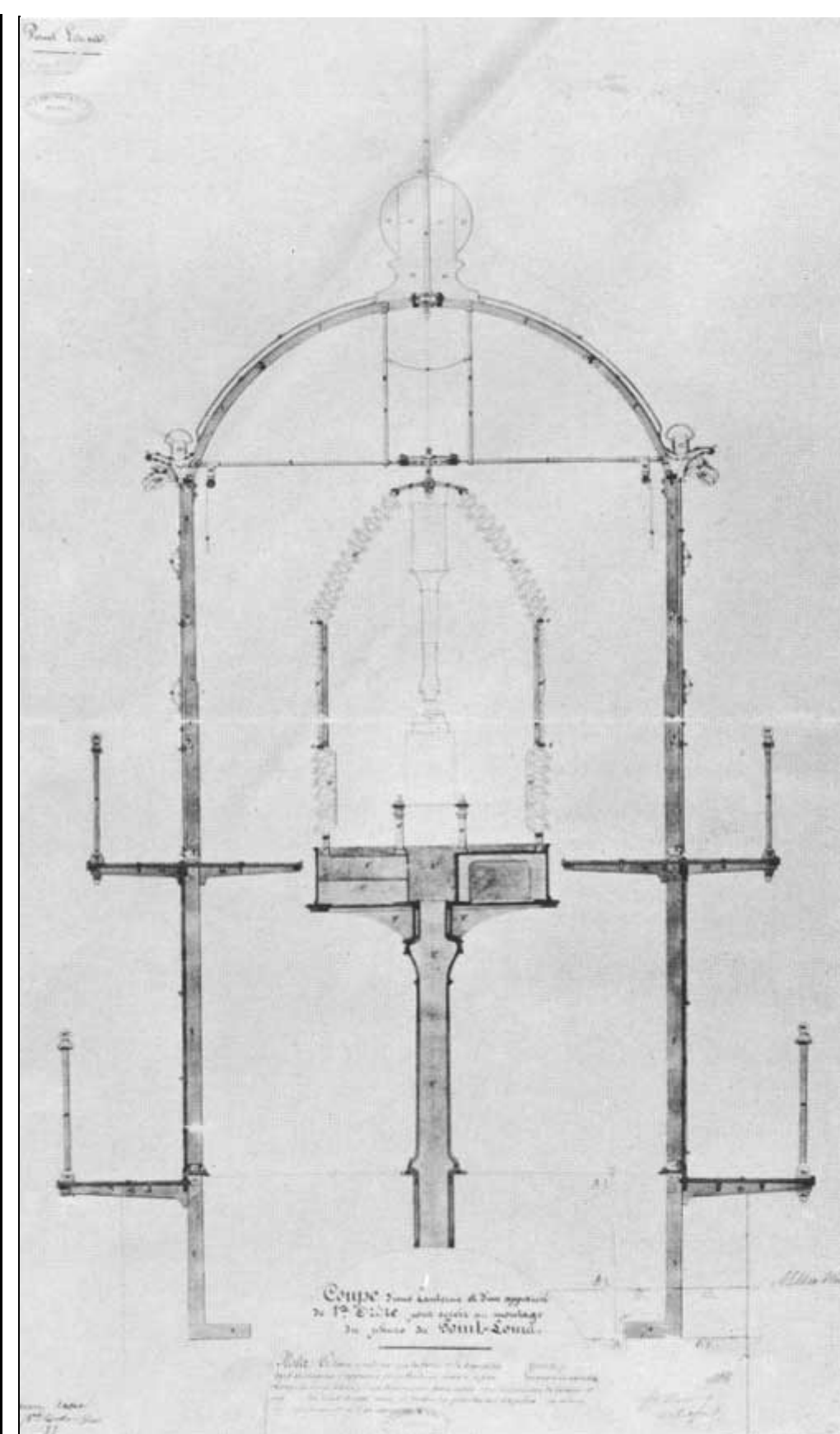
Symbol of the Pacific Coast's first Lighthouses



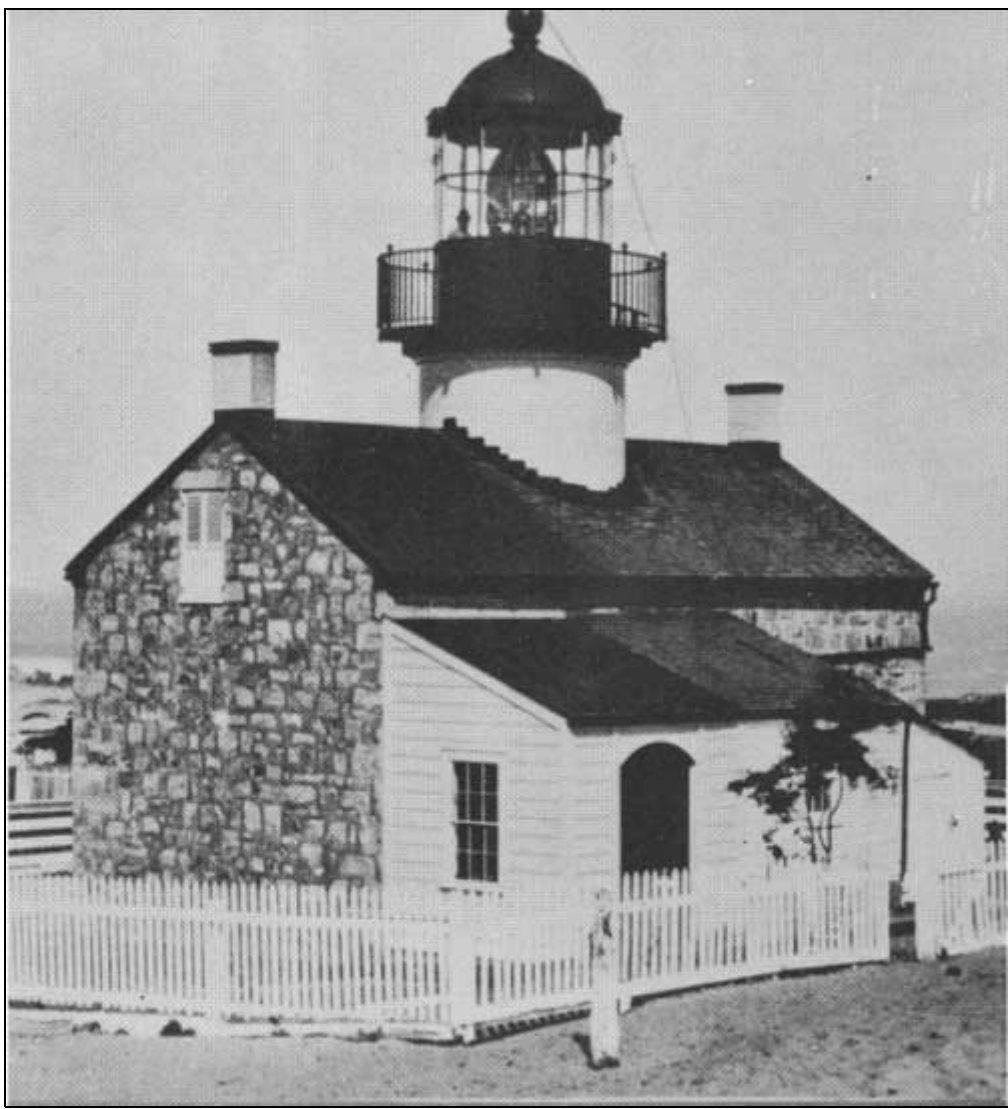
The first picture of the Point Loma lighthouse. It was sketched by Major Hartman Bache in 1855. Photo courtesy of National Archives.



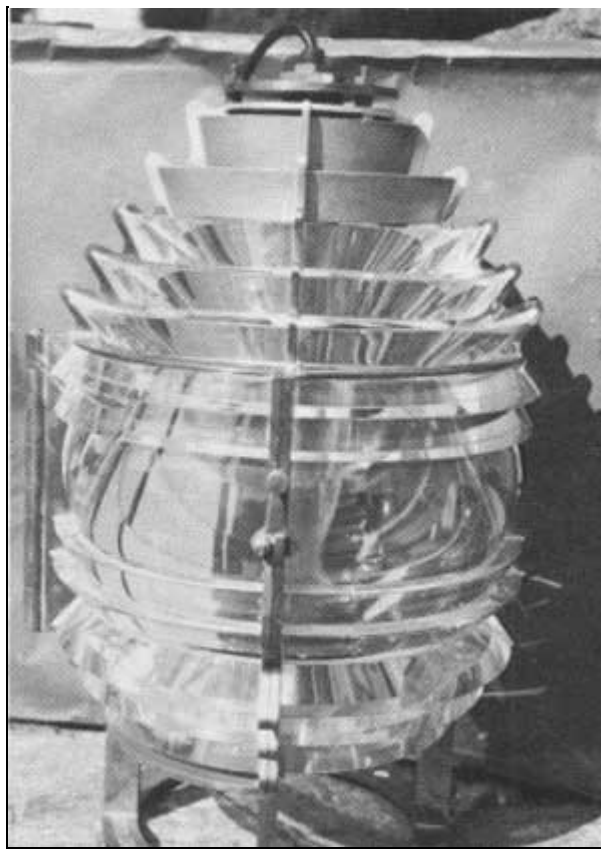
View from Point Loma lighthouse sketched by Major Hartman Bache in 1855. Photo courtesy of National Archives.



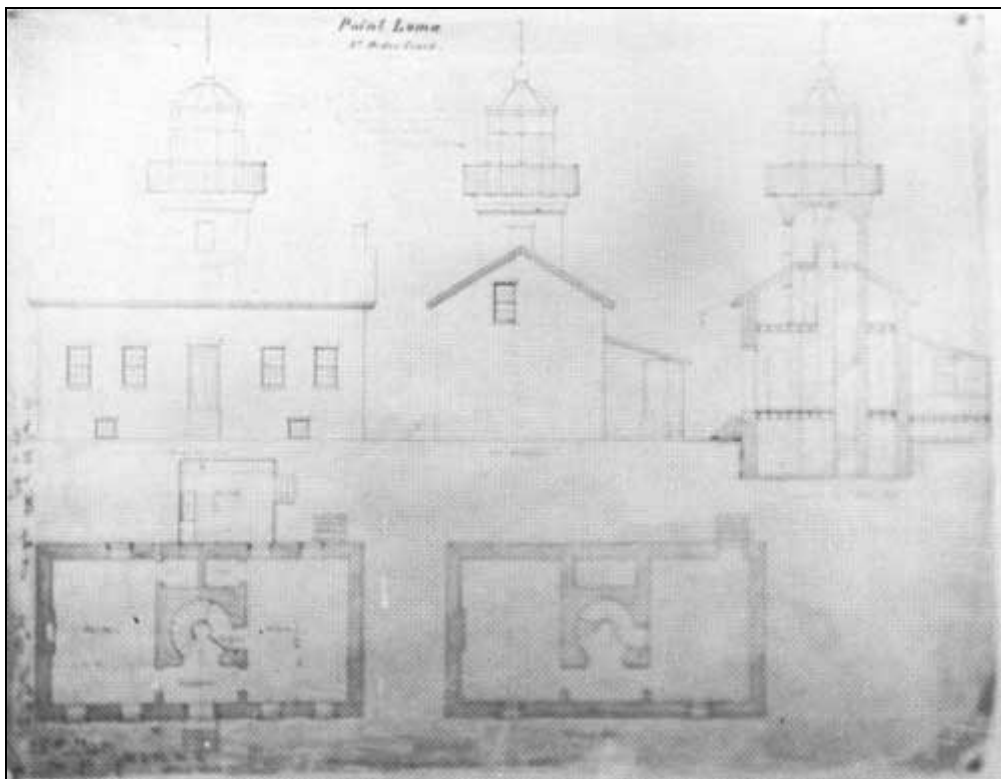
Plans for first order illuminating apparatus originally ordered for Port Loma, the most southwesterly lighthouse in the United States. It was installed in the Cape Flattery lighthouse, the most northwesterly one in the United States. Photo courtesy of Smithsonian Institution.



Point Pinos lighthouse, Monterey, California, possibly in the 1870's. Today it is the oldest active lighthouse on the west coast. Photo courtesy of the California Pioneer Society.



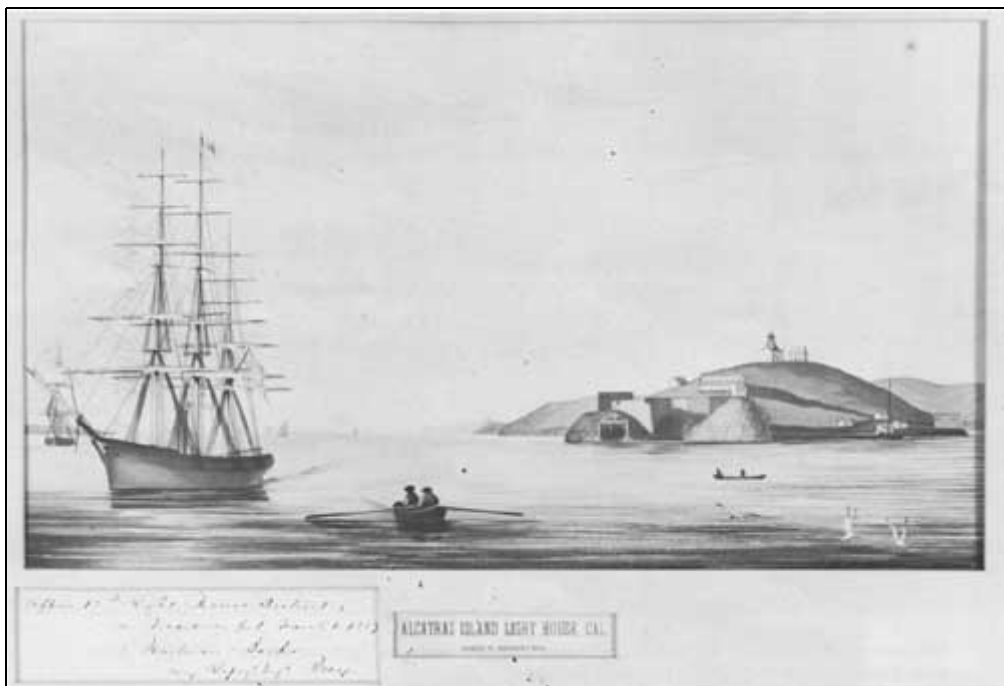
Fifth order Fresnel lens used at the Ballast Point lighthouse until 1961. This lens in design was similar to, and about one-third the size of, the original lens used at Point Loma.



Original plans of Point Loma lighthouse.



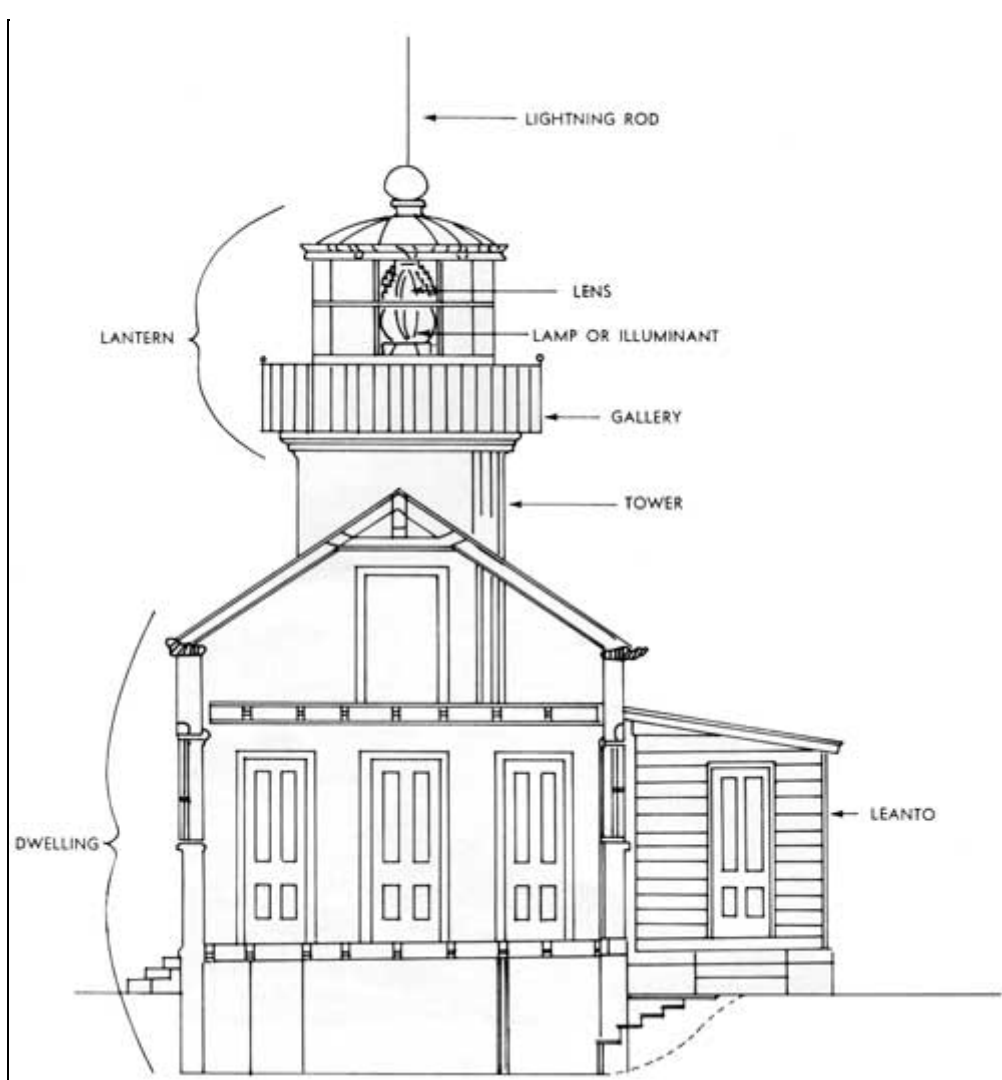
Point Loma and its lighthouse as seen from Coronado about 1887. The Point Loma lighthouse was once the highest in the United States. Photo from Douglas Gunn, *Picturesque San Diego*.



Original Alcatraz lighthouse about 1900. It was the first lighthouse on the west coast. The original lens of this lighthouse is now at Cabrillo National Monument. From an original drawing of 1859.



Active Point Loma lighthouse, possibly in 1860's. From Historical Collection of Title Insurance and Trust Company, San Diego.



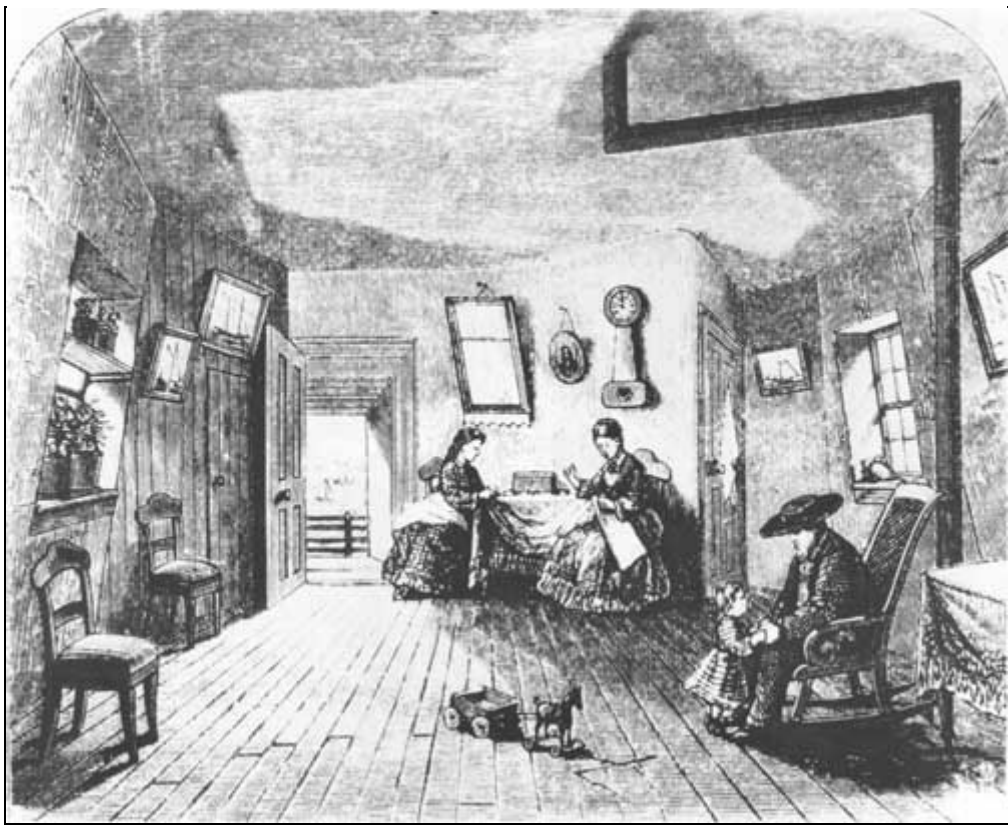
Nomenclature of a lighthouse.



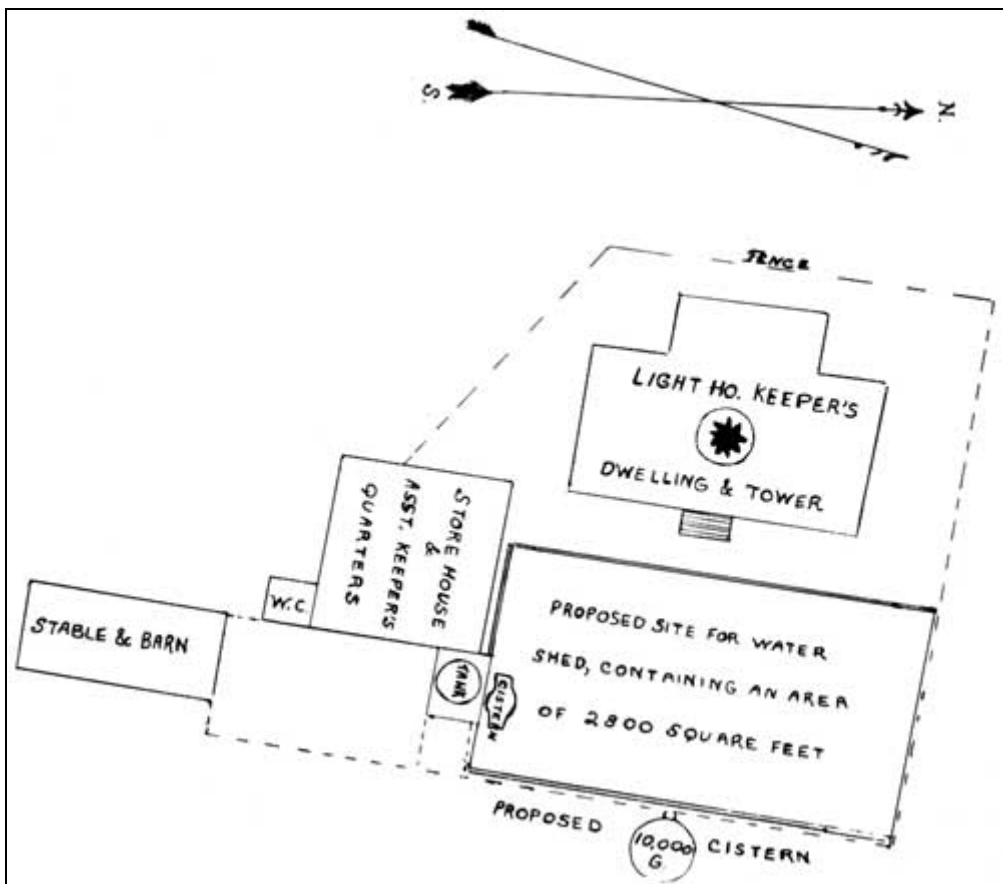
Captain Robert D. Israel, long time keeper of the Point Loma Light Station, in his lighthouse keeper's uniform.



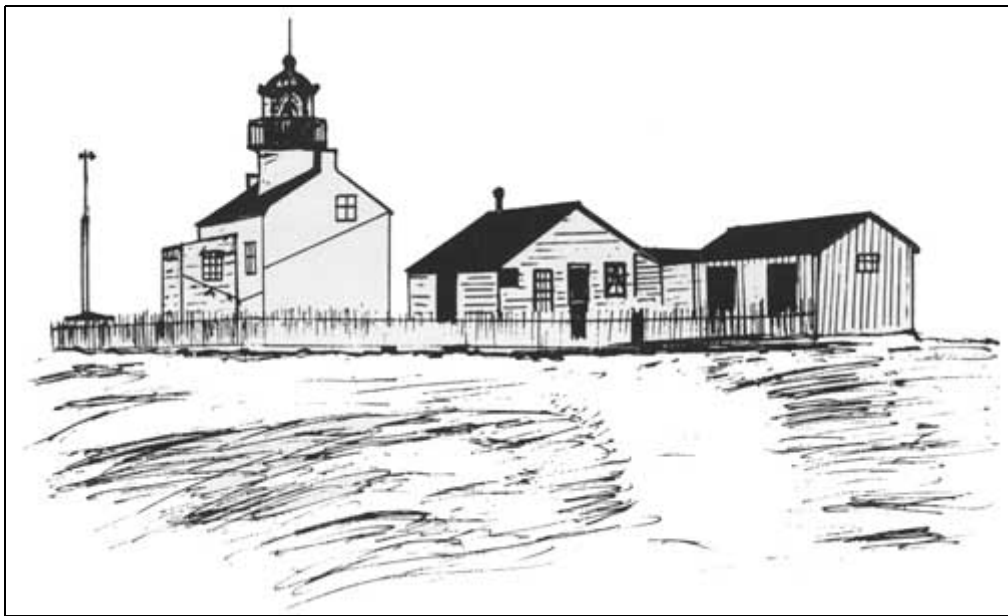
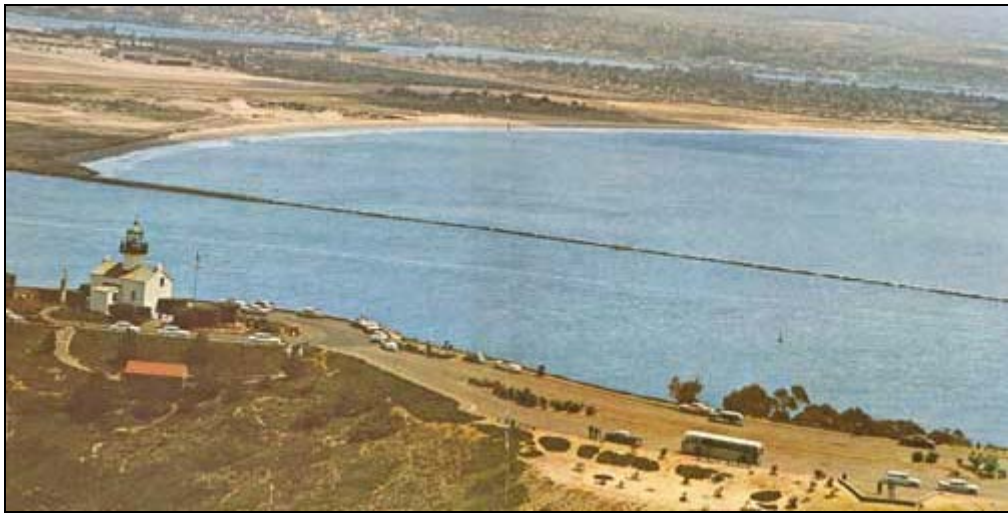
Mrs. Mary A. Israel, wife of Captain Israel. At one time she served as assistant keeper.



Interior of an east coast lighthouse in 1880's. From *St. Nicholas Magazine*.



Layout of Point Loma Light Station in 1882.



Point Loma Light Station about 1890. Sketched by Mrs. Gladys Neuber from several historical photographs.



A picture and frame of shells made by Mrs. Israel while at the Point Loma lighthouse.



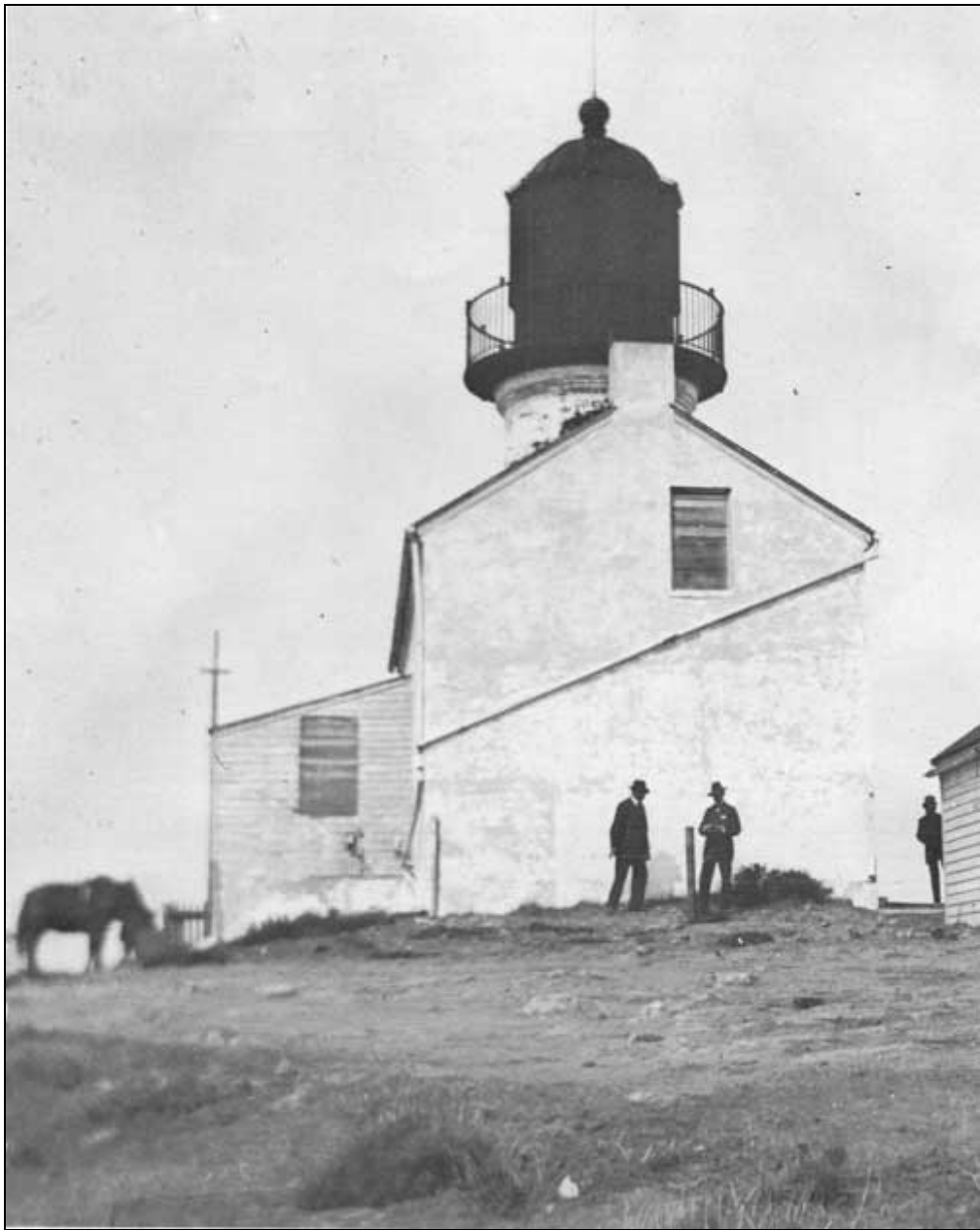
Point Loma Light Station about 1890. From Historical Collection of Title Insurance and Trust Company, San Diego.



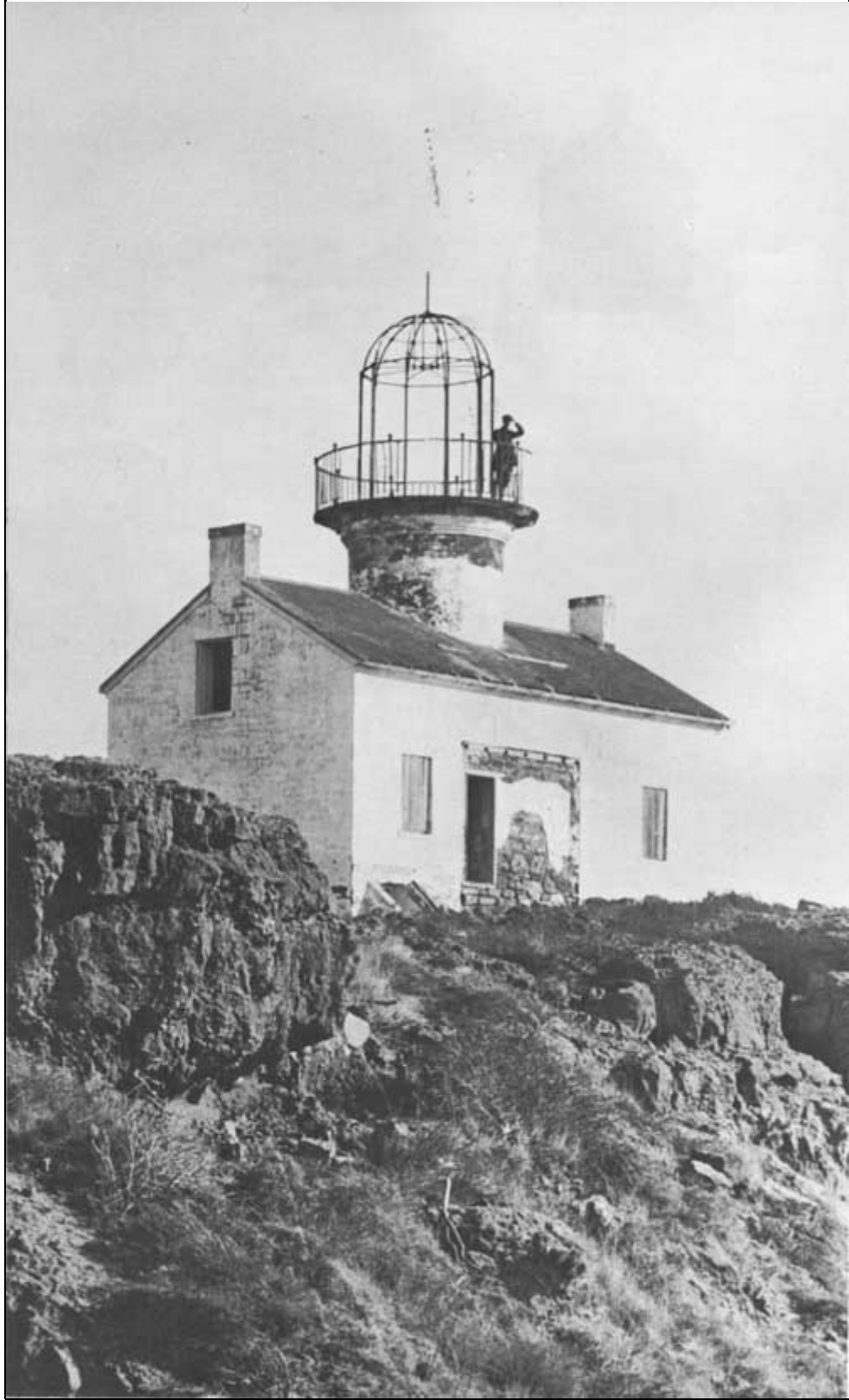
The new Point Loma Light Station about 1892. From Historical Collection of Title Insurance and Trust Company, San Diego.



Ballast Point Light Station about 1900. From Historical Collection of Title Insurance and Trust Company, San Diego.



Old Point Loma Light Station shortly after it was abandoned. From Historical Collection of Title Insurance and Trust Company, San Diego.



Rear of abandoned Point Loma lighthouse about 1910. Note where lean-to had been. Photo from Historical Collection of Title Insurance and Trust Company, San Diego.



Captain David Splaine, on right, former assistant keeper of the Pont Loma lighthouse and first keeper of the Ballast Point Light Station.



Although abandoned and falling into ruins the old lighthouse continued to be a favorite tourist attraction. Photograph was taken about 1910. From Historical Collection of Title Insurance and Trust Company, San Diego.



Abandoned Point Loma lighthouse in 1913. Large stand in front of building was stage used in

dedication of Cabrillo National Monument, September 26, 1913. From Historical Collection of Title Insurance and Trust Company, San Diego.



The Army encourage its personnel to live in the old lighthouse and keep it in good repair. Note the remains of the catch basin and cistern. Photo, taken about 1915, is from Historical Collection of Title Insurance and Trust Company, San Diego.



Old Point Loma lighthouse as an Army radio station and tourist attraction about 1920. From Historical Collection of Title Insurance and Trust Company, San Diego.



Front of abandoned old Point Loma lighthouse about 1895. From Historical Collection of Title Insurance and Trust Company, San Diego.

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