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ON POINT PINOS

The Light That Guides The Mariner

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Has Shown for Many Years

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Its Peculiar Situation--Picturesque Surroundings of the  
Structure

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One of the most interesting of the many light-houses in California, is the one located on Point Pinos in Monterey County. The location is unusual. The ideal light-house is on a rocky headland out of the reach of the foaming breakers that roar about its base and dash spray against the lantern in stormy weather. It is a spot where the keepers are practically out of the world and in many cases deprived of the comforts of life. Such will describe most of the lighthouses in California, but will not convey the least idea of the one at Point Pinos.

The Point Pinos lighthouse was the second one established on the California coast, the one at Alcatraz Island being finished a few months previously in the year 1852. But the latter has been changed so much that it bears no resemblance to its original appearance.

Instead of being built on a barren rock the Point Pinos light is located on the edge of a forest of pines and cypress. It is quite a distance back from the beach and surrounded by a large meadow filled with grazing cattle.

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The greater part of the year the climate is like paradise. When it was first erected the lighthouse was of an ideal form. A graceful tower with concave sides rose ninety feet above sea level, and picturesque buildings for the keepers were grouped about its base. But some years later a house was built around the tower, entirely inclosing the lower position of it and destroying its beauty somewhat, but producing a most quaint appearance.

The tower is surmounted by a lantern that is one of the most beautiful in this country and ornamented by a bronze cornice that must be acknowledged to be a work of art. It was made in France in 1850 and is a feature of lighthouses not found in these days of utility.

The Point Pinqs lighthouse is what is known as a station of the third order, although it is located in a most important position. The lamp is the original one placed in position forty-two years ago, and is of the ordinary three-wick pattern, invented by Thomas Comvin. It is made entirely of brass, and the oil is forced to the wicks by a weighted float. The lamp is an exceptionally good one and thus <sup>was</sup> never given any trouble during its many years of continuous service.

Surrounding the lamp is a lens that was made in France in 1850 at a cost of \$1,600. It magnifies the flame of the lamp to 1900 candle-power, and is said to produce the most perfect, steady, white light of any lamp on the coast.

On many occasions the light has been seen at Santa Cruz, nearly twenty miles, and it shows a remarkably great distance through a fog. A strange thing about the performance is the fact that the lenses were broken several places in the long journey from France to their present position. None of the fractures are exactly in the local plane, but several of them are most serious and look as if they would entirely destroy the efficacy of the glass.

Although the Point Pinos lighthouse has had a number of keepers, they have all performed their duties with exceptional diligence. No case is on record of when the lamp failed to burn for a single night. At present the station is in charge of Mrs. M. E. Fish, a lady well-known in San Francisco and Oakland, who has held the position for over a year. During her term of office, Mrs. Fish has made many improvements about the place, and has kept everything in the best of order. She attends to the lamp herself, and on stormy nights never leaves the tower, first for a single moment the flame should be extinguished and some weather-beaten ship lose its course and be dashed on the rocky coast. She keeps the brass work on the lamp shining like gold and the lenses polished like diamonds. Not a speck of dust can be found anywhere, and even the paint on the walls fairly glisten.

When Mrs. Fish first took charge of the Point Pinos light she found it surrounded by only sand and wildflowers,



but one year has worked a marvelous change. She has laid out a garden that, under the influence of an abundance of water, has become a perfect mass of flowers. Neat gravel walks lead up to the house, and a fountain splashes day and night. Instead of being a trial, life at Point Pinos has been made a pleasure.

The general appearance of the lighthouse and surrounding buildings produces an artistic effect, and at the same time is in keeping with the natural surroundings. The buildings and tower are painted a dazzling white, and stand in strong relief against the dark-blue waters of the Pacific on one side and the background of pines and cypress on the other.

Monterey, four miles away, is the official post-office of Point Pinos, and there the lighthouse steamer Madrona carries supplies and orders once a month. The position of the Point Pinos light makes it a most important one in the commerce of the world. All the steamers from Australia, China and Hawaii sight it, as do also the large fishing fleet on the coast.

In all the years the Point Pinos light has been in existence very few wrecks have occurred on the coast it guards. This may be greatly due to chance, but there is no denying that fact that some credit is due the "steady, white light".

SOURCE: Newspaper clipping in scrap book compiled by  
Vinné Bickford.