

Point Pinos Lighthouse Keeper Honored Upon Retirement

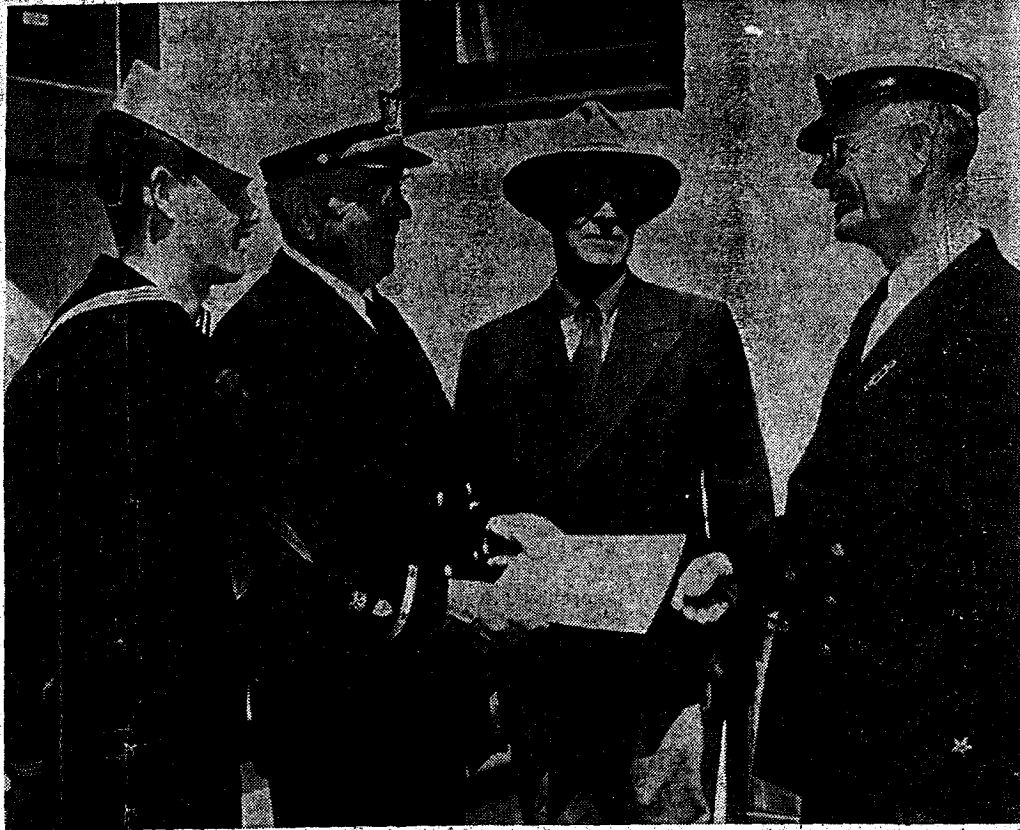
30 Years As Public Servant

By JIM HARGET

"As an evidence of the esteem in which you are held by the Treasury Department," the Gallatin award was presented to Thomas Henderson, officer in charge of the Point Pinos lighthouse station, upon his retirement yesterday following 30 years as a public servant.

"The fine contribution you have made to the public service merits this commendation of your government," concluded the award made by C.W.O. Kurt Sprenger of the Coast Guard lifeboat station in Monterey, by direction of the commander of the 12th Coast Guard district.

The Gallatin scroll, signed by



(Herald photo.)

Tom Henderson (right), keeper of the Point Pinos Light, receives the Gallatin award from CWO Kurt Springer (second from left). Others are Seaman Robert Stone (left), first assistant at the light, and W. F. Wilkinson, new keeper.

Secretary of the Treasury, George M. Humphrey, is named after Albert Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury from 1801 to 1813.

Henderson's career as a lighthouse keeper began in 1925 when he answered a newspaper advertisement by the Department of Commerce which controlled all lighthouse stations at that time.

Serving his first duty at Point Arguella near Santa Barbara, he was soon transferred to the Pigeon Point station above Santa Cruz.

In 1932 Henderson was sent to Point Sur as officer in charge

Witnessing the accident there which caused the destruction of the Navy dirigible Macon in 1936 is one of the lighthouse keeper's most vivid memories.

"It looked like many newspapers fluttering from the large 600 foot ship, when the big fin disintegrated," said Henderson who had watched the incident through binoculars.

"Luckily, there were many Navy ships going through maneuvers in the vicinity and the Macon was able to put down on the water, even in rough weather. All but two of its 81-man crew were rescued," he continued.

The Macon, the Navy's biggest

oil. Not until 1919 was the station equipped to operate on electricity.

Visiting hours at Point Pinos are from 2 to 4 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

Henderson is particularly fond of his everyday "guests" a small herd of deer, including five bucks, eight does and several fawns, which has taken a special liking to the geraniums planted around the house at the station.

"If anyone wants trouble, just let them bother the deer," says Henderson. The lighthouse station is also a wild-game preserve. In fact, he interrupted the interview to scare off a large dog he saw chasing several deer. One doe had just given birth to a set of twins.

Henderson and his wife once found a young fawn, so weak from hunger that it couldn't stand.

Mrs. Henderson fed it with an eyedropper at first and later from a baby bottle.

The deer, nicknamed "Dopey," became a family pet, slept on a couch in the living room. Dopey was quite an attraction, especially to visitors with cameras.

A cat owned by Bob Stone, one of the station's three-man crew, loves to romp and play with the deer, according to Henderson.

"FIRST MATE"

Henderson, who has been married for 44 years states, "My wife has been a wonderful 'first-mate'

and well satisfied with lighthouse life." A lighthouse keeper's wife plays an important part in the welfare of her family. The Hendersons have two children and four grandchildren.

The couple bought a home on San Juan road near Salinas two years ago. He plans to spend most of his time working in the garden, almost an acre of land, and to catch up on his fishing.

"Though I've been on the coast for over 30 years," he says, "I still feel like I'm behind on my fishing."

Proud of the fact that he has been a master of the Masonic Lodge in Pacific Grove, Henderson is also happy that he has made so many wonderful friends on the Peninsula.

His replacement at the Point Pinos Lighthouse Station will be William Wilkinson, who formerly took care of the Stockton Channel lights.

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