

Point Pinos Lighthouse Station is now the oldest manned light on the West Coast, according to the Coast Guard.

E. Nielsen, commander of the Monterey area Coast Guard Group; and UN2 Ronald C. Wright, recruiting officer and administrative assistant to Nielsen.

Since 1855 a beacon of light has flashed nightly from the small white lighthouse as a guide and warning to the many ships cruising off the coast.

HISTORY . . . The light at Point Pinos has changed through the years.

Today, there are more than 400 active lighthouses under Coast Guard supervision. The one at Alcatraz Island, formerly the oldest manned station, has been converted to automatic controls.

The first light was from a sperm oil lantern in which the oil was forced up from its tank to the light by a rude piston operated by gravity.

Thus Point Pinos becomes the oldest.

A shutter moved by a falling weight mechanism rotated around the light, blanking it out periodically. Some years later kerosene was substituted and in 1915 the light was electrified.

The station is operated and maintained by three Coast Guard men who live on the site with their families.

Now a 1,000 watt lamp is used, and shining through the center lens produces 50,000 candlepower. With the center of the prism of the lens 89 feet above sea level, the light of Point Pinos is visible up to 15 miles at sea.

PEG LEG REX . . . Perhaps the most famous resident of the lighthouse is Peg Leg Rex, a German shepherd who broke his leg in a storm some time ago and acquired his name.

Rex was outside the station during a raging storm one night, and was found limping badly the next morning. With the help of a local veterinarian, the Coast Guard seamen nursed Rex back to health.

NEVER FAIL . . . The light is in operation from one hour before sunset until one hour after sunrise, or whenever visibility is less than five miles. The old shutter and gasoline lanterns, however, are still kept in readiness in case of power failure and have been used for several such emergencies through the years.

He still limps a little, but survived when most dogs would have died from the injury. The big canine has a good disposition and is a big hit with the many school children who tour the lighthouse periodically.

NO TRAGEDY . . . The small light station has a relatively quiet history, and fortunately there have been no shipwrecks caused by the failure of the light.

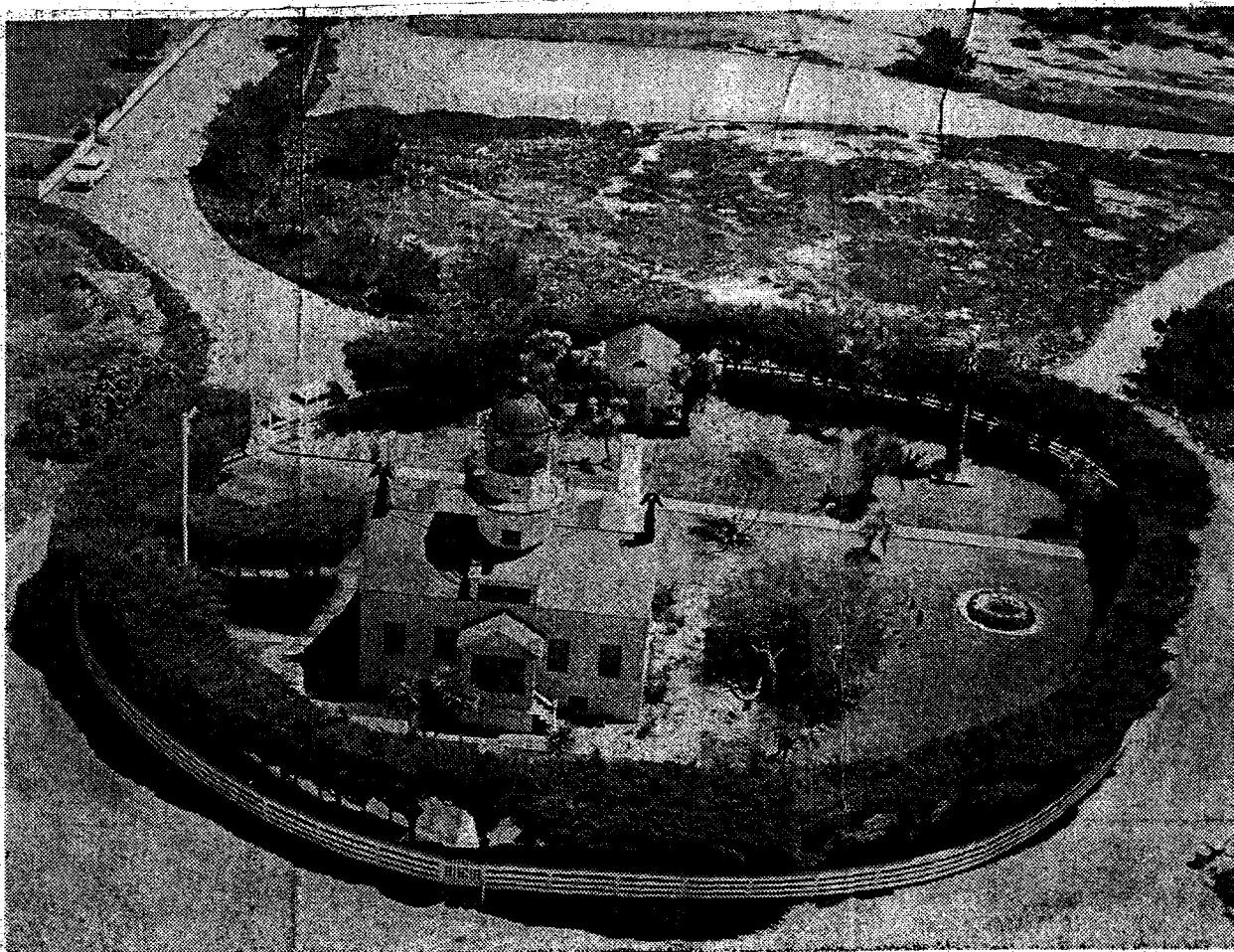
OFFICES . . . In command of the lighthouse staff is Chief Clinton Scovel, who lives in one of the two residences on the lighthouse grounds.

But the log books, kept faithfully for more than 100 years, provide a glimpse of

life at Point Pinos through the years.

The first keeper, Charles Layton, was succeeded in his post by his wife, Charlotte. Following are log entries which tell of periodic stops of the supply boat Madrona from San Francisco, of bear tracks on the grounds in 1860, and even the birth of a litter of pigs to a keeper's sow.

Visiting hours at the lighthouse are 1-3 p.m. on weekdays and 1-4 p.m. on weekends and holidays.



Oldest Manned Light

Point Pinos Lighthouse Station is now the Coast Guard's oldest manned lighthouse on the West Coast. Built in 1855, it was one of the first six lighthouses appropriated by Congress in the new state of California.

The tower was badly damaged by the earthquake of 1906 and was partially rebuilt in 1907. Otherwise, it is one of the few lighthouses in the country which is still in the original building and uses the original lenses and prisms.

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