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# Pinos grounds need TLC

by Elizabeth Evans

Calling all historical buffs; calling all historical buffs: Point Pinos lighthouse grounds is in need of some tender loving care.

That's the opinion of both the U.S. Coast Guard, the city of Pacific Grove and the director of the Museum of Natural History in Pacific Grove.

Built in 1855, the Point Pinos lighthouse is the oldest continually operating lighthouse on the California coast. The lighthouse is no longer manned, but the light itself is maintained through electronic automated devices. Yet the lighthouse structure and grounds have slowly become a difficult maintenance problem due to ownership and maintenance duties being split up.

According BWC Skip Heeter of the Coast Guard, the facility and land belongs to the Coast

Guard, but leases the facilities to the city for its historical interest.

"The lighthouse is not just a museum; it is still a major aid to navigation, which was why it was built in the first place," Heeter said.

The municipal golf course as well as the lighthouse structure are leased by the city.

Because of the mixed interests by the city and the Coast Guard, Heeter and the city have been coordinating efforts to clean up the surrounding area to make it more presentable.

But to keep it up, volunteer help may be needed.

Recently, while trying to clean up the grounds, the Coast Guard removed some dead trees by the lighthouse, only to find the dead ones were holding up some live ones. One toppled on its side, but Heeter said "we've trimmed it up and covered the

*'The Coast Guard does not have the dollars to maintain the lighthouse in its original condition... perhaps we could organize a community project to help beautify it.'*

trees/page 2



roots and think it will be okay."

Heeter acknowledges the trees are of sentimental value. They were planted in the 1800s by the wife of the lighthouse keeper. The trees, then small, were very close to the lighthouse itself. Over the years they grew and were maintained in a hedge fashion until maintenance and upkeep fell by the wayside.

"I think since Point Pinos is of such historical interest that perhaps we could organize a community project to help beautify it," Heeter said.

Maintenance falls into a no man's land, Heeter added, because the Coast Guard legally is responsible, but does not have sufficient funds to fully take care of everything.

The Coast Guard's primary requirement remains maintaining the aids to navigation for ships, Heeter said. The lights, radio beacon in the basement of the lighthouse and electronic equipment which transmits signals to boats to help them determine their positions at sea are among the maintenance tasks of the Coast Guard.

"The Coast Guard does not have the dollars to maintain the lighthouse in its original condition," Heeter said.

Coast Guard funds for maintenance are designated for aids to navigation, not the historical part, he added.

Yet the lighthouse is a major artifact and of historical significance.

According to Vern Yadon, museum director, approximately 5,000 persons annually visit the museum at the lighthouse. "We have good attendance, so the importance of having things kept up and looking good is obvious," Yadon said.

The museum is open from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays at Point Pinos lighthouse.

Although the city budgeted \$75,000 for the museum operation, the lighthouse itself is operated only on the basis of part-time labor, he noted.

"We give it all the additional time we can from our maintenance staff at the museum. Occasionally we ask the golf course people or building and grounds to help with some special grounds clean up situation," Yadon added.

But what is needed, he feels, is to landscape the area properly. "Certain procedures have to be

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***'I suspect the landscaping of the lighthouse is not of utmost priority.'***

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***A cypress tree, topples on its side, illustrates the slow deterioration of a once full hedge***

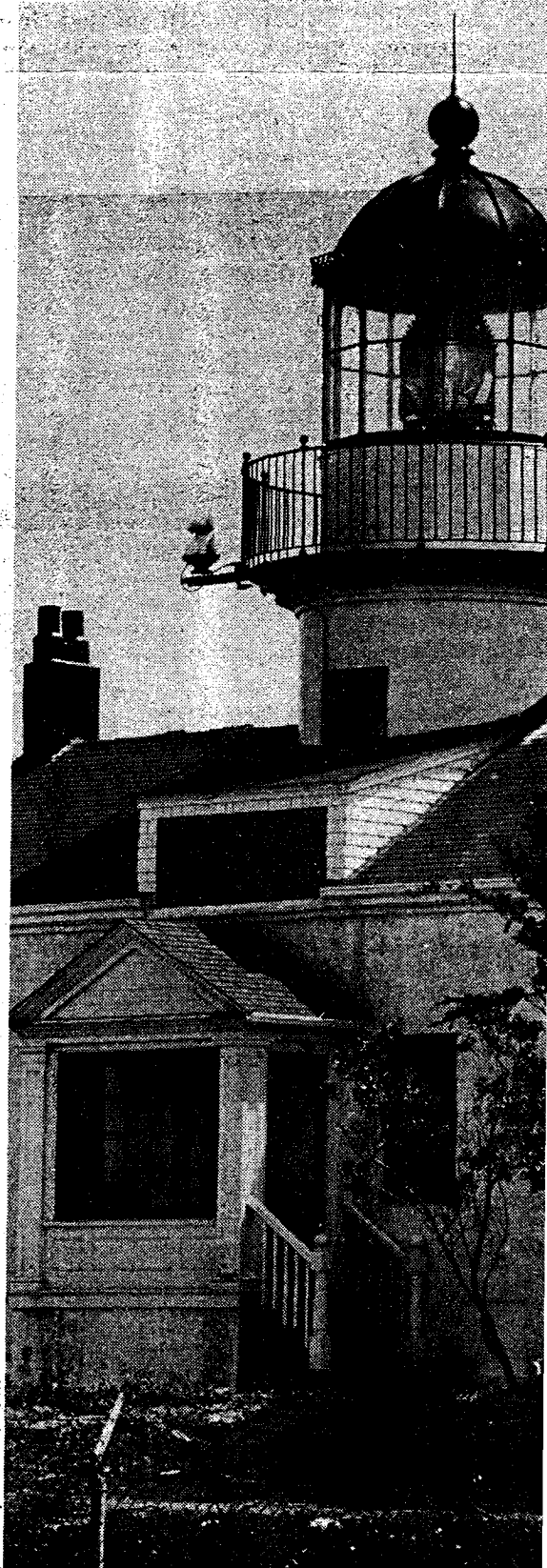


photo by Chuck Scardina



Photo by the Society of California Pioneers (circa 1890)

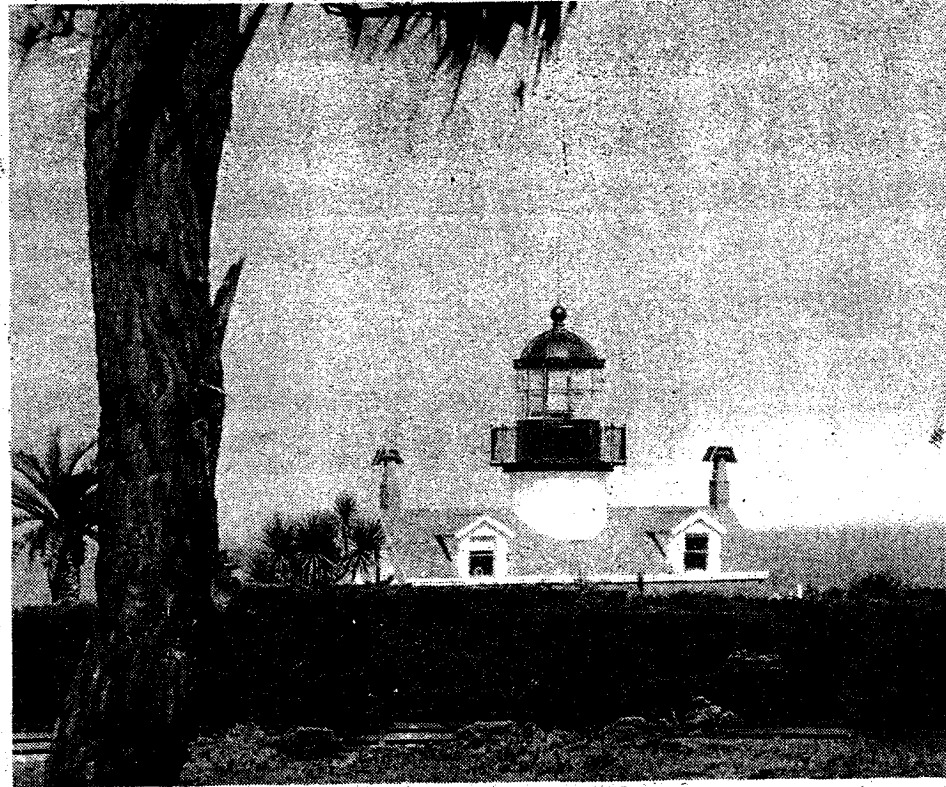


Photo by Lee Blaisdell (circa 1942)

*A white wooden fence surrounded lighthouse property in 1890. By 1942 a hedge of cypress trees grew well above the fence line.*

# Upkeep, trees down

trees/from page 1

done to keep from being wasteful of the funds we have. If we landscape the area we need a sprinkler system. Otherwise we will spend time dragging hoses around, and that's costly use of labor. Until we can budget \$1,500 for a sprinkler system, I cannot see spending a lot of time trying to landscape in a way that is acceptable to everyone," Yadon noted.

However, until funds are obtained to put in a sprinkler system, Yadon agrees that "public volunteers to help do maintenance would be appreciated." One task where help is needed is in pulling the weeds, he said.

Obtaining grant funds is difficult, he noted, since the facility is owned by the federal government, and the city only has the legal right to open

up and maintain the museum inside.

"Of course we do work to the best of our abilities on the groups to keep them in an orderly fashion," he added.

Yadon said donation of funds for the sprinkler system are a possibility. Approximately \$200 in donations have been received.

"This is an important historical facility, and the public really enjoys seeing it," Yadon said.

Given Pacific Grove priorities in its overall financial picture, Yadon noted that "I suspect the landscaping of the lighthouse is not of utmost priority."

That leaves private donations of money or volunteer maintenance as the only alternatives for spiffing up the historical landmark and grounds.