



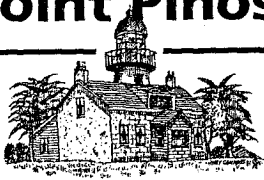
PACIFIC GROVE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

165 FOREST AVENUE • PACIFIC GROVE • CALIFORNIA 93950-2612

(831) 648-5716 • FAX (831) 372-3256 • E-MAIL pgmuseum@mbay.net

www.pgmuseum.org

Point Pinos Update—The Flagpole at Point Pinos



(Courtesy of Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History)

by Jerry McCaffery

The current flagpole at Point Pinos Lighthouse needs to be replaced. Pacific Grove Museum of Natural

History director, Steve Bailey, asked me for some help in tracing its antecedents. Here is what I found:

Allen Luce's log for March 28, 1881, says that "Comdr. C. J. McDougall... was drowned with two others.... The sad accident occurred while attempting to make a landing through the breakers at Cape Mendocino Light Station for the purpose of inspection. It is hereby ordered that the flag at this station be set at half-mast for... 24 hours out of respect to the memory of our late inspector." This is the first documented mention of a flag at the lighthouse. Behind the docent desk at the lighthouse, there is a picture that shows (faintly) the ball from Luce's flagpole. On the wall next to the tea set in the reception room there is a slightly earlier picture of the lighthouse with a man out on the balcony and a horse and carriage tied to the fence. In this picture the long tall flagpole with the ball on top is clearly visible. This is the first picture of the flagpole and must be after 1881, since the entrance to the cellar is enclosed.

On February 23, 1894, Emily Fish writes in the Point Pinos Log, "Raised the flag and the staff." This flagpole can be seen in a post-1899 photo. The flagpole stands approximately where it is today.

On February 23, 1912, Emily's log says, "Wind Gale, NW. Clear. About 9 p.m. the flagpole broke at the ground and fell without damage... flagstaff was raised

February 23, 1894, standing 18 years...." This 1894 pole was a single mast with a ball on top and would have been a shorter replica of Luce's flagpole. There is no mention of when the next flagpole was erected after that February storm, but we know from photographs it was put in the same spot and had an eagle on top of it. This can be seen in photos from the 1930s.

Sometime before January 1950, the eagle flagpole was replaced by a pole with a flat disk on top of it. This seems to have been standard Coast Guard issue; it appears on the cover of the book *California Light Stations* circa 1950 by John Twohy and George Mattson. This flat-topped pole was still in use in 1962 as can be seen in a photo from Pat Hathaway's collection, dated April 26, 1962. Sometime between April 1962 and July 1966, the Coast Guard changed the flagpole to a mast and crossbar design. It remains in this configuration today.

I have researched Pat Hathaway's Collection and the Archives of the Pacific Grove Library, as well as my own files. Staff docent Nancy McDowell and docent Tori Thatcher, who helped organize the lighthouse history notebooks, also helped in this project. As a result, we know what the flagpole looked like from the 1880s to the present date and we have a record of a flag being at Point Pinos in 1881. In terms of replacing the flagpole, it would seem that a single pole would be most authentic to the period the lighthouse represents (1880-1945). A ball could top this single pole, as it did in Emily's period, or an eagle, as it was for most of the rest of the period. ■