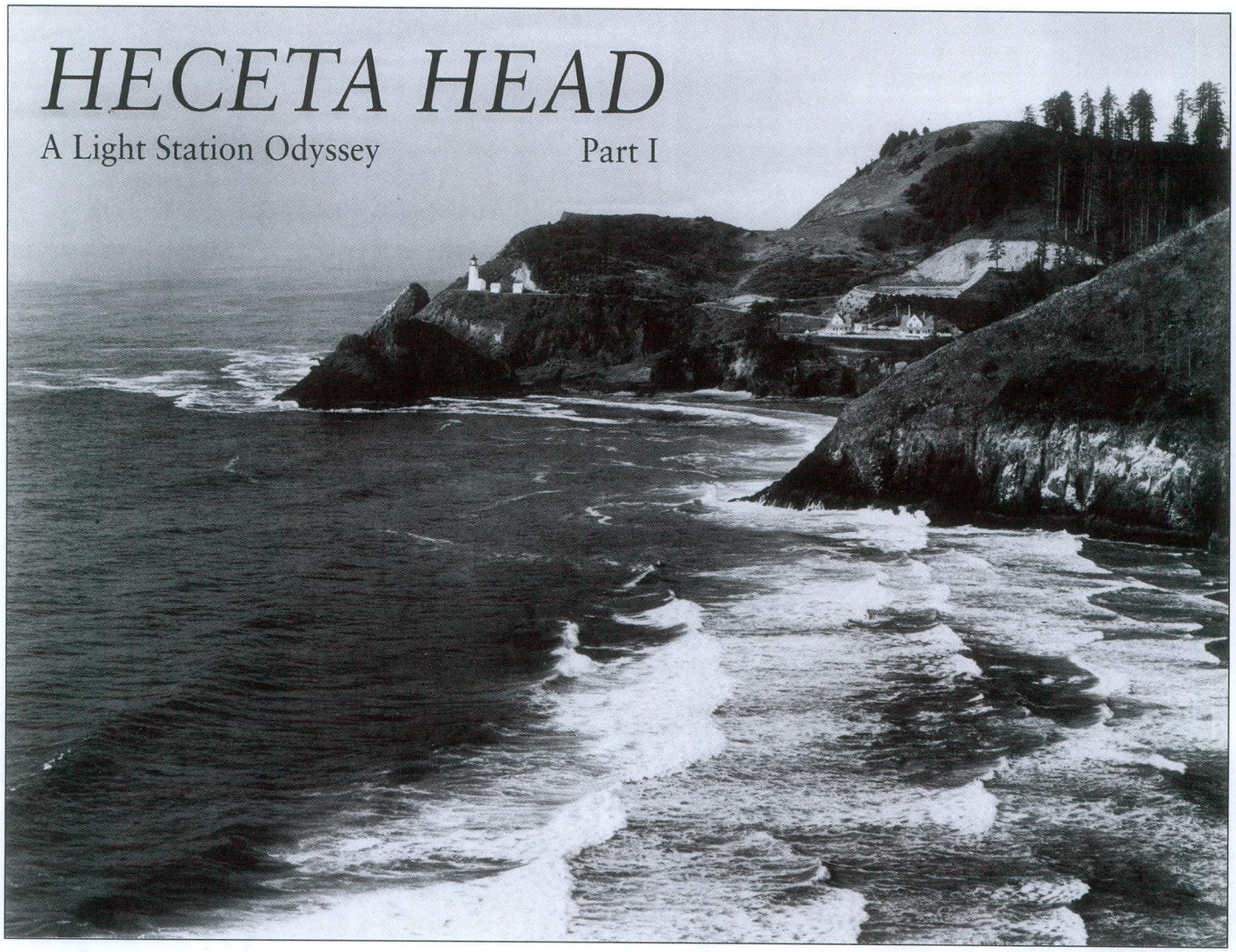
HECETA HEAD

A Light Station Odyssey

Part I



Heceta Head Circa 1932

Excerpted and adapted from "Heceta House: A Historical and Architectural Survey," written by Stephanie Finucane and produced by the Waldport Ranger District of the U.S. Forest Service.

Heceta Head was named to commemorate one Don Bruno de Heceta, a Portuguese credited with exploring much of the Northwest Coast. Historians generally agree that Heceta, a captain sailing for the Royal Navy of Spain, left for his exploration of the Pacific Northwest coast on March 16, 1775. He launched his ship, *Santiago,* from San Blas, Mexico, carrying a year's provisions and 45 men; he was joined in the expedition by Juan Francisco de las Bodega Y Quadra, who sailed the *Sonora.*

Heceta had orders to put in at the San Diego and Monterey missions, and then proceed north as far as 65° (the Arctic Circle). The voyage was to be made in secrecy, and the captain was further commanded to ". . . land often, take possession, erect a cross and plant a bottle containing a record of the act of possession."

On July 30, 1775, Heceta and Qaudra separated, probably as a consequence of stormy weather. A short time later, Heceta turned homeward, short of his goal of 65°. His early return was prompted by concern for his sailors, many of whom were suffering from scurvy. Although he had discovered the mouth of the Columbia River during the expedition, he was unable to sail over the rough waters of the bar for further exploration of the river. For his part, Quadra managed to take the *Sonora* as far north as Sitka, Alaska.

In addition to the near-discovery of the Columbia, the explorer sighted the headland that now bears his name, where he commented upon the shallow water some distance off shore. (Later, soundings made by the U.S. Coast Survey in 1862 confirmed the captain's conclusions about the shallow depths. George Davidson of the Coast Survey suggested the names Heceta Head and Heceta Bank, which were adopted by the government.)

Heceta sailed into Monterey, California, on August 29, 1775. Thirty-five of his men were placed ashore, too ill to continue the trip home. With the close of this expedition, Bruno Heceta's career seems to have ended as well, for Spain cancelled all further voyages of discovery in 1780.

Spain was not the only country to encourage explorers to lay claim to Pacific Northwest territory. Russia, Britain, and the United States vied for the land, as well. Competition for shore bases was particularly fierce between England and Spain, but eventually led to a series of agreements which effectively knocked Spain from the contest. Russia was eliminated in 1825, when pressure from Britain forced the Czar to sign treaties ceding claims to the Oregon-Washington territory. Britain was prepared to allow the United States to own the territory south of the Columbia, but the British wanted sole control of the river; the question of ownership was settled by the signing of a treaty of joint occupancy, in 1818.

The following years were marked by the westward movement of many Americans into the Oregon territory. Some wanted a share of the profitable sea otter trade with China; others set out to establish churches in the wilderness; and a few courageous farmers were lured by tales of the fertile Willamette Valley. The emigration culminated in the "great migration" of 1843, in which 1,000 people traveled from Independence, Missouri to the Willamette Valley.

The British were active in settlement of the territory as well, largely due to the efforts of Hudson's Bay Company, which established Fort Vancouver on the Columbia. However, the United States won control of Oregon, including the contested waterway. American ownership was based on exploration and extensive occupation. On August 13, 1848, the bill creating the Oregon Territory passed Congress.

Coastal ports rapidly were established in Oregon, but trade was hampered by the fact that there were no aids to navigation on the west coast. In 1849, Congress sent a survey team to locate sites for construction of lighthouses. As a result of the survey, a total of sixteen lighthouses were authorized for the Pacific coast. They were built between 1852 and 1858, and with the exception of one light station on the Umpqua River, they were constructed in California and Washington. Congress made further appropriations for lighthouses in Oregon in following years and lighthouses were subsequently constructed at Cape Blanco; the Coquille River; and other locations in Oregon.

The government largely ignored the Siuslaw River during this period. In fact, a map accompanying the annual report of the superintendent of the Coast Survey, dated 1851, shows no river between the Umpqua and the Alsea, where the Siuslaw should have been indicated.

However, in 1877, a 300-ton vessel named the *Alexander Duncan* stopped at Florence, and the settlement was commercially recognized from that date. In the following years, pressure for improvement of navigational facilities on the river increased considerably.

About 1888, Senator Mitchell and Congressman Binger Herman introduced a bill to provide $80,000 for construction of a light station at Heceta Head. The bill was approved by the Lighthouse Board and passed by the Senate, February 25, 1889. The appropriation was made not to encourage trade along the Siuslaw, but to provide illumination for a notorious dark spot on the coast. A recommendation made by S.C. Rowas, Vice-Admiral of the Navy, confirms this:

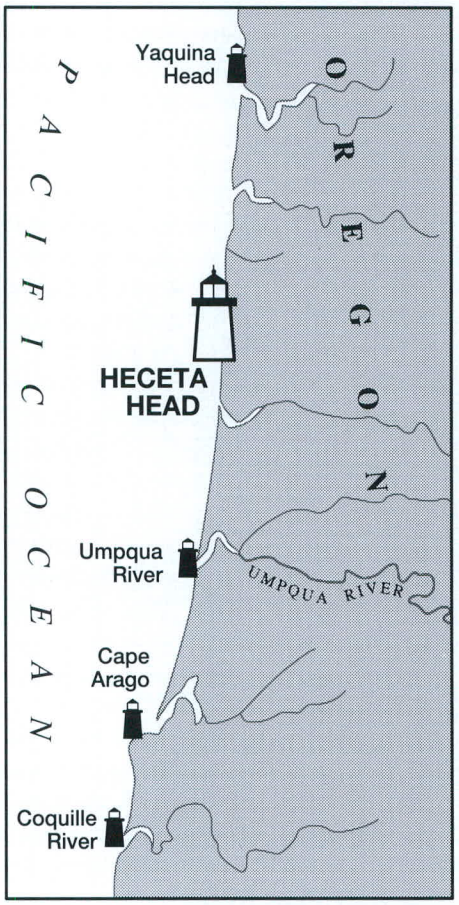
It does not appear that a harbor light is needed by the sparse commerce of this river. But it is quite evident that a coast light is required to divide the dark space between the two lights above mentioned [Cape Arago and Cape Foulweather].

After the appropriation was approved, work on the station proceeded rapidly. In 1890, a survey of the site was made, a line for a roadway leading to the nearest county road was surveyed, and negotiations for purchase of the land were begun. Although Heceta Head was not owned outright by a private party, it was included in a homestead claim filed by Welcome E. Warren and his wife, Dolly. The Warrens, originally from Watcom County, Washington, had filed the claim in 1888, 164 acres which included both Heceta Head and Cape Creek.

Because the couple had not received title to the land, Congress passed a special act allowing them to sell a portion of the homestead to the U.S. Government for lighthouse purposes. Accordingly, in a presidential order signed by Benjamin Harrison on July 18, 1891, the government reserved approximately 19 acres of the Warren claim. The couple received $750 for the land, plus an additional $75 for the sale of water rights to a spring located above the proposed station; they also granted the right for a government-constructed road through their property.

In addition, the Department of Interior set aside a tract of 239.2 acres of public domain land for lighthouse purposes, reserved by an executive order dated May 19, 1891. This acreage was located south of Cape Creek; it did not adjoin the lighthouse site, but was probably set aside to avoid undesirable encroachments near the station.

William A. Cox, owner of the ranch at the south end of the road, signed an "indenture" granting the government right-of-way through his property. Under terms of the indenture, the government agreed to ". . . place substantial gates in



all the present fences where the said right-of-way shall pass through the present fences." According to the Annual Report of the Lighthouse Board, a 7-mile wagon road was completed April 12, 1892.

The Heceta Head Station was designed in the grand style. Structures included a tower, two oil houses, barn, single dwelling for the head keeper and duplex for two assistants. The architectural plans used for the Umpqua station were duplicated for Heceta Head, which no doubt saved valuable time.

The lowest bid for metal work on the tower was $5,000; for construction of the tower and oil houses, $13,700; and for the keepers' dwellings and barn, $26,470. Contracts for construction of the buildings were awarded in 1892, and work began.

At Heceta Head, H.M. Montgomery & Co. employed 56 men, all on contract for the barn and dwelling; these included carpenters, laborers, five teamsters, one bookkeeper and a foreman by the name of Charles H. Page. Payroll records Page forwarded to Montgomery indicate the going rate for laborers was $2 a day, while the highest paid carpenter took in $4 a day. (The total payroll for the May 1 to June 1, 1892 period was $880.94.) Workers averaged ten hours per day.

The company also paid for the lodging of some of their employees, among them the bookkeeper and Page. Again, the Warren family benefited from construction of the station, this time by taking in the workers. For the month of May alone, Montgomery ran up a bill of $426.98 with the Warren "boarding house." Those not lucky enough to board with the Warrens bedded down in tents.

Despite construction of the wagon road, transportation of materials was difficult at best and impossible at worst. Lumber was shipped from mills in Florence and Mapleton to the mouth of the Siuslaw, and then rafts were towed to Cape Cove. From there, the material was hauled up the slope to the construction site. As an alternate method, lumber was bound in bundles, carried to the site by tug, thrown overboard near Cape Creek Beach, and finally rescued when it floated ashore. Not all lumber arrived safely, and other items for construction were lost at sea as well. In one instance, a shipment of water pipe was placed on one of the rafts. It failed to arrive, though bills of lading showed it had been shipped. Workers were forced to conclude the pipe had fallen through shifting lumber.

Bricks and cement were shipped from San Francisco to Florence, reloaded on the tug Lillian, and transported to the mouth of the Siuslaw. They then were hauled to the Cox ranch on a wagon by George Prescott. If weather was fair and the wagon road to the construction site was dry, the materials were easily hauled the remaining distance. But more likely than not, the road was muddy and impassable, and the bricks sat at the Cox ranch until conditions improved.

George Prescott was a local man, like many of the workers at Heceta Head. And deliveries of bricks and cement were among the easier of the runs he made. As steamers were not licensed to carry explosives, blasting materials had to be hauled over mountain roads from Florence, and Prescott was enlisted for the job. According to one of Prescott's descendants, on one occasion the teamster was hauling dynamite, when a young man by the name of Jack Bunch begged a ride to the Head. "The road was real rough, and when Jack found out George was hauling dynamite, he decided he'd rather walk."

Many residents of Waldport, Yachats and Florence have a grandfather or great-grandfather who was involved with the construction of the station. Les Akerly, a native of Florence, claimed his homesteader-father worked on the lighthouse . . . and took any carpentry jobs he was offered. "Most homesteaders worked on farms in the winter, summer they went out to make a few extra dollars," he explained. This was the experience of German immigrant Claus Ludeman, who homesteaded near Yachats. According to his daughter, the family sorely needed any extra money which could be earned.

You might wonder what people did for a living in those hazardous times and so far from supplies. For three years Papa helped build the Heceta Light House, tediously and skillfully applying his old world techniques doing the interior work in the two keepers' houses, which boasted very impressive stairways.



Loading supplies on the beach, summer 1892. At top right the duplex keepers' quarters is nearing completion. The temporary workmen's wood frame tent can be seen left of the duplex. U.S. Forest Service photo.

It is likely that foremen and highly skilled workers had to be "imported." Fortunately for these outsiders, a post office was established at Heceta Head February 19, 1891. Original location of the post office is not known. It is possible the Warren house was used until one of the keepers' dwellings was erected at the station.

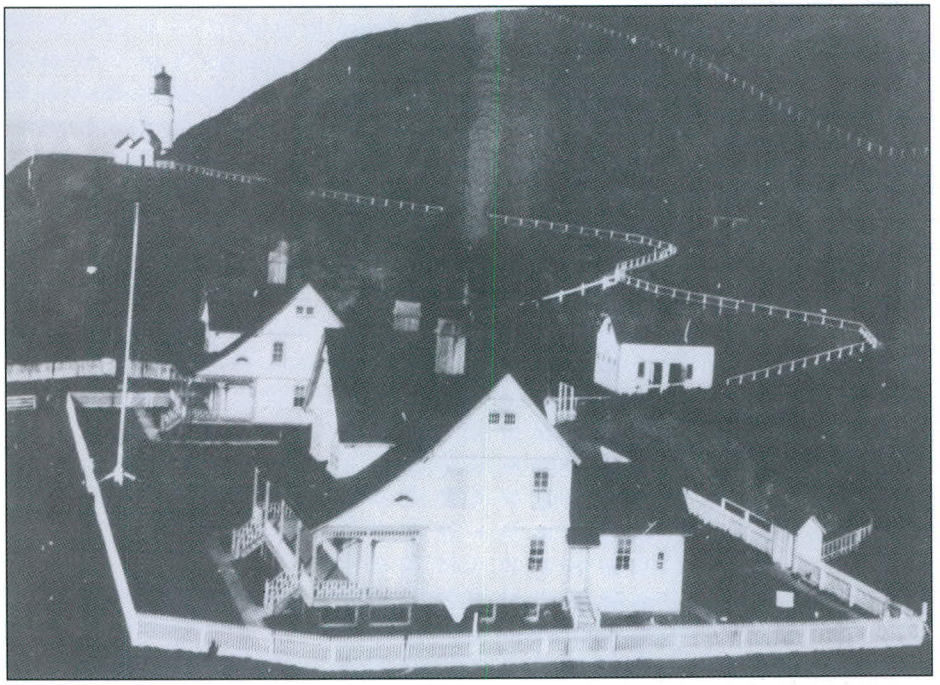
By the close of 1892, the barn was completed, the foundations and framing of the keepers' houses were finished and metal work for the tower was delivered. Windows, finished lumber and other accessories then began arriving by the lighthouse tender *Columbine*, which sailed out of Tongue Point, Oregon. The rock that forms the base of the tower was brought from the Clackamas River near Oregon City, loaded aboard the *Columbine*, transported to the mouth of the Siuslaw and finally hauled by Prescott to the head.

The lens for the lighthouse was transported by the Lighthouse Service Tender *Manzanita* and unloaded near the tower by means of surf boats. The unloading was probably a harrowing experience, for the British-made lens was extremely valuable. Although the cost of the lens is not listed in any government document, the son of one of the keepers [in 1979] placed the price at around $10,000. The hand-ground "first order" lens is composed of eight panels made up of 640 prisms, each two inches thick. It revolves once every eight minutes; the revolutions are controlled by clockworks, which formerly were wound by hand.

Heceta Head was to be recognized by a white light flashing once every minute. Such a pattern was important, as the following passage explains:

Marine disasters have occurred from the mistaking of one lighthouse for another and it is evidently important that lights be so distinguished that the navigator may recognize with certainty the light he sees. To this end lights are known by their number, color, intensity or time of visibility.

According to the *Annual Reports from the Lighthouse Board* for 1893, the tower was completed August 31, 1893; all other buildings were finished as well. The lens had arrived in October of 1892 and was set up in November. However, the lighthouse could not begin operating until the lamp for the tower arrived. There was a delay in receiving this equipment, which had to come from the general lighthouse depot at Staten Island, New York.



This photo illustrates all the structures of the station early in this century. A privy can be seen at right, with a barn behind the keeper's house. A picket fence and wooden boardwalk lead from the barn to the tower. The fence on the hill defines the boundary of the station. U.S. Forest Service photo.

The five-wick lamp finally arrived in February of 1894. Once placed inside the lens, it generated 80,000 candle power, visible for 20 miles. The original lamp burned kerosene, or coal oil, as the keepers called it. The supplier for the oil was, in the words of one writer, "That gigantic monopoly, the Standard Oil Company . . ." Once the lamp was in place, the station was ready for operation. This event was awaited by mariners and the residents of Florence alike, as this quotation from *The West* indicates:

Mr. McCloud, who had charge of setting the lamps at Heceta Head, finished work and left for Portland. Now the beacon lamp is ready to have the match applied, and only waits the coming of the keepers, and an order from the board.

In March of 1894, Mr. R.D. Lang, who had acted as caretaker of the Heceta Head grounds and buildings, turned over the keys to the first head keeper, and on March 30, the long-awaited match was applied to the light.

Very little is known about the early keepers of the new Heceta light station. The first head keeper, Andrew P.C. Hald, had previously served at the Cape Mears Lighthouse. His first assistant was Eugene M. Walters and his second assistant John M. Cowan. Of the three men, only Cowan was a native American, from California; Hald was born in Denmark and Walters in France. None of this original crew stayed long at Heceta Head. Between 1894 and 1904, all three positions turned over many times.

The salaries of the light keepers were fixed by law in 1867, and the law was not changed for 50 years. The head keeper received $800 annually, the first assistant $600, and the second assistant $550; housing and firewood were included.

It is quite likely that the first keepers brought families to the station, as arrangements for a school were made as early as 1896. That year, the Warrens sold an acre of land for $5 to the Direc-

tors of School District No. 149 of Lane County, Oregon. The original schoolhouse was of the shingled, one-room variety. Frank DeRoy, a later keeper, told his son that students left their books in kerosene cans to prevent them from being nibbled by rats. Whether this was fact, or a frightening bed-time story may never be known.

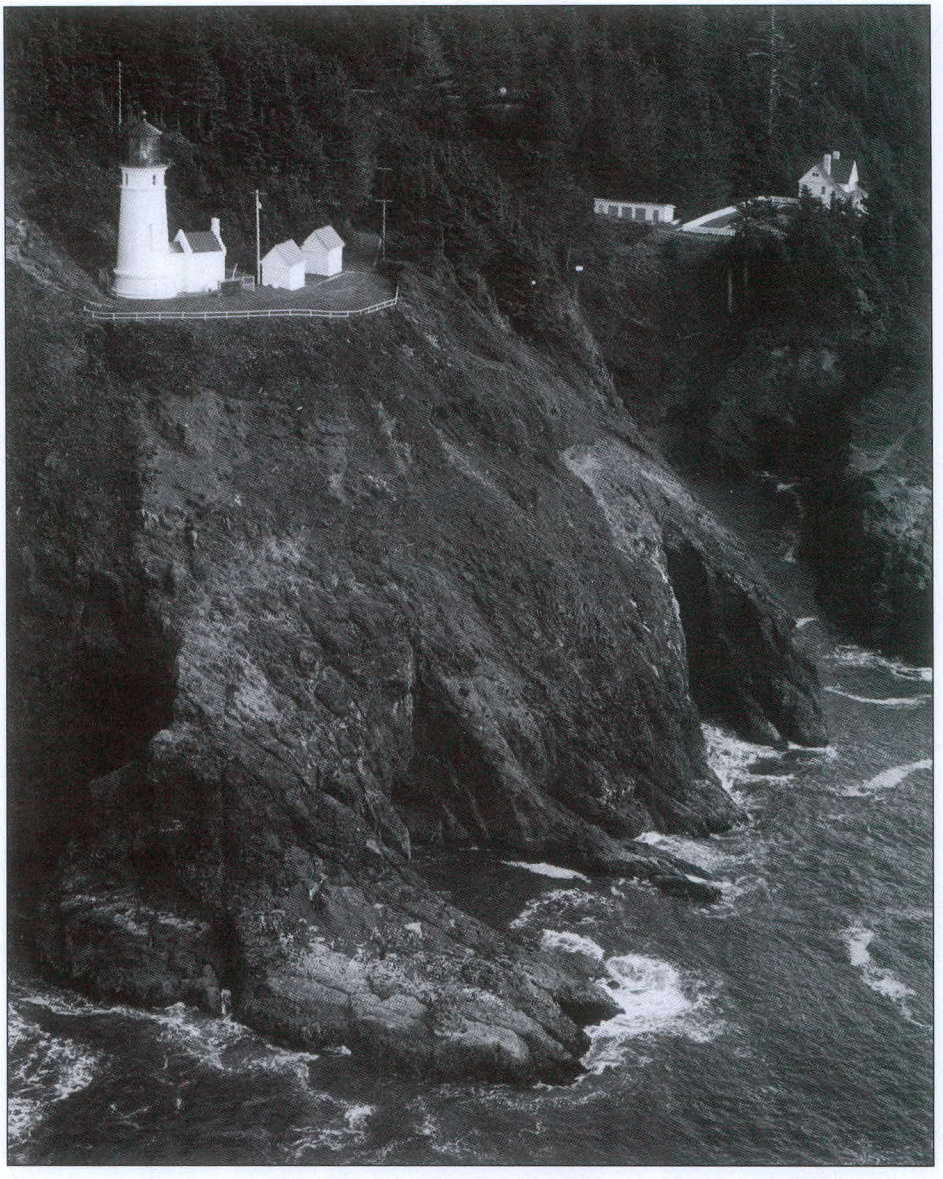
Olaf L. Hansen was appointed first assistant to Heceta Head in September, 1896. He was transferred a few years later, but returned as head keeper in 1904 remaining at that post until 1920. During this tenure, Hansen established himself as postmaster and a member of the local school board and, most importantly, he brought a sense of stability to the Heceta light. He is survived by two daughters, who provided information about their father and about life at the station.

Hansen spent his boyhood in Porsgurn, Norway. He began a career as sailor at the age of 14. In later years, he located in San Francisco and sailed out of that city. From there, he moved north to Astoria and landed a job on the lighthouse tender, *Manzanita*. According to his daughters, this stint on the tender inspired him to enter the Lighthouse Service as a keeper. He was appointed fourth assistant at the Tillamook Rock Station on December 26, 1894, at the established rate of $550 per year. A promotion came just a year later, when Hansen was made third assistant at Tillamook.

In February of the following year, he was transferred to Cape Disappointment as second assistant, and in September of 1896 was made first assistant at Heceta Head. By that time, Hansen was bringing in $600 annually. This raise in pay undoubtedly was needed, for the 37-year-old Hansen came to Heceta Head a newlywed. His wife, Annie Martin, 32, hailed from West Virginia. She arrived in Oregon accompanied by one son from a first marriage.

The Hansen daughters never asked their parents how they met, but they have their own theory about the match.

How could a sailor from Astoria meet a woman from Huntington, West Virginia, who had a dressmaking shop, except by correspondence? They must have corresponded for some time, because he sent her a watch as a gift and she had a emerald engagement ring. We've always surmised that they answered some newspaper ad.



One can imagine that the keepers had difficulty walking to the tower at night during winter storms. The two structures to the right of the tower are oil houses. In this photo the keeper's house has been removed. U.S. Coast Guard photo.

During their first stay at the head, the Hansens began their family: one boy and five girls. Most of the children were born at the station, with the assistance of a midwife from Florence. The couple filed a homestead claim at Mercer Lake during those five years, which created a problem when Hansen was transferred to Puget Sound in 1902. Annie Hansen proved her resourcefulness by staying behind to maintain the homestead. Described as large and "raw boned" by her neighbors, she was aided only by her teenaged son from her first marriage until her husband returned in 1904. Hansen returned on November 1 of that year, reuniting the family. By then the 45-year-old mustachioed Norwegian was making $800 per year, which no doubt brought him a sense of security.

As head keeper, Hansen had the same duties and shifts as his assistants, but he was charged with overseeing the station as well. In return for shouldering the responsibility, he received his raise in pay and the designation of head keeper. His family was entitled to live in the large single residence nearest the lighthouse.

There were other, subtle distinctions that marked the various ranks. The second assistant lived on the east side of the duplex, farthest from the light, while the first assistant lived on the west side, just one step away from the keeper. Even the light fixtures at one time reflected status. The "chandeliers" on the second assistant's side have four bulbs each; the fixtures on the first assistant's side are of the same design, but have five bulbs each, and according to Hansen's daughters, the head keeper's house was illuminated by chandeliers with six bulbs.

The duties of lighthouse keepers were specifically laid out in a Lighthouse Service publication entitled *Instructions and Directions to Light Keepers*. The instructions included the following:

123. Lights must be lighted punctually at sunset, and must be kept burning at full intensity until sunrise.

124. All preparations must be made early, that there may be no delay in lighting.

The clockworks which powered the revolving lens had to be wound manually every four hours. According to Hansen's daughters, the slow descent of the weights was an unforgettable sight.

It was a beautiful, beautiful clockworks, all enclosed in glass. The weights dropped clear to the floor of the tower. Even the curtains around the lantern were beautiful; they were made of the finest linen I've ever seen.

Despite the beauty of the tower, lighthouse duty still meant work for the keepers. The first shift began at sunset and ended at midnight and the second lasted from midnight to sunrise. One man was always off duty at night; the shifts were taken in turn, which gave each keeper a full night's sleep every third night. The men were directed to remain at the tower throughout their shifts. Instructions were clear on this point, but there is some disagreement as to how carefully they were carried out. Visitors to Heceta House report noticing a mirror rigged up in one of the bedrooms, which would have allowed a keeper reclining in bed to monitor the light by checking the looking glass. According to the Hansen sisters, their father demanded strict adherence to regulations. If there ever was a mirror, they insist it must have been mounted by "lazy ones" who came after Hansen's time. Regardless of whether they served the full watch, the men insisted on certain comforts. The watchroom adjacent to the tower was kept heated by a wood stove, and a leather arm chair was kept invitingly near the heater. A small library was maintained in the watchroom and one keeper purchased a telescope to facilitate star gazing.



The keepers' houses as they appeared in the early years of the station. U.S. Forest Service photo.

Although the Heceta light was kept illuminated only at night, the keepers had plenty of daily duties. The working day began at nine a.m., though the man who had come off duty at sunrise was not required to complete morning chores. The routine at the tower included cleaning the glass of the lantern, polishing brass fittings, trimming wicks, filling the lamp reservoir and removing any spots from the glass.

In addition to this daily ritual, there often were painting or whitewashing assignments to tackle. The Lighthouse Service was very specific about the painting:

The whole interior of lighthouse lantern is to be painted WHITE and must be kept clean, free from soot and grease and the white paint renewed as often as necessary.

Flat brushes are used for sashes, for varnishing, and for painting in lines or narrow spaces.

When the bristles of a brush get loose, drive a few thin wedges of wood inside of the binding twine or thread, which will render the whole fast again.

Despite the seeming arduousness of these tasks, assistants under Hansen stayed with the job longer than their predecessors. From 1912 to 1918, Leroy Avery served as assistant; Frank DeRoy was appointed assistant in 1913 and was promoted to head keeper in 1920. Bob Bay assisted from 1918 to 1930; and Charlie Walters served from 1919 until 1930.

These keepers were, without exception, career Lighthouse Service men. After serving at Heceta Head, all were transferred (or requested transfers) to other light stations. However, other assistants tried lightkeeping for a time, then drifted on to other work, some without leaving records of their destinations. In many cases even their names were forgotten by the "regulars." Robert DeRoy, son of the keeper DeRoy, recalls the steady stream of assistant keepers:

There was an exchange of several second assistant keepers while we were at Heceta Head. The ones I remember were a man named Hayward and his wife, they had no children that I remember; a family by the name of Walters, had a baby and a

small girl; a single man by the name of Miller, who we kids used to call Miller by the Dee, which he didn't like much.

There was also a family by the name of Williams, who had two girls named Charlotte and Marion. Mr. Williams, his first name was Clayborn, was a rather heavy man, and smoked cigarettes a lot. He sort of wheezed most of the time when he breathed. I thought that this was real cool, and started to imitate him. My mother got worried and thought that I was coming down with something bad, until she found out what it was all about. That was the end of my wheezing even until now.

Hansen's daughters vividly remember still another second assistant, Thomas E. Alexander, who was appointed in 1912.

There was one weirdo came in as an assistant here, Mr. Alexander. Mr. Alexander had a horse and one time he lassoed and threw that horse, tied his four legs together and sat on the hillside and threw rocks at that horse. We went and told our Dad, of course, what he had done. He reported it to headquarters, but he had to wait a week for the mail to go back and forth. Many times during that week, my dad and the other assistant would not go to the tower alone. They went up together because they were afraid of that man.

Once the fateful report was received, it is not likely that Alexander remained on the Lighthouse Service payroll for long.

The local transportation network did not improve much during Hansen's tenure. A trip to Florence, just 13 miles down the coast, entailed an all-day journey by team and wagon. Some Heceta Head families made the arduous trek only a few times a year, though keeper DeRoy sometimes donned a knapsack and hiked the distance to Florence to secure some much needed item. Yet, despite the difficulty of travel, keepers were not totally isolated from Florence. Charles Stonefield, who lived with his family at Cape Creek, regularly hauled supplies for lighthouse residents. He had purchased Warren's homestead for $500 in 1902 (the fate of the Warrens is not known). The hearty German immigrant purchased additional land from homesteaders who lived up the hill from Warren. In this way, he fell heir to the large and livable Cobb house, which became the first Stonefield family home.



Above – The Heceta Head schoolhouse. U.S. Forest Service photo.

Charles rode into Florence about two or three times a month with his wagon and team of Clydesdales, Duchie and Princess. He had the choice of following an inland or beach route. The inland road which wound above the present highway, was close to impassable in wet weather. Then, Stonefield followed the beach from Berry Creek to Heceta Beach. At Heceta Beach, a ramp led to the road and from there on it was a straight shot to town. There were disadvantages to this route as well: Sutton Creek had to be forded and beach travelers needed to pay close heed to the tides. However, Stilnah Stonefield Smallwood, Charles' granddaughter, remembers that trips to Florence were something of an occasion.

It took pretty much all day to get to Florence. We'd leave in the morning and when we got down there in the sandhills, we'd have a picnic. There were oats for the horses and we all sat out on the ground. We stayed in Florence overnight. Granddad had a livery stable with a room off it where we slept. If there was a big fair, we stayed three or four days.

In addition to carrying supplies for the lighthouse personnel, Charles Stonefield had the government contract for supplying wood to the Heceta Head families. Each family was allotted eight cords per year which was "cut into stove wood lengths by a buck saw, at the keeper's pleasure or displeasure, whichever the case may have been."



The enterprising Stonefields engaged in other financial endeavours. They raised cattle, which were driven to Cushman for auction, and grazed sheep on the hill in back of the light station (This practice gave the hill its name: Sheep Hill). The sheared wool was stuffed into 10-foot bags and shipped to Portland. Charles sold cream by the five-gallon can and son Rufus went into the skunk raising business for a time.

When the Cobb place became too cramped for the growing family, Charles and Annie built a second house closer to the creek. Annie opened the new house

to boarders and in this way, Heceta Head became established as a half-way point for travelers journeying from Florence to Yachats. The Stonefields did not have a monopoly on financial enterprises; at least two lighthouse residents set themselves up in business. Mrs. Hansen collected agates at what Heceta residents called the Devil's Churn, located below the station. The name passed out of existence when Devil's Churn near Cape Perpetua became popular. The agates were sold at the A.L. Thomas shop in Newport.

LeRoy Bay, Bob Bay's son, peddled different wares; he trapped moles and sold the pelts to a furrier in Portland. Of course, young LeRoy could not devote all his energies to his business; he had school to attend and chores to perform.

The original shingled schoolhouse apparently outlived its usefulness; the Cobb place served as classroom for a time but, by 1916, a new school was built close to the creek. Like its predecessor, the new school had only one classroom, though two adjacent rooms served as library and wood shed. A wood-burning stove sat in the center of the classroom, and a "two-holer" behind the building completed the conveniences. The schoolroom windows provided a good view of the creek, and during salmon season students kept at least one eye on the outdoors at all times. At the sight of a salmon run, the entire class jumped up, grabbed spears kept near door, and raced for the creek.

This was whether school was in session or not. It probably did not go over too well with the teacher, but was not considered a serious offense, as our parents were glad to get any extra food they could. They generally smoked the salmon we did not consume at the time.

In addition to attending school, children of the station helped with housekeeping duties. They polished the brass in the tower, dusted furniture woodwork in the houses and tended animals. However, the bulk of the housework fell to the women. The wives refereed the fights of the children; scrubbed laundry on wash boards and hung it on lines to dry; smoothed clothing with heavy, cast irons heated on the woodburning stove and cooked daily meals.

The Heceta Head women were fanatical window washers and cupboard cleaners because of the constant threat of a visit from lighthouse inspectors. These inspectors paid a surprise visit to the station at least once a year; they not only toured the tower and inspected lighthouse machinery, but also entered the houses and eyed cupboards, window sills and woodwork. The more fastidious inspectors donned white gloves and ran their fingers atop sills and doors. Despite such stringent checks, few women were reprimanded for their housekeeping, although one was "cited" for a dirty laundry room because she was sorting clothes into piles when the inspector came in, unannounced.

Lighthouse Service publications do not offer any justification for such intrusion into keepers' private homes. However, Scottish Lighthouse engineer Robert Stevenson, grandfather of author Robert Louis Stevenson, gave the following explanation, which was doubtless subscribed to by lighthouse officials the world over:

I hold it as a fixed maxim that, when a man or a family put on a slovenly appearance in their houses, stairs, and lanterns, I always find their reflectors, burners, windows, and light in general, ill attended to; and, therefore, I must insist on cleanliness throughout.

Mercifully, the keepers sometimes received "tips" that inspectors were on their way, probably from keepers at nearby stations after telephones were installed. Lighthouse tending and housekeeping were primary occupations, but the families spent their spare hours tending vegetable gardens, raising chickens, milking cows and caring for horses. They planted on the hillside above the beach, and often extended the gardens as far as the sand.

Although the Lighthouse Service provided a medicine chest and a doctor's manual, and spiritual well-being was attended to by traveling preachers, the Heceta Head community tried to be as self-sufficient as possible, for links with nearby towns were not strong.



The schoolhouse can be seen middle right with the station in the background. The creek in the foreground is temptingly close when the salmon are running. U.S. Forest Service photo.

The lighthouse residents survived their semi-isolation well. The women sewed most of the families' clothing, and Rufus Stonefield, who was skilled at cobbling, made shoes. What could not be produced by hand was ordered through the "Monkey Wards" and "Sears and Sawbuck" catalogs, as the keepers called them. And

keepers set off on frequent hunting and fishing forays in order to supplement the vegetables and dairy products from the station. However, according to the Stonefields, Forest Service rangers sometimes interfered with the ambitious designs of hunters. George Stonefield recalls;

In those days, the forest service men were the same as the police. If you had illegal deer meat or illegal fish they'd arrest you. Even back then, there was deer season and fishing season, though there was no elk season till '41.

But we had deer and fish year 'round, because when a forest service man left Florence, folks would call to the first place down the road and warn that he was on his way. When he left the first place, those folks would call the next house and say he'd just passed. Out there at Berry Creek to the lighthouse it's three miles. When he passed there, they'd call ahead and say he'd just passed.

On at least one occasion, the system did not work. George Stonefield told of the time that a ranger from Mapleton stopped in when the family was feasting on undersized trout. Because the ranger was a family friend, he remarked that the trout must have shrunk, and let things go at that.

The mail carrier also could be considered an "intruder," but he was decidedly more welcome than the rangers. Although the Heceta Head post office was established in 1891, regular service was not instituted for some time. Turnover of mail carriers was high, for the Florence-Yachats run was one of the more treacherous of the coastal routes; inland roads were often impassable, and carriers traveled by horse and wagon on the hard packed sand along the ocean.

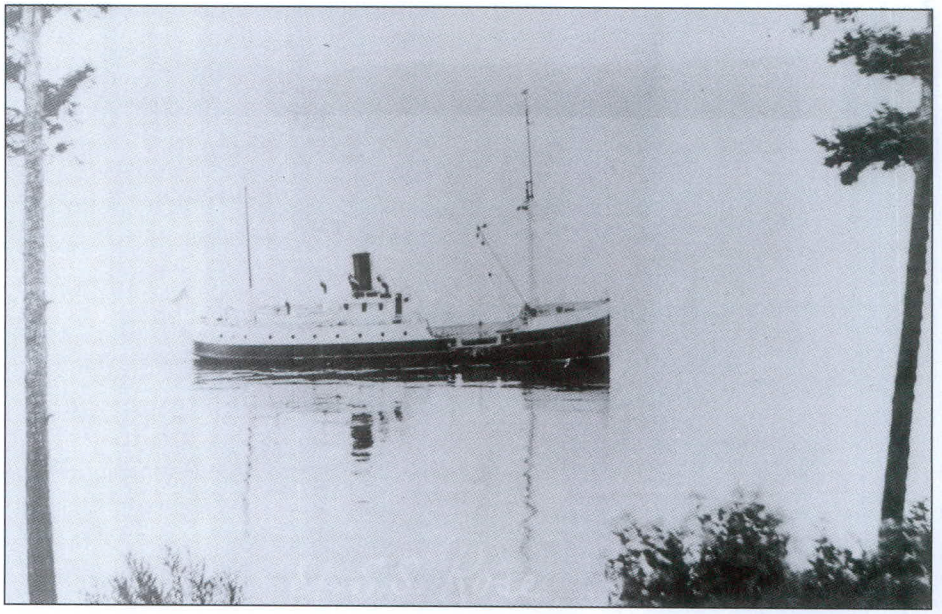
Mail to headquarters may have been slow, but the keepers did have recourse to the telephone. Approximately 1910 lines were installed from Florence. According to reports, there were about 16 parties on the line and more than a few were reputed to eavesdrop on a conversation.

Technology brought another major change to the station in 1910. The original kerosene-burning lamp in the tower was replaced by a Kerosene I.O.V. Lamp. But perhaps the most welcomed alteration occurred in 1916 when the installation of indoor plumbing eliminated the need for outside privies. The families had looked forward to the indoor rest rooms for some time. The bathroom fixtures sat in the barn collecting dust for more than a year before they were finally installed in the rear wings.

Cape Perpetua presented a highly dangerous obstacle to the mailmen, as carrier Guy Hays describes: ". . . we [horse and man] practically crawled on our bellies to keep from being swept into the crashing surf below."

occupations. In later years, service was increased to three times a week and carriers' salaries rose accordingly.

Keeper Hansen was postmaster of the Heceta office, which was contained in the basement of the single dwelling. One farmer, Ben Bunch, met his future wife while coming after letters. Sixteen-year-old Thelma Hansen and Bunch were married at the head keeper's house. The Hansen girl's marriage was not the only one celebrated at the light station. In 1929, assistant Bay's daughter, who was also named Thelma, was married in the first assistant's house.



The Lighthouse Service tender *Rose* hove to off Heceta Head. This vessel was one of three 17th District ships that brought supplies to the station. She was constructed in 1916 and was 127 feet in length. The crew of the *Rose* consisted of 5 officers and 16 men. U.S. Forest Service photo.

Rufus Stonefield, Charles' son, served a three-year stint as carrier. According to his children, high winds often forced Rufus to crawl around the Cape while holding onto his horse's tail. Despite such hardships, there was a decided benefit to the job: every woman along the route had a treat for the carrier, be it coffee and cake or a full meal. While visiting the families, the "mailman" took orders for everything from sewing thread to nails, which he purchased in Florence and dropped off on his return to Yachats.

Salary for the Florence-Yachats route is recorded at $180 per year, which seems astonishingly low. However, mail was delivered only once a week, which gave the carriers time to pursue other

The occasional weddings were just one type of event put on by the Heceta Head community. Beach parties, Fourth of July picnics, barn dances and card parties at the Stonefields all helped break the monotony of light tending. And the annual fair at Florence provided a distraction of major proportions. Heceta Head women baked pies and cakes and put up pickles for judging, while the keepers laid plans to visit the pool hall in Florence's hotel.

Another annual event set off an even greater upheaval at the station. Everyone within hiking distance congregated at the headland to witness the arrival of the lighthouse tender, *Rose*. The major supplies of the station, such as paint,

kerosene and tools, were transported from the Tongue Point depot on the *Rose*. Once the tender arrived at the head, shipments for the lighthouse were brought ashore on surf boats. Robert DeRoy's son remembers the occasions well:

The tender would stand off at a safe distance from shore and lower one of the whale boats. The tenders did not carry any power boats in those days. The crew would load the boat, row it through the surf, which could be rather hairy with a heavily loaded boat, and off-load it with the keepers' help onto the beach. They always picked the best weather they could for this.

The crew of the *Rose* often invited Stilnah Stonefield, Charles Stonefield's granddaughter to come aboard. She enjoyed sunbathing on the immaculate deck, but invariably returned home with a painful sunburn.

Most days, the families had to make do with simpler entertainments, such as reading and walking the beach. Photography was a great hobby of DeRoy's, but this had disastrous consequences for Ovie Dowell. On one occasion, a whale washed up on the beach near the station. DeRoy quickly set up his tripod and heavy view camera, posed atop the whale "muscle-man" style, and instructed his wife to take the picture. Some days later, Dowell's girlfriend was coming from Florence for a visit, and the assistant asked DeRoy if he could borrow the camera while she was there. DeRoy agreed, and Ovie's friend arrived on schedule in her crinolines and petticoats. Dowell took her to the beach and, not wanting to be outdone by DeRoy, requested she take his picture astride the whale.

Unfortunately, the whale had decomposed since DeRoy had used it. When Ovie climbed atop, the belly caved in and the keeper found himself mired in whale flesh. Once down, Dowell couldn't get up, and he called on his girlfriend for help. She slithered over the whale, soiling her finery in the process, and, with the scent of rotted whale still clinging to her clothing, she returned to Florence.

Despite the variety of diversions at the head, time often passed slowly for the keepers and their families, and the residents sometimes took to quarreling among themselves. However, for the most part, relations among the families were good. They often shared meals and entertainments, as well as chores.



Heceta Head station circa 1932. Supplies were landed on the beach, lower left, and hauled to the station by wagon. U.S. Lighthouse Society photo.



Keeper Frank Deroy and his lovely bride Jenny.

The Hansens were transferred to Washington's Willapa Bay Light Station in 1920. Moving was no easy matter for any family, and was a particularly difficult chore for the Hansens, who had accumulated 16 years worth of memorabilia. Charles Stonefield transported the family to Florence in his wagon; there they boarded the tender *Rose*, which conveyed them to the new assignment. Hansen served as head keeper at Willapa Bay for ten years. He then retired after 36 years of continuous duty with the lighthouse service.

The same tender that transported the Hansens from Heceta Head brought in the new head keeper, Frank DeRoy. He had first come to the head as second assistant approximately 1913. He served there until 1917, when he was promoted to first assistant at the new Lime Kiln station on the Puget Sound. In 1920, he was transferred back to Heceta to take over for Hansen.

According to his son, DeRoy had been a seafaring man most of his life. His wife, Jenny Gustafson, immigrated from Sweden as a child and spent her teenage years in Oakland, California. As her son relates, it was something of a culture shock for Jenny when she first came to Heceta Head as a newlywed in 1914:

I remember my mother telling when she was on her way from Florence to Heceta Head for the first time. It was raining and they were bouncing along the road along the bluff in Charlie Stonefields farm wagon, and she was feeling very blue, when suddenly the sun came out, and shone on the lighthouse station, and her spirits lit up, and she welcomed her new home.

Keeper DeRoy and his wife both instituted changes at the light station. These are best described by their son:

After father returned to Heceta as keeper in charge, he and the assistants set to work in putting the station in top shape. This took several years, as all the old, built-up paint was burned off and scraped down to the bare wood and metal inside and out. In some places, the paint had been put on coat after coat without properly preparing the surfaces, until it had not dried properly and hung like plastic icicles from the iron handrails in the tower.

The lighthouse service had a policy of awarding the best-kept station a gold star as an incentive for keepers to maintain the stations in good condition. I don't know if the Heceta Head station had ever received the award, anyway, the station was a long way from top shape when my father took charge.

Soon after my father transferred to the Columbia River station, Heceta Head received the coveted gold star. This didn't do much for father's ego, but soon afterward, he received a letter from the district superintendent explaining that it was due to the efforts of my father and his assistants that the award was granted, and not because of the new incoming keeper in charge. This sort of set things right with him.

While the keeper concentrated on improving the tower, his wife turned her energies to the single dwelling she had inherited with her husband's promotion. Jenny could not abide the stark white walls of the house, which she painted over with pastel shades. She also prevailed on her husband to purchase some blue and white checked linoleum for the kitchen and bathroom.

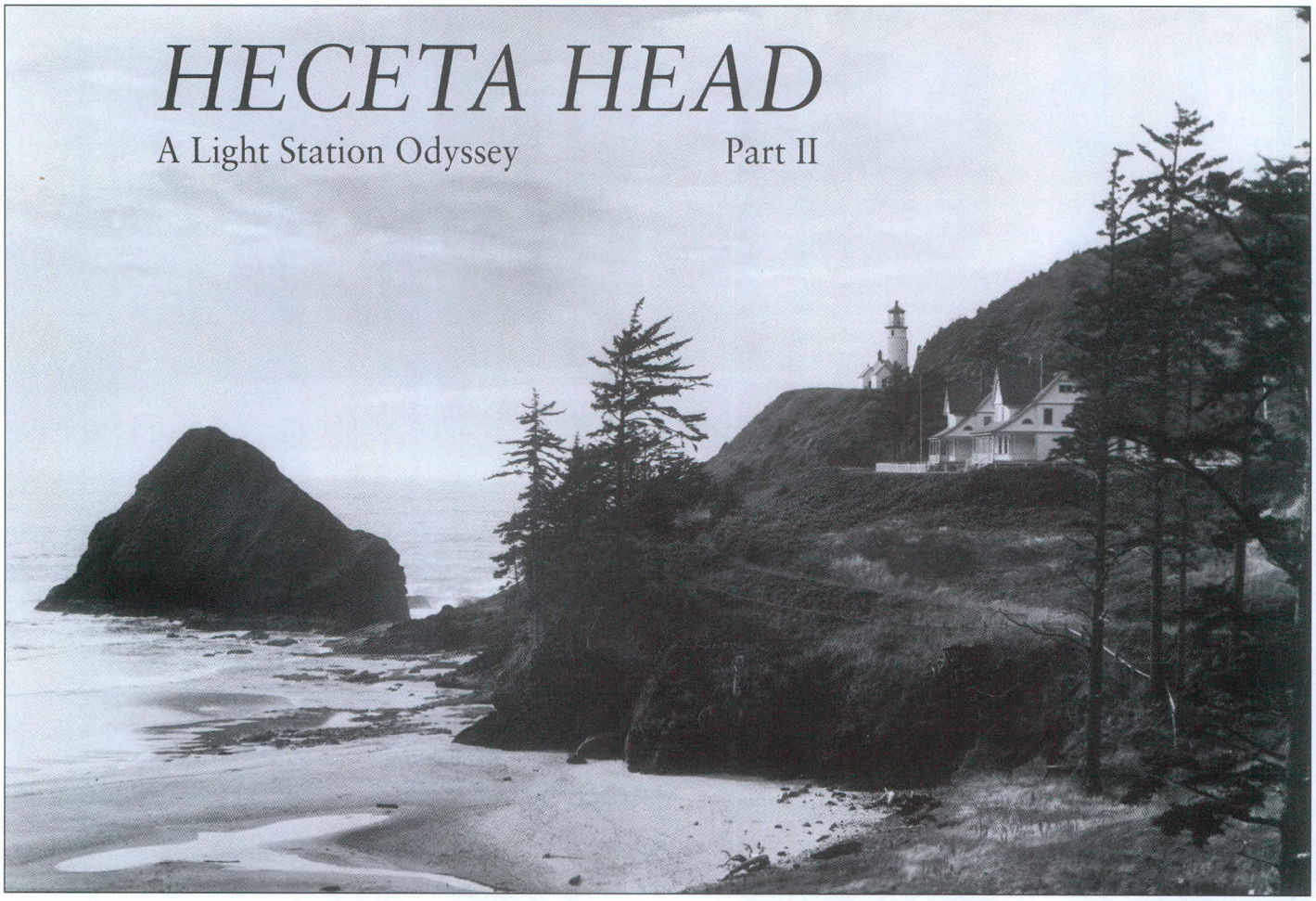
Surprisingly, the inspector did not object to the redecorating. In fact, he encouraged the couple to make other improvements. However, the family did not remain at the head long enough to continue the work. The head keeper requested a transfer to the Warrior Rock station on the Columbia in order to provide better schooling for his son. The request was granted, and in 1925 the DeRoys left Heceta Head.

Their departure marked the end of the "pioneer days" of the station. Electricity, highway construction and automobiles were to drastically change Heceta Head in the years to come.

Heceta Head Odyssey – Part II, "An End to Isolation & World War II," will be continued in the Summer Log.

HECETA HEAD

A Light Station Odyssey Part II



Heceta Head Light Station in the 1930s. U.S. Lighthouse Society photo.

Part I of the Heceta Head story was published in the last issue of the *Keeper's Log*. Part I told of the discovery of the area by the Spaniard Don Bruno de Heceta in 1775, the eventual construction of the station in the 1892-94 period, and the early years of 'light tending.' It ended with the transfer of Keeper DeRoy and his family in 1925.

An End to Isolation

DeRoy was replaced by veteran light keeper Clifford B. "Cap" Hermann, who received his first lighthouse appointment in 1905. Cap had a number of assignments under his belt: Tatoosh Island, Lime Kiln, Cape Arago and the isolated Destruction Island (at this last station, it was reported that the only residents other than the keepers and their families ". . . were a cow and the lowly mole"). Hermann arrived at Heceta Head in September of 1925, in time to witness the first in a series of milestones.

The Heceta Head post office was discontinued July 5, 1992, and moved to Roosevelt Beach; reasons for the move were not documented. The number of families along the route had increased to 45, and the coastal route had changed considerably since the days carriers bellied their way around Cape Perpetua. In 1926, Cy Cooper became the first mail carrier to complete the dreaded Florence-Yachats run by automobile: a 1918 Model-T Ford with 13 forward and 8 reverse gears. It was said he started shifting at Yachats and didn't stop until he reached Florence.

Cooper's automobile was not an uncommon sight at Heceta Head; the Bays had purchased a Chevrolet in the early twenties, and an increasing number of tourists were making the light station a stopping point on their Sunday drives. Often Charles Stonefield, with his team and wagon, was enlisted to rescue automobiles which were bogged down in sand or mud. Cy Cooper did not always fare well with his mail truck either, as this notice from the Florence newspaper indicates:

From the far western end of Lane County a call for aid came to the office of Supervisor R.S. Shelly of the Siuslaw National Forest. The request was from the mail carrier who every other day made the trip between Florence and Yachats. "I get stuck several times every trip," said the carrier. "Can't you help fix up some of the worst mud holes?" Mr. Shelly sent a message to the ranger in that district to spend a little money on maintenance work on the road, and a few of the mud holes were eliminated.

In 1930, two of the Head's "old timers" departed: Bob Ray (who had served as first assistant for 12 years) was transferred to Smith Island, WA; second assistant Walters was reassigned to Ban-

don. Larry Grimshaw, one Florence resident, vividly recalled the going-away party thrown for Walters. Home brew had to be smuggled in, as Prohibition was still in effect. Because Cap Hermann would not allow liquor at his station, he was kept in the dark about the party. "The night of the party, Walters had the midnight-to-daylight shift, but he had plenty of help with the job. All the men at the party went up in the tower with him. We walked on tiptoe, so we wouldn't wake up the captain and his wife."

Further excitement reached the area with the discovery of a supposed gold strike. The "Oar" provided some of the details:

C.M. Prather believes he has found a gold and silver bearing ledge at Heceta Head. It may be the mine which was discovered years ago and lost because of a huge slide. Mr. Prather is not experienced in mining and is seeking someone with knowledge of the game who will go in with him in the venture.

Apparently C.M. Prather, whoever he may have been, never found a knowledgeable partner, for no further mention is made of the gold ledge. But rumors of a gold mine took backseat to the all-consuming, highly contagious passion that gripped the Oregon coast: highway fever. By 1925, the Roosevelt Coast Military Highway was completed with the exception of the 90 miles in the middle of the state. This apparent abandonment of Lane County prompted one disgruntled reporter to write, "Within a short time Lane County will stand alone as the one section in Oregon which obstructs the free passage of tourists up and down the coast over the Roosevelt Highway." The anonymous writer did not have long to wait.

By 1930, the Cape Perpetua section of the highway was underway, and survey work at Heceta Head had begun. Workers began trickling into Heceta that year, and by January of 1931, they had transformed Cape Creek into a crowded work camp. This caused Cap Hermann to remark that he was ". . . virtually surrounded by road builders and the day for lonesomeness is passed."



The road between Heceta Head and Yachats, OR, left a lot to be desired. Photo courtesy of the Norman Larsen family.



Keeper "Cap" Hermann and his wife. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Forestry Service.

In April of 1931, John K. Holt, contractor for most of the Cape Creek bridge work, arrived with his foreman, engineer and two laborers. He came immediately after finishing the bridge at Grant's Pass. The "Oar" placed the projected cost of the bridge at $150,000; cost of the tunnel was not given. When completed, the concrete and steel structure would include a main span 220 feet long, with several smaller spans.

Holt was responsible for the major span, while the Clackamas Construction Company had a contract for the smaller arches; Kern & Kibb were awarded the contract for the tunnel. Between Holt's men and those hired by other companies, almost 90 workmen were involved. The majority of laborers earned 50 cents for a 6-hour day. This rate was set by both the Federal Bureau of Roads and the State Highway Commission.

Among the number of local residents who found work at the construction site were Fred Stonefield, who ran a compressor in the tunnel, and Charlie Walters' son, Mike, who worked on the survey crew. Those men not within easy walking distance to Heceta Head set up camp at Cape Creek, which prompted one reporter to comment:

One must reach the Rufus Stonefield place before he gets a real vision of the magnitude of the job which engineers were so long in mapping out. There is a real village here of cabins and tents. Men, women, and children, for there are several camps in one.

Despite the crowded living conditions, camaraderie was high among the workers and their families. A supply station and mess hall catered to their needs, and the beach provided recreation. For the most part, the road crew and the lighthouse families did not mix. However, Charlie Walters' wife, Emma, made a small profit by supplying lunches for a few of the workmen.

Transportation of materials to the work site was not as difficult as it had been in the days of lighthouse construction. Pilings for the bridge were towed in rafts along the Siuslaw, just as lumber for the keeper's quarters had been transported, but other materials were produced at Cape Creek. According to the "Oar,"

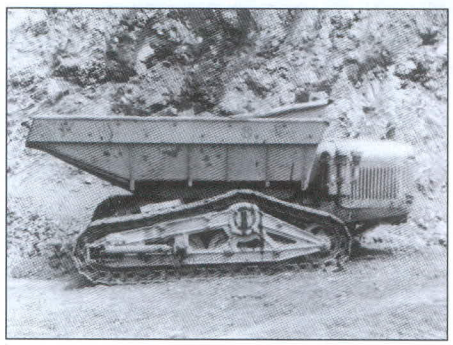
the Ross Highway Lumber Company turned out 6,000 feet of lumber at the Cape daily. A rock crushing plant established at the site produced much of the rock used in surfacing the 14 miles from Berry Creek to the northern boundary of Lane County.

Public interest in the highway remained intense throughout the entire construction period. Sightseers flocked to Heceta Head, though the staff of the "Oar" did their best to discourage the practice. One disgruntled reporter commented:

It is surprising how many visitors make the trip up the coast as far as the lighthouse. It is a wonderful trip all right, but the big force of trucks which are doing duty on highway construction make the trip irritating to the visitor and sometimes inconvenient to the truck drivers. These men are busy and do not want to be held up.

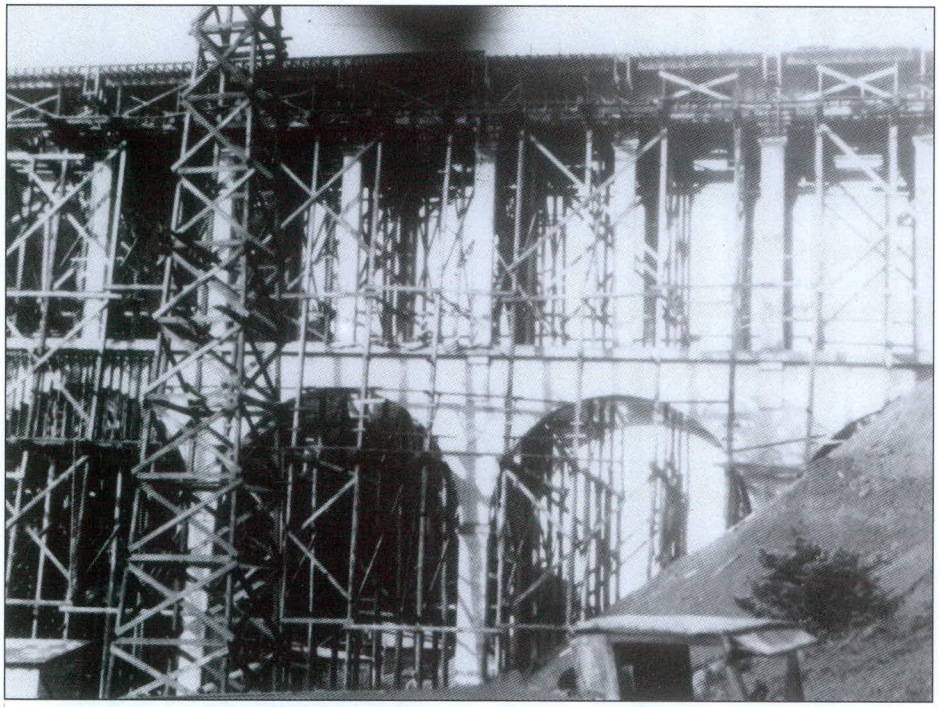
In addition to warning travelers away from the busy truck drivers, the "Oar" writers did an admirable job of keeping their readers informed of progress on the bridge. Articles on the subject appeared on the front page of every weekly edition. One of the more descriptive reports reads:





Above – The Heceta Head camp for the workers on the Roosevelt Coast Military Highway. The station can barely be seen at left, with the new bridge far left.

Left – Earth mover at the site circa 1931. Photos courtesy of the Norman Larsen family.



The new bridge at Heceta Head spanning "a little creek which isn't more than knee deep." Norman Larsen family photo.

The noise around this bridge building is the first thing that impresses. There are ninety men working on it and each one of them does something that makes a noise, to say nothing of the power saws the moving cables, the rock crusher and — the elements. But of all the noise that is made you scarcely ever hear a human voice. Nobody hollers. Holt is so quiet that you have to have good ears. . . . You can't help but wonder how in the dickens the great state of Oregon wants to make an expenditure like this to cross a little creek which isn't more than knee deep. Great arches up there a hundred feet above the little valley. An architectural beauty which could adorn the metropolis of Paris or any other place, and it is now being built along side of Rufus Stonefield's cattle ranch.

In December of 1931, the tunnel was completed and the work camp abandoned. The bridge was scheduled for completion by November of 1931; but when November came, engineers were expressing doubts that it would be finished before May of 1932. That prediction proved a bit pessimistic, as the final completion date reported by the "Oar" was March 31, 1932.

The opening of the Cape Creek-Florence link in the Oregon Coast Highway system had tremendous consequences for Heceta Head residents. Easy access to the markets of Florence made the raising of vegetables, chickens and milk cows unnecessary. At the same time, more visitors than ever found their way to the lighthouse, and giving tours became an unofficial duty of the keepers; a visitors' book was provided for the signatures of guests.

For the light keepers, the tourists provided a welcomed break from the tedium of brass polishing and white-washing. However, not everyone hailed the increased flow of traffic, least of all the Stonefields. One of Charles' grandsons described the effect this way:



The completed highway brought numerous visitors to the Devils Elbow Beach at Heceta Head, changing the idyllic life-style of the station forever. Norman Larsen photo.

Soon as that highway got built there were people everywhere — couldn't believe it. Interfered with us and our fishing and hunting. See, before there was just that old road. In the wintertime it wasn't passable unless you rode horseback. We could hunt and fish whenever we wanted, catch as much as we wanted, use a net and anything else. As soon as the highway was built and people started coming through, it kind of put the skids to that.

Just two years after the highway was completed, another change hit Heceta Head: electric power was installed at the station. A combination garage and power plant was constructed in October, 1934, under the supervision of the chief electrician from the Portland Lighthouse Service office. Lighting, electric washing machines and irons were not the only conveniences made possible by the power plant, certain operations at the light tower were automated as well: the incandescent oil vapor lamp in the lens was replaced by an electric bulb. A 500-watt bulb increased the light to 1,000,000 candlepower, visible 21 miles. The manually operated clockworks which powered the revolving lens was converted to an electric system. Elimination of the task of winding the clockworks may have seemed a boon to the keepers, but it soon became apparent that increasing automation would change the nature of light tending.

Initially, three keepers were assigned to the station, despite the decreased work load. Hermann and his wife remained in the single residence, although assistant keepers changed often, after the departure of Bay and Walters. Albert Johnson replaced one of the pair, probably second assistant Walters. He served until 1932, when he was transferred to Puget Sound. He returned to Heceta Head in 1936, replacing Fred Sargeant as first assistant. Bill Schumacher served as second assistant for a time, but he resigned from the service in the late thirties and was never replaced. Following the departure of the Schumachers, the Hermanns moved into the duplex, leaving the single residence vacant.

Ostensibly, the position of third assistant was eliminated because the electrically powered light did not require as much attention as the old equipment. Also, the more stringent regulations of the Lighthouse Service had been relaxed. Inspections still were held, but the days of the white gloves were gone.

A change in the administration of navigational aids also may have been a factor in the reduction of the station's work force. In 1939, the Lighthouse Service was transferred from the Department of Commerce to the U.S. Coast Guard. With this change, the Coast Guard gave all Lighthouse Service personnel the opportunity to enter the Guard or remain working in a civilian capacity. According to Coast Guard historian Robert L. Scheina, between 20 and 30 percent of lighthouse personnel simply quit or retired. However, most of those who resigned worked on tenders or in tender depots. Because Schumacher left close to this period of transition, it may have been viewed as a good time to reduce operating costs by phasing out his position altogether.

With the elimination of the third keeper, the single house was no longer essential. For undocumented reasons, Coast Guard officials decided to tear down the residence. In 1940, the contract for razing the head keeper's house was secured by Rufus Johnson of Mapleton. In exchange for his labor and an additional payment of $10, he was given ownership of all salvable materials. Johnson's 15-year-old son, Wayne, helped in the work; he recalled that the place was stripped before his father arrived on the scene. All the furniture, the stained glass window and the overhead light fixtures had been removed. The Johnsons had no easy time disassembling the house. According to Wayne, simply removing the nails took a supreme effort. The elder Johnson used the salvaged lumber to build a store in Mapleton, which is now the Alphabet Cafe. Flooring in the house was installed in the Walt Huntington home in Mapleton.

After the house was demolished, the site was planted in lawn. Unfortunately, the residence was gone before it had outlived its usefulness. As war with Japan became more and more inevitable, Coast Guard personnel began trickling, then streaming, into the station. The Keeper's house could have provided quarters for at least a few of the men. No doubt, the decision to remove it was regretted more than once during the coming years.



Above – The assistant keeper's duplex in the foreground has been restored. The keeper's house in the background was razed. U.S. Forest Service photo.

World War II and Beyond

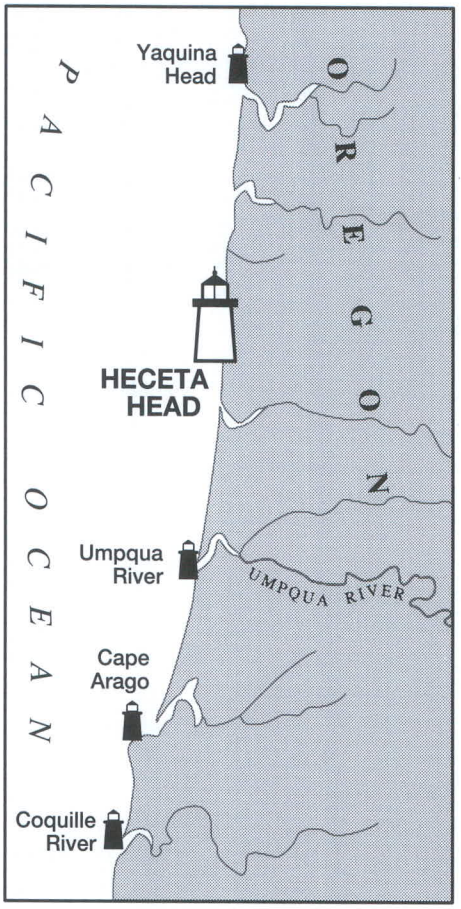
Concern over a Japanese attack on the coast was voiced in the Florence "Oar" as early as 1935. An article reported that the War Department had requested funds to map areas along the Oregon coast, and claimed this was ". . . the initial step toward extensive fortification of the Oregon coastline against foreign invasion."

Despite early calls for military installations, it was not until after the attack on Pearl Harbor that a network of defensive positions were established on the coast, many at light stations. The Heceta Head Light Station was among the spots chosen as a military observation post. A story, printed December 26, 1941, in the "Oar" read:

Four of the boys from the Coast Guard station have been transferred to the lighthouse. To make living quarters for the new men, the Johnsons are vacating their residence and Mrs. Johnson and daughter Mary Lou will go to Astoria to spend the winter with her folks there.

Mr. Johnson remained at Heceta approximately one year, after which he was transferred to Tongue Point Station; soon after his departure, Coast Guardsmen began arriving en masse. One of the first to come was head cook Stanley Anderson. When he arrived in April of 1943, between 10 and 15 men were stationed at the base, but in the coming months, the number jumped to 75.

According to Anderson, the first arrivals were quartered in the east half of the duplex, while the Hermanns continued to occupy the other side. Sharing one bathroom with over a dozen men did not sit well with Anderson, but the housing squeeze was soon eliminated: barracks and a mess hall were erected on the spot the head keeper's house once stood. The enlisted men were assigned to the barracks, while their commander set up headquarters in the duplex.



The Heceta Head Guardsmen provided an important link in a chain of coastal patrols. A lookout station was built above the lighthouse and manned round the clock. They patrolled 24-hours a day as well, taking dogs along at all times, covering the shore as far north as Yachats and as far south as Heceta Beach. Between 10 and 12 of the patrol dogs were kept at the station; according to Anderson, they were extremely vicious. One man was assigned to each dog, and the animals were kept constantly chained. In addition, the Guardsmen took over many lighthouse duties, which lightened Hermann's work load considerably.

Anderson described Hermann's status as that of an 'honorary citizen' — he and his wife were the only civilians allowed to remain on the military reservation. He is remembered as a 'grandfatherly type.' He certainly looked the part, for he was well into his sixties, and had a good-sized belly to attest to his wife's culinary skills. Hermann often entertained the Guardsmen with tall tales of the sea, and naturally, of lighthouses.

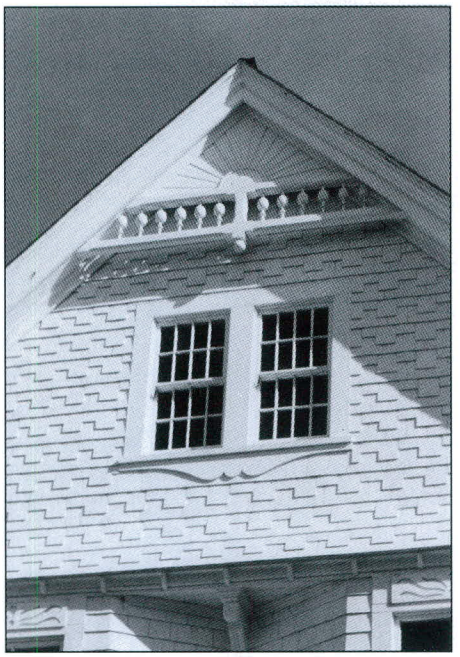
The Hermanns remained the last testimony to the old way of life at the station. Stonefields still occupied Cape Creek, but his family had dwindled considerably. Charles died in 1927, Annie in 1934; Rufus and Rosie remained, but their children had left the Cape.

Heceta Head was strictly off-limits to visitors during the war. Sentry posts were set up at the entrance to the driveway and at the house. However, families of the Guardsmen were allowed on the station occasionally, and once a week the USO faithfully appeared. The station wagon driven by USO volunteers was a type of traveling theatre; it carried a movie screen, projector, and reels of film. Each week, the mess hall was transformed to a temporary movie house. While it may not have featured the latest films, it at least provided some entertainment.

Generally, the men went off station for their entertainment. A Greyhound bus stopped by the station on the run to Florence. Anderson remembered those bus rides vividly:

It was hard because there was only one bus a day. It went down and the next day it went back, so we had to spend the night in Florence. If you think the 55-mile-an-hour speed limit is bad now — then, they had a 35-mile-an-hour speed limit and that old bus used to lug.

As the outcome of the war became apparent, personnel were gradually withdrawn from the Heceta Station. Anderson was transferred to Seattle in May of 1944, and by 1946, only one or two Guardsmen remained to help Hermann run the tower. No news came out of Heceta during the next few years; it almost seemed as if a curtain had been drawn around the station.



Gable detail of the restored quarters. USLHS photo.

It was not until 1950 that the lighthouse again made the front page of the "Oar." The occasion was the retirement of Hermann, who served his last day at Heceta on January 31, 1950. The veteran keeper retired at the age of 70, after 49 years of continuous lighthouse duty. He and his wife moved to Tillamook, leaving S.H. Elder in charge of the lighthouse. Elder had been assistant since 1948, but he did not remain long at Heceta Head. During the next few years the Coast Guard transferred men in and out at an unprecedented rate. For that reason, records of keepers who served after Hermann are practically nonexistent.

In July of 1952, a newspaper article in the "Oar" announced that the lighthouse was again open to visitors. The story listed John A. Boyer, engineman second class, and Grant Allen, seaman, as keepers. The men occupied the duplex with their families. Apparently, the 'open house' tradition maintained before the war was back in full force, as the "Oar" stated, "In one day recently, 87 people signed the guest book, registering from all corners of the United States and several faraway lands." Another tradition was reinstated which undoubtedly terrorized the wives of the keepers: the house was once again subject to strict inspections. In 1957, the Heceta Light was placed under the care of a veteran, civilian light keeper Oswald Allick, who had put in some twenty years at the Tillamook Rock Station. When that station was closed, he was given a choice of serving at any lighthouse along the coast. He picked Heceta Head, and along with his wife Alice, moved into the duplex formerly occupied by the likes of the Hermanns, DeRoys, and Hansens.

The light station again disappeared from the news until 1963, when the tower was automated. That year, a sensor was placed in the lighthouse which alerted the Coast Guard station at Florence when the light went out. In that event, Guardsmen would simply make the short trip up the coast and switch the power to a back-up generator. Automation of the tower eliminated the need for keepers, and Allick found himself out of a job. He chose to retire the same day the station was switched to remote control: July 20, 1963. The passing of the old-style station was lamented by both lighthouse buffs and diehard romantics. Their position was summed up well in the following passages from an updated page of the "Oregon Statesman":

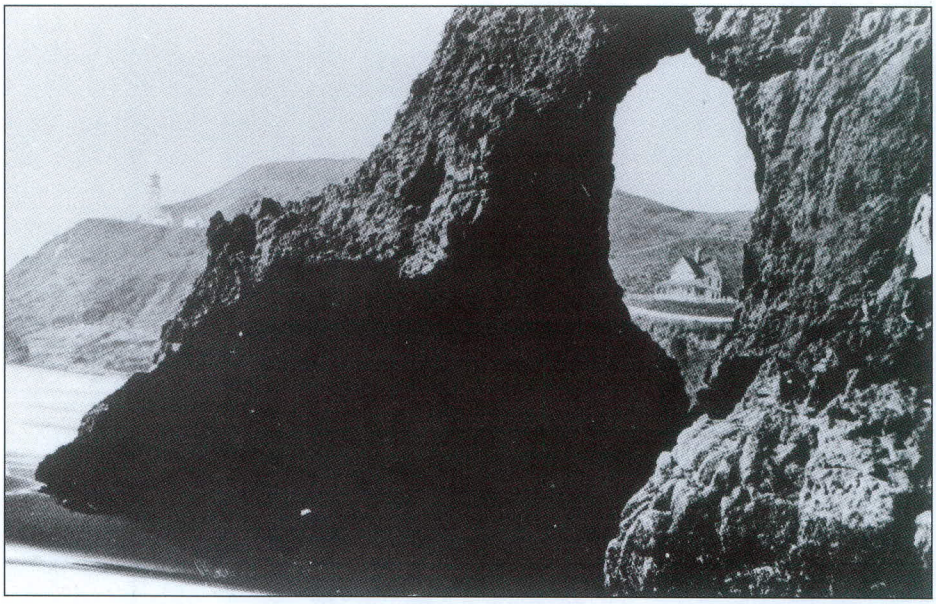
Chalk another landmark off the map, mourn the passing of another lighthouse keeper. Heceta Head light is about to join the unromantic, scientifically controlled robots now marking Oregon's western coastline that once were the subject of romantic tall tales.

After the light was automated, the Coast Guard found itself owner of a house without a keeper. Agency officials decided they had no further use for the house, so the residence and garage, along with 10.8 acres, were declared excess property. The Coast Guard retained the 2.2 acres where the tower and oil houses stood, and determined that the State of Oregon was a likely successor to the relinquished property. The state had established Devil's Elbow Park some years earlier, and because the park was next to the lighthouse station, Coast Guard officials reasoned Heceta Head would be a logical extension of the state lands.

The beach fronting Cape Cove was selected as the use area of the park, and picnic tables and a parking lot replaced the open space that had once been a playground to Heceta Head children. The Coast Guard granted the state a revocable license for the former keepers' quarters and the adjacent acreage. In exchange for use of the property, the state agreed to maintain the premises in a "presentable condition" at all times. The license was signed August 29, 1963.

In 1965, the Coast Guard notified the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) of its intention to relinquish custody of the light station, reasoning: ". . . the excess 10.8+ acres of land are not suitable for return to the Public Domain because of the improvements made thereon. It is recommended that the property, less reservations noted, be reported to the General Services Administration for possible conveyance to the State of Oregon for park purposes."

BLM officials did not automatically concur with the Coast Guard. They sent a note describing the status of the property to the Forest Service. John Brillhart, who was then employed with the Division of Lands in the Forest Service, received the notification. According to Brillhart, he did some checking and discovered transfer of the Heceta Head land to the state would be illegal. Because the property had been public domain prior to the establishment of the light station, Brillhart maintained the land should revert to the public domain, in which case it would become part of the Siuslaw National Forest. BLM agreed, and the former Coast Guard property was offered to the Forest Service.



A favorite angle for photographing the Heceta Head Light Station was through arch rock. Tower at left, keeper's house in the arch. This formation no longer exists. U.S. Forest Service photo.

After the Forest Service became official owner of the property, the duplex was rented to families employed on the Siuslaw Forest. Initially, the arrangement was satisfactory, but by 1970, the building had deteriorated to such an extent that it became difficult to find people interested in renting it. A list of maintenance requirements compiled in May of 1970 totalled $16,350, and included painting the exterior; replacing certain doors, windows and siding; repairing the porch railing and posts; and rebuilding the water system. In addition, the Lane County Health Department notified the Forest Service that sewage was running directly into the ocean, and required the installation of a new sewer system.

When conditions of the building were not immediately improved, community members became alarmed that the house would be allowed to deteriorate beyond repair. Under the direction of Don Bowman of the Siuslaw Museum Association a "Friends of Heceta House" was formed. Rumors that the Bohemia Lumber Co. was interested in purchasing the site for a resort complex were particularly disturbing to the "Friends," who drew up a list of guidelines to be incorporated in Forest Service management plans for the house. The list include: public use of the house for environmental and educational purposes; public access to the lighthouse trail; landscape and house to remain essentially unchanged; no extension of vehicular access and parking; and the establishment of an advisory board to Forest Service personnel involved in maintenance of the house.

Heceta House had become something of an albatross around the neck of the Forest Service, and Service administrators were anxious to grant a special use permit to an organization willing to comply with the requirements set forth by the Friends of Heceta House. There was some speculation about converting the house to a maritime museum, but interested groups did not have adequate resources.

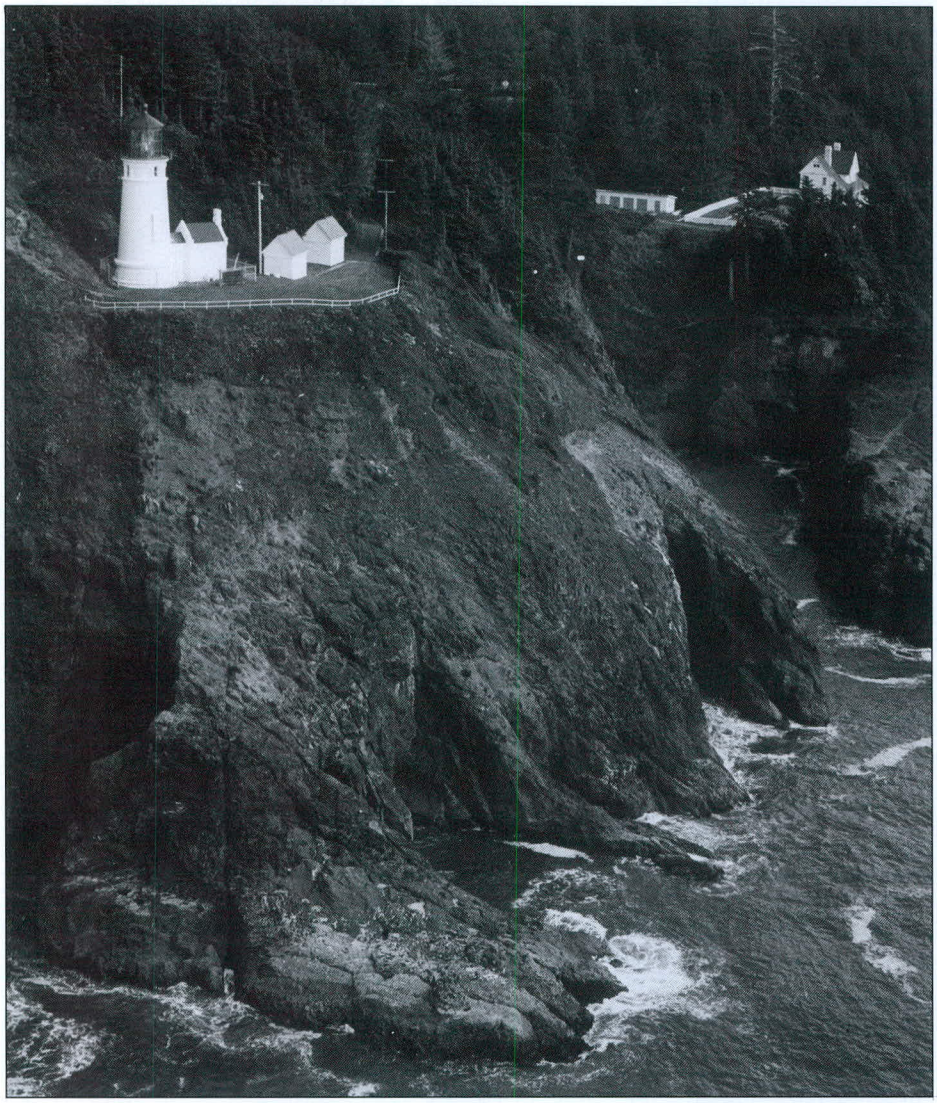
Lane Community College (LCC) expressed an interest in leasing the property as a site for coastal field trips. The Forest Service approved the idea, and the proposal was brought to the LCC Board of Directors. Catherine Lauris, member of the board, had a particular interest in the matter. "I wanted it [Heceta House] for historical reasons, and I wanted to preserve it for the general public because it had always belonged to the public. So we hashed it out . . . finally we said, o.k., we'll sign a lease with the Forest Service."

A ten-year lease was signed in 1970. Under its terms, rent would be paid in the form of repair and maintenance work on the interior of the house. The Forest Service agreed to care for the exterior. Also, LCC was required to hire a full-time caretaker to live in the duplex. With a joint effort by the college and the Forest Service, the house was restored to livable conditions. Workers from Angell Job Corps painted the exterior, while the college refinished interior woodwork, repaired moldings, and replaced buckled floor boards.

Instructors reserved the house almost every weekend. Classes in virtually every discipline were held at Heceta Head; the coastal landscape was captured by art and photography students; architecture professors lectured on the design of the 19th century lightkeepers' house; and science students studied the flora and fauna of the area. In terms of the use, LCC occupation proved highly successful. However, the house continued to need major repairs, despite maintenance measures. Help eventually came in the form of federal legislation.

An executive order signed in 1971 required all federal agencies to nominmate eligible properties under their jurisdiction to the National Register of Historic Places. This was not the first law to have an impact upon historic properties; legislation protecting cultural resources had been passed as far back as 1897. However, for the first time, federal law directly affected the Heceta Head property. In accordance with the executive order, the Coast Guard nominated the Heceta Head light tower to the national Register. After consulting with the Forest Service, Heceta House was included in the nomination forms. The process of nomination was involved; the property did not make the register until November of 1978.

Inclusion in the National Register had a number of consequences; besides officially recognizing the structure as a cultural resource, it provided for the protection and maintenance of the property. Preservation of the building is now a high priority item for the Waldport Ranger District.



Heceta Head station in 1983. The assistant keeper's duplex can be seen at right. The two small structures next to the tower are oil houses. U.S. Coast Guard photo.

Since 1980 the Forest Service, Lane Community College, and private contractors have engaged in a restoration program designed to stabilize and replace many elements of the Heceta Assistant Keepers' Quarters which had been changed or removed over the years. Great care was taken: historic architectural surveys and site analyses — past and present — were made; replicas of wooden house elements were accurately fabricated, and a master plan to ensure the wisest choice of interpretation objectives (i.e.: issues of restoration decisions, maintenance costs, development for recreational use, etc.) were researched.

During this process, the Forest Service team came up with four alternative plans for future development and use, then rigorously evaluated the respective benefits of each. Ultimately, aspects of all four plans were integrated into a preferred development plan, highlights of which included:

- Rehabilitating the exterior of the house to its 1893 appearance, including addition of a white picket fence and rear wings.
- Removing some trees to provide a view of the lighthouse from the residence.
- Developing an interpretive brochure and cooperating with other agencies to create interpretive signs and a gazebo at Devil's Elbow State Park.

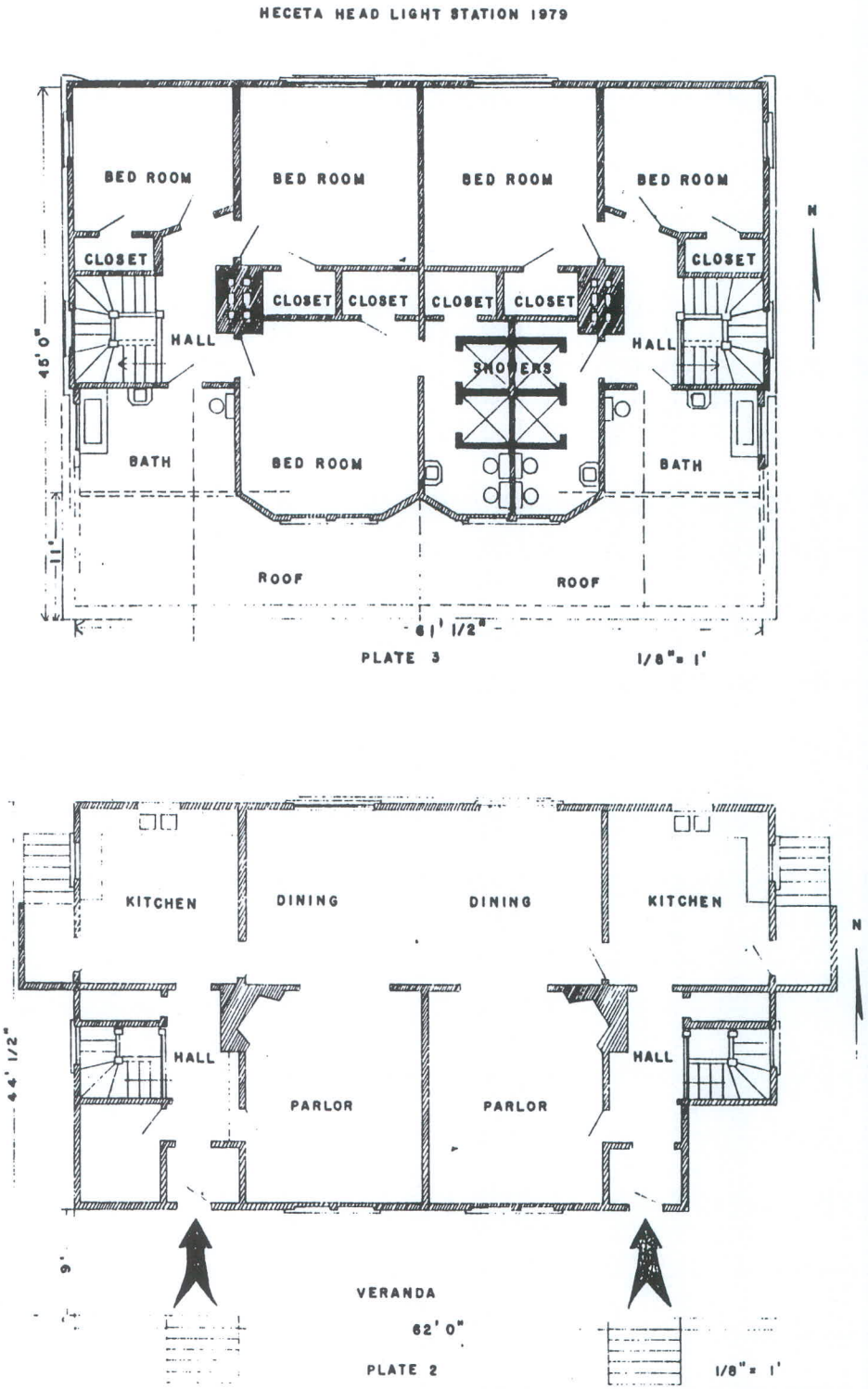
- Maintaining the existing trail at its current standard, making no modifications to the access road from the highway.
- Continuing the Lane Community College permit, which allows limited public access to the inside of the house.

Adoption of this management plan provided the Forest Service with a "road map" to follow over the coming years. It also did away with the need to consult the State Historic Preservation Officer and Historic Advisory Council each time a new project is planned. By presenting a comprehensive restoration program to the state, the Forest Service was able to obtain approval for all future jobs, thereby cutting red tape and shortening the planning process.

The preceding text was all derived, by permission, from: HECETA HOUSE: A History and Architectural Survey; Studies in Cultural Resource Management, No. 3, 1985. By Stephanie Finucane, Drawings by Jeannine Rowley Miller; a joint publication by Lane Community College and USFS for the Heceta House Development Fund.

Since October of 1989, Dick and Pat Kruse have been resident keepers in Heceta House. It is open to the public only for designated times during the summer months, beginning with the "Rhododendron Days" of Mid-May, and on the third Sunday of each month thereafter, through September.

The incredible dedication of countless individuals over a long period of time resulted in a splendid restoration of the Heceta Head Assistant Keepers' Quarters and grounds. Devotion of the keepers and efforts to secure funding support continue, yet the prize has been achieved: the light station remains, access to it is assured, and the local history is being preserved. It is a monument to the miraculous way in which people who live in the present can make a commitment to participate in the process of honoring a beacon from the past, and provide a heritage for succeeding generations.



The present configuration of the Assistant Keeper's Duplex. A common wall between the quarters has been removed on the first floor, allowing a large meeting space. U.S. Forest Service drawings.