" OUR HERITAGE BEACON"

To the mariner in a gale tossed sea; to the landlubber looking at the light from the safety of the shoreline, the brilliant beam of light from a lighthouse can be a soothing reassurance of the certainty of knowing exactly where you are!

Such feelings have been shared for hundreds of years by multitudes of people, be they sea-going or shore folks when they see the light from a lighthouse.

For you and me on the Monterey Peninsula and the Big Sur coastline, we have two such beacons flashing their bright glow in all directions, Point Pinos and Point Sur. The former - the oldest active lighthouse on the West Coast with its original 3rd order Fresnel ~~Third Order~~ lens - located on the southernmost headland of the Monterey Bay, and the latter with a First Order Fresnel Lens high on a hill ~~mass~~ on the rugged Big Sur coastline.

Much has been written by numerous authors about the two lighthouses and my story is just one more. However, this one is exclusively about the Point Sur ~~light~~ lens, because it tells of two missions for the ~~light~~ lens; one that was performed for close to 100 years, and one to be performed in future years in the Allen Knight Maritime Museum located in the new Stanton History Center in Monterey.

One must go back to the beginning, 1887, when construction began on the lighthouse on the steep sided, rugged sandstone hill which is separated from the coastal mountain range by a half-mile stretch of sandy soil. The point of land is familiarly known as Point Sur. The work of constructing the lighthouse tower building and related buildings, engine house, dwellings ~~house~~ and other structures, began in 1887 and was completed in 1889. Lighthouse Keepers and their families operated the Station for the United States Lighthouse Service from the beginning in '89 to 1939 when the United States Coast Guard replaced the service and became responsible for all lighthouses in America. That mission is still current today.

The First Order Fresnel Lens was installed in the tower and was lit for the first time on August 1, 1889. For about the next one hundred years the light went through different means of illumination and different colors. From the earliest kerosene lamp to the latest bulb, 1000 watts, the beam cast by the ~~light~~ optic performed the mission of an "aid to navigation" to ships moving up and down the California coast. As an aside, many near miss sea-faring calamities have been averted by navigators and ship captains being able to steer clear of the coastline by taking their "bearings" on the light itself. There have been, unfortunately, some shipwrecks near Point Sur before the light station was established, among them are the schooner "FALMOUTH" in 1874 and the

steamer "VENTURA" in 1875. Another major disaster occurred near Point Sur in 1935 with the crash of the dirigible "USS MACON".

The original signal emitted from the tower was an alternating red and white light with a focal plane of 250 feet above the sea level. This light was changed in 1950 to a flashing white at the same elevation and is still in use today.

The Fresnel lens was put in place in the tower on the rocky coastline promontory (Point Sur) a few miles south of Carmel. This lens, manufactured in Paris, France in 1887, was sold to the American government whose agency, the U.S. Lighthouse Service, had early on determined the need to establish a lighthouse in this location.

The original source of the light was a kerosene lamp. The light, magnified by the lens, was visible over 20 nautical miles, and from that beginning to the present day there has been a light shining seaward from the Point Sur Lighthouse.

Over the years the light source was changed and modernized, as was the mechanical works themselves.

In 1972 the officials of the U.S. Coast Guard ordered the discontinuance of the Point Sur Lighthouse as a manned unit. The order was carried out on 21 November 1972; the resident Lighthouse Keeper was removed from the station and the lighthouse was fully automated. The tower was boarded up to prevent vandalism and

weather damage to the lens and to the mechanical parts. All the other structures on the hill ~~mass~~ were also boarded up at the same time. For the next few years a temporary ~~aircraft~~ aero- beacon ~~light~~ was used in place of the original ~~light~~ lens. It was positioned on the roof of the ~~oil house~~ fog signal building, ~~which is~~ connected to the tower. Some vandalism occurred in this time period, and because of the lack of security, the Coast Guard officials offered the complete ~~light~~ lens assembly to the Allen Knight Maritime Museum with the provision that it be removed from the tower and placed in the Maritime Museum in Monterey for public display. Through an agreement with the Coast Guard the Fresnel Lens and Rotating Mechanism were ~~given~~ loaned to the Allen Knight Maritime Museum for permanent public display. It was at this time, and with the direction, support and advice I received from the late Rear Admiral Earl E. Stone, USN, Ret., the museum director - and my boss - that I became personally involved with the Point Sur Lighthouse. It can be said that Admiral Stone spearheaded the planning and decision making to obtain the Fresnel ~~Light~~ lens Assembly for the museum, and he received complete cooperation and assistance from officials in the United States Coast Guard.

I should add that in 1984 the federal government turned over to the State of California approximately 33 acres at Point Sur

"for public recreation purposes". The light~~house~~ station is now the "Point Sur State Historic Park". The land includes the Point Sur Light Station, but excludes the lighthouse tower and ~~oil house~~ fog signal building that are still the responsibility of the United States Coast Guard.

With the help of personnel from the Coast Guard, the Fresnel lens was disassembled piece by piece and moved to Monterey in 1978. A detailed account was prepared by the author describing the entire disassembly operation. A similar account was prepared for the reassembly in the Allen Knight Maritime Museum. The story of the removal and movement of the lens from Point Sur to Monterey appeared in the "Week End Magazine" section of the Monterey Peninsula Herald on October 15, 1978. A permanent aero-beacon ~~light~~ was placed in the lantern room of the tower after removal of the original ~~works~~ lens and is in continuous operation at Point Sur as an aid to navigation.

The original Fresnel lens has been on public display in the Maritime Museum for over 14 years, and has been examined and admired by a multitude of visitors. Due to the confining nature of our present museum the ~~light~~ lens was never lighted. ~~lit inside the lens.~~

We now come to the second mission I mentioned, to serve as a beacon of light and beauty for the many local residents and the thousands of visitors who come to the Monterey Peninsula to enjoy

the beauty and the history of ~~the~~ our maritime heritage~~, of our home.~~

A fitting mission for the entire ~~light~~ lens assembly is "Our Heritage Beacon".

This magnificent artifact standing over 18 feet tall will occupy the premier location inside the museum in the Stanton History Center, and will be plainly visible from the outside of the building and from both lower and upper floors in the museum. The light intensity to be emitted from the assembly will be greatly reduced from that of its former mission; however, the operational and functional nature will be duplicated as it was years ago.

Over the years I've had the pleasure of working with many individuals in the United States Coast Guard without whose help and assistance this historic artifact would not have been made available to the Allen Knight Maritime Museum for preservation and display. There are too many to list all of them, but I do want to thank Vice Admiral James S. Gracey, USCG and each one of the Commanding Officers of Group Monterey and some of their staff, that I have worked with since 1976. Lt. David Lyon, Lt.Roger Ryan, Lt. Commander Tom Landvogt, Lt. Commander Bruce Wallisch, Lt. Commander Phil Sanders, Lt. Commander David Reed, Lt. Commander James B. Hall, CWO Curt Lundine, CWO Randy Maxson, CWO Craig Bitler and Lt. Sue Kinner. To each and every member of USCG Group Monterey, my deepest thanks!

Chief Warrant Officer Craig Bitler - the mainstay and overseer of all the work needed to mount the Assembly in the Stanton Center - has been a bulwark of help. His knowledge, expertise and professional judgement, along with his great personality, have made this job a labor of love!!

Another person to whom I owe a great deal of thanks is Mr. Wayne Wheeler, the President of the U.S. Lighthouse Society in San Francisco, California, who was a member of the United States Coast Guard family for over 23 years. His expertise in the arena of "aids to navigation" has been invaluable to me.

My hope is that the people of the Monterey Peninsula, and our many visitors will admire and enjoy this wonderful historic lighthouse mechanism in the Allen Knight Maritime Museum in the new Stanton History Center in downtown Monterey, and that it will perform its new mission, "Our Heritage Beacon", for years to come in the same splendid manner that it performed its first mission as "An Aid to Navigation".

July 30, 1992

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