

Lighthouses of the Pacific Coast



Oregon State Conference 2026

Compiled and Presented by Lynda Nyseth

History of Lighthouses
Information taken from 2003 lesson
Given by Barbara Voltin and Bonnie Owen
Revised 9/29/2026

Compiled by Carol Cheney and Ida Lee Knapp

Most people think of lighthouses as being a tall white tower on a point of land. Lighthouses come in many shapes, sizes and heights, including cylindrical, conical, square, octagonal and even triangular shaped, with towers that stand as tall as 193 feet.

The essential role of the lighthouse as guardian of the shores and protector of seafaring vessels remains fixed in our imaginations.

Fueled by wood fires, the lights of early towers were generally exposed to the elements. Covered lanterns later provided some protection from the rain and after that some structures added glass to further safeguard the flame. But constant burning devoured wood quite swiftly, so by the 16th century coal use became more common. Although coal fires presented an increased hazard (a strong wind could create a flame so hot it might melt the grate that contained it), coal fires offered better light and were therefore used for centuries until the mid-1800's.

Nowadays, only about seven hundred to eight hundred traditional lighthouses remain, fewer than two-thirds of which still see active service. In past decades, obsolete stations often ended up in private control, sometimes sold at public auction. Today many inactive lights are administered by the National Park Service and the United States Forest Service. Several of them are centerpieces of state or national parks or have been converted into maritime museums or tourist attractions filled with lighthouse artifacts. Others have been leased and restored by local historical groups, which often take action to preserve the traditional look of a light station after automation. Sometimes the keepers' quarters are restored to their original appearance to provide visitors with a glimpse of the keepers' lifestyle. Some lighthouses have even been transformed into elegant bed-and-breakfast accommodations, or into inexpensive youth hostels for those on a more limited budget.

Lighthouses along the Pacific Coast

ALASKA

There are eleven active lights in the state. Alaska has the northernmost and westernmost lighthouses in the United States and some of the most isolated as well.

The **Cape Hinchinbrook Light, 1910** is a lighthouse located near the southern end of Hinchinbrook Island adjacent to Prince William Sound.



Cape Hinchinbrook Lightstation, 1948



The Cape Hinchinbrook Lighthouse was first established in 1910 to mark the entrance to Prince William Sound. Congress authorized the construction of a lighthouse at this point in 1906, however construction did not begin until 1909. In the winter of 1909 a temporary fixed white light was established on the second story of the building under construction. Due to the earthquakes in 1927 and 1928, which caused instability in the cliff around the lighthouse, it was felt a new light should be built on solid rock. The new 67-foot (20 m) octagonal tower was completed in 1934. The lighthouse was automated in 1974.

Cape Sarichef Light, 1904 is a lighthouse located on the northwest tip of Unimak Island approximately 630 miles southwest of Anchorage. The most westerly and most isolated lighthouse in North America, Cape Sarichef Light marks the northwest end of Unimak Pass, the main passage through the Aleutian Islands between the Bering Sea and the Pacific Ocean. When it was first lit on July 1, 1904, it was Alaska's second coastal lighthouse (after Scotch Cap Light) and the only staffed U.S. lighthouse on the Bering Sea. Today, the lighthouse is automated, and the beacon is mounted on a skeleton tower.

History

The original lighthouse was a wood tower on an octagonal wood building, 45 feet (14 m) in height. The light was 126 feet (38 m) above the sea.

The lighthouse was known for its extreme isolation, which precluded regular resupply. From August 1912 to June 1913, the lighthouse received no supplies at all; the nearest neighbor was a trapper some 10 miles (16 km) away. Although living quarters were originally provided for keepers' families, the Lighthouse Board prohibited civilian keepers from bringing their families because of the site's isolation. Mail and supplies were not received for months at a time. The station shut down from December 1 through March 1 because the Bering Sea was frozen. Due to the privations they endured, civilian keepers got one full year off every 4 years of service. Circa 1933, one of the assistant keepers suffered a breakdown after two years at the lonely station. Following the disastrous tsunami in 1946 that destroyed Scotch Cap Light and killed its 5-man crew, the Coast Guard razed and rebuilt Cape Sarichef Light in 1950. The upgrade included a LORAN radio beacon to help ships and aircraft obtain an accurate position. A crew of 21 men each served a one-year tour of duty at the station. Approximately 2 miles (3.2 km) from the station was an Air Force DEW (Distant Early Warning) Line radar station crewed by 25 men. Relations between the two services were reportedly very good, with a lot of swapping of everything from food to vehicle parts.

The station was automated in 1979. The new light was erected on a steel skeleton next to the old tower. The old light, fog horn and radio beacon were turned off. The Coast Guard turned the property over to the Fish and Wildlife Service. The old tower and buildings were demolished in 1999.



Cape Sarichef Light

The **Scotch Cap Light** is a series of [lighthouses](#) located on the southwest corner of [Unimak Island](#) in [Alaska](#). It was the first station established on the outside coast of Alaska. ^{[1][2][3]}

History

The Scotch Cap Light was built in 1903 as a 45-foot (14 meter) wood tower on an octagonal wooden building. According to the Coast Guard Historian's Office, the lighthouse was witness to several shipwrecks.

In the spring 1946, five men stationed at the Scotch Cap lighthouse had reasons to be happy. World War II was over. They had survived. Their lonely Coast Guard assignment on Unimak Island would be over in a few months.

But the lighthouse tenders would never return to their homes in the Lower 48. In the early morning of April 1, 1946, the earth ruptured deep within the Aleutian Trench 90 miles south. An immense block of ocean floor rose, tipping saltwater across the North Pacific. A 130-foot wave destroyed the lighthouse.

The earthquake was giant, at least magnitude 8.1. The tsunami that resulted, killed 159 people in Hawaii, drowned a swimmer in Santa Cruz, California, banged up fishing boats in Chile and wrecked a hut in Antarctica. The curve of the Aleutians protected much of Alaska, but the five men at Scotch Cap had no chance.



Scotch Cap Lighthouse 1903



Scotch Cap lighthouse 1940

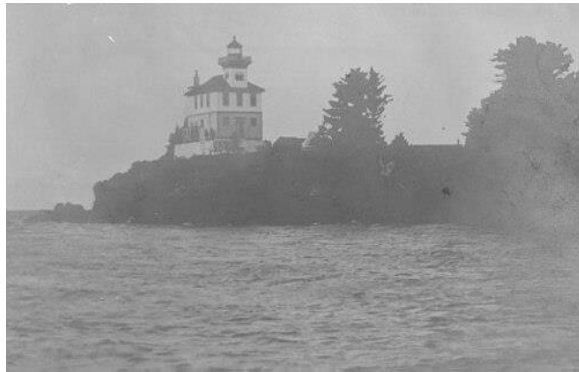


Scotch Cap lighthouse after it was destroyed on April 1, 1946

The Five Finger Islands Light, 1902 is located on a small island that lies between Stephens Passage and Frederick Sound in southeastern Alaska. It and Sentinel Island Light Station were the first U.S. government lighthouses opened in Alaska, first lit on March 21, 1902. It became the last lighthouse in Alaska to be automated on August 14, 1984.

History

The original structure (wood frame lighthouse building) burned down in December 1933. The current structure is made of concrete, which was completed and relit in 1935. It was automated by the United States Coast Guard in 1984.



2025

Original 1902 Lighthouse – [USCG](#) archive photo

The lighthouses of the beautiful and dangerous wilderness coasts of Washington and Oregon are some of the greatest engineering stories of the late 1800's. Building lighthouses here required extraordinary ingenuity, courage and strength. This is an area of huge waves, high winds, towering cliff faces, rolling sand dunes and pounding surf.

WASHINGTON

There are eighteen active lights in the state; three are standing but inactive, three were supplanted by automated towers, and two have been completely demolished. Two lights, one of them still active, serve as museums.

The **Cape Disappointment Lighthouse, Columbia River, 1856** was the first lighthouse in the state (lit 1856) and is still active. It is near the mouth of the Columbia River in the U.S. state of Washington. It can also be listed under Oregon Lighthouses. It was built to warn mariners traveling in Oregon waters, going to the mouth of the Columbia river. It is one of the oldest operating lighthouses in the Pacific Northwest.



History

In 1848, it was recommended a lighthouse be located at Cape Disappointment in what was then the Oregon Territory. An appropriation of \$53,000 was made in 1852. After the lighthouse was designed, a first-order Fresnel lens was ordered. When the lens arrived, it was found to be too large for the tower. Rebuilding the tower took an additional two years. The first lighthouse in the Pacific Northwest was finally lit on October 15, 1856. In addition to the light, the

station was Equipped with a 1,600-pound bell powered by a striking mechanism. The keeper's residence was about a quarter-mile away. The lighthouse had several shortcomings. The fog bell was sometimes inaudible due to the roar of ocean waves. It was discontinued in 1881 and moved to West Point Light in Seattle, and eventually to Warrior Rock Light near Portland. Also, the light was not visible to ships approaching from the north. This problem was corrected by building a lighthouse at North Head, two miles from Cape Disappointment. The first-order lens was moved to North Head and a fourth-order lens installed at Cape Disappointment.

The lighthouse was electrified in 1937. In 1956, the Coast Guard intended to close the station but retained the light when the Columbia River Bar Pilots protested. The light was automated in 1973. An observation deck has been built for the Coast Guard to monitor traffic and bar conditions. The grounds are open to the public through Cape Disappointment State Park.

Admiralty Head Lighthouse, 1893

Ships bound from the Pacific to Seattle must first pass along the Strait of San Juan de Fuca, which separates the Olympic Peninsula and Canada's Vancouver Island, and then turn south and navigate through Admiralty Inlet before reaching Puget Sound. Two points define the entrance to Admiralty Inlet from the Strait of San Juan de Fuca: Point Wilson on the west and Admiralty Head on the east. Lighthouses were eventually placed on both of these points to guide shipping, and today, the Keystone - Port Townsend ferry connects landings located near the two points, providing a quick link between the northwestern part of the state and the Olympic Peninsula.

Captain George Vancouver named Admiralty Inlet on June 2, 1792, in honor of the British Navy's Board of Admiralty. While surveying Puget Sound in 1841, Lieutenant Charles Wilkes of the U.S. Exploring Expedition named the headland on the western shore of Whidbey Island Red Bluff on account of the reddish color of the cliffs, but the name Admiralty Head later gained more common usage.

An act of August 18, 1856 authorized construction of Red Bluff Lighthouse atop the headland's ninety-foot cliffs, and ten acres of land for the station were purchased in 1858 from Dr. John and Caroline Kellogg, early settlers of Whidbey Island. The lighthouse, consisting of a two-story wooden structure painted white with a light tower rising like a church steeple from one end of its pitched roof, was built on the headland during the second half of 1860 and became operational on January 21, 1861. Almost nineteen years passed before its companion light was established across Admiralty Inlet on Point Wilson.

Red Bluff Lighthouse employed a fixed, fourth-order Fresnel lens in its nine-sided lantern room to produce a white light at a height of 108 feet above the inlet. The lighthouse itself measured forty-one feet from the ground to the ventilator ball atop the lantern room. Captain William Robertson, a "grey grizzled sea dog," was appointed first keeper of the lighthouse. He had sailed around Cape Horn and reached San Francisco around the time of the



[Original Admiralty Head Lighthouse in 1893](#)

gold rush, but then relocated to a 247-acre land claim on Whidbey Island in the early 1850s. Indians burned the Robertson's log cabin home, but the family quickly rebuilt it, and Captain Robertson mounted a cannon in the yard to discourage another attack. During his four years as keeper, Robertson also served as coroner and postmaster of Island County.

In 1864, Asa Shinn Mercer, the newly elected president of the University in Seattle, visited Lowell, Massachusetts to recruit young women to relocate to Washington Territory to serve as teachers and help balance the none-to-one ratio of men to women. Two of the eleven ladies, known as the Mercer Girls, who traveled to Washington via Panama with Mercer that year were nineteen-year-old Josephine Pearson and Georgianna, her fifteen-year-old sister. The Pearson girls were accompanied by their father Daniel Pearson, who hoped the change in climate would improve his health. Josephine and Georgianna served as teachers in Coupeville on Whidbey Island, while their father served as a watchman at the Puget Mill in Port Gamble. When Josephine died unexpectedly on August 21, 1864, Daniel relocated to Whidbey Island, where he was appointed the second head keeper of Admiralty Head Lighthouse later that year. Georgianna left school teaching and served as an assistant to her father starting in March 1865.

Daniel Pearson was joined in 1866 by his wife and two more children, Daniel and Flora, who came west as part of Asa Mercer's second expedition. With two marriageable daughters living at the lighthouse, many suitors came calling. According to Flora's memoirs, one Sunday, "There were fifteen horses with men's saddles on their backs, hitched to the fence."

In 1928, the wooden lighthouse was torn down and the lumber used to build a house on Whidbey Island. The second Admiralty Head Lighthouse consisted of a two-story dwelling linked to the base of a circular tower of roughly the same height by a one-story foyer. Three bedrooms were located upstairs in the dwelling, while the kitchen, dining room, and a living room were downstairs. Built in a Spanish style using brick covered with stucco, the lighthouse was a one-of-a-kind and was said to be the most comfortable residence in the territory, featuring an indoor bathroom and laundry room.

By the early 1920s, the bulk of marine traffic was powered by steam rather than wind, permitting the modern vessels to hug the western side of the inlet. Admiralty Head Lighthouse was thus no longer of consequence, and the second lighthouse was extinguished after just nineteen years of service. In 1927, the lantern room was removed and placed atop the newly reconstructed tower of New Dungeness Lighthouse.

In the early 1990s, Washington State University's Island County Extension offered to staff the lighthouse with volunteers in exchange for office space in the structure. After plans for the original lantern room were located, Dick Malone, a lighthouse docent and former high school metal-shop teacher, and Chuck Juras, Fort Casey State Park director of maintenance, took them to Archie Nichols of Nichols Brothers Boat Builders in 2009 to devise a strategy for building a replica. To control costs, donated materials were found and three high school metal shops were



[Original Admiralty Head Lighthouse](#)

recruited to provide the labor. Oak Harbor students built the cross-barred central section, Coupeville students built the roof, and South Whidbey students built the base section, which includes a door.

The three sections were united at South Whidbey High School on February 2, 2012, and the rest of the school year was spent finishing the lantern room. On August 23, 2012, a crane provided by Island Crane Services, Inc. lifted the old, inaccurate lantern room off the lighthouse's tower, and two hours later, after holes were drilled in the new, authentic, 5,000-pound lantern room, it was placed atop the tower. At long last, a worthy lantern room sits atop the unique and stunning building that is Admiralty Head Lighthouse.

Today, the lighthouse is home to a gift shop and a museum, which contains a multi-bull's-eyed, fourth-order Fresnel lens used at Alki Point Lighthouse. A fixed, fourth-order Fresnel lens, thought to have been used in Admiralty Head Lighthouse, is also on display.

New Dungeness Light Station in Sequim, Washington, 1857. Established in 1857 and overhauled in 1927, the station stands on a remote sandspit in the Straits of Juan de Fuca. The light is staffed entirely by volunteers, twenty-four hours a day, year-round. Each Friday or Saturday, a new team of two couples arrives (sometimes with children), to spend the week living at the furnished keeper's quarters (built in 1904). For their week's tour of duty, they are assigned specific tasks to maintain the house and grounds and of course, to keep the light burning.

In 1915 President Woodrow Wilson decreed the New Dungeness Spit to be a Department of Agriculture wild Bird Reservation. Today it is managed by the Fish & Wildlife Service and is called Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge.



Grays Harbor Light, Westport, 1897

At 107 feet tall, the Grays Harbor Lighthouse is the tallest lighthouse in Washington State. Considered by its architect, Carl Leick, to be his masterpiece, the Grays Harbor Lighthouse is the pride of Westport, Washington, and Grays Harbor County.

Construction of the lighthouse began in 1897. On June 30, 1898, a dedication ceremony was held at the base of the lighthouse and that night marked the first official service of the Grays Harbor Light.

The walls at the base of this octagonal structure are four feet thick, tapering up to an 18 inch width. They are made up internally of red brick and coated with concrete on the inside and outside. A metal structure completes the top of the tower.



There are 135 steps leading up to the lantern room. The staircase is original and forged of cast-iron. The manufacturer of the metalwork was Patrick Dundon of San Francisco Boiler Works. The landing brackets are pieces of artwork themselves. They are mounted to the wall to support the landings; the staircase is self-supporting.

Unlike many lighthouses, the Grays Harbor Light still houses the original 3rd order clamshell-shaped Fresnel lens. This lens was built in Paris, France in 1895 and visitors can climb to the lens (or lantern) room level. The flash pattern of this lens was, and still is, red and white to mark the opening to Grays Harbor. As the lighthouse itself is still an aid to navigation, visitors are able to see the

current beacon mounted to the outside railing.

With a 360° view of the ocean and surrounding areas, it is a photographer's dream. Come on a clear day and you might even be able to see the top of Mount Rainier to the east.

OREGON

Tillamook rock, "Terrible Tilly", Tillamook, 1879. Located on the northern Oregon Coast. Approximately 1.2 miles offshore from Tillamook Head and 20 miles south of the mouth of the Columbia River near Astoria. It is situated on less than an acre of basalt rock in the Pacific Ocean. The construction of the lighthouse was commissioned in 1878 by the United States Congress and took more than 500 days to complete. It is deactivated.

Due to the local erratic weather conditions and the dangerous commute for both keepers and suppliers the lighthouse earned the nickname "Terrible Tilly". Over the years, storms and the sea have damaged the structure, shattered the lens and eroded the rock. The light was decommissioned in 1957. Since then has been sold several times to private buyers. Today the lighthouse remains privately owned.

Today the lighthouse is visible from the coastal cities of Seaside and Cannon Beach, as well as from Ecola State Park.

Construction was done in secret with the crew sequestered, partially on the steamer U.S. Revenue Cutter Thomas Corwin, because of public opposition. There was a line from the Corwin to the rock called a "breeches buoy". It was a life ring fitted with old pants cut off at the Knees. This contraption carried men on and off the rock until it was unmanned in 1957.

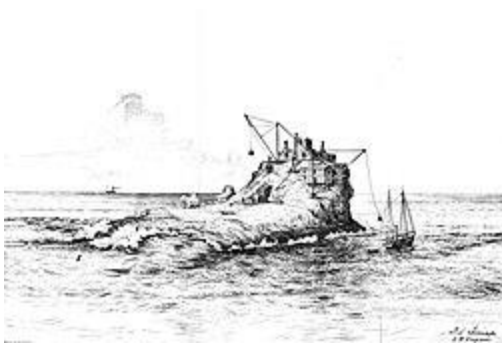


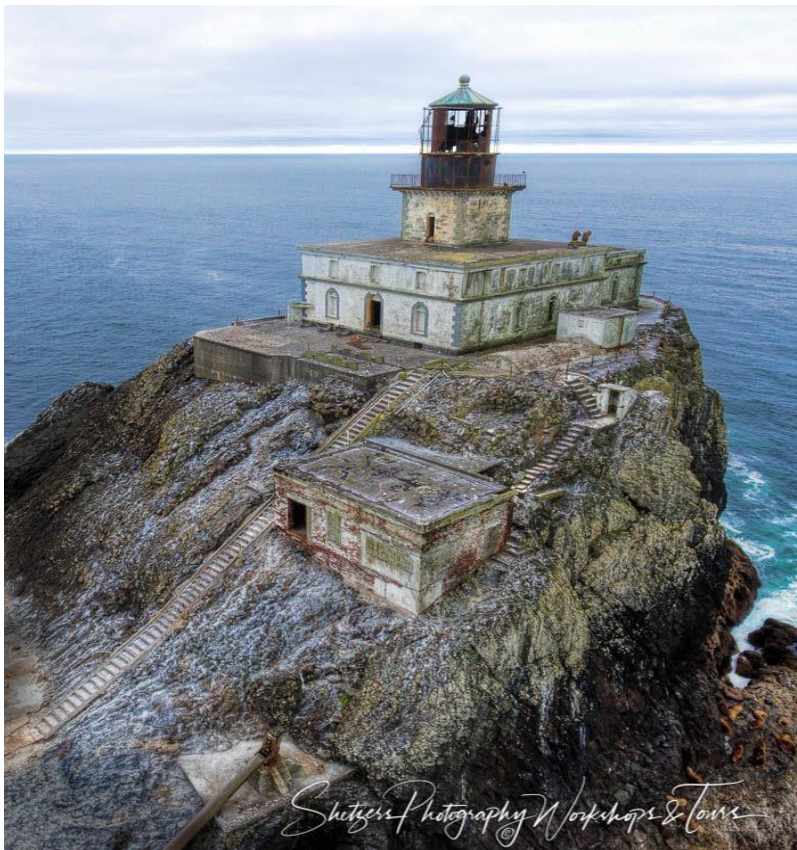
Illustration of the lighthouse under construction

The structure of the lighthouse included an attached keeper's quarters and a 62-foot (19 m) tower

that originally housed a first-order Fresnel lens, with an incandescent oil vapor lamp, 133 feet (41 m) above sea level. The light had a visibility range of 18 miles (29 km) and was fixed with a steam foghorn.

In 1980 a group of realtors purchased the lighthouse and created the Eternity at Sea Columbarium, which opened in June of that year. After interring about 30 urns, the columbarium's license was revoked in 1999 by the Oregon Mortuary and Cemetery Board and was rejected upon reapplication in 2005.

In April 2022, Eternity at Sea announced that the property was for sale. The buildings were said to be in need of complete renovation due to damage from storms, nesting birds and sea



lions.



Yaquina Bay Lighthouse, 1871 and Yaquina Head Lighthouse, 1873, Newport. Yaquina Bay Lighthouse, served for only 3 years. Built in error, it was to be built at Cape Foulweather, 9 miles to the north. Yaquina Bay is now a museum and it is lit up at Christmas Time.



Yaquina Bay Lighthouse



Yaquina Head Lighthouse

Cleft of the Rock, Yachats, 1976.

Oregon Coast's Only Privately-Built Lighthouse for Sale: Cleft of the Rock Near Yachats at \$2 Million.



It was for years the Oregon coast's only hidden lighthouse, and the only one privately-owned that was operating. Perched high on a rocky cliff near the Devil's Churn, Cleft of the Rock was a family home that also had its own lighthouse blinking and flashing out to the sea. (Photos

Realty One at the Beach)

Now, Cleft of the Rock – the home – is for sale. The wildly beautiful place which has captured the imaginations of some over the decades, though it has not done so as much as its stalwart and more frightening sibling Tillamook Rock Lighthouse near Cannon Beach

This little lighthouse no longer blinks, though it did for a little longer after original owner / author James Gibbs passed way over a decade ago.

The light wasn't always operational, so many times it was simply a curious-looking home that visitors spotted, rounding that bend from the last hints of Yachats to the north. Oregon Coast Beach Connection staff had spotted it working several times since the '90s, and that was always a fascinating sight.

Why a lighthouse here? Gibbs had a lot of connections to all things lighthouse and maritime.



Gibbs was one of the last to serve on Tillamook Rock Lighthouse when it was decommissioned in 1957. He started keeping watch there in the '40s as part of the U.S. Coast Guard, though was not initially thrilled about the assignment. Gibbs had his eye on a lighthouse in Alaska but later admitted not getting that one turned out to be worth it. A tsunami hit it in the late '40s and killed all those tending to the lighthouse.

Gibbs was a well-renowned author, writing the go-to guides to shipwrecks and lighthouses in the region – a much-lauded maritime historian. His book *Shipwrecks of the Pacific Coast* is still considered by many to be the Bible on that subject matter. Consequently, he's still seen on numerous YouTube videos to this day getting interviewed about his time on Terrible Tilly or other maritime matters. He passed away in 2010.

When he settled into the Yachats area, he built Cleft of the Rock in 1976.

The lighthouse itself was a working beacon for many years on and off, but it did disappear for a while when Gibbs lent the light to the Yaquina Head Lighthouse in Newport. Its signature was ten seconds of white and ten seconds of red, and it was visible some 16 miles out off the Oregon coast. Its lens is some 110 feet above the sea. While that was obsolete by the time of its construction, it still delighted many mariners out to sea. Fishermen who were crabbing close to Heceta Head and other small vessels appreciated the light greatly over the decades, as it helped keep them safe from these jagged shores.

Heceta Head Lighthouse, Florence, 1894. Heceta Head Light is 13 miles (21 km) north of Florence, and 13 miles (21 km) south of Yachats. The 56-foot-tall lighthouse shines a beam visible for 21 nautical miles (24 miles), making it the strongest light on the Oregon Coast. Pronounced He-see-ta, sometimes pronounced Hecketa.

The light is maintained by the Oregon parks and Recreation Department, while the assistant lighthouse keepers' house, operated as a bed-and-breakfast inn, is maintained by the U.S. Forest Service. The lighthouse is 2 miles from Sea Lion Caves.



Closeup view of the Heceta Head Light tower. Heceta Head is named after the Spanish explorer Bruno de Heceta. Before him, Heceta Head was a spot of frequent fishing and hunting by the American Indian tribes that populated the area.

Cape Arago Lighthouse, Coos Bay, 1857.

Starting in the mid-19th century, Coos Bay had become an important shipping point on the west coast of the United States. The amount of shipping at the time warranted the building of a light at the location, and in 1864, funds were given to build the harbor's light. In 1866, the first light was illuminated. This first tower, which housed a fourth-order Fresnel lens, was nothing more than a 25-foot (7.6 m) octagonal tower with a skeleton base. This tower, located on the west end of an island, was connected to the keeper's residence via a 1,300-foot (400 m) wooden walkway. However, because of its location on the island, the light was greatly exposed to the elements along the Pacific and soon was in need of repairs. Over the next 35 years, much of the station's infrastructure had to be repaired or replaced. Several improvements were also made during this time, including the installation of a fog signal and a new boathouse.



Cape Arago Lighthouse

However, sailor's demands for a better light and the threat of erosion meant the end of the first tower, and in 1909, the second tower was lit. Located higher on the island, the new wooden tower stood 100 feet (30 m) tall and provided better illumination. Erosion eventually threatened this light as well, and in 1934, the third light was illuminated.

Containing the second light's fourth-order lens, the third tower was made from concrete to better withstand the inclement weather of the area. It was also at this time that the first tower, which still stood, was finally destroyed. The second light fared better. The tower was soon removed and the building was converted into an office.

Cape Blanco Lighthouse, Sixes, 1870. This lighthouse is the oldest, most westerly and the tallest in Oregon. It sits about 4 miles north of Port Orford. It stands at 59 feet and is 245 feet over sea level. In clear weather, the beam can be visible as far as 23 nautical miles out, warning



ships away from dangerous reefs. The cape was named Cape Blanco de Aguilar by Captain Aguilar for the chalky white cliffs.

Jutting 1.5 miles out into the Pacific Ocean, the headland is often exposed to strong winds. Most of the time, the wind blows about 20 miles per hour (mph), but during the winter storms, it can reach 100 mph. During the Columbus Day Storm in October 1962, the gale brought deadly winds up

to 180 mph.

History

Constructed in 1870, in 1980, it became fully automated. You can enjoy the lighthouse tour, which takes you all the way to the lantern room. The tour lasts around 20 minutes and requires climbing 63 spiraling steps to the top.

Cape Blanco and its surrounding area feature over 400 years of recorded history, starting from Captain Martin D'Aguilar of Spain visiting the cape in 1603 and naming it Blanco ("white" in Spanish).

The lighthouse grounds are part of Cape Blanco State Park, established in 1971 after the purchase of land from Joseph N. Hughes. Hughes's family owned a 2,000-acre dairy farm that bordered the lighthouse property and extended to the Sixes River.

CALIFORNIA

The coastline of California is a geologically young and highly active margin, with mountains rising up and sinking into the ocean. It is a navigator's nightmare. Faults and volcanoes have left scores of rocky capes and points reaching far into the sea. Sharp rocks and sandbars lurk just beneath the waves. California lighthouses dot a coastline that is rugged, forbidding, beautiful, often fog bound and frequently deadly. Lighthouses on the western coast were built later in the nation's development, driven partly by the discovery of gold.

St. George Reef Lighthouse, "The Dragon", 1892

Not accessible to the public. Leased by Bureau of Land Management to St. George Reef Preservation Society and Del Norte Historical Society. Sits six miles off shore in very dangerous waters.

The St. George Reef Lighthouse is one of the greatest lighthouses in America. Of the three outstanding engineering feats among U.S. lighthouses, St. George Reef is truly the most outstanding. (The other two are Minot's Ledge and Tillamook Rock.) It was the most expensive lighthouse built in the U.S. at a cost of \$704,633 (Congress originally appropriated only \$100,000). It took George Ballantyne, who also built Tillamook Rock, 11 years to build. The St.

George Reef Lighthouse sits on a concrete pier 70 feet high. Its tower is 134 feet, made of 1339 granite blocks with some blocks weighing up to 2 1/2 tons each. The blocks were fit together with no more than a 3/16 gap and held together with metal dowels, cement, and stone shoved in the crevices.

The St. George Reef is the peak of a submerged volcanic mountain six miles off the northern extreme coast of California. Rough weather with howling winds and crashing waves create a mist that obliterates the peaks and creates dangers for mariners. It was dubbed the "Dragon Rocks" by explorer George Vancouver in 1792.

George Roux served as head keeper for 20 years, beginning in 1918. In 1937, he and his men experienced some of the harshest weather in the St. George Reef's history. The weather conditions cut off all contact with the shore for over a month, so no supplies were delivered. Although the crew had worked with each other for years, they were feeling trapped and tense. They stopped speaking to each other; just to say "pass the salt" became a personal affront. Crew members would even eat facing away from the table. They were so fed up with each other that it became unbearable, and after 59 days, the weather broke and a supply ship could come out. As the weather normalized, so did their relationship, and they all started talking again.



Battery Point Light (originally Crescent City Lighthouse), Crescent City, 1856

The Crescent City Lighthouse was built to guide lumber ships in and out of Crescent City harbor as they carried lumber from ancient redwoods to build the city of San Francisco following the gold rush of 1849. The city was laid out in 1853, and in just one year there were over 300 houses and hotels. Crescent City was the port of entry for Oregon's gold mines. The lighthouse is built on an isthmus, and it is only accessible during low tide; during high tide, the isthmus becomes an island.

History

Battery Point Light was one of the first lighthouses on the California coast. Rugged mountains and unbridged rivers meant coastal travel was essential for the economic survival of this region. In 1855, Congress appropriated \$15,000 for the construction of a lighthouse on the tiny islet, which is connected to Battery Point by an isthmus which is visible and can be traversed on foot at low tide. Although not included in the 1852 contract by the United States Lighthouse Service for the first eight west coast lighthouses, the Battery Point Lighthouse was actually lit ten days before the Humboldt Harbor Lighthouse, the last of the original eight to become operational. The fourth-order Fresnel lens was lit in 1856. The lighthouse was automated in 1953, and a modern 14.8-inch (375 mm) lens replaced the fourth-order Fresnel lens. Theophilis Magruder was the station's first keeper; Wayne Piland was its last before automation in 1953. The 1964 Alaska earthquake, the strongest earthquake ever recorded in the northern hemisphere, caused a tsunami. The lighthouse survived. Tsunami waves swept far inland and destroyed most of the city's commercial area and homes. Eleven people were killed and twenty-nine blocks were demolished. In the following year, the modern beacon that replaced the Fresnel lens in the tower was switched off, and a flashing light at the end of the nearby breakwater served as the harbor's navigational aid. In 1982, the light in the lighthouse tower was lit again, and the Battery Point Lighthouse was listed as a private aid to navigation.

Battery Point Lighthouse and Museum

The lighthouse is open to the public only when low tide permits access, daily from April through September with tours between 10 AM and 4 PM. October through March, the lighthouse is open for tours on weekends, from 10 AM to 4 PM. In both seasons, visits to the Battery Point Lighthouse and Island are only possible at low tides. It is recommended that visitors research tide times before visiting, as the tide rises quickly at the point and the land bridge to the lighthouse can disappear rapidly. The museum includes the lighthouse keeper's quarters with period furniture and artifacts since the 1850s, as well as displays of maritime artifacts, photos and historical documents. Tours include a climb into the light tower.



In popular culture

At least two novels have been set at Battery Point Light. *Walk Across the Sea*, by Susan Fletcher, is a 2001 work of historical fiction for teens. *The Lightkeeper's Daughter*, by Colleen Coble, is a 2010 inspirational romance for adults.

Also, the music video for the Tim McGraw song “Not

a Moment Too Soon” has scenes of McGraw next to the light on the lighthouse's top balcony and scenes of the Battery Point Light from a distance.

Lots of ghost stories are written about things going on at the lighthouse. Several other lighthouses also have ghost stories written about them.

Alcatraz Island Lighthouse, San Francisco Bay , 1854 and 1909

Alcatraz, which means "pelican" in Spanish, was placed in operation in June 1854. The Alcatraz Island Lighthouse was the first active lighthouse on the west coast. Congress, recognizing that San Francisco was becoming the doorway to the west, appropriated funds to build one lighthouse after another into San Francisco's harbor.

When the military prison was expanded in 1909, it overshadowed the original lighthouse, which was replaced by an imposing tower built of reinforced concrete with connecting quarters for three keepers.

Housekeeping on Alcatraz Island (until the prison was closed in 1963) presented interesting challenges. Garbage could not be routinely tossed away. Anything that could be worked into a weapon had to be tossed into a special garbage security location to be beaten, broken, and cast into the San Francisco Bay. Keepers' children rode the prison boat to San Francisco to attend school, while keepers' wives rode with the guards on buses to catch boats to go shopping. All passengers were counted both when leaving the prison island and upon returning to the launch.

In 1970, Native Americans claimed the unoccupied island and abandoned prison facilities under an old law which specified that excess government lands be returned to Native Americans. The Federal Government turned off the electrical power to oust the Native Americans, and the Coast Guard placed lighted buoys at each end of the island. Despite protests from mariners, the lighthouse remained dark until the Native Americans themselves lit it on the 8th of June as a symbol to all Native American tribes to "achieve their just claims and the recognition of their rightful dignity". Unfortunately, a fire broke out during their occupation, destroying the keepers' quarters and damaging the lighthouse.



Original Lighthouse



Alcatraz Lighthouse, 1909

Even though the native Indians of the San Francisco area are stated to be the original settlers on the island (they collected eggs from the large flock of birds that regularly gathered there), Alcatraz got its name during Spanish rule in 1775 when naval officer and explorer Juan de Ayala surveyed the harbor and the San Francisco Bay. Since he observed pelicans in large

numbers on the island, he named the island as "Isla de los Alcatraces" meaning the "Island of Pelicans". The island is separated from the mainland by more than 1 mile (1.6 km).

The gold rush and the inherent risk of the choppy waters of the west coast prompted the urgent need for establishing lighthouses. Congress recognized the need and passed suitable acts in the years 1851 and 1852 to build seven lighthouses on the West Coast to guide navigation. The Baltimore firm of Gibbons and Kelly was awarded the contract to build seven lighthouses in California and Cape Disappointment in Washington State. Equipment was shipped on Oriole, reached San Francisco on January 29, 1853. The Alcatraz Lighthouse was the first to be completed in July 1853, making it the oldest major navigational light on the West coast. However, the foundation for building the light house had begun much before the equipment reached San Francisco.



Alcatraz Light at sunset

In 1909–12, the present cell house of Alcatraz was built. Since the new structure would interfere with the operation of the lighthouse, a taller 25.6 metres (84 ft), concrete tower was built south of the original lighthouse. The original lighthouse had been damaged during the great San Francisco earthquake of 1906 and was eventually torn down. In 1963, the Alcatraz Lighthouse was automated by the United States Coast Guard. In 1970 a fire destroyed the

warden's house, the keepers' quarters and other buildings on the island. The only remaining building is the tall cement tower equipped with a modern beacon. The lighthouse has been a museum since 2000 and can be visited. In over 50 years, the lighthouse has not been seriously damaged despite many prison escapes, the Battle of Alcatraz and fires.

There are so many more lighthouses along the Pacific Coast, with fascinating stories. This information and pictures were taken from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Check out stories, pictures and all the information on your computer.

References: Wikipedia and the lesson presented at state conference 2003.