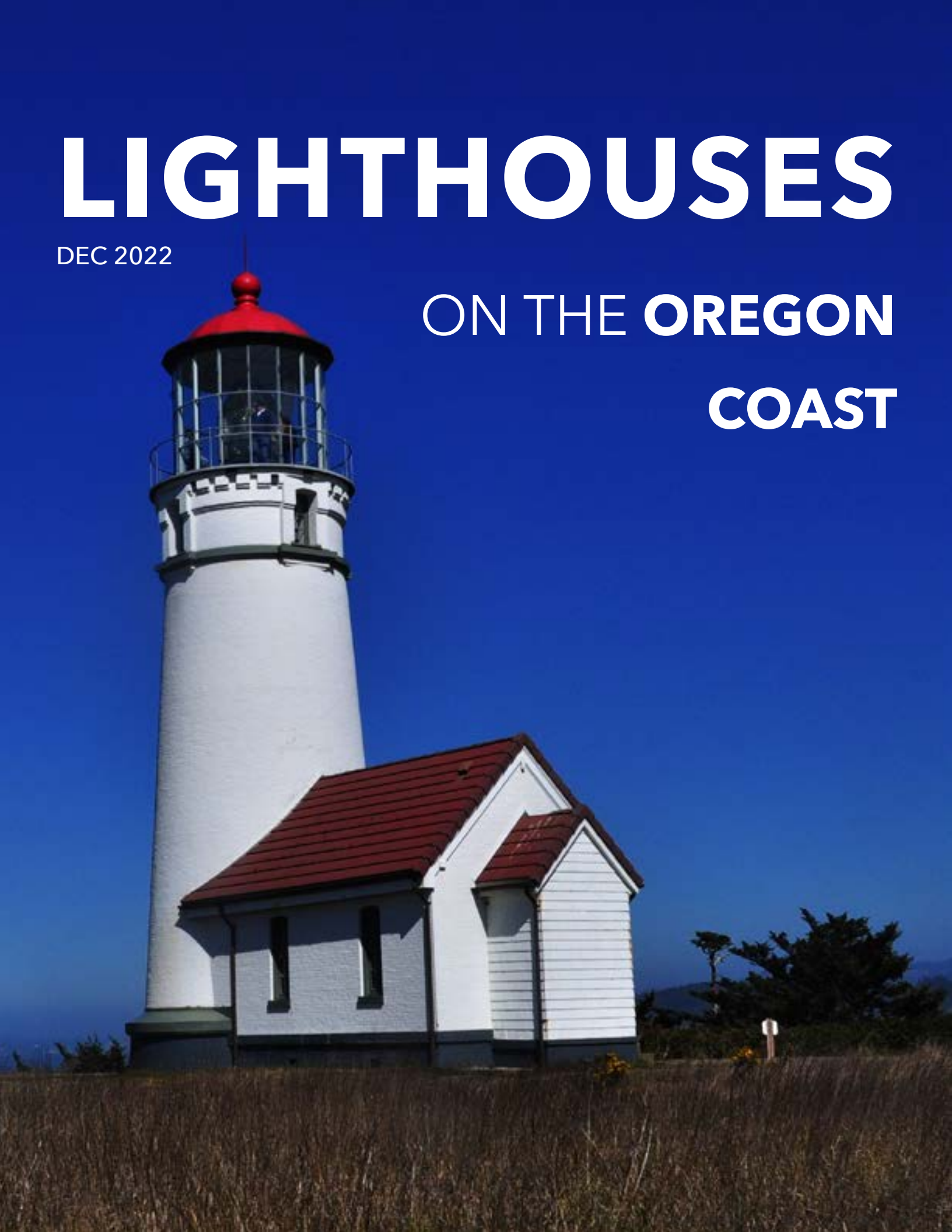
LIGHTHOUSES

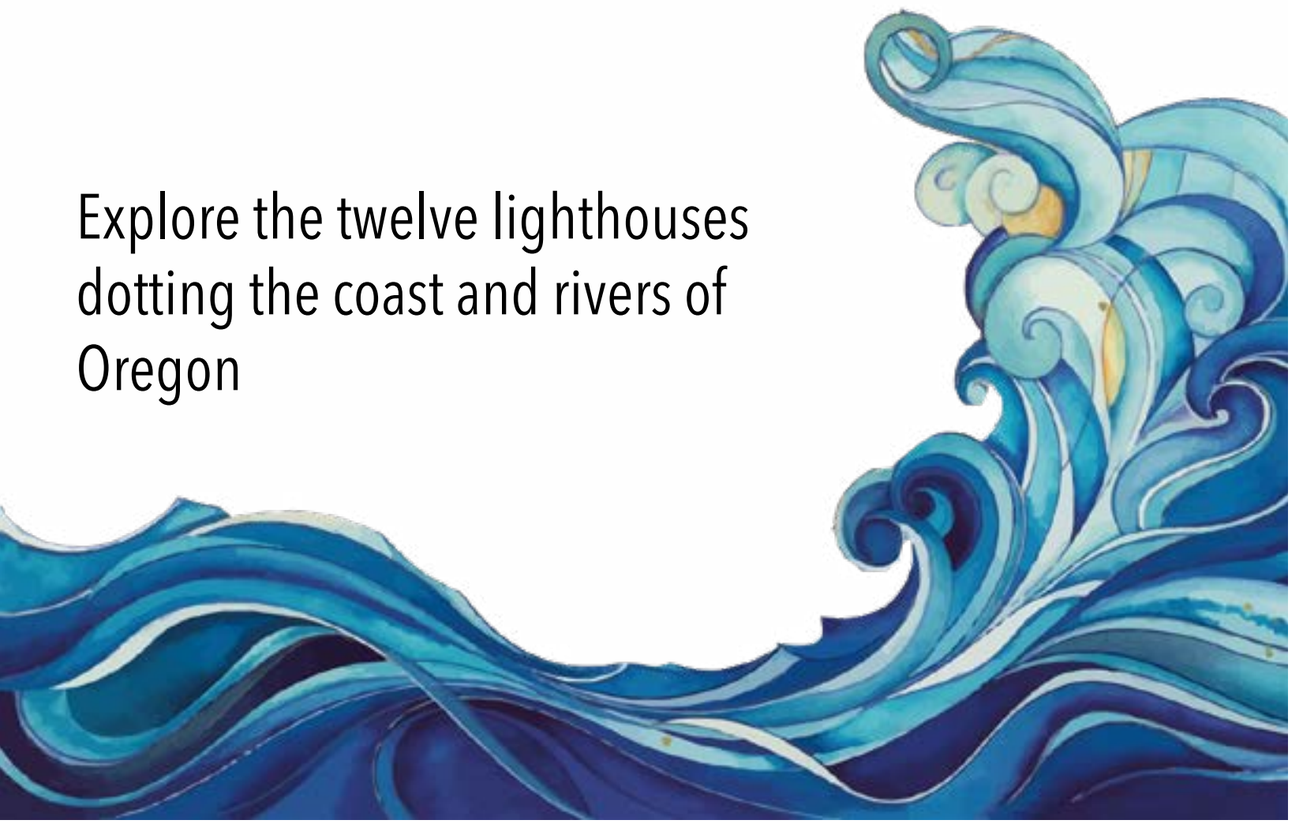
DEC 2022

ON THE **OREGON COAST**



IN THIS ISSUE

Explore the twelve lighthouses dotting the coast and rivers of Oregon



Warrior Rock Lighthouse

Warrior Rock lighthouse helps guide river traffic on the Columbia River. It once contained the Pacific Northwest's oldest fog bell. It is Oregon's smallest lighthouse, and one of only two Oregon lighthouses still operating which are not on the Pacific Ocean.

CONSTRUCTION AND EARLY HISTORY

U.S. Congress authorized a lighthouse for the site in 1888. It was constructed in 1889 as a small, wood frame building atop a sandstone base; it had living quarters below and an oil lamp beacon light with lens and a hand-cranked fog bell on top. The light was placed to warn of a bedrock reef which projects into the Columbia at the east tip of Sauvie Island.

Warrior Rock Lighthouse in 1943

The fog bell was cast in 1855 in Philadelphia and first installed at the Cape Disappointment Light at the mouth of the Columbia River when it was retired for a louder model. It was subsequently installed at the West Point Light in Seattle, but removed in 1887 to make way for a steam whistle. It was installed at Warrior Rock in 1889.

Lightkeepers used a skiff to approach the island from St. Helens, and the lighthouse itself in times of high seasonal water. The 1920s-era lightkeeper rigged an aerial cable to get to the lighthouse from the keeper's quarters during such times. The wooden house was replaced with a 28-foot (8.5 m) tall octagonal concrete tower in 1930 on the original sandstone foundation. Around the same time, the light was electrified. The site was an official water level gauging station in 1937 and 1938.

LOSING THE LIGHT AND BELL

The lighthouse was struck by a barge on May 27, 1969, destroying the foundation and disabling the light and bell. While the Coast Guard was evaluating whether to repair or replace the tower, the fog bell was removed. It fell into the river and cracked, putting it out of commission. It is now outside the Columbia County Courthouse in St. Helens, close to a half-scale replica of the original Warrior Rock Light without foundation.

WARRIOR ROCK LIGHT TODAY

Today, a flashing white light is displayed from the tower at Warrior Rock, but there is no fog signal. Warrior Rock Lighthouse is the only one of the three lighthouses established on the Columbia River that has survived. Willamette River Lighthouse burned in the 1950s, and Desdemona Sands Lighthouse was dismantled in the 1930s.

The exterior of the site is open to the public, and can be visited by a three-mile (5 km) hike from the north end of Reeder Road.

Warrior Rock Lighthouse viewed from the south with Mount St Helens in the background. Photo ca. 2005.

Tillamook Rock Lighthouse

One mile west of Tillamook Head, a rock rises from the ocean. Shaped like a sea monster, it is where old Nor'easters go to die. Where Indians believed under ocean tunnels inhabited by spirits came to the surface. Where sheer cliffs drop straight into the sea to depths of 96 to 240 feet. Where clinging to the top, fighting off the gripping hands of the sea, stands a lighthouse – a symbol of the precarious line between human endeavor and the forces of nature.

An intriguing and powerful testament of the will and determination of the human spirit, the story of Tillamook Rock Lighthouse began in 1878 when Congress appropriated $50,000 for a lighthouse to mark this section of the Oregon Coast.

Locals felt the endeavor was foolhardy and refused to work on the project. Charles A. Ballantyne, who replaced Trewavas, was forced to hire men unfamiliar with the area and then sequester them in the old keeper's quarters at Cape Disappointment until construction could begin so locals wouldn't scare them away.

After a total of 575 days of labor, the lighthouse was lit for the first time on January 21, 1881; the fog signal followed suit on February 11. The total cost of the lighthouse came to $123,492.82, and amazingly, the

Tillamook Rock Lighthouse ca. 1943-53

only construction death was the drowning of Trewavas.

THE "TERRIBLE TILLY" NICKNAME

The cramped quarters, frequent storms, and fog with the ensuing blasting of the fog sirens, often caused tension among the crew and led to the station earning the nickname "Terrible Tilly." Enraged keepers were known to pass notes at dinnertime rather than speak to each other. Any keeper causing trouble or showing mental instability was immediately transferred from the rock. The newspapers loved the drama, and any dismissal raised eyebrows. One paper reported that Keeper Bjorling was removed quickly from his post after trying to kill the head keeper by putting ground glass in his food. Fourth Assistant Keeper Charles Justen was removed from the rock in August 1906 as he was suffering from extreme nervousness and it was feared he would become mentally deranged.

The only known death of a keeper at the lighthouse occurred on August 2, 1911, when Second Assistant Keeper Thomas Jones was painting the derrick and fell thirty five feet onto rocks, sustaining terrible injuries. The steamer Elmore passed the station a few hours later and offered to take Jones to the hospital at Bay City. Jones hung on for a period before passing away. When passing Tillamook Rock the next week, the Elmore was once again hailed and asked to take off another keeper. This time, the injury was not life threatening.

RETIREMENT AND COLUMBARIUM

Terrible Tilly shone her light for seventy-seven

Ruins of Tillamook Rock Lighthouse in 2016. Photo by Abhinaba Basu

years before being replaced by a red whistle buoy, anchored one mile seaward of the rock.

Five men from Las Vegas purchased Tillamook Lighthouse at a bid sale in 1959 for $5,600. Three of the men visited the lighthouse a few weeks after the purchase, but it is believed they never again set foot on the rock or funded any improvements. In 1973, George Hupman, a New York-based executive with General Electric, purchased the lighthouse from the Las Vegas group for $11,000.

Max M. Shillock, Jr. purchased the lighthouse from Hupman in 1978 for $27,000, but he was forced to cede the title to Joy Goolsby, whom he had reportedly swindled out of large sum of money. In 1980, Goolsby sold the lighthouse for $50,000 to real estate developers backed by a group of investors. Under their direction, the structure was gutted and turned into the Eternity at Sea Columbarium. Interested parties could have their ashes placed inside the lighthouse, with prices varying from $1,000 for a place in the derrick room to $5,000 for a prime spot in the lantern room. With an estimated capacity of a few hundred thousand remains, the lighthouse seemed to be not only a self-sustaining project but a profitable business opportunity.

The owners of the lighthouse lost their license to operate as a columbarium in 1999 when they were late with their renewal. In 2005, an application for a new license was rejected due to inaccurate record keeping and improper storage of urns. Addressing concerns that urns were not well protected, Morissette, whose parents are inurned at the lighthouse, said, "People ask me what if a tsunami hits the lighthouse, and I tell every person their second choice better be to be buried at sea." Eternity at Sea still plans to raise additional money and construct niches in titanium to store some 300,000 urns. To date, only about thirty urns have been placed in the lighthouse, and vandals reportedly stole two of those in 1991.

In March 2022, Morisette ran an ad in the Wall Street Journal, offering the lighthouse for $5.6 million. She plans to use $1.5 million of the sale to cleanup the lighthouse, seal it, and create a titanium honeycomb to store urns.

The ghostly looking lighthouse, now with perhaps more than its own story to tell, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Cape Meares Lighthouse

Located in "the land of cheese, trees, and ocean breeze," Cape Meares Lighthouse sits on the Oregon Coast at the northern end of the beautiful, twenty-mile-long Three Capes Scenic Loop.

Made of sheet iron lined with bricks, the octagonal tower is the only one of its kind on the Oregon Coast and sits on a ledge cut from solid rock.

Cape Meares Lighthouse in 2009. Photo by Gary Halvorson.

STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

Anthony W. Miller, the station's first head keeper, exhibited the light for the first time on January 1, 1890. Though the squatty lighthouse was only thirty-eight feet tall, the shortest in Oregon, thanks to the lofty cliff, the light had a focal plane of 223 feet and could be seen for twenty-one miles.

George Hunt, the station's second head keeper, served from 1892 until July 1903, when he passed away at the lighthouse at the age of fifty-three. The station's logbook recorded the event. July 7, 1903: "Attended to regular duties. Keeper sick with pneumonia."

This entry was repeated daily until July 10, when Hunt's death was tersely announced: "Commenced haying. Keeper died at 6 p.m." Augusta Hunt served in her husband's placed for a few weeks until her departure on August 2: "Keeper wife, Mrs. and children left station today."

DECOMMISSIONING

The lighthouse was decommissioned on April 1, 1963 when an automated beacon was installed on a concrete blockhouse a few feet from the tower. The new light had a characteristic of a white flash every fifteen seconds.

After the new light was installed, the Coast Guard talked of removing the old tower. The workroom was torn down, and the tower started rusting away. Local citizens opposed the destruction of the tower, and in 1964, the property was leased to Tillamook County.

VANDALISM

With no resident caretakers, the tower and vacant dwellings were subjected to vandalism, and the four bull's-eye prisms were stolen from the Fresnel lens. In 1968, the property was leased to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, and the dilapidated keeper's dwellings were razed. A replica of the workroom was rebuilt on the east side of the lighthouse in 1978. The lighthouse was opened to the public on Memorial Day, 1980.

In 1984, one of the four bull's-eyes from the Fresnel lens was recovered in a drug raid in Portland, Oregon. After a 1986 magazine article pleaded for the return of the others, the other three eventually found their way back. One was given to the Tillamook County Pioneer Museum, and another was anonymously left on the doorstep of a Cape Lookout assistant park ranger.

On the night of January 9, 2010, vandals once again struck Cape Meares Lighthouse. Several rounds were fired at the lantern room, breaking fifteen panes of glass in the lantern room and several prisms in the priceless Fresnel lens. The estimated damage was $500,000. Two men were arrested on February 10, just over a month after the incident, and charged with first-degree criminal mischief, a class C felony, and four misdemeanor charges. The following December, the case was resolved out of court, with the two men pleading guilty, agreeing to pay $100,000, and being required to spend two weeks in jail (between December 27th and January 11th) in 2010, 2011, and 2012. The judge, in handing down the sentence, said, "Some people go to Hawaii for vacation and some people go to jail. The next three years will serve as a reminder, and you are going to get some time to contemplate that."

The Coast Guard disconnected the beacon on June 25, 2014, 124 years after the cape was first illuminated; A representative stated that the light was no longer necessary with rapid advancements in GPS technology.

Today Cape Meares Lighthouse is part of Cape Meares State Scenic Viewpoint and is interpreted by Friends of Cape Meares Lighthouse.

Yaquina Head Lighthouse

Early morning moonset from Yaquina Head in October 2017. Photo by Jeremy Higgins for the Bureau of Land Management.

Yaquina Head Lighthouse can be a spooky place on a dark, cold, windy night. Stories are told of ghosts lurking and ship compasses not working.

TROUBLE BEFORE THE START

Construction began in 1871 was often delayed due to the tempestuous Oregon winter. Lighters shuttling materials to shore often had difficulty landing, and at least two overturned in the surf and lost their cargo. The schooner engaged in bringing supplies up the coast from San Francisco twice got struck on the bar while trying to enter the harbor at Newport.

Finally, after almost two years of toil, the tower's fixed white light shone for the first time on August 20, 1873.

POPULARITY

Yaquina Head Lighthouse has always been popular with visitors, whether seen or unseen. Keeper Zenor reported at times he would have up to 600 visitors in a day. In 1938, with close to 12,000 visitors, Yaquina Head was the fourth-most-visited lighthouse in the United States.

The station was electrified in 1933 and then automated on May 1, 1966, allowing the last two Coast Guard keepers to leave the station. The two keeper's dwellings, which had been boarded up and abandoned, were demolished in 1984. The original lens is still in place, but is now illuminated with an electric bulb.

Mysterious occurrences continued to happen

at Yaquina Head after its keepers left. In 1998, a person was taking Buddy, a five-year-old German shepherd, on a rainy night walk near the lighthouse when the dog fell over a cliff. Rescue workers were called out and could hear the dog barking on the beach below. After surveying the scene with search lights, it was determined that the only way to retrieve the dog was to rappel down the cliff. While the crew was waiting for additional help to arrive, the dog suddenly appeared uninjured by one of the fire trucks. No one could understand how he got up the slippery cliff.

In 1993, the Coast Guard turned the station over to Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area, managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and visitors were once again allowed to climb the tower, which had been closed to the public for several years. Friends of Yaquina Lighthouses works towards the preservation and interpretation of the lighthouse, and a thorough restoration of the tower, costing one million dollars, was completed in 2006. The restoration effort focused on repairing or replacing heavily eroded cast-iron pieces at the top of the tower. Authentic iron and bronze castings were used to replace the most severely damaged parts. The lantern room, previously colored red and green, is now black, its original color.

Just south of the lighthouse are amazing tide pools where seaweed, sea stars, hermit crabs, purple urchins, and colorful anemones can be seen. The lighthouse is still quite popular, receiving over 400,000 visitors a year. It is only open to the public during daylight hours. Perhaps so no one gets spooked.

Yaquina Head Lighthouse in 2011

Yaquina Bay Lighthouse

Yaquina Bay Lighthouse, a charming two-story clapboard structure, is located on a hill overlooking the northern side of the entrance to Yaquina Bay. It was deserted a mere three years after its light was first lit in 1871, and ever since has been the scene for many a ghostly tale.

CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION

The story of the lighthouse begins in February 1869, when Henry W. Corbett presented a memorial from the Oregon legislature to the U.S. Senate, asking for the construction of a lighthouse at the mouth of Yaquina Bay. At this time, Yaquina Bay was a bustling port, the most populated along the West Coast between San Francisco and Puget Sound. The Lighthouse Board determined there was a need for such a lighthouse to guide traffic into the bay, and an appropriation for it was made by Congress in 1870. In April 1871, thirty-six acres were purchased from Lester and Sophrina Baldwin, original homesteaders, for $500 in gold, and construction commenced May 1, 1871.

The lighthouse was quickly built – the tower and dwelling by Ben Simpson of Newport, Oregon, the lantern room by Joseph Bien of San Francisco. Its beacon, produced by an oil lamp within a fifth-order Fresnel lens, shone for the first time on November 3, 1871.

Yaquina Bay Lighthouse and neighboring observation tower in October of 2010. Photo by Andy Melton

Charles H. Peirce (pronounced Purse), a former Civil War captain in the Union army, brought his wife and six children with him when he started to serve as head keeper at Yaquina Bay Lighthouse. The Peirce's ninth child, Kate, was born on March 25, 1872, during the couple's first year at the lighthouse.

AN EARLY RETIREMENT

With increased maritime traffic along the Oregon Coast, the Lighthouse Board decided the area would be better served with a coastal light at Yaquina Head, just four miles to the north. The completion of Yaquina Head Lighthouse in 1873 eliminated the need for Yaquina Bay Lighthouse, and on October 1, 1874, Captain Peirce extinguished the light and moved his family to Cape Blanco, where he would serve as head keeper for ten years.

An effort was made to sell the station in 1877, but the offer received was so small that the property was retained. The following year, the Lighthouse Board noted that the structure "was in such wretched condition as to be almost uninhabitable." With the anticipated relighting of the station on the completion of a railroad from Willamette River to Yaquina Bay, the lighthouse's roof and outside sheathing were renewed in 1878 to "prevent the building from going to ruin." Egenton Hogg had plans to turn Yaquina Bay into a great seaport by making it the terminus of a transcontinental railroad. Hogg's Oregon Pacific Railroad extended from Yaquina Bay to the Cascades before he was forced to declare bankruptcy in 1890.

Yaquina Bay Lighthouse remained empty for fourteen years until the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers used it as a home for John Polhemus, the engineer in charge of the construction of the north jetty, a project that ran from 1888 to 1896. The November 20, 1889 edition of The Morning Oregonian contained the following article entitled "The Old Lighthouse Building Struck by Lightning."

In 1906, the U.S. Lifesaving Service quartered a crew in the lighthouse. The Lifesaving Service was merged with the Revenue Cutter Service in 1915 to form the U.S. Coast Guard, who built the steel observation tower on the property. The Coast Guard used the lighthouse until 1933, when it was again abandoned. A portion of the lighthouse reservation, including the lighthouse, was transferred to the State of Oregon in 1934 for public highway and park purposes, and picnic areas constructed near the lighthouse became a popular spot for taking pictures of the recently completed Yaquina Bay Bridge.

REVIVAL

With there lighthouse deserted and in disrepair, ghost stories abounded. Talk circulated of razing the structure, and it likely would have been had the Lincoln County Historical Society not be formed in 1948 to save the lighthouse. For three years, the organization tried in vain to raise the money necessary to preserve the structure. Preparations were again being made to demolish the lighthouse in 1951, when L.E. Warford, an Ohio industrialist raised in Oregon, joined the preservation campaign and spearheaded a movement to get national recognition for the structure. By 1955, the plans for demolition were abandoned, and in 1956, the lighthouse was dedicated as a historical site under the jurisdiction of the Lincoln County Historical Society. For the next eighteen years, the lighthouse served as a county museum despite being in poor condition.

In 1974, Oregon State Parks initiated a year-long, thorough restoration of the lighthouse and had it listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The lighthouse is the only existing wooden lighthouse in Oregon and is believed to be the oldest structure in Newport.

On December 7, 1996, the light was re-lit, using a 250mm modern optic donated by lighthouse historian James Gibbs, who had the privilege of throwing the ceremonial switch. The light is an official U.S. Coast Guard privately maintained aid to navigation and displays a fixed white light visible for six miles.

Cleft of the Rock Lighthouse

Nestled on the north spur of Cape Perpetua, under the shadow of the cape, is a privately owned lighthouse, marking the spot for vessels sailing the coast between Coos Bay and Yaquina Bay.

Built in 1976 by former lighthouse keeper and noted maritime historian Jim Gibbs, Cleft of the Rock Lighthouse takes its name from the hymn by Fanny J. Crosby, "He Hideth My Soul in the Cleft of the Rock," which is based on Exodus 33:22.

Mr. Gibbs designed the lighthouse as a replica of the former Fiddle Reef Lighthouse, which was located on Oak Bay near Victoria, British Columbia. Made of redwood siding originally painted driftwood grey, the tower stands thirty-four feet tall, has a focal plane of 110 feet above the sea, and serves as the entrance to the dwelling. Its optic, formerly used by the Canadian Coast Guard at sea-girt Solander Island off the west coast of Vancouver Island, sends out a beam from a small halogen globe that can be seen sixteen miles out to sea. The

Cleft of the Rock Light ca. 2012.

light has a signature of alternate white and red flashes every ten seconds.

The home and lighthouse have been a labor of love for Mr. Gibbs, who has incorporated several historic pieces from West Coast lighthouses into the décor. The stair railing from the original keepers dwelling at Yaquina Head is installed in the tower, and among many maritime treasures are two fourth-order Fresnel lenses - one from Semiahmoo Lighthouse and the other from Patos Island Lighthouse.

Mr. Gibbs, whose life has been devoted to all things maritime, began his career in the Coast Guard. He once recounted that he initially requested to be stationed on Scotch Cap Lighthouse on Unimak Island in Alaska. "Instead, I was sent to Tillamook Rock Lighthouse. I wasn't too thrilled, but it turned out to be a good thing. On April 1, 1946, Scotch Cap was hit by a large tsunami, knocking it completely off its foundation and killing the five men stationed there."

Since his Coast Guard days, he has authored twenty-one maritime books including Lighthouse of the Pacific (1986) and is considered an authority on Pacific Coast Lighthouses and Northwest shipwrecks.

His light at Cape Perpetua was not originally considered for a lighthouse designation because ocean traffic at this point travels well offshore, but in 1979, just over 200 years from Captain Cook's day of discovery, the light was made an official navigational aid. James Gibbs remained actively involved in the Oregon Lighthouse community until passing away at his beloved lighthouse in May 2010.

Heceta Head Lighthouse

Perched on a breathtaking bluff 150 feet above the sea, Heceta Head Lighthouse is one of the most-visited lighthouses in the United States, drawing thousands of visitors each year to sense its history, feel its romantic aura, and enjoy its spectacular setting.

For more than a century Heceta Head Lighthouse has helped seagoers navigate the Pacific Ocean's treacherous currents. The cape owes its name to Don Bruno de Heceta, who in 1775 embarked on a secret voyage for the Queen of Spain to sail up the West Coast. Due to the onslaught of scurvy, Heceta and his crew turned back just before the Columbia River, but not before he noted the shallow waters and rocky headland that now bear his name.

CONSTRUCTION AND EARLY YEARS

A century later, mariners frequenting the dark waters between Coos Bay and Newport asked for a lighthouse to guide their journeys up and down the coast. Heceta Head proved an ideal location, but the construction project in this isolated place was no small feat. In 1892, an order was placed with the Chance Brothers in England for a powerful First Order Fresnel Lens to be shipped to Heceta Head, where construction of two Queen Anne-style Lightkeepers' houses and Lighthouse tower had already begun. Building materials were transported over a single lane wagon road or placed on rafts and pushed overboard at Cape Cove to float ashore with the incoming tide.

On March 30, 1894, the lighthouse cast its first beam. The first eight years were trying times for the three Lightkeepers and their families who lived in the little community of Heceta Head. Many Lightkeepers were unable to handle the sparse and isolated conditions and moved on. Head Keeper Olaf Hansen worked for over fifteen years to make the Lightstation a sustainable community. Olaf started the vegetable gardens, a schoolhouse and the Heceta Head Post Office.

20TH CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

Much changed in the 1930s, when Oregon finished construction of U.S. Highway 101 and the Lightstation received electricty. Motorist frequently traveled up and down the Oregon Coast, which ended the Lightkeepers' years of isolation. Electricity allowed for a partially automated lighthouse, ending the duty of one Lightkeeper.

The 1930s ended with the retirement of the U.S. Lighthouse Service. Its successor, the U.S. Coast Guard, retired the Head Keeper's dwelling and sold the house for $10. The salvaged lumber returned to Mapleton to build what's now known as the Alpha Bit Store and Cafe.

During World War II, the Coast Guard Beach Patrol manned Heceta Head with 75 men.

Heceta Head Lighthouse. Photo taken by Carol M. Highsmith ca. 1980 - 2006

They guarded the beaches between Florence and Yachats with attack dogs and lived in 2 wooden barracks where the Head Keeper's house once stood.

TRANSFER TO THE US FOREST SERVICE

After WWII, the Coast Guard continued to man the Lightstation as an aide to navigation. Two men and their families remained at Heceta. In 1963, Head Lightkeeper Oswald Allick witnessed the end of the era of Lightkeepers when the Lighthouse was automated and turned over to computers. The Keeper's House was then turned over to the U.S. Forest Service.

From 1970 to 1995, the U.S. Forest Service leased the Keepers House to Lane Community College for use as a satellite campus. The wall dividing the two dining rooms was removed to create a classroom space. Students were

able to enjoy the Oregon Coast while taking classes, retiring afterwards to the second floor, which was furnished with bunk beds.

CONVERSION TO A BED AND BREAKFAST

When the Keepers House was placed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1973, the U.S. Forest Service looked for alternative uses that would allow the Keepers House to be more accessible to the public and to share the rich history. It was decided that a Bed & Breakfast would make this feasible.

Heceta Head entered a new era in 1995, when Mike and Carol Korgan were chosen to be the first Innkeeper's for the Heceta Lighthouse Bed & Breakfast. As volunteers, the Korgans helped start the careful restoration of the interior. Now retired, their daughter Michelle continues to restore the Keepers House. Its lens still casts a beam 21 miles (34 km) out to sea, making it the brightest light on the Oregon Coast. In 2013, the Heceta Head Lighthouse was completely restored including the lighthouse's metalwork, masonry, windows and lens machinery.

"Heceta Head Lighthouse is one of the most-visited lighthouses in the United States"

Distant photograph showing Heceta Head Lighthouse and Lighthousekeeper's house. Photo taken by Carol M. Highsmith ca. 1980 - 2006

Umpqua River Lighthouse

During the summer of 1849, the Coast Survey, headed by Alexander D. Bache, set out along the unmarked West Coast to determine the most beneficial locations for lighthouses. The mouth of the Umpqua River was selected as one of only six sites in the Oregon Territory, which included the modern day states of Oregon and Washington.

CONSTRUCTION

Local Native Americans had used the Umpqua River area as prime hunting and fishing grounds for centuries and were none too pleased to watch the progress being made on the lighthouse. Rather than confront the workers and risk an attack from nearby Fort Umpqua, they attempted to delay the work by stealing critical tools. Long winter storms also slowed progress until the spring of 1857.

Umpqua River Lighthouse consisted of a large Cape Cod duplex with a tower rising to a height of ninety-two feet from the center of its gabled roof and was similar to the structures being built at Cape Flattery and on Dungeness Spit. With the work complete, Keeper Fayette Crosby lit the lamp inside the tower's third-order Fresnel lens on October 10, 1857, making Umpqua River the first light along the Oregon Coast.

POOR PLANNING

Unfortunately, the survey crew that selected the sandy shore on the north side of the river mouth as the site for the lighthouse, never saw the river at flood stage. On February 8, 1861, a coastal gale combined with record mountain runoff to blast away at the lighthouse's foundation. With its footings compromised, the house and tower developed a slight tilt, and another violent storm in October 1863 made the situation even more precarious.

Living in constant fear that the entire structure would collapse with them in it, the keepers petitioned for the lighthouse to be abandoned, and in late January 1864, permission was granted. A week later, the lens was removed, and while workers were in the process of dismantling the iron lantern room, the tower began to shake and sway. The men dropped their work, fled for their lives, and watched from a safe distance as the tower came crashing down.

INTERIM PERIOD

The Lighthouse Board replaced the lighthouse with a buoy and decided that the interests of commerce would be best served by establishing a new light at Cape Arago, twenty-five miles to the south, rather than rebuilding at Umpqua River. With no lighthouse, maritime traffic used alternative ports, and commerce did not develop as originally hoped. Locals constantly petitioned for the lighthouse to be replaced, but their cries were in vain for more than two decades. Meanwhile, the ruins of the lighthouse served as a daymark for the mouth of the river.

Eventually, the Lighthouse Board desired the coast to be lit so that a ship would come into

the light of one beacon as it passed out of the rays of another. In October of 1888, $50,000 was appropriated for the construction of a second Umpqua River Lighthouse.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE SECOND LIGHTHOUSE

This time, with lesson learned, the lighthouse was built further inland on a headland above the mouth of the river, where it is the farthest away from a river or ocean of all the lighthouses along the Oregon Coast.

When it came time to install the lens in the tower. When this was attempted, it was found that the stand for the lens was fifteen inches too short and another $200 would be needed. Money to complete the station was not provided until August of 1894, and the light was finally established on December 31, 1894.

EARLY OPERATION

Marinus Stream from Astoria Oregon, the first head keeper of the new lighthouse, tragically drowned two years after arriving at the station. Despite the early tragedy, Umpqua River Lighthouse became a desired assignment for lightkeepers, perhaps because the station did not have a fog signal.

The longest serving head keeper at Umpqua Lighthouse was Captain Andrew P.C. Hald, who was in charge of the station from 1899 until 1921. At the age of fourteen, Hald left his native Denmark and served as a cabin boy aboard a full-rigged sailing ship. After years at sea, Hald enlisted in the Lighthouse Service. Hald had previously worked in assistant positions at Cape Flattery Lighthouse and then Cape Meares Lighthouse. Before coming to Umpqua River, Hald was in charge of the newly completed Heceta Head Lighthouse for five years. Hald was never once reprimanded during his thirty-three years of lighthouse service. Rather, his work was often lauded.

MODERNIZATION

In 1934, a generator building was built near the lighthouse, and the station was electrified. The light was automated in the 1960s, and all of the outbuildings were eventually torn down. Before automation, the light was active from one hour before sunset until one hour after sunrise, and curtains were drawn around the lantern room during the day to protect the lens from the sun. Now, the automated light is active twenty-four hours a day.

Northwest view of Umpqua River Lighthouse. Photo taken by Debbie Tegtmeier in June, 2011.

Over time, the chariot wheels wore out, and in November 1983, a temporary rotating beacon was installed on the tower to replace the lens. When the Coast Guard talked of discontinuing the Fresnel lens for good, the community rose in outrage. Hundreds of names were gathered from the surrounding communities of Gardiner, Reedsport, and Winchester Bay, and the help of congressmen and senators was enlisted to repair the lens. The Coast Guard eventually relented, and the lens went back in operation on January 14, 1985.

The lighthouse is located adjacent to Umpqua Lighthouse State Park and is managed by Douglas County, whose Umpqua River Lighthouse Museum is located 100 yards north of the lighthouse in the historic former U.S. Coast Guard Station Umpqua River.

Cape Arago Lighthouse

Long before white settlers arrived in 1853, the Coos Native Americans lived in villages near the bay that now bears their name. Just south of the entrance to Coos Bay and two-and-a-half miles north of Cape Arago (originally known as Cape Gregory), is a small, detached piece of land with sheer cliffs that the Coos Native Americans called Chief's Island. The shape of the island has been aptly described as a bony left-hand fist, with an extended index finger pointing northward. It was near the tip of this finger-like extension that the first Cape Arago Lighthouse would be erected in 1866.

After the arrival of white settlers, Coos Bay soon became one of the more important harbors along the Oregon Coast, and as the shipments of lumber and coal from the bay grew, so too did the need for a navigational aid to guide vessels to the bay.

CONSTRUCTION AND EARLY HISTORY

Cape Arago Lighthouse was originally built to serve as a substitution for the recently toppled one at Umpqua River. Cape Arago Lighthouse opened was illuminated on November 1, 1866 by Leonard C. Hall, its first head keeper.

The original Cape Arago Lighthouse. Photo courtesy of US Coast Guard

Rowboats were initially used to access the island, until a low bridge was constructed in 1876 to link the island with the mainland. High seas during a heavy gale in November 1877

cut short the bridge's life and washed away the station's boathouse and a portion of the tramway for hoisting supplies from the beach to the lighthouse. Rowboats were once again necessary until a new bridge was built. Several iterations of the low bridge to the island repeatedly washed away until a higher bridge was finally constructed.

A fog signal was eventually constructed, but it after been in operation for just over ten years, erosion on the point endangered the lighthouse and fog signal building.

SECOND AND THIRD LIGHTHOUSES

As a replacement, a lighthouse consisting of a wood-frame fog signal building with an attached octagonal tower was built near the keeper's duplex in 1907 and commenced operation in 1909.

After improvements to the station's lighthouse were recommended in 1932, the old wooden lighthouse was moved a short distance to serve as the keeper's office in 1934, and Jake Hillstrom, a Coos Bay contractor, constructed Cape Arago's third lighthouse. Perhaps

Early photo of third Cape Arago Lighthouse

seeking a more durable structure, the new lighthouse was constructed of concrete, using the plans from Washington's Point Robinson Lighthouse.

The only surviving structure on the island today is the third lighthouse. The original lighthouse was blown up with dynamite in 1936, the keeper's duplex was razed in 1957, and the second lighthouse met the same fate in the 1960s.

1953 aerial photograph of Chief island showing (right-to-left) the bridge, keeper's duplex, second lighthouse without its tower, third lighthouse, and unknown structure. Courtesy US Coast Guard

RETURN TO ORIGINAL OWNERS

Knowing that many of their ancestors had lived and were buried there, the Coos Native Americans continued to have a strong connection to Chief's Island and the nearby mainland, even after it had been reserved for nearly a century as a light station.

"Long before white settlers arrived in 1853, the Coos Native Americans lived in villages near the bay"

In 2007, Senator Gordon Smith submitted a provision that would transfer Cape Arago Lighthouse to the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians. This was not approved, but in 2008 Representative Peter DeFazio sponsored a bill covering just the transfer of Cape Arago, and this was passed by the House and Senate in September and signed by President George W. Bush on October 8, 2008.

During a ceremony held on August 3, 2013, Captain Mark Reynolds, Commander of Coast Guard Sector North Bend, signed over approximately twenty-four acres of land including Gregory Point and Chief's Island to the Confederated Tribes.

Coquille River Lighthouse

The Coquille River was a natural link to the timber in the area, but the bar at the mouth of the river, formed by the interaction of the river and ocean, was a major obstacle for ships entering the river. At times, only a few feet of water would cover the bar, but vessels still attempted to navigate the river in hopes of reaping the rewards that lay upstream. In 1880, Congress passed a bill funding the construction of a jetty on the south side of the river's entrance that created a deep channel, resulting in a rapid rise in the number of ships entering the river.

Photo of Coquille River Lighthouse and the surrounding area taken with a drone in October, 2015 by Luke Thornberry

CONSTRUCTION

Workers and supplies arrived on scene in April 1895, and one of the first tasks was to level the top of Rackliff Rock to provide a base for the lighthouse. Local stone was cut to form the structure's foundation, while the lighthouse itself was built of brick, covered with a layer of stucco. The design was unique with a cylindrical tower attached to the east side of an elongated, octagonal room containing the fog signal.

OPERATION

A forest fire swept into Bandon in September 1936 and consumed all but sixteen of the towns' 500 buildings. The lighthouse, separated from the fire by a water barrier, was not damaged, however, ash and soot found its way into the lighthouse requiring extra work of the keepers. The sick and invalid from the hospital at Bandon were transported across the river by the lighthouse tender Rose and sheltered at the lighthouse. Keeper Langlois and Charles Walters, his assistant, were commended by the Lighthouse Service for helping refugees during the fire.

An electrically-operated fog bell on the south jetty that went into operation in 1924.

CLOSURE AND CHANGES

In 1939, the Coast Guard assumed responsibility for Coquille River Lighthouse and decided it was no longer needed. An automated beacon was placed at the end of the south jetty, the dwelling was disassembled, and the lighthouse was abandoned. The lighthouse stood neglected for twenty-four years, until Bullards Beach State Park was created on the north side of the river. The grounds of the original eleven-acre light station were included in the park, and the park assumed responsibility for the lighthouse.

The damage inflicted on the lighthouse by time and vandals was too much for the park system to reverse by itself, but a joint restoration effort involving the state and the Army Corps of Engineers was launched in 1976. The lighthouse's roof was repaired, bricks were replaced, and the structure received a fresh coat of paint before it was opened to the public in 1979.

As part of the Bandon centennial celebration in 1991 (the city was incorporation in 1891), a solar-powered light was placed in the tower. The lighthouse is further illuminated in December, when it is decorated with festive lights.

Violent winter storms deposit piles of driftwood on the beach near the lighthouse and have eaten away at the lighthouse's foundation. To correct this problem, a restoration effort, costing over $600,000, was carried out during the summer of 2007. The project included removing damaged stucco, repainting the exterior, replacing the roof, adding a false chimney, and repairing copper flashing. The colors used to paint the lighthouse were reportedly found on some older layers of stucco, but some locals strongly oppose the new color scheme and insist that white is the historically accurate color.

Cape Blanco Lighthouse

Cape Blanco juts out one-and-a-half miles into the Pacific Ocean from Oregon's southern coast and terminates in a large headland with 200-foot cliffs along most of its perimeter. These chalky, white cliffs prompted early Spanish explorers to name this landmark, which is the most westerly point in Oregon, Cape Blanco or White Cape.

The town of Port Orford was established two decades before construction of Cape Blanco lighthouse. Louis Knapp, proprietor of the town's Knapp Hotel, was so concerned about the safety of the mariners navigating this dangerous section of the Oregon coast, that he kept a lantern burning nightly in the hotel's large window that overlooked the sea. The light burning brightly just up the coast at Umpqua River light made Knapp's lamp unnecessary.

Cape Blanco Lighthouse at sunset. Photo taken by Anita Ritenour in 2010

EARLY YEARS

The station's first principal keeper was Harvey B. Burnap, who was serving at Oregon's first lighthouse at Umpqua River when it collapsed in 1863.

Due to its exposed location, Cape Blanco was often buffeted by strong winds. The roof of the keepers' dwelling was seriously damaged by a gale in February 1878, and during another storm on October 14th of that year, a large portion of the roof was torn off and the walls of the gable damaged. The roof was repaired the following year, and solid shutters were installed on the exposed sides of the dwelling to prevent the windows from being broken during sand and gravel squalls.

James Langlois and James Hughes were both stationed at Cape Blanco Lighthouse for their entire career, which lasted forty-two years for Langlois and thirty-seven years for Hughes. Hopefully they got along well, as they spent most of those years at the lighthouse together. Hughes was the second son of Patrick and Jane Hughes, whose 2,000-acre ranch bordered the lightstation property. The ranch is now Cape Blanco State Park, and the Hughes' home, a two-story Victorian built in 1898 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, remains standing and is open to the public for tours.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

Around 1912, a hood was placed around the lamp inside the Fresnel lens, and a clockwork

mechanism was used to raise and lower the hood to produce the following flashing signature: two-second eclipse, light for three seconds, two-second eclipse, light for thirteen seconds. In 1936, the original lens was replaced by a second-order revolving lens with eight bull's-eyes. The new lens, rotated by an electric motor powered by a generator, produced a white flash every twenty seconds. The motor and lens are still operating in the tower today.

A radiobeacon was placed in commission on the cape on November 30, 1925 to help mariners determine their location during periods of limited visibility. The beacon would transmit groups of three dashes followed by a dot. During the winter of 1932, severe storms swept the Pacific Northwest. Winds reached a velocity of 100 mph at Cape Blanco, ripping asbestos slates from roofs, blowing fences down, and driving pebbles like bullets through the lantern's plate glass.

MODERN CHANGES

The historic keeper's dwellings were torn down between 1967 and 1974. The station was automated and de-staffed in 1980. Twelve years later, two local teenagers broke into the lighthouse and, using a sledgehammer, smashed one of the lens' bull's-eyes and six smaller prisms. The boys were eventually apprehended and convicted. After a nation-wide search, Larry Hardin, of Hardin Optical Company in nearby Bandon, was selected to repair the lens. By the spring of 1994, the lens had been restored using Corning Pyrex, at a cost of $80,000.

Stairs inside Cape Blanco Light. Photo taken in June, 2009 by Eric Riback

After years of being off-limits, Cape Blanco Lighthouse was once again opened to visitors on April 1, 1996.

In September 2002, the Fresnel lens was removed from the tower for restoration work as the caulking, which cemented the thousands of prisms to the brass frame, was starting to deteriorate. Hardin Optical of Bandon was again tasked to work on the lens, and succeeded in disassembling and recaulking the lens. The lighthouse itself underwent restorative work in the Spring of 2003, when the tower's copper roof and lantern room windows were replaced, and the brickwork was repaired and painted. Shortly after Memorial Day of 2003, the reunited tower and lens were once again open to visitors.

Cape Blanco's two keepers' dwellings, oil house, water tower, and other utility buildings are all long gone, but the majestic tower, the centerpiece of the station, remains, and visitors are allowed to ascend the spiral staircase to the lantern room for an impressive view of the repaired lens and surrounding coastline.

Pelican Bay Lighthouse

As the newest lighthouse on the Oregon Coast, Pelican Bay can signal up to 12 miles out to sea. It was first lit in 1999, and stands 141 feet above sea level. This lighthouse is not open to the public, but can be viewed from Brookings Harbor.

Pelican Bay Lighthouse overlooks the Port of Brookings Harbor and the mouth of the Chetco River. Built as an addition to an existing house, Pelican Bay Light is maintained by the Cady family of Brookings.

HISTORY

The Pelican Bay lighthouse is one of the newest in the United States and the second private lighthouse in Oregon. Bill Cady wanted to add a lighthouse to his home. He moved his home to its current location, perched on the corner of a 100 foot cliff, in 1997. The lighthouse was added and the tower is 141 feet above the Pacific Ocean. The Coast Guard commissioned the lighthouse as a private aid to navigation on June 24, 1999 and it was first lit on July 4, 1999.

Pelican Bay lighthouse tower. Photo taken on June 7, 2006 by Christine and Tom Cardaci

The lamp is a fixed acrylic Fresnel lens and turns on at dusk and off at dawn and can be seen 11 miles away. The $3,000 clear lens runs on 110 alternating current. Inside there are four 12 volt lamps each with a life of 3,000 hours. If one light burns out, the bulb is automatically replaced with the next one by means of a built-in changer. The Coast Guard Station is nearby. You can see California's St. George Reef lighthouse far off shore to the southwest.

Photo of Pelican Bay Lighthouse and the attached house

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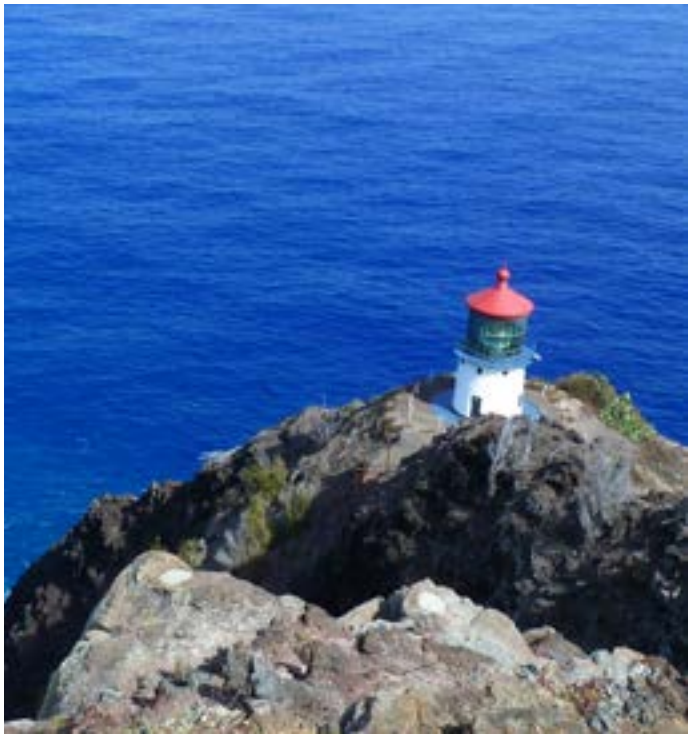
Portland Head Lighthouse in Portland, Maine



Makapu'u Point Lighthouse in O'ahu, Hawai'i