



# The Docent Diaries of the Point Pinos Lighthouse

— First Lit 1855 —

*The Oldest Continuously Operating Lighthouse on the West Coast*

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## The 1855 Survival Game

Curious how you'd fare in 1855 (the time of our first lighthouse keepers)? Check out our 1855 Survival Game!

<https://www.pointpinoslighthouse.org/1855>

Why bring this up? As docents we are in the history game. What would it be like to live in 1855, 1890, 1920, 1945 or even the present? By contrasting the different time periods we can imagine what it was like for our parents, grandparents, even great grandparents.

I have actually interacted with at least six people in my life who were born in the 19th century. Imagine life before phones, radios, airplanes, even cars. My great grandmother remembered having to wait for the morning stage to get into town. She would have passed the above quiz easily.

Review the news over the last few years, lots of disasters, wars, diseases, etc. Life happens all around us, and sometimes, even to us. Could we survive? Do we have enough survival skills to make it through a Paradise Fire, a Loma Prieta earthquake, or even last year's winter storms, which brought down a thousand trees in Monterey County? Power was out for days, houses were destroyed, roads impassible. What skills did you have to call on to do what needed to be done? Never too late to become prepared!

by c. patton

## Assistant Keepers Helped RLS

Anson Smith was an assistant keeper for Charlotte Layton, the first woman principal keeper on the West Coast of the U.S., and then for her second husband, George Harris. After Smith's time at the lighthouse, 1859-1861, Jonathan Wright was the assistant for George Harris 1862-1863.

Years later, around 1877, Smith and Wright purchased land in Carmel Valley together, raising Angora goats and then honey bees. Smith was known as a bear hunter for keeping them away from the honey.

By 1879, Robert Louis Stevenson arrived in Monterey where he visited lighthouse keeper Allen Luce. While camping in Carmel Valley and becoming sick, he was cared for by Anson Smith as his physician in the cabin of Jonathan Wright.

The graves of Jonathan Wright and his family are in the Monterey City Cemetery near that of Charlotte Layton Harris and George Harris.



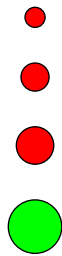
# *The Decent Diaries of the Point Pinos Lighthouse*

## **Restoration Report**

Work continues on the lantern room panels.  
Only two panels left to do!



Front steps have been repaired, a major undertaking! Much safer for everyone.



## **Help Needed!**

We are missing portraits, photos, drawings, even a description of some of our keepers.

Are you able to help us? Looking for:

Charles Layton (1854 – 1856)  
Charlotte Layton (1856 – 1860)  
George Harris (1860 – 1863)  
Allen Luce (1871 – 1893)  
Richard Williams (1919-1931)

William F. Wilkinson (1955-1957)  
Truman E. Cook (1957-1960)  
Frank Tower (1960-1964)

**Assistant keeper images  
welcome too!**



## **Keeper Peter C. Nelson**

(1931-1938)



Capt. Peter C. Nelson, 1871-1964, served as Principal Keeper at Point Pinos from 1931 to 1938 and called this duty "cream of the crop." Peter and his wife grew roses and dahlias behind the lighthouse during these years. He refuted the notion that lighthouse duty was a lonely and isolated existence. He and his family had many visitors at the lighthouse and entertained them by playing the harmonica. Prior to his coming to Point Pinos, Nelson had served 39 years in the Lighthouse Service, starting as 3rd assistant at Pt. Sur Light Station. He served 30 years at Lime Point Lighthouse and Fog Signal Station, located near water level at the Golden Gate. He transferred to Pt. Pinos right before construction began on the Golden Gate bridge. He and his family watched in horror across the water as San Francisco burned after the great 1906 earthquake. A lot of debris washed by the lighthouse.

## **Tech Corner**

### **Plaque Commemorating our Fog Signals**



### **Learn more**

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