

Point Cabrillo Light Station

State Historic Park



Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at **(707) 937-5804**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact interp@parks.ca.gov.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

P.O. Box 942896

Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

For information call: (800) 777-0369

(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.

711, TTY relay service

www.parks.ca.gov

Discover the many states of California.™

Point Cabrillo Light Station

State Historic Park

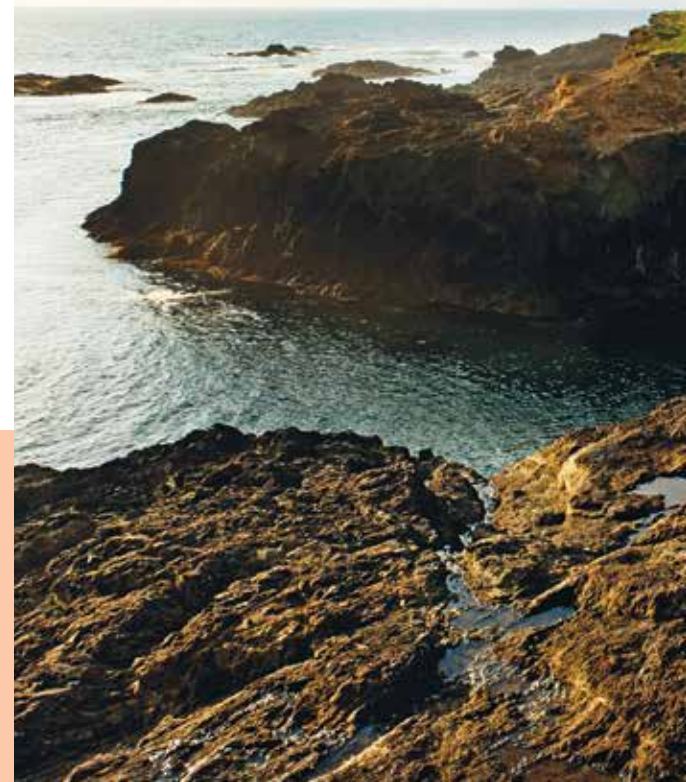
13800 Point Cabrillo Drive

Mendocino, CA 95460

(707) 937-5804

Northern harrier photo courtesy of Ron LeValley

*Point Cabrillo Light
Station has ensured
the safety of thousands
of ships traveling the
treacherous waters off
Point Cabrillo.*



Point Cabrillo Light Station State Historic Park

is a living link to California's history, featuring a beautifully rehabilitated 1909 lighthouse and 11 other structures, including three lightkeepers' homes. In a nearby cove rest the remains of the *Frolic*, the most important Gold Rush-era shipwreck in California.

Located four miles north of Mendocino, the park's 296.5 acres of open space include an impressive variety of wildlife and hiking trails.

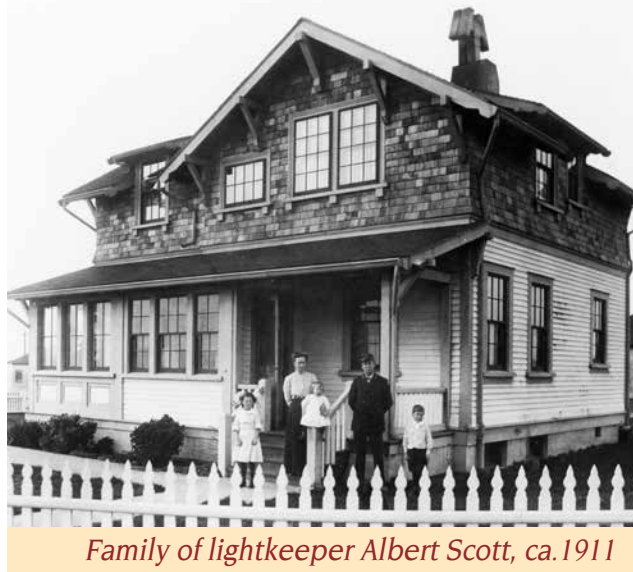
PARK HISTORY

Native People

For thousands of years, the resource-rich waters and headlands around Point Cabrillo were the summer hunting and gathering grounds of the Pomo people. The Pomo moved here from their inland encampments in early summer to harvest abalone, mussels, seals and sea lions, deer, kelp, and salt. These foods were carried to their permanent villages and stored for the winter.

In the late 1850s, settlers and lumbermen began using the lands for grazing and harvesting timber for railroad ties. As the influx of settlers increased, the Pomo way of life was forever altered.

Today Pomo descendants occupy parts of their ancestral lands and have revived their language and traditions.



Family of lightkeeper Albert Scott, ca. 1911

The Wreck of the *Frolic*

In 1850, the clipper brig *Frolic*, on its way to San Francisco with a cargo of Chinese housewares, struck a reef just north of Point Cabrillo. After securing the wrecked ship in

what is now Frolic Cove, the captain and some crew took longboats to carry word of the wreck south to Fort Ross. In 1851, Henry Meiggs, a San Francisco businessman, sent Jerome Ford north in hopes of salvaging cargo. By then, the ship had sunk, but not before the Pomo had removed Chinese ginger jars, bolts of silk, camphor, lacquered trunks, housewares, and other items. Ford found Pomo women wearing splendid silk shawls, but no cargo was left to salvage.

Ford told his employer about the lack of salvageable cargo, but he noted that there were groves of redwood and Douglas-fir in the area. A year later, Meiggs had sawmill equipment shipped around Cape Horn and erected a mill at Big River. This led to the founding of Mendocino and the beginning of the timber industry in Northern California. Local mills supplied wood to construct the Point Cabrillo Light Station.

The Light Station

Out to a distance of about 14 miles, the Point Cabrillo Light Station signaled coastside danger to all ships, including small “doghole” schooners that sailed the Pacific waters.

Construction of the Point Cabrillo lighthouse began in 1908 and was completed in early 1909. The Light Station complex, comprising 30.5 acres and 15 structures, was managed by the U.S. Lighthouse Service. The Head Lightkeeper was in charge of the Light Station, overseeing the work of the First Assistant (the Wickie) and the Second Assistant (the Timer). The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) assumed command of the Point Cabrillo Light Station in 1939 and managed it until 1991.

The Lens

The third-order Fresnel (fray-*nel*) lens—the most advanced example of lens technology at the time—was first lit on June 10, 1909, by Wilhelm Baumgartner, the first Head Lightkeeper. One of twelve in the U.S., the British-built lens was manufactured by Chance Brothers and shipped around the Horn. The lens has 90 glass prism pieces; the original lens was rotated by a wind-up clockworks mechanism.



Frolic Cove

The oil lamp and clockworks were replaced by electric lamps and motors in 1934 and 1935, respectively. In 1972 an automated beacon was installed outside the lantern room; the electric lamp of the Fresnel lens inside the lantern room was extinguished, and the lens was shrouded. The United States Coast Guard and volunteers restored the original Fresnel lens and reactivated it as a Federal Aid to Navigation in 1999.

The beam shining through this restored lens—visible from 14 miles at sea on a clear night—is currently provided by a 1,000-watt lamp, operational around the clock.



Volunteer with Fresnel lens today

Rehabilitation and Restoration

The California Coastal Conservancy supported and funded the acquisition of the property in 1991. The Conservancy provided grants, joined with private donations, to rehabilitate the Lighthouse, its lens, the Blacksmith/Carpenter Shop, and Oil House.

California State Parks acquired the Light Station and surrounding property in 2002. That year, rehabilitation of the lightkeepers' houses and three outbuildings began. Restoration of all structures and the grounds has been overseen by the nonprofit

Point Cabrillo Lightkeepers Association, by agreement with California State Parks.

The Point Cabrillo Restoration Project received the 2007 Governor's Historic Preservation Award and the California Preservation Foundation's Preservation Design Award.

With 12 of its original 15 buildings, Point Cabrillo is one of the most complete light stations in the U.S. Currently, four of its buildings are open to visitors, and the vacation rental buildings are open to registered guests.

NATURAL HISTORY

The Light Station sits on the second of five coastal terraces that were pushed up from the ocean floor by plate tectonics. Native plants have adapted to high winds, drenching winter rains, foggy summers, and salt spray. Native grasses are evident today, but are usually covered by invasive European grasses. Seasonally, look for more than 50 species of birds, including northern harriers, white-tailed kites, osprey, black oystercatchers, and cormorants. From the bluff tops, visitors may see gray, orca, or humpback whales. Dolphins, seals, sea lions, or a rare blue whale may also be spotted.



Northern harrier

EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

The Light Station hosts an annual Whale Festival in March, four summer Lantern Room tours, and school field trips. Call (707) 937-6122 for details.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Two parking lots near the Museum and vacation rentals are reserved for cars with disabled placards or plates. The Visitor Center, Lightkeeper's Museum, Blacksmith Shop/Marine Science Aquarium, and the first floors of the vacation rental homes and Lighthouse are accessible.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- Water safety**—Stay back from the water's edge to avoid large rogue waves and strong currents that can sweep people out to sea.
- All of the park's natural, underwater, and cultural features are protected by state law and may not be disturbed or removed.
 - Pets must be kept on a six-foot leash.
 - Driving off designated roads is not allowed.
 - Bicyclists must stay on trails.
 - Fishing is not allowed within the park.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Jug Handle State Natural Reserve
15501 North Highway 1
Caspar 95420 (707) 937-5804
- Russian Gulch State Park
9500 North Highway 1, Mendocino 95460
(707) 937-5804

This park is managed by the Point Cabrillo Lightkeepers Association.











All proceeds from visitors, events, weddings, vacation rentals, and interpretive sales go directly to maintenance and education at Point Cabrillo.

Point Cabrillo Lightkeepers Association
P.O. Box 641, Mendocino, CA 95460
(707) 937-6122 www.pointcabrillo.org

Point Cabrillo Light Station

State Historic Park

Legend

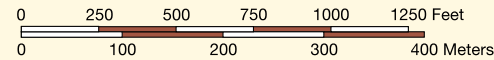
-  Paved Road
-  Unpaved Road
-  Hiking Trail
-  Accessible Feature
-  Building
-  Lighthouse
-  Parking
-  Restrooms
-  Trailhead
-  Visitor Center



1850 Frolic Shipwreck Site

Frolic Cove

PRIVATE PROPERTY



to 1 northbound

Point Cabrillo Drive

POINT CABRILLO LIGHT STATION STATE HISTORIC PARK

No Vehicles Past this Point

Lighthouse Road

North Trail

Park Entrance

Point Cabrillo Lighthouse and Museum

Blacksmith Shop/ Marine Science Aquarium

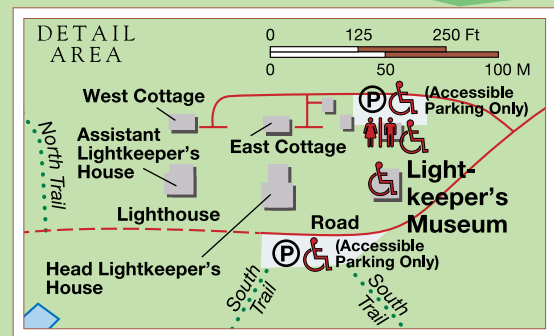
South Trail

see detail area map lower right

Road use limited to authorized vehicles and those displaying disabled placards.
No other vehicles permitted.
1/2 mile walk from parking lot to lighthouse

PRIVATE PROPERTY

Point Cabrillo Drive



to 1 southbound