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Step Into the Light

Old Point Loma Lighthouse | Cabrillo National Monument



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Safety • Stewardship • Storytelling

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Why We're Here Today

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- Understand how Open Tower Day operates
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Review safety and visitor flow
- Strengthen storytelling within the tower

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What is Open Tower Day?



- A special opportunity for visitors to enter the lighthouse tower
- Offered three times per year
- Provides rare access to a space normally closed for preservation
- Requires coordinated staffing to ensure safety and smooth flow

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Why These Dates Matter

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Open Tower Days are scheduled to honor key milestones in the history of the lighthouse and the National Park Service:

- March 22: Anniversary of the extinguishing of the light (1891)
- August 25: National Park Service Founders Day (1916)
- November 15: Anniversary of the first lighting of the lighthouse (1855)

These dates connect public access to meaningful moments in the story of the Old Point Loma Lighthouse.

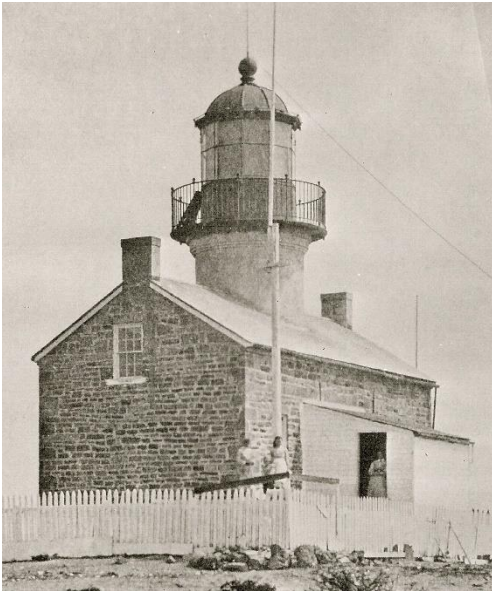
The Old Point Loma Lighthouse



- First lit November 15, 1855
- Positioned 422 feet above sea level
- Extinguished March 22, 1891, due to fog
- Replaced by the current Point Loma Lighthouse

Life at the Point Loma Lighthouse

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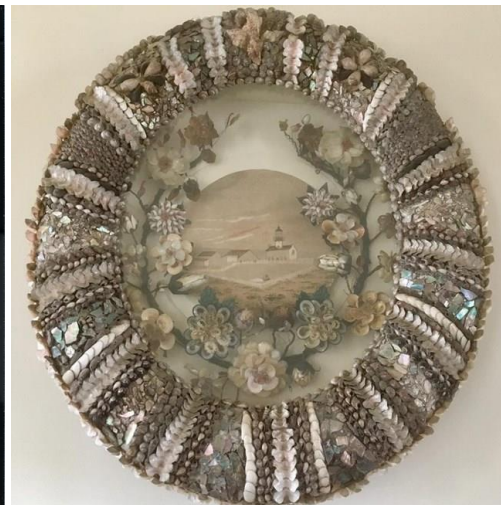
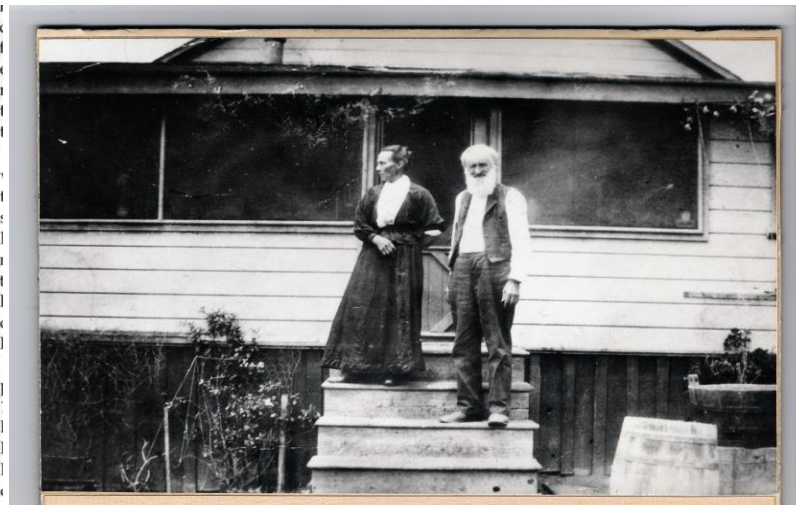
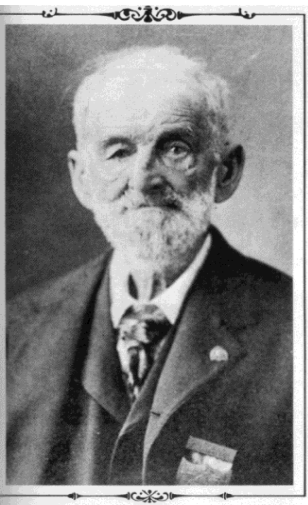
- A 24/7 responsibility - no days off
- Families lived onsite, often in isolation
- The kitchen was the heart of daily life
- Women served as lighthouse keepers nationwide

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The Israel Family

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- Robert Israel served as Keeper beginning in 1873
- María Israel served officially as Assistant Keeper
- They raised their family inside the lighthouse
- María crafted abalone shell frames to supplement income
- Their service ended when the light was extinguished in 1891

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How the Day Will Run



- Event hours: 10:00 AM - 3:30 PM
- Guided tours every 15 minutes
- Each tour lasts approximately 30 minutes
- Maximum of 10 visitors per group
- 10-minute limit at the top of the tower
- Structured staffing supports smooth flow and safety

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30-Minute Tour Flow



00:00 – 00:05

Welcome & Introduction (Kitchen Garden / Flagpole)

00:05 – 00:08

Life at the Lighthouse (brief family & keeper context)

00:08 – 00:12

Entrance Orientation (rules, safety, structure)

00:12 – 00:15

Parlor & Bedrooms (brief interpretive stops)

00:15 – 00:25

Tower Experience (10 minutes maximum)

00:25 – 00:30

Descent → Kitchen Exit → Closing

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Keeping Visitors Safe

 **Group size:** Max 10 visitors per tour

 **Bags:** Must be checked or left in vehicles

 **Shoes:** Closed-toed required for ladder access

 **Height:** Minimum 48 inches (approx. 4 ft) to climb

 **Ladder:** Visitors must climb unassisted

 **Accessibility:** Tower is not ADA accessible

 **Fresnel Lens:** *Look, but do not touch*



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How Our Roles Work Together

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- **Tour Guide**
Operational Lead for the entire 30-minute experience
- **Tower Top – Safety Support (Lens)**
Monitors ladder safety, timing, and lens protection
- **Tower Top – Gallery Interpreter**
Provides interpretation and supports visitor flow
- **Front of Lighthouse (Ticket, Bag Check, Entrance)**
Manages visitor screening and flow
- **Floater**
Flexible support and break coverage
- **All Roles**
Radio 799 if assistance is needed

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Tour Guide: Leading the Experience

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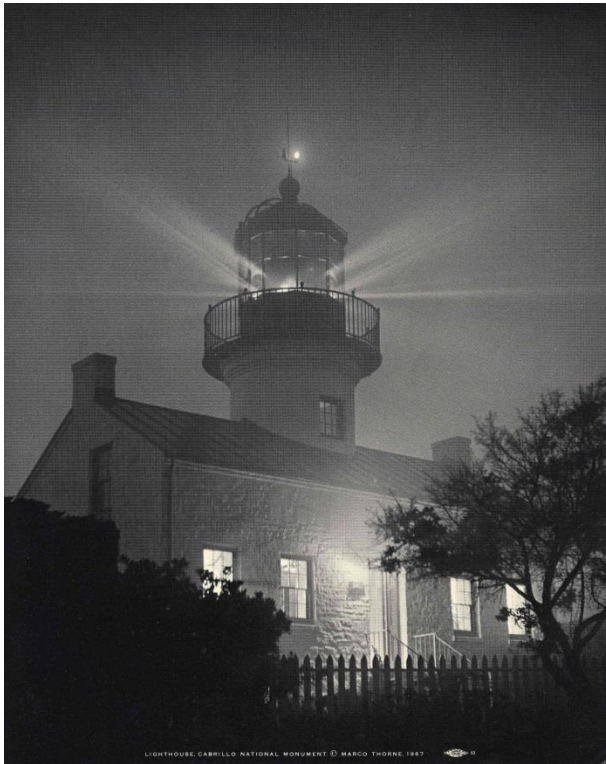
- Meet group near Kitchen Garden
- Confirm tickets and safety requirements
- Maximum 10 visitors per group (no exceptions)
- Lead full 30-minute experience
- Keep group on schedule
- Maintain 10-minute tower limit
- Use clear transition statements

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Setting the Tone



- Welcome visitors warmly
- Use short, focused stories
- Keep the tour moving with clear transitions
- Answer questions briefly and continue after the tour if needed
- End with appreciation

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Front of the Lighthouse



Ticket Table

- Confirm safety requirements
- Ensure full party is present
- Track attendance accurately

Bag Check

- Use matching card system
- Never leave bags unattended

Entrance

- Count every visitor
- Admit ticketed guests only

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Inside the Lighthouse



Parlor & Kitchen

- Deliver brief, focused room talks
- Protect furnishings
- Maintain visitor flow

Top Tower – Safety Support

- Enforce ladder safety
- Protect the lens
- Start and monitor 10-minute timer

Top Tower – Gallery Interpreter

- Deliver short interpretive talk
- Support timing and safe movement

Floater

- Provide break coverage
- Support high-traffic areas



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Key Stories to Highlight



- Life of the lighthouse keeper and family
- The Fresnel lens and tending the light
- Women in lighthouse service
- Why the light was extinguished in 1891

The Heart of the Lighthouse

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- 3rd Order Fresnel Lens
- Focused light into a powerful beam visible over 20 miles
- Required constant tending from sunset to sunrise
- Symbol of vigilance and responsibility
- Look, do not touch

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360° Lighthouse Walkthrough



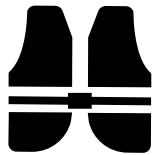
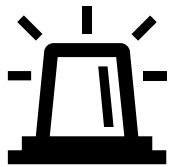
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- Station positioning and movement
- Ladder approach and timing
- Tower top placement
- Traffic flow and tight spaces
- Descent and exit path

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When Things Don't Go as Planned



- Safety always comes first
- Stop the tour if something feels unsafe
- Weather may delay or cancel tower access
- Visitors who do not meet requirements cannot climb
- Radio 799 for assistance

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Questions + Final Reminders



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- Arrive 15 minutes before your shift
- Review your VicNet assignment in advance
- Dress appropriately for weather conditions
- Bring water and stay hydrated
- Light snacks and refreshments will be available in the basement
- Thank you for supporting safe and meaningful access to the lighthouse

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Resources

 Room Talking Points (Parlor, Kitchen, Bedrooms)

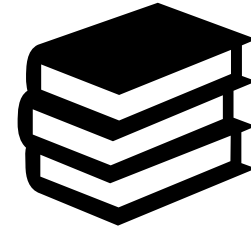
 30-minute Tour Outline

 Lighthouse History Quick Facts

 Female Lighthouse Keepers overview

 Open Tower Day Roles & Responsibilities

 VIP Voice Article: <https://cnmvipvoice.org/an-overview-of-the-old-point-loma-lighthouse/>



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