

SAVED BY POST

*Whaler's Cove*

AT PIGEON POINT

LANDSCAPES & SUMMER 2000  
PENINSULA OPEN SPACE TRUST



# Preserving the San Mateo Coast



## *Whaler's Cove at Pigeon Point*

**S**ince 1993, POST has attempted to acquire and protect Whaler's Cove, a scenic beachfront property on Highway 1 adjacent to the Pigeon Point Lighthouse. When construction of a motel on the site began last year, our efforts intensified.

Our patience and persistence paid off in May,

when we were able to purchase Whaler's Cove for \$2.65 million. Located 21 miles south of Half Moon Bay between Pescadero and Año Nuevo State Reserve, the three-acre parcel includes four buildings, a water purification system and sewage treatment facilities, all of which will be removed.





**T**he purchase of Whaler's Cove is a very important and symbolic achievement for POST. Our goal is to preserve the extraordinary, rural character of the coast and prevent it from being compromised by building and development. The motel would have been the first commercial development west of Highway 1 between the county of Santa Cruz and Half Moon Bay.

POST's acquisition accomplishes several things. It allows us to restore beach access to Whaler's Cove, which was closed to public use in 1994, and remove visual obstructions from a beautiful piece of coastline. It also eliminates possible run-off from the water desalination and sewage treatment plants which could have degraded the bluff and polluted the tide pools at Whaler's Cove.





Photos: Robert Buckman

**K**nown as the Lighthouse Inn, the motel was to include three bungalow-style buildings, each containing three units. While adamantly opposed by historians and environmentalists, it was approved in 1996 by the San Mateo County Planning Commission, Regional Water Quality Control Board and California Coastal Commission.

Construction was delayed by water and sewage treatment issues, finally commencing in late 1999. The shells of the buildings had been completed before work was halted last month when POST and the previous landowner, Lighthouse Inn at Pigeon Point, LLC, reached agreement on the terms of the sale.

Pigeon Point Lighthouse, now a State Historical Park, was established in 1872 after a series of shipwreck disasters in the area. The name, Pigeon Point, comes from the clipper ship, Carrier Pigeon, which ran aground and sank at the spot in 1853 on its maiden voyage from Boston to San Francisco.

The lighthouse is now owned by the Coast Guard and leased to the California State Department of Parks and Recreation. From the lighthouse, visitors can observe migrating whales, seals, sea lions, elephant seals, and many species of seabirds.

POST plans to turn the property over to the state park system, which now maintains the lighthouse and an adjacent youth hostel. The hostel originally housed the Coast Guard personnel who manned the station from 1939-1972, when the light became automated. Before bulldozing the structures, we will attempt to recycle the four buildings for other possible uses, such as environmental education or farm labor housing.

While this property is much smaller than many of our recent acquisitions, Audrey Rust, POST President, regards it as one of our most significant. “The lighthouse is a very visible symbol of our efforts to save the coastline,” she said. “The planned construction of the facility next to the lighthouse was a signal that the coast is very vulnerable. The fact that we have been able to stop it gives people hope that we can work together to prevent further development.”

Thanks to your ongoing support, POST was able to commit the resources necessary to acquire this property. The \$2.65 million we paid for Whaler’s Cove was borrowed from our land acquisition fund, moneys that must be replenished so we have the necessary working capital in place for future land purchases. We need your additional support now to help save the coast when new opportunities arise. There are a number of ways we can recognize your contributions at the Whaler’s Cove site.



# *A Bit of Pigeon Point's Rich History*

"We learn that the clipper ship Carrier Pigeon, Captain Doane, 130 days from Boston, drifted ashore on Monday night about 25 miles south of the heads. Captain Doane came ashore and dispatched three Spaniards on horseback with a note... that the ship had bilged and would be a total loss."

SAN FRANCISCO HERALD, JUNE 8, 1853

On the evening of June 5, 1853, a clipper ship on its maiden voyage ran aground on the California coastline 50 miles south of San Francisco. The disaster was the first of several tragic losses in the area that 19 years later led to the establishment of a lighthouse. It also was the origin of the name, Pigeon Point.

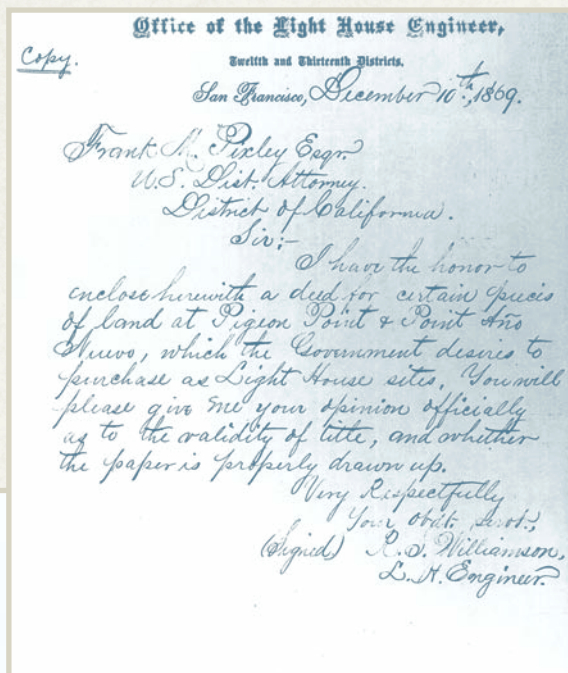
With a finely-carved gilded pigeon gracing its bow, the Carrier Pigeon had sailed for San Francisco from Boston on January 28, 1853, carrying 1300 tons of cargo. Four months into its journey, the ship encountered several days of dense fog off the California coast. On June 5, lost in a thick blanket of fog near Point Año Nuevo, it was pulled by strong currents into the rocky shoreline. All hands were saved, but the ship was a total loss. The point where the wreck occurred thereafter became known as Pigeon Point.

The fog, gales, current and reefs at Pigeon Point caused several other high-profile shipwrecks,

including the Sir John Franklin in 1865 and the Hellespont in 1868. Pressure increased on the government for the construction of a lighthouse to warn mariners of the dangers of the coast.

An editorial in the November 28, 1868 edition of the *San Mateo County Times-Gazette* argued: "The recent terrible wreck of the ship 'Hellespont' at Pigeon Point in this county which resulted in the loss of eleven of her crew... constitutes another appeal to the government at Washington for the establishment of a lighthouse at Pigeon Point. Several vessels have been wrecked in that vicinity within the past few years... Thousands upon thousands of dollars are monthly expended from the national treasury for matters of much less

benefit to the country than would be the construction of a lighthouse at this point."



Photos: San Mateo County Historical Museum



**B**y 1871, the U.S. Lighthouse Service had purchased a site at Pigeon Point for \$5,000 and installed a foghorn to warn ships away from the rocks. The steam whistle was fueled by wood and could be heard up to two miles out at sea.

A year later, the 115-foot tall Pigeon Point Light Station was erected. The reinforced tower was built from approximately 500,000 locally-made bricks. The lantern room was constructed at the U.S. Lighthouse Service General Depot in New York and shipped around the Horn. A 136-step spiral staircase provided access to the five-wick land oil lamp and Fresnel lens. The lens, manufactured in France and comprised of more than 1,000 prisms, previously had been in service at the Cape Hatteras Light Station in North Carolina. It showed white flashes of light every ten seconds and could be seen from the deck of a vessel at a distance of 18 1/2 nautical miles.

The lighthouse was illuminated for the first time on November 15, 1872. Initially operated by the men and women of the U.S. Lighthouse Service, it was manned by the U.S. Coast Guard from 1939 to 1972, when the original Fresnel lens was replaced

by an automated 24-inch Aero Beacon. The fog horn was discontinued in 1976 after loran, radar and other electronic systems made sound signals obsolete.

Prior to the wreck of the *Carrier Pigeon*, Pigeon Point had been called *Punta de las Balenas*, or Whale Point, after the gray whales that frequently pass offshore as they migrate between the Arctic and Mexico. In the 17th and 18th centuries, ships rarely passed the Point. However, after gold was discovered in California in 1848, hundreds of vessels carrying passengers and cargoes to the booming town of San Francisco transformed the waters off Pigeon Point into a well-traveled marine highway.

In the late 1800s, a trading village and whaling station operated at the Point. Lumber, hides, tallow and farm products were bartered and shipped to San Francisco, while Portuguese whalers harpooned gray whales and hauled them onto the shores for rendering.

Today, Pigeon Point Light Station is recognized as one of America's most beautiful and historic lighthouses. It is a popular stop for travelers enjoying the natural beauty of the California coast.



*Photo: Robert Buelteman*





## Appreciating Whaler's Cove

**T**wenty-one miles south of Half Moon Bay between Año Nuevo State Reserve and Pescadero, Whaler's Cove at Pigeon Point is a beautiful piece of California coastline with spectacular views, a secluded beach, fascinating tidepools and rock formations, and endless opportunities for whale and bird-watching. If POST had not stepped in, this beautiful piece of property would have been accessible only to guests of the Lighthouse Inn and limited school groups.

Now, public access to the beach and tidepools will be restored, ensuring that all residents of the Bay Area and visitors to the San Mateo Coast will be able to enjoy the wild and rural character of this extraordinary property.

At Whaler's Cove, gray whales can be observed in early winter and spring during their migrations

between the Bering Sea and Baja California. Harbor seals can be spotted foraging nearby, along with elephant seals, otters, sea lions, dolphins and humpback whales.

The Cove is also a bird-watchers paradise regarded as one of the finest vantage points for observing seabirds anywhere on the California Coast. The area's accessibility, geography, and deep ocean waters close to the shore combine to produce excellent birding possibilities. The prime time of the year is during spring migration (March – May), when thousands of northbound loons, scoters, brant, cormorants, shearwaters, gulls, terns and shorebirds pass this promontory.

Over 50 species of seabirds have been spotted, including the resident American Black Oystercatcher, as well as Wandering Tattlers, Surfbirds, Black Turnstones, and Marbled Murrelets.

In addition to seabirds, Pigeon Point can also be a good place to check for unusual land birds during fall migration (September-November). Rarities such as Tropical Kingbird, Bobolink, Palm Warbler, Red-throated Pipit, Common Ground-Dove and Clay-colored Sparrow have been spotted there.



Photo: Robert Buckleman





Photo: Brian O'Neill

## Bear Creek Redwoods Update

**L**ess than a year after taking out a \$10 million loan for the purchase of 805 acres at Bear Creek Redwoods near Los Gatos, POST has raised nearly \$9 million in gifts and grants to repay our loan and direct expenses. Our call for support brought in over 1,500 new donors to POST, in addition to a generous response from regular friends of POST. Thank you for your help! With your continuing support we are well on our way to making a park at this beautiful location a reality.

One interesting development in our efforts to raise funds for this project has been the invitation by POST donors to approach their local city councils for support. Susan Anawalt, a resident of Monte

Sereno, and Joanne Rodgers of Los Gatos, have been instrumental in getting resolutions put forth before their respective councils. In May, Monte Sereno city council approved a grant for Bear Creek Redwoods when it becomes public open space, and Los Gatos has a similar resolution on its agenda for discussion this month. These local governments are giving to the project because of the strong response from POST donors in their own towns. With the aid of other involved POST donors, we plan to ask additional cities including Saratoga, Cupertino, Sunnyvale and Morgan Hill to participate in this campaign.

**We'll keep you POSTed on our results!**





## POST President Receives National Conservation Award

The Garden Club of America, founded in 1913, is a national conservation and civic improvement organization. Nominating Audrey for this award were the Woodside-Atherton and Hillsborough Garden Clubs. Among those supporting her nomination were U.S. Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt, former U.S. Ambassador Bill Lane, and South Bay Congresswoman Anna Eshoo.

“Audrey has taken on major programs of preserving lands when other organizations were unwilling to take the risk,” said Colburn S. Wilbur, retired head of The David and Lucile Packard Foundation. “Audrey Rust is truly one of those people who can say that their life made a real difference and added value to the people of this world.”

**P**OST President, Audrey Rust was awarded the Garden Club of America’s prestigious Cynthia Pratt Laughlin Medal on May 16, for her “outstanding achievement in environmental protection and the maintenance of the quality of life.”

Audrey joins a distinguished line of recipients of the Garden Club award, including David Packard, generous funder of land conservation efforts, ecologist Eugene P. Odum, and Patrick Noonan, President of The Nature Conservancy from 1972 to 1980, and founder of the Conservation Fund.

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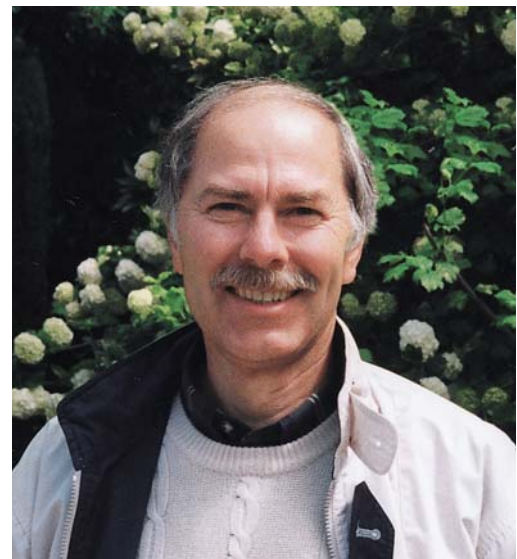
## Paul Newhagen Joins POST Board of Directors

**P**OST would like to extend a warm welcome to the newest member of our Board of Directors, Paul Newhagen of Los Altos.

Co-founder of Altera Corporation in 1983 and Chief Financial Officer of the company for ten years, Paul comes to POST with great credentials. His knowledge of Silicon Valley and finance will be extremely helpful as POST takes on increasingly complex land-saving projects.

“Having lived in the Bay Area for the past 27 years, I have seen a lot of changes as population and urban growth have overwhelmed the area,” said Paul. “I feel that we need to take the ‘long view’ as it relates to land use, and I believe that POST is taking that view. I am honored to help POST maximize its objectives and improve the quality of life here in the Bay Area.”

In addition to serving on POST’s board, Paul also serves on the Board of Directors of Altera Corporation and GeoHazards International.



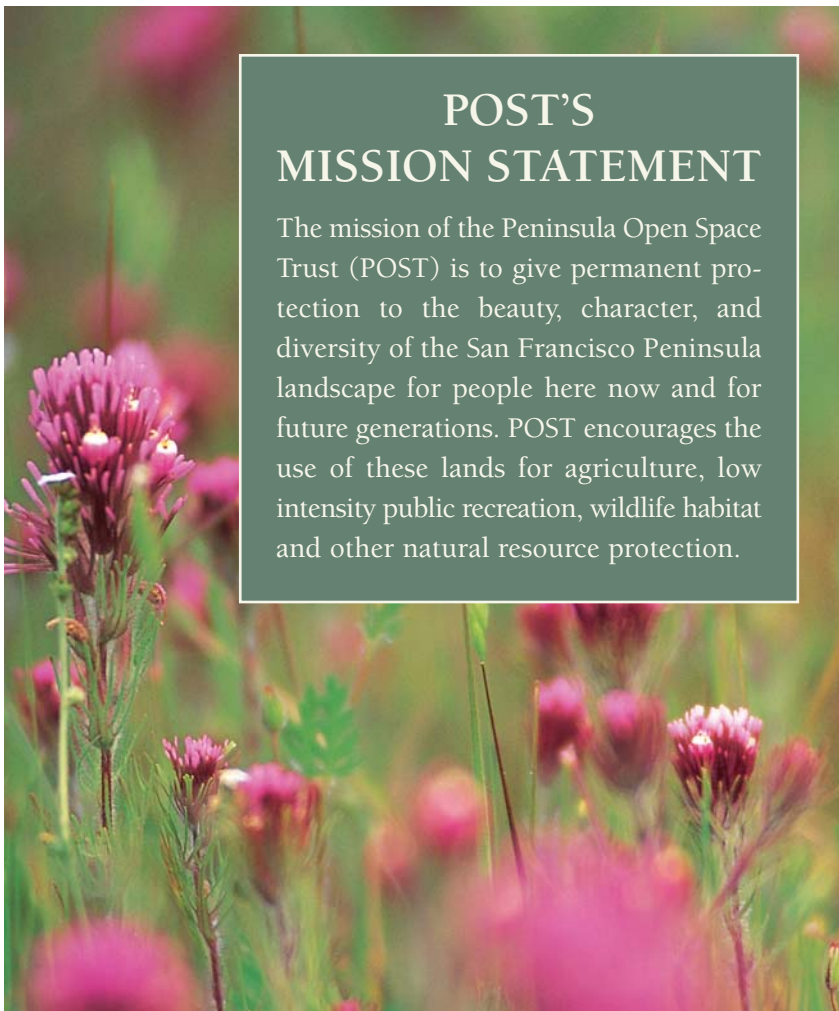






## POST'S MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) is to give permanent protection to the beauty, character, and diversity of the San Francisco Peninsula landscape for people here now and for future generations. POST encourages the use of these lands for agriculture, low intensity public recreation, wildlife habitat and other natural resource protection.



## Stock Gifts to POST

Your contributions are essential to our land conservation work.

If you would like to make a gift of securities to POST please contact:

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Montgomery Private Client Services  
600 Montgomery Street  
San Francisco, CA 94111  
(415) 627-2191

Relevant information for a transfer of stock:

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#1 Land Purchases  
Account #: 110-66982  
DTC #: 773  
Tax ID #: 94-2392007

It is important that you also notify POST directly of your gift to ensure that it is recorded accurately.

Your gift is fully tax-deductible. Thank you for your support!



## Landscapes

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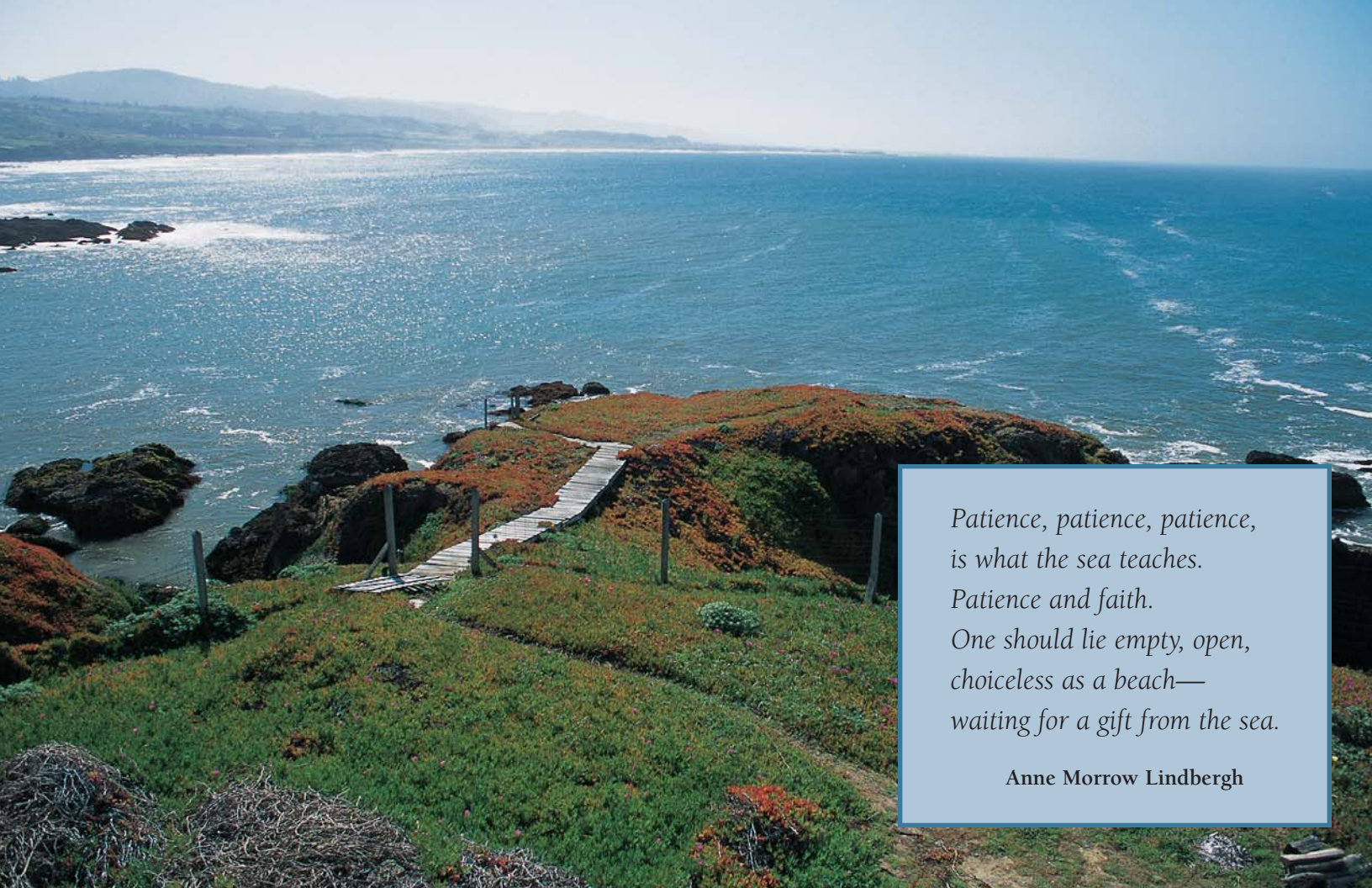
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Cover Photos: Robert Buelteman

*Patience, patience, patience,  
is what the sea teaches.  
Patience and faith.  
One should lie empty, open,  
choiceless as a beach—  
waiting for a gift from the sea.*

Anne Morrow Lindbergh



**LANDSCAPES**  
SUMMER 2000

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