

children. On the other, her existence was lonely and fraught with concern over her children's advancement and scratching together enough to survive.

#### CHARLOTTE LAYTON

The opening of the American West after the Mexican War and the California Gold Rush created a flood of settlers to the Pacific Coast. The increase in shipping, as well as the government's desire to regulate the new territories, prompted Congress to build lighthouses along the Pacific Coast. The first lighthouses were built in California, with eight in operation by 1855.<sup>57</sup> One such light was situated on a point of land covered with pine trees, aptly called Point Pinos, that jutted out into the Pacific Ocean one hundred and fifteen miles south of San Francisco. Located a good four miles outside of Monterey, California, the Point Pinos Lighthouse used the a new third order Fresnel lens and never had the laborious array of ill-made Winslow Lewis lamps and reflectors. Like many Californian residents, the first family to live at the lighthouse traveled thousands of miles before reaching the Pacific Coast.

Charles Layton was born in Oxfordshire, England about 1814, but made his way to America, enlisting in the United States Army in Philadelphia, Philadelphia on 19 August 1837. As a private in the 3rd Artillery Company F, he served in Florida, where he reenlisted at Fort Pierce on 16 August 1840. In July 1842, the company moved to Fort Macon near Atlantic Beach, North Carolina. During his time stationed on the Outer Banks, Charles met and subsequently married Charlotte Ann Wade on 29 November 1843. Charlotte, a native of nearby Beaufort, was born in March 1824. Their first son,

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<sup>57</sup> *Official Register*, 1855, 34-35: Alcatraz, Fort Point, Point Pinos, Farrallones, Humbolt, San Diego, Point Conception, and Point Bonita (all as spelled in report).

Charles, was born in North Carolina in 1844. In November of that year, Company F transferred to Fort McHenry, Maryland where Charles reenlisted on 16 June 1845. The following year, the company briefly went to Fort Columbus, New York before sailing for California aboard USS *Lexington* on 14 July 1846. The vessel stopped in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil and Valparaiso, Chile, before arriving in Monterey, California on 27 January 1847.<sup>58</sup> William T. Sherman, a new junior First Lieutenant with Company F, who also made the voyage, described the ports of call and the “very rough weather” that delayed for a month passage around Cape Horn.<sup>59</sup>

It is unclear whether Charlotte moved with Charles along the east coast before relocating to California, though most forts did have housing for married enlisted men, and it was customary for wives to follow their husbands. Either way, Charlotte and her son did follow Charles to California, although not on the same vessel. The six month long voyage around Cape Horn must have had its share of vivid experiences for the twenty-three year old mother and her three-year-old boy. Most likely Charlotte was traveling with other spouses when she arrived in Monterey on the supply ship *Erie* in 1847.<sup>60</sup> The Laytons first lived in Fort Halleck (located within the Monterey Presidio), which likely was where their second son, William, was born in 1849. On 16 June 1850, Charles was discharged at Monterey as an Ordnance Sergeant. The young family settled

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<sup>58</sup> Returns from Regular Army Artillery Regiments June 1821-January 1901 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M727, roll #9 Third Regiment Jan. 1841-Dec. 1850), NARA; Charles Layton to Charlotte Ann Wade, 29 November 1843, Marriage Records, Carteret County Courthouse, Beaufort, North Carolina; “Chas Layton,” U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1850 Federal Census, Monterey, Monterey County, California, 25 September 1850, 227.

<sup>59</sup> *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1875), 1:11-18.

<sup>60</sup> Charlotte’s obituary cites her arriving on *Erie* in January 1847, while Sherman’s memoirs mention a ship called *Erie* arriving in March. Sherman’s memoirs do not mention traveling with *Erie* or wives/families. Charlotte Layton Harris Obituary, *Monterey Cypress*, 15 February 1896, Monterey, California, California History Room & Archives, Monterey Public Library, Monterey, California (hereafter Monterey Public Library); *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 25.

in Monterey, where they owned three small pieces of property. The family grew again with the birth of Thomas in 1851, and Caroline in August 1855.<sup>61</sup>

Charles was appointed the first keeper of the new Point Pinos Light on 6 September 1854 at an annual rate of \$700. His salary was increased on 7 November 1854 to \$1000, indicating the need to retain quality keepers and the high cost of supplies.<sup>62</sup> The Laytons moved into the one story grey granite Cape Cod style house with a black lantern room thrusting out of the center of the roof and an accompanying spiral staircase that bifurcated the residence. First exhibited on 1 February 1855, the Point Pinos Light displayed a fixed white light visible for almost thirteen nautical miles.<sup>63</sup>

An assistant keeper was allowed for the station and Isaac Hitchcock was appointed 29 January 1855 for \$650 per year. Hitchcock had also served in Company F 3rd Artillery of the U.S. Army, transiting around Cape Horn with Charles in 1846, and was discharged in Monterey in 1851.<sup>64</sup> Charles had most likely requested Hitchcock as an assistant, having known him while serving in the military. It was certainly common for wives to be assistants, yet, in this case either Charles or Charlotte did not want that to occur. It may have had much to do with Charlotte's hectic days spent corralling three young children. The fourth child and only daughter, Caroline, would be born in August, suggesting Charlotte may have realized she was once again pregnant.

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<sup>61</sup> Register of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798-1914 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M233, 1840 Jun-1846), NARA; Returns from Regular Army Artillery Regiments June 1821-January 1901 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M727, roll #9 Third Regiment Jan. 1841-Dec. 1850), NARA; "Geo W. Harris," U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1860 Federal Census, Monterey Township, Monterey County, California, 14 June 1860, 33; Entries under Charles Layton, City of Monterey Assessor's Book 1851-1855, Monterey Public Library.

<sup>62</sup> Registers of Lighthouse Keepers, 1845-1912 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1373, roll 6 West Coast, Alaska & Hawaii), NARA. Pay was from date light was displayed.

<sup>63</sup> Notice of New Lighthouse, *Sailor's Magazine and Naval Journal*, April 1855, New York, Nineteenth Century Newspapers via Old Dominion University Library, <http://www.lib.odu.edu>.

<sup>64</sup> Registers of Lighthouse Keepers, 1845-1912 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1373, roll 6 West Coast, Alaska & Hawaii), NARA; Register of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798-1914 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M233, 1846 Jul-1850 Oct), NARA.

The first year the light was lit a dispute, commonly referred to as the Roach-Belcher Feud, erupted. Although the focus of the feud had nothing to do with the Layton family, it would cost Charles his life. The basis of the dispute was the misappropriation of the wealthy Jose Maria Sanchez estate by former sheriff William Roach, who was originally suggested for the guardianship of the Sanchez estate by Lewis Belcher, a prominent local businessman. In Monterey, tensions erupted into violence as Belcher was shot at but not harmed. In March 1855, Roach's brother-in-law killed Dr. Sanford (the widow Sanchez's third husband) before himself dying in the gunfight. Roach hired attorney Isaac Wall, who was also the new Collector of Customs for Monterey and thus Charles Layton's supervisor. On 10 November 1855, Wall was ambushed while on horseback en route to San Luis Obispo by an outlaw named Anastacio Garcia. The subsequent small posse organized to chase Garcia included Wall's brother James, and Charles Layton.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps Charles was chosen because of his military experience, but most likely he volunteered due to the murder of his boss and the man who may have helped Layton and Hitchcock secure their appointments.<sup>66</sup>

Early in the morning of 16 November 1855, the posse surrounded the Garcia house twelve miles from Monterey. In the ensuing gunfight, Charles was wounded in the stomach and hand. Separated from the rest in the confusion, Layton walked six miles towards Monterey before being discovered and brought to town. Although originally thought to have survivable wounds, Charles died three days later on 19 November

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<sup>65</sup> William B. Seacrest, *California Feuds: Vengeance, Vendettas & Violence on the Old West Coast* (Sanger, CA: Quill Driver Books, 2005), 1-24. See also Paul P. Parker, "The Roach-Belcher Feud," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, 29 No. 1 (March 1950), 19-28;

<sup>66</sup> Jerry McCaffery, *Lighthouse, Point Pinos, Pacific Grove, California*, (Pacific Grove, C.A. 2001), 48-49. McCaffery specifies further connection including hiring of Layton as a temporary customs agent, and allowing the Laytons to live in the lighthouse before completion.

1855.<sup>67</sup> A veteran of thirteen years service in the U.S. Army died from wounds received in an ill-fated shoot-out of cursory importance in the Roach-Belcher feud.

Charlotte would undoubtedly have been able to see her husband before his death. It appears there was some hope he would recover, but ultimately the wounds became infected. No accounts have been found detailing Charles' final passing or his burial.<sup>68</sup> At thirty-one, Charlotte was a widow with four young children, and her closest family was three thousand miles away. The youngest child, Caroline, was only about three months old and would require the infant care of breast-feeding and constant diaper changes. The Laytons still owned a lot and house on Larkin Street in Monterey, but without a steady source of income Charlotte was facing the destitution that affected many widows during the Early Republic.<sup>69</sup> Taking the position left vacant by her husband's death, Charlotte received a dependable income and a home. As Charlotte did not previously fill the assistant job, it could be surmised she now sought the head keeper position in order to survive. On 4 January 1856, the Lighthouse Establishment appointed Charlotte as the keeper of Point Pinos Lighthouse, though she had been serving in this capacity since Charles' death.<sup>70</sup> Her pay commenced at \$1,000 per year, further confirming widows earned the same salary as their deceased husbands. With advancements in infrastructure and more local supplies, the pay was reduced to \$800

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<sup>67</sup> 17 & 24 Nov 1855, *Monterey Sentinel*, Monterey Public Library; John Boessenecker, *Gold Dust and Gunsmoke: Tales of Gold Rush Outlaws, Gunfighters, Lawmen and Vigilantes* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1999), 191-193.

<sup>68</sup> McCaffery, *Lighthouse*, 50.

<sup>69</sup> Entries under Charles Layton, City of Monterey Assessor's Book 1851-1855, Monterey Public Library.

<sup>70</sup> Appointment of Charlotte Layton, Item No. 38.2-833-I, Point Pinos Lighthouse Collection, Pacific Grove Museum Archives, Pacific Grove, California. "Treasury Department, January 4, 1856. Madam, You are appointed Keeper of the Lighthouse at Point Pinos Cal, the duties of which office you will perform until further notice, at a salary of one thousand dollars per annum vice Charles Layton deceased. James Guthrie, Secretary of the Treasury."

around 1858.<sup>71</sup> Isaac Hitchcock stayed on as the assistant, initially earning \$650, having his pay adjusted to \$500. In 1859, Isaac resigned and Anson Smith was assigned as the new assistant at \$500 per annum.<sup>72</sup> These figures not only support the equality of pay between males and females, but are an example of a female head keeper with a lower-paid male assistant.

Removed from the hustle and bustle of the growing city, for four years Charlotte continued to keep the light with her assistant, while raising Charles, William, Thomas and Caroline. During this period, Anastacio Garcia was indicted for murder, and jailed in Monterey in February 1857. Ongoing tensions from the Roach-Belcher Feud combined with fears of Garcia's testimony caused unknown parties to hang Garcia in his cell under cover of night.<sup>73</sup> Was Charlotte relieved to have Garcia dead, and the drama of her husband's death over? Did she enjoy living in a semi-remote location, attending to the daily chores of mother and lighthouse keeper? Having been raised on the Atlantic Coast, Charlotte might have found some comfort gazing out at the blue grey waters of the Pacific. By saving money, Charlotte may have been able to finance a return to North Carolina to be near family, which would have eased her childrearing responsibilities and most likely also her spirit. In 1856, however, this would have meant sailing back around Cape Horn or travelling by wagon across the Great Plains, as the Trans-Continental Railroad would not be completed until 1869. Having survived the six-month sea voyage with three-year-old Charles in 1847, perhaps Charlotte did not desire to relive that experience with children now aged twelve, eight, six and a new born. Crossing dusty,

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<sup>71</sup> 1857 *Official Register* lists rate at \$1,000, then 1859 *Official Register* lists \$800.

<sup>72</sup> Registers of Lighthouse Keepers, 1845-1912 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1373, roll 6 West Coast, Alaska & Hawaii), NARA.

<sup>73</sup> Seacrest, *California Feuds*, 21-22.

dangerous plains must also have appeared daunting. Or perhaps Charlotte had wholeheartedly adopted California as her new home and thus endeavored to carry on with her life in her husband's occupation with no thoughts of returning east. Without journals or surviving family stories, only guesses can be made about Charlotte's motivations to remain in Monterey.

After four years, Charlotte met and married George Chase Harris. A native of Massachusetts, Harris had arrived in Monterey in 1846 as the third mate aboard a whaling ship. Like many transplants, Harris tried a variety of occupations from ranching to mining before settling on the livelihood of a tavern and saloon keeper. The "quiet, unassuming gentleman" might have known the Laytons before Charles' death, or perhaps Charlotte befriended him as a widow.<sup>74</sup> The two married in 1860, and George was appointed the new keeper on 4 August.<sup>75</sup> As in the case of Susan Harvey, it would appear that here too, Charlotte was replaced by her new husband due to social conventions rather than any lapse in her lighthouse duties. Several secondary sources report that George was an assistant keeper, yet he is not listed as such in the official documents examined. Furthermore, the 1860 census lists George as a tavern keeper while Charlotte is the Lighthouse Keeper and Anson Smith is the Assistant Lighthouse Keeper.<sup>76</sup> This would appear to suggest that the newly married couple were at the lighthouse, but George's primary association was as husband and not lighthouse keeper.

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<sup>74</sup> George Chase Harris Obituary, *Monterey Cypress*, 17 December 1896, Monterey Public Library; Dennis Copeland (Historian and Archivist; Manager of Museums, Cultural Arts, and Archives for City of Monterey, California), e-mail message to author, 13 July 2010.

<sup>75</sup> Registers of Lighthouse Keepers, 1845-1912 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1373, roll 6 West Coast, Alaska & Hawaii), NARA.

<sup>76</sup> "Geo W. Harris," U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1860 Federal Census, Monterey Township, Monterey County, California, 14 June 1860, 33; "George C. Harris," U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1870 Federal Census, Monterey, Monterey County, California, 6 September 1870, 25.

George was removed as keeper on 28 August 1861 and replaced by Frank Porter.<sup>77</sup> George's removal was most likely due to the poor keeping of the light as the Lighthouse Board strived to reduce the effect of politics on appointments and removals. Perhaps George was still more a tavern keeper than a light keeper.

After his removal as keeper of Point Pinos Light, the Harris family continued to live in Monterey with George operating various taverns and saloons, including the Washington Hotel where Dr. Sanford was killed during the Roach-Belcher feud. For a few years between 1875 and 1885 George and Charlotte lived in San Francisco next door to Caroline (Layton) Burr and her growing family.<sup>78</sup> They eventually returned to Monterey, where George passed away on 14 December 1890.<sup>79</sup> Charlotte, widowed again, lived another six years until dying on 11 February 1896 from a brain hemorrhage at the age of seventy-two.

Charlotte Layton lived a remarkable life that included marrying a foreign-born artilleryman, transiting on a sailing ship around Cape Horn, being an early settler in frontier California, enduring the murder of her husband, keeping a semi-remote lighthouse, raising four children, and outliving a second husband. The end of her obituary refers to Charlotte's local popularity and longevity: "The funeral...was largely attended, as the deceased had a host of warm friends, many of whom had known her since her first arrival in Monterey. Thus one by one, the old pioneers of California go to make room for a new generation."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Registers of Lighthouse Keepers, 1845-1912 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1373, roll 6 West Coast, Alaska & Hawaii), NARA.

<sup>78</sup> "Geo C. Harris," U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1880 Federal Census, San Francisco, San Francisco County, California, 2 June 1880, 1.

<sup>79</sup> George Harris Obituary, *Monterey Cypress*, 17 December 1890, Monterey Public Library.

<sup>80</sup> Charlotte Layton Harris Obituary, *Monterey Cypress*, 15 February 1896, Monterey Public Library.