

Restoration Recap – Dennis Tarmina

First I would like to thank the docents and Nancy and the City of Pacific Grove for throwing this birthday party for me. I turned eighty three yesterday. Who would have thought? I had a lot of friends in high school who would have bet against me.



First off I am probably repeating myself a bit, but the restoration of the lighthouse was a cooperative effort between the City of Pacific Grove and the Heritage Society of Pacific Grove. We took it on about fifteen- sixteen years ago and we are here every Tuesday. We spend four hours here, two hours with coffee and about two hours working and that is one of the reasons it has taken so long.

What I would like to emphasize in particular is we have done this restoration, all of it, without any of your tax dollars. We have raised the money ourselves through grants, through visitor donations, and the profits of the gift shop and when I went before city council all those many years ago I made that promise and so far, knock on wood, we have been able to keep that promise.

We are very lucky here in Monterey County to have very generous foundations and very supportable through grants, though donations, and I have a dear friend who has passed away, she raised a lot of the money for us. With all that being said I will give the quick summary.

Look down, look up, look at the sides, look inward, look at these buildings. Whatever you see, we've touched.

When we got here there were two buildings, the restroom and gift shop were not here. This was just dirt. There was no oval fence. The parking lot was a mess and for those of you who don't know, those two buildings over there were where the Coast Guard representatives lived. Which brings me to this, this property is owned by the City of Pacific Grove, except those two houses, The NOAA building which you see in my background here and the lantern. If you look up to the tower and see where it starts in black, it is still owned by the Coast Guard. And we, because the Coast Guard did not have any money, and still doesn't, have restored it on their behalf.



We have had one person working on it since we started. This project has evolved into everyone taking on a specific part of it. And Lowell Northrop has spent the majority of the last fifteen years up there. Everything has been redone. The vertical black panels you see up there are made of stainless steel, marine grade. We always restore when we can, but the original cast iron panels were beyond repair. Believe it or not, big blue sitting out there, is a mighty master, she really ate through all those iron panels with rust damaging them beyond restoration. So we took it upon ourselves to spend sixty thousand dollars of our money to get new panels, to install them, including the walkway.

The reason all of this is still under the guidance or the auspices of the Coast Guard is the reason we don't allow visitors. That Fresnel lens is the original lens that was put into this lighthouse all those years ago, back in the 1850s.

The history of this place is somewhat murky. I've heard that that lens should have gone into the lighthouse on Alcatraz. I heard that it didn't fit so they sent it down here. How true that is I don't know.

It's a third order lens and the Coast Guard values it at two million dollars. We are very, very fortunate because the Coast Guard has gone on a program to retrieve the lenses in most of the lighthouses in the United States. And they are stored at the Coast Guard warehouse in Maryland, shrug. Why I don't know.

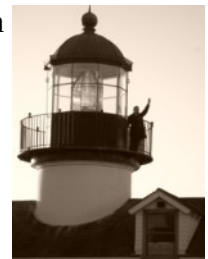
But they do pay attention right down to working up a lease agreement with the Coast Guard, because we have to lease a lot of the artifacts in there from the Coast Guard. And they do send people out to take a look at how we are taking care of things.

The deed to this place. When you buy or sell your house, the deed is one piece of paper. I was in the title insurance business for a long time so forgive me that I put that in. The deed to this place was a conditional deed, fourteen pages long. And that deed says that the City had to restore this place and make it open to visitors and to take care of it. And if they didn't, the General Accounting Office would take it back. Well, that's not going to happen, but they were very specific on what we could do and couldn't do.

The restoration we started, we wanted to make an impact right away so that when people heard about what we were doing, they could actually see it. So the first thing we did was build the famous white oval fence. It mimics and is in the same place that the original oval fence was so that the golfers coming by could say, "Ah, they are actually working here and not just sitting around drinking coffee." The second thing that we did was through Ken Hinshaw, who is sitting right here. We restored the windows to try and stop the leaks, because this place was leaking like a sieve. The poor docents whenever it rained would have to go up into the lantern room with a mop and a bucket and mop it up and then when all this water was leaking down and when all that happened we discovered a crack in the tower which we had to fix.



For those of you who don't know, the 1906 earthquake, that tower was severely damaged. It was brick and then it was rebuilt with cement/concrete with rebar added so that it wouldn't crack, but we still found a crack and we still had to have it fixed. We used plaster, cement and epoxy resin.



The second thing that we did, the main thing that we wanted to do, was put a bathroom in. The visitors and docents had to go across the street to the golf course to use the restroom. So we knew that there were two buildings. These buildings mimic the two buildings that were here before. The only difference was we were not sure what they were used for, maybe for the assistants. Not sure. We brought them back to the gift shop and of course the restroom. These buildings are three feet longer and a foot wider than the buildings that were here originally. The reason for that was we had to comply with ADA. So we built the buildings all with grant funds and donations we got and then, I am talking about just major projects here, I don't want to bore you to death.

The next major project was to paint this building. It's funny that if you stand where I am standing you see the wavy lines of the exterior wood. Although it was built to certain specifications, it wasn't built perfectly.. We went down into the basement where you can view the film of the history of the lighthouse, but the planning department wanted us to close the basement because the ceiling was too low. We needed to close it or fix it. The job that we did, we went down into the basement and took up the boards, and bricks. You can imagine a guy my age treading up and down the stairs with buckets of bricks and sand, we did for days on end. And then we had a professional contractor come in and lay the bricks which are down there right now. And around the edges, you see the original brick. We saved those trying to keep some of the original.



Any questions? (When do we get the red tiles? CP) Okay, there are no major projects left. But we have one last thing that is to replace the roof. The new roof will be red. Our period of restoration was from 1938 to 1948.. The reason we chose that time period was because if we had to go back to 1855 we would have had to take down this section here (current kitchen), that contained the kitchen and the original bathroom. And we would have to take down the dormers put on in 1938 to adhere to the restoration. We have to follow a set of rules. The roof you see up there, it is going to be a metal roof. That makes the Coast Guard happy, and the fire department and everybody else. The roof has a fifty year lifespan, well beyond my time.

That marker we found on the beach. This area had these markers put in, boundary markers. At one time it had a very nice brass Coast Guard plaque, but it is gone.



The oil house was built in 1899. as a place for storing flammables. The sign above the door was uncovered while we were prepping the building for painting. Someone decided that storing kerosene inside the lighthouse was probably not the best practice. There were a couple of fires and explosions along the east coast.

This lighthouse was called the Cape Cod design. It was very, very common for a reason, so the lighthouse keepers would not have to go outside to service the light during the night. So we meticulously restored it, that oil house building has walls that are two feet thick in case of explosion or fire. That and this building here (LH itself) are the original buildings on the property. The walkway that you walked in on, that's redone. The driveway around the oval fence has been redone. Again, everything that you see has been restored and we are proud of it.



I am available to answer any questions you may have. Please have an enjoyable day and be sure to visit the inside of the lighthouse.

Dennis Tarmina