

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	DEC 30 1975 SEP 1 1976
DATE ENTERED	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  *ph* Punta Gorda Light Station  
AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION** From Petrolia 1 mile south on Mattole Road and across  
STREET & NUMBER bridge; from here right on to Lighthouse Road and west  
5 miles to beach; then 4.5 miles southwest along beach  
to property.

CITY, TOWN *10.7 miles S.W. of Petrolia* Petrolia  VICINITY OF 2  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE  
California 06 Humboldt 023

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

(see continuation sheet Item #3) NO

**AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Ukiah District Office

STREET & NUMBER  
555 Leslie Street

CITY, TOWN VICINITY OF STATE  
Ukiah California

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Humboldt County Court House

STREET & NUMBER  
825 5th Street

CITY, TOWN VICINITY OF STATE  
Eureka California

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
West Coast Lighthouses, by Jim Gibbs, 1974

DATE  
1974  FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
Superior Publishing Company

CITY, TOWN VICINITY OF STATE  
Seattle Washington

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

On September 10, 1908 an Executive Order was issued, setting aside the NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 31, T. 2 S., R. 2 W., H.M. for lighthouse purposes; and the following year, on March 25, an adjoining 22.8 acres was purchased for \$1,824. Totaling 66.2 acres, the tract was dubbed Punta Gorda Light-Station, named for Punta Gorda, Spanish for "Massive Point", a rocky headland that juts into the Pacific Ocean about a mile to the northwest.

Construction activities began late in 1910 in the southwest corner of the property. Several buildings were constructed on a level bench just above the high water mark of the Pacific Ocean, and only a few hundred feet shoreward of a boiler from the steamer St. Paul which had run aground in heavy fog in 1905. Stretching from northwest to southeast along the beach, the buildings were: 1.) a wood frame fog-signal building, 2.) a concrete oil house, 3.) a reinforced concrete light building, 4.) a wood frame blacksmith and carpenter shop, 5.) a two-story wood frame first assistant keeper's quarters, 6.) a two-story wood frame keeper's quarters, 7.) a two-story wood frame second assistant keeper's quarters, 8.) a wood frame fuel and store house located to the rear of each of the keepers' quarters, and 9.) a wood frame barn.

The fog-signal, compressed air sirens powered by a gasoline motor, went into operation on June 22, 1911; and a half a year later, on January 15, 1912, the station's light shown for the first time. An incandescent oil vapor lamp, with a fourth order lens and a focal plane 75' above mean high tide, was visible for 14 miles. The oil lamp served as the light source for most of the 39 years during which Punta Gorda Light-Station was active, an electric lamp coming into use during the 1940's, only a few years before the light was permanently extinguished on February 15, 1951.

Though abandoned, the light-station remained in Coast Guard hands until January 16, 1963, when the property was transferred to the Bureau of Land Management in the Department of the Interior. By the late 1960's the wood frame buildings had become so delapidated that the Bureau of Land Management, feeling that they posed a safety hazard, burned the buildings to the ground and bulldozed the ruins into the basements. Today, 65 years after the light-station was constructed, only two buildings still stand, the lighthouse and the oil house.

Twenty-seven feet in height, the light-house consists of an iron lantern room atop a flat-roofed, reinforced, concrete structure 12' x 23' x 12' high. The concrete base served as a watch room when the light-station was in use; but now its windows are gone, the door lies on the ground a short distance away, and the white paint on its

(see continuation sheet Item #7)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1910-1951 ~~DESIGNER~~ ARCHITECT **John Riddle - former light-house Engineer, 12th Lighthouse Dist**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Like any lighthouse, the Punta Gorda Light-Station has achieved some notoriety as a navigation aid for waterborne transportation. But of far greater significance is the fact that construction and maintenance of the light-station itself presented some unique problems in the field of transporation and communications. Such problems, unusual insofar as mainland light-stations are concerned, were a result of the station's extreme inaccessibility both from the sea and overland. Thus, for much of its active life the Punta Gorda Light-Station was an anachronism, a frontier settlement in the midst of a modern world.

As early as 1892 Pacific Coast mariners had requested that a lighthouse be built in the vicinity of Punta Gorda, a rocky cape some 220 miles to the north of San Francisco. No lighthouse was built then, but during the next several years a number of shipwrecks occurred in the area, seemingly justifying the mariners' request. From 1895 to 1907 a total of ten ships sank or went aground near Punta Gorda. The last of the ten was the Columbia, a passenger ship that collided with a lumber ship on July 12, 1907, resulting in the loss of 77 lives. This disaster was undoubtedly the impetus for construction of a lighthouse at Punta Gorda, because in 1908, the year after the Columbia sank, Congress appropriated \$60,000 for that purpose.

Construction activities began in 1910 with supplies being brought ashore via a high line from a schooner moored off the mouth of Four Mile Creek. From there horses dragged the building materials on sleds a half mile down the beach to the actual construction site. From the time it began operation in 1911 and up to 1915 the Punta Gorda Light-Station was serviced entirely by boat using the same route as above. It was in 1915 that the balance of a right-of-way along the coast was acquired, thus enabling supplies to be brought by horse and wagon from the town of Petrolia, ten and one-half miles away. But for seven months a year this route was useless since the flooding of nearby creeks isolated the light-station from late fall to early spring. Each year during this period of time horseback was the only means of transportation into and out of the area. During these early days Punta Gorda was known as the "Alcatraz of Light Houses", not only because it was a virtual island at times, but also because many

(see continuation sheet Item #8)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

United States Coast Guard, 12th Coast Guard District, Aids to Navigation Branch - Historical File: "Punta Gorda".

Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Ukiah District Office - Study File: "Punta Gorda".  
(see continuation sheet Item #9)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 66.2

UTM REFERENCES

10	38.4	860	44	56	295	10	38.5	881	44	56	295
ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		
10	385	881	44	56	452	D					

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Commencing at a point on the high water line of the Pacific Ocean in Humboldt County, California (UTM Reference: 10/385630/4455700), and in Sec. 31, T. 2 S., R. 2 W., which point is about 7/8 mile southeast the mouth of Four Mile Creek and about 650 feet southeast of the mouth of the creek known as Wreck Creek; N. 50°39' E. 445.6 feet to a point on the south side of NW¼ of the S.W. fractional ¼ of (see continuation sheet Item #10)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Rodney K. Mayer, Recreation Technician

*956-900*

ORGANIZATION Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Ukiah District Office

DATE September 11, 1975

STREET & NUMBER 555 Leslie Street

TELEPHONE 462-3873  
(707) 461-3873

CITY OR TOWN Ukiah

STATE California

# 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES  NO

OCT 22 1975

NONE *Herbert M. ...*

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National  State  Local .

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE *[Signature]*  
TITLE Deputy Assistant Secretary

DATE DEC 18 1975

## FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 9/11/76

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: *[Signature]*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 9/2/76

*Acting*

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Punta Gorda Light-Station  
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Item #3: Classification (Present Use)

The property is located within Management Zone #1 of the King Range National Conservation Area; and the primary use of that zone is recreation

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Item #7: Description

exterior is obviously weatherbeaten. From the old watch room an iron spiral stairway leads to the 7'8" diameter cylindrical iron lantern house. The weather has taken its toll on the lantern room, and the catwalk around its perimeter, as evidenced in heavy rust of the iron-work; and the glass in the helical windows is gone.

Seventy-five feet to the northwest of the light building is the oil house, a squat concrete building 13'8" x 23'2", with an interior divided into two rooms. Like the lighthouse, its windows and doors are no longer in place, and the weather has chipped and faded the white paint covering its walls.

Aside from these two structures all that remains of Punta Gorda Light-Station are the foundations of some of the demolished buildings along with several hundred feet of seemingly misplaced cement sidewalk.

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Item #8: Significance

Commander H. F. Stolfi (Chief of Aids to Navigation, 12th Coast Guard District) found it necessary to ride into Punta Gorda on horseback, briefcase in hand. In essence, the station was very much a frontier community right up to 1951, when it was abandoned.

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Item #8: Significance

employees of the Light House Service were reportedly "exiled" there as punishment for misconduct.

When the Coast Guard took over the station during World War II some improvements were made, but the site still remained very much an island, if not literally then figuratively. The light-station had had a telephone connection with the town of Petrolia prior to the war, the telephone wire supports having been cemented into the rock face of Punta Gorda. But with 80-mile an hour winds in the vicinity of the point, the telephone line never stayed up for very long. More reliable telephone communications were felt to be a necessity in wartime because there was a shore patrol stationed at the lighthouse, therefore, a new telephone line was constructed that went up and over the top of Punta Gorda. Even then one had to use an old crank phone when making a call from the station.

During the war, horse and buggy remained the dominant form of transportation to and from the station. Horse and buggy were utilized by any and all visitors, including the USO representative who brought movies into the station on a regular basis.

No electrical power lines ever connected Punta Gorda with the outside world, and during World War II the only part of the station that was electrified by an on-site power plant was the light itself. Up through 1945 the man on watch still had to crank a weight up every hour or so to keep the light turning. Later in the decade, when five light plants were used to electrify the station, the importation of large amounts of fuel presented somewhat of a problem since it had to be transported by a most circuitous route. Twice each year 96 drums were loaded on a ship at San Francisco and taken north along the coast, and past the light-station to Humboldt Bay. From here they were transported by truck over forty miles to Petrolia, and from Petrolia a jeep brought the fuel to the beach where it was dragged via tractor and sled to the station.

By the late 1940's Punta Gorda had become the most expensive station to operate in the 12th Coast Guard District. This, in addition to the fact that modern navigation equipment had come into use on many vessels, led to a decision to abandon Punta Gorda Light-Station. Even in 1950, when final plans were being made to withdraw from the station,



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Punta Gorda Light-Station

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Item #9: Major Bibliographical References

Humboldt Times (Eureka, California), February 25, 1951, "Swan Song for Punta Gorda - An Outpost of the Mainland on the Other Side of Wilderness" by Ed Neumeier.

Interview with Mr. John E. Evenden, Master Chief Bosun Mate, United States Coast Guard, retired (Officer-in-Charge, Punta Gorda Light-Station, 1943-45), Petrolia, California, August 7, 1975.

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Item #10: Geographical Data

Sec. 31, T. 2 S., R. 2 W.; then east 638.8 feet along the south side of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of the SW fractional  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 31 of T. 2 S., R. 2 W., to the SE corner of same; from here N to the NE corner of said NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of the SW fractional  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 31 of T. 2 S., R. 2 W. and then west to the NW corner of same; then south 62.0' along the west side of aforementioned NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of the SW fractional  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 31 of T. 2 S., R. 2 W.; from this point N 53<sup>o</sup>39' W. 949.1 feet; then S 57<sup>o</sup>45' W. 112.9 feet more or less to a point on the high water mark; and from here southeast along the high water mark about 2,138 feet to the point of beginning.