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# KEEPER'S LOG

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## Point San Luis Lighthouse



Hiking the Pecho Coast Trail, May 2022. Photo courtesy of John Went.

## Welcome to the Keeper's Log!

### Bus and Hiker Tours Run Wednesdays and Saturdays

The Point San Luis Lighthouse is open for tours on Wednesdays and Saturdays. To take a shuttle bus up to the lighthouse, purchase tickets [here](#). To hike to the lighthouse, register [here](#). The hike is free; bring \$10 for the lighthouse tour.

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### A Note from the Executive Director

It's a beautiful time to hike to the lighthouse. Trail docents lead hikers along the Pecho Coast Trail to Point San Luis every Wednesday and Saturday morning when weather permits (see map on page 5). Hikers leave the trailhead at 9 am, and generally arrive at Point San Luis about 10:30 am. After touring the lighthouse buildings and grounds (admission to a tour of the buildings is \$10), hikers head back at about noon. Although not a "walk in the park" by any means, the hike offers panoramic views of Avila Beach and hikers are treated to stunning landscapes while learning about local flora and fauna from docent naturalists. [Click here for more details.](#)

[www.pointsanluislighthouse.com/donate](http://www.pointsanluislighthouse.com/donate)

Issue 33, July 2022

### The Trail Issue

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Not only is a visit to the station well worth anyone's time, but especially picturesque is the three-mile hike along a trail which winds through the hills high above the ocean.

~ San Luis Obispo Tribune,  
June 21, 1939 ~

Happy Summer! *Deb Foughty*

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## The Pecho Coast Trail: Then and Now



*In this recently discovered circa 1914 photo, three unidentified young women rest on a bench overlooking San Luis Bay during a hike to the lighthouse. Courtesy of Dianna Jackson and the Paso Robles Historical Society; enhanced by Bob Mihelic.*

Before the road was laid in the mid-1960s, keepers and visitors to the Point San Luis light station either hiked or came by boat.

In 1907, Keeper William J. Smith described the trail without wasting words as “a footpath from the station to the railroad depot at Port Harford about one mile distant.”

In 1931, the Pismo Times described the trail with a bit more eloquence:

**The abalone fan, the shell fan and the good hiker will enjoy a fascinating trip to Point San Luis...Drive north to Avila and park the car. Walk the railroad track to San Luis Hill, circle the old hotel porch to the rear, mount the steps and follow a good path up and over to the lighthouse at the Point. The keeper will show the lighthouse on request...A glorious panorama, in morning mist, noonday brilliance or at sunset, amply repaying weary muscles, awaits you at every turn of the trail. Time to Avila 15 minutes – hike over mountain, 1 hour.**

Of course, weary muscles could result in a tumble. In 1933, the San Luis Obispo Daily Telegram reported that a hiker had suffered a badly wrenched knee, due to a fall “while walking with a party of others from the Lighthouse to Port San Luis.” And there were rattlesnakes, as a 1960 San Luis Obispo Telegram article reported:

**Except for a foot path which winds itself around the high cliffs just north of the Port San Luis Transportation company pier, the station is accessible only by boat. Recently, rattlesnakes have been encountered along the path and a warning sign to prospective visitors is being prepared by the coast guardsmen. Walking to the station takes about an hour.**

Unfortunately, after the road was built, the original trail fell into disuse and gradually disappeared.

(continued on page 4)

Freeda Settle lived at the light station before there was a road. She and her Coast Guard husband Richard F. "Rich" Settle were stationed at Point San Luis from October 1960 until January 1962. It wasn't until later in 1962 that the Coast Guard began negotiations with the surrounding landowners for a right-of-way, allowing a road to be built from Port San Luis to the light station that would pass through their properties. The road wasn't finished until 1964.

The Settles lived in the right side of the new duplex, built in 1960, with their sixteen-month-old daughter Sherill; officer-in-charge Rodger Dewey and his family lived in the left side. Down the hill, in the cinderblock duplex the Coast Guard built in 1948, were two other Coast Guardsmen, Allan Karp and Bob Doell, and their families.

Freeda was delighted with the accommodations:

-- There was an electric stove, washer, dryer—really, really nice. I was thrilled with it. All the furniture was brand new. There were two bathrooms, and each side of the duplex had its own laundry room. The families in the little duplex down the hill had to share a washer and dryer not near as nice as ours.

In June 1961, Freeda delivered their second child, Calleen. And the other Coast Guard families at Point San Luis were having babies, too. All the children were quite young. "If your child was getting close to school age, they moved you out," Freeda said.

Freeda recalled:

-- We would go to the commissary at Vandenberg Air Force Base and fill our

## Freeda and Richard Settle

**"It was a little path about 18-20 inches wide. You got on it at the foot of the pier. We did that if we dared to stay out after dark and wanted to get home or if the boat wouldn't come. The Coast Guard boat couldn't be taken out at night because Dewey refused to put running lights on it."**

**-- Freeda Settle**

trunks with two weeks' worth of food for two families. Then we would park our car on the third pier [Harford pier] and climb down a ladder into a 20-foot Coast Guard boat with groceries and babies in tow. Load up the little boat, go around the point to the Coast Guard dock below the light station, get hoisted 20 feet in the air, and dropped on the dock. Then we'd load the groceries into the Coast Guard Jeep or—when the Jeep broke down—into a wheelbarrow, and bring them up the hill. The wives and babies walked up the hill because the groceries took up all the room.

When the tide was out or if the boat couldn't be used, they walked the trail:

-- It was a little path about 18-20 inches wide. You got on it at the foot of the pier. We did that if we dared to stay out after dark and wanted to get home or if the boat wouldn't come. The Coast Guard boat couldn't be taken out at night because Dewey refused to put running lights on it. I walked the trail about half a dozen times. The men walked it a lot. They were always finding an excuse to go into Avila to get the mail. There was a tiny grocery store there and one bar.

While other Coast Guard wives might remember their lives at Point San Luis with fondness, Freeda does not:

-- Couldn't do this, couldn't do that. Couldn't go anywhere at night, couldn't go to a movie because you couldn't get back home. Monthly inspections. And that foghorn day and night. I just couldn't take it any longer. If you wanted to move to another station without the Coast Guard ordering it, you had to pay your own way. And so we did.

The Settle family moved up to a Coast Guard station in Port Angeles, Washington in January 1962.

After his Coast Guard service ended, Rich Settle attended bible college and was ordained a Baptist minister. Rev. Settle died in 2003. Freeda lives in Arkansas.

## The Pecho Coast Trail: Then and Now (continued from Page 2)



*Docent leading hikers along the Pecho Coast Trail section overlooking San Luis Bay in February 1993. Photo by Mike Hodgson. Published in the Five Cities Times Press Recorder Feb. 10, 1993.*

It wasn't until the early 1990s that a new trail was built. According to PG&E biologist Sally Krenn, "originally the trail was headed to Rattlesnake Canyon and then up to San Luis Hill and down to the lighthouse. However, it was decided that this section of the trail would be too strenuous for the average hiker, so the California Conservation Corps built a trail that did not go up San Luis Hill."

In February 1993, the Five Cities Times Press Recorder reported on the Pecho Coast Trail's official dedication. After a luncheon and remarks "by and about some of the people who made the trail possible:"

**...small groups of visitors led by trained docents set out to hike the 1.7-mile portion of the trail that connects the lighthouse with Port San Luis near the entrance to the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant...The short trek from the lighthouse to Harford Drive offered spectacular views of the harbor, Avila Beach and the sweep of the coastline to the south as far as Point Sal.**

Krenn says the new trail was mitigation for a California Coastal Commission permit to construct a simulator building. "After the Three Mile Island incident, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission required every nuclear power plant to construct one. PG&E's was built in the coastal zone. The trail was a condition for the permit."

The Nature Conservancy was the trail's first manager; PG&E took over its management in 1996. The new trail will celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023.

2022

Summer Concert Series  
At Point San Luis:  
Remaining Dates

Tipsy Gypsies, July 23

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Barflyz (w/Kenny Lee  
Lewis), August 13

~

Mother Corn Shuckers,  
August 27

~

Damon Castillo Band,  
September 10

~

Unfinished Business,  
September 24

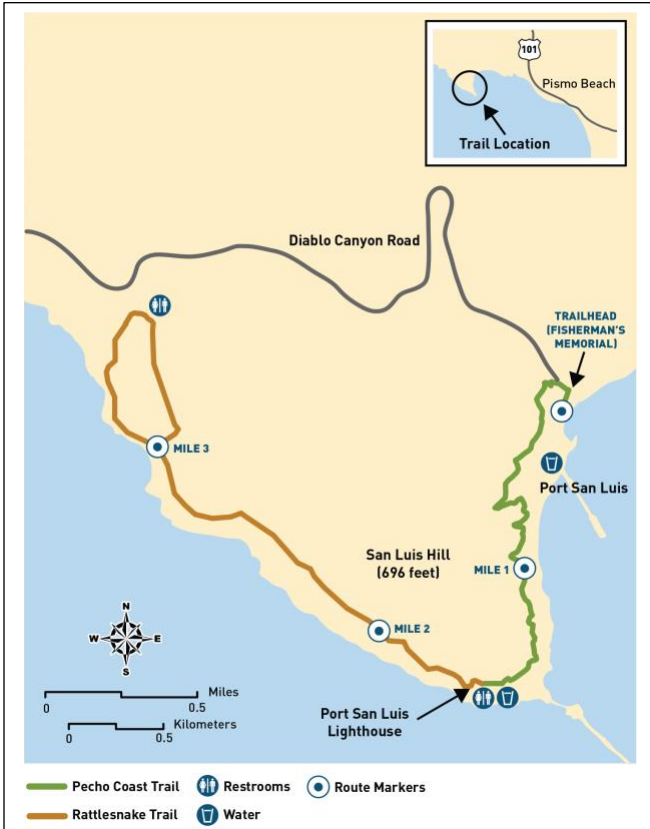
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The Charities, October 8

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Tickets on sale at  
[My805Tix](https://www.my805tix.com)

# The Pecho Coast Trail: Map and Pictures



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Point San Luis Lighthouse

KEEPER'S LOG

P.O. Box 308  
Avila Beach, CA, 93424

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As a way to honor the memory of a loved one in a very special way, Point San Luis offers dedication benches. Only a limited number are available. For information and pricing, contact [SanLuisLighthouse@gmail.com](mailto:SanLuisLighthouse@gmail.com) or call (805) 540-5771.



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- \_\_\_\_\_ Light Station Commander - \$1000

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