

# The Whalers Cabin and The Whaling Station Museum

The Cultural History of Point Lobos State Natural Reserve



*Whalers Cabin photographed by Hortense M. Lion*

**The Whalers Cabin** is a museum containing an interesting and diverse collection of artifacts. Its contents represent hundreds of years of occupation of Whalers Cove by indigenous peoples, Chinese fishermen, Japanese abalone fishermen, Portuguese whalers, and others. **The Whaling Station Museum** contains several interpretive panels which inform visitors about whales, as well as a collection of artifacts from the whaling industry.

---

California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact Point Lobos State Natural Reserve at 831-624-4909 (TTY relay service, 711).  
This brochure is available in alternate formats.

Point Lobos State Natural Reserve reflects a resplendent harmony between land, sea and sky that causes us to give thanks to those responsible for the preservation of this "coastal jewel." Their selfless dedication surmounted various attempts in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to industrialize the area. Whalers Cove, sheltered from both southwesterly storm winds and the prevailing northerlies, served as the focal point in these attempts.

Many areas within the Reserve have been identified as Native American sites. Portable and bedrock mortars, projectile points, and massive shell mounds, or midden heaps, are all present. Because of the moderate climate, nearby sources of fresh water, and ample food supply, Rumsien tribes and their ancestors camped seasonally at Point Lobos for more than 2,500 years; their campsite at nearby San Jose Creek was one of the largest in Monterey County. Their spirit lives on, both on site and on display at the Whalers Cabin.



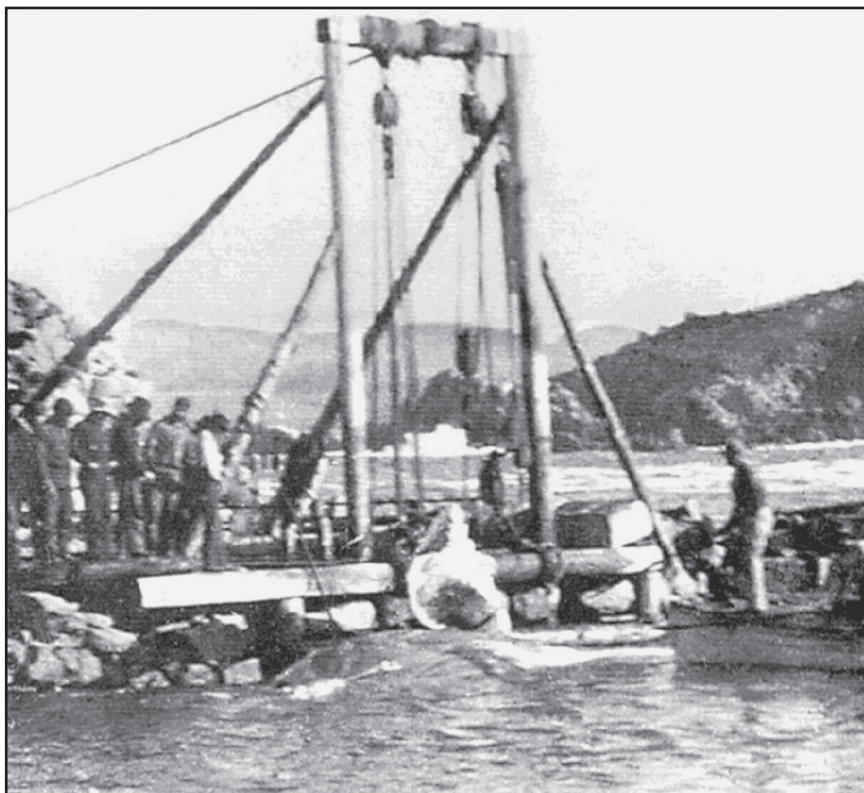
Quock Mui, also known as Spanish Mary, was born at Point Lobos August 13, 1859. Photograph by Mary Chin Lee, granddaughter

Sometime in the early 1850s, a group of four or five Chinese fishermen and their families moved onto the west shore of Whalers Cove and built their residences; one of which still stands and houses our museum. Pine and redwood lumber were used for siding, and square nails can still be seen. Originally, the floor was packed earth. The foundation consisted of hand-hewn logs that ran the length and width of the building. The plank floor was added near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Six whale vertebrae provide support for

the floor joists, which rest on granite piers supplied from the nearby quarry. The cabin is the oldest wood-frame building in Monterey County.

Four years after the Chinese arrived, their serene and sleepy environment was rudely awakened by the operation of a granite quarry at the mouth of the cove. Up to 35 workers noisily gnawed away at the granite outcrop, shipping the slabs to the growing San Francisco Bay area (notably the Mint and Fort Point in San Francisco and the Mare Island Naval Shipyard).

The annual gray whale migration attracted Portuguese whalers to the cove in 1862. They built their residences on the south side of the cove. Around 1880 the less expensive



Hauling a whale out of the cove on a hoist.  
Photograph by A.M. Allan, 1900

kerosene supplanted whale oil for lighting purposes, and so began the demise of the Carmelo Bay Whaling Company.

A low-grade coal was discovered in 1872 in nearby Mal Paso Canyon. The coal was hauled by four-horse wagon teams to be loaded on ships at Coal Chute Point, across Whalers Cove from the Chinese cabin. The coal-mining venture lasted over 25 years before the mine was abandoned.

The Carmelo Land and Coal Company proceeded to subdivide Point Lobos, selling 25 and 50-foot prospective residential building lots in 1890 for up to \$50.00 each. Plot maps show the lots to be packed together in the facing meadow of Whalers Cove. Fortunately for us today, a severe economic depression, combined with relative inaccessibility (no bridge existed over the Carmel River) inhibited sales of these lots. In 1898, a local entrepreneur, Mr. A.M. Allan, purchased Point Lobos for a business investment and residence. This stopped plans for subdividing Point Lobos, although it took many years to complete the repurchase of lots sold to individuals. Eunice Riley, A.M.'s daughter, made the final repurchase in the 1950's.



Early coal mine, Monterey County

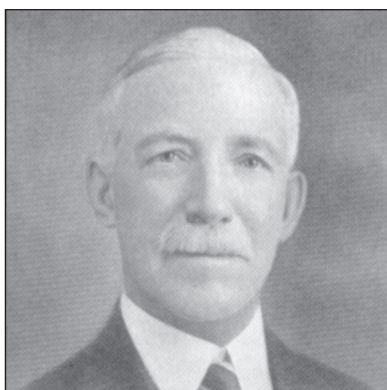




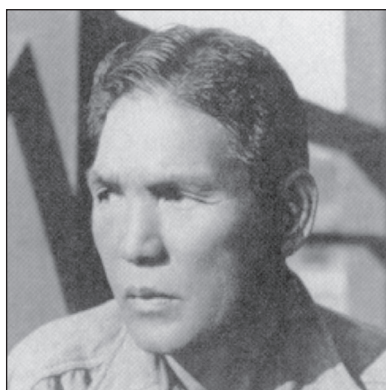


“Foolish Wives” directed by Erich von Stroheim  
 Photograph by L. S. Slevin, October, 1920

Perhaps the venture most memorable was the partnership between Mr. A.M. Allan and a Japanese marine biologist, Mr. Gennosuke Kodani. They established and operated an abalone fishery in 1898. The abalone cannery was built in 1902 on the flat surface created as part of the granite quarrying operation.



A. M. Allan  
 Photo courtesy of Topher Allan



Gennosuke Kodani  
 Photo from the Pat Hathaway Collection

This full-fledged partnership continued for over 30 years, from 1898 to 1930. The State of California purchased Point Lobos from Mr. Allan's heirs for \$631,000 in 1933. Although the abalone cannery was shut down, Japanese divers continued to harvest abalone, which was a delicacy in their homeland, until shortly before World War II.



Abalone drying on racks, Coal Chute Point, ca. 1904  
Photo from the Pat Hathaway Collection

During World War II the cabin was used as headquarters for the U.S. Army Coastal Defense Squad and also the 4th Air Force Long Range Radar Site. In 1943 the cabin served as quarters for eight sergeants of the 543rd Amphibious Brigade involved in the training of landing craft operations.

For six years (starting in 1944), the Monterey Sand Company shipped sand from nearby Monastery Beach to various naval installations in the San Francisco Bay area.



LCM's moored in Whalers Cove, 1943

In 1960 the waters surrounding Point Lobos were declared an underwater reserve, and in 2007 the newly established Point Lobos State Marine Reserve expanded this fully protected area. The no-take zone now extends from the east side of Monastery Beach to the mouth of Mal Paso Creek. Today, divers are permitted access to Whalers Cove and Bluefish Cove under strict regulations to preserve the underwater environment in its natural state.

The Whalers Cabin, occupied and used from 1851 to 1983 by various families, workers, and park personnel, was added in 2007 to the National Register of Historic Places.

Efforts to industrialize, settle, or otherwise despoil the natural beauty of Point Lobos ceased when the State of California acquired Point Lobos in 1933 for the inspiration and enjoyment of the public. As we enjoy the magnificence of Point Lobos State Natural Reserve today, may we all share the responsibility of protecting and preserving these lands and waters for the enjoyment of future generations.



## Whalers Cove Chronological History

- 1602 Sebastian Viscaino landed at Carmel Bay. It is likely that he explored Point Lobos.
- 1769 Don Gaspar de Portola camped within the Reserve.
- 1770 Carmel Mission established by Father Junipero Serra. Point Lobos was claimed by the mission for its cattle and Native Americans.
- 1835 Governor Juan Alvarado granted Rancho San Jose y Sur Chiquito (which included all the lands that are now Point Lobos) to Teodoro Gonzalez.
- 1841 Don Joseph Abrego bought the rancho.
- 1842 Don Joseph Abrego deeded the property to ten officers and soldiers stationed at the Monterey Presidio.
- 1844 Soldiers turned the property over to Captain Jose Castro.
- 1845 English schooner "Star of the West" is shipwrecked at Whalers Cove.
- 1851-1879 Chinese fishermen settle on west side of Whalers Cove (about 4 or 5 families).
- 1854 Colonel Jose Castro sold Rancho San Jose y Sur Chiquito to Abner Bassett and Joseph Emery for \$700.00, to be used for quarrying granite.

- 1854-1860 Granite quarry employed 35 men. Rock was used for the U.S. Mint in San Francisco, and the Mare Island Naval Shipyard.
- 1861-1882 Whaling industry operated by the Portuguese.
- 1863-1866 San Carlos Gold-Silver Mining Company explored Point Lobos unsuccessfully for gold.
- 1874-1901 Coal was discovered and brought from Mal Paso Canyon to Coal Chute Point by four-horse wagon teams. It was a tentative operation with low-grade coal and insufficient volume.
- 1890 Carmelo Land and Coal Company real estate subdivision began selling lots for \$50 or less (25 ft. and 50 ft. wide lots).
- 1897 Gennosuke Kodani arrived from Japan to begin an abalone fishing business.
- 1898-1902 Japanese Whaling Company established, with Portuguese as part of the company.
- 1898 Mr. A.M. Allan purchased Point Lobos.
- 1899 Toll charges began for visitors at 50 cents per vehicle.
- 1899-1903 Farming -- potatoes, pumpkins, corn, beans grown for the San Francisco markets.
- 1902-1928 Abalone cannery, operated by Gennosuke Kodani and A. M. Allan in partnership.
- 1903-1954 Point Lobos Dairy. Sold milk and made Monterey Jack cheese.

- 1914-1989 First movie filmed at Point Lobos thought to be "Valley of the Moon". 49 movies have been filmed in part at or near Point Lobos.
- 1920-1926 Gravel quarry. The "Pit" was opened and gravel was trucked to San Jose Beach and crushed for construction use.
- 1930 Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh used hill behind Point Lobos to test new glider. Here for three weeks.
- 1933 State of California purchased Point Lobos for \$631,000.
- 1941 U.S. Army Coastal Defense Squad used cabin for headquarters just after Pearl Harbor.
- 1942-1944 4th Air Force Long Range Radar site. 90 men were billeted in tents below Rat Hill.
- 1943 U.S. Army established training school for amphibious landing craft at Point Lobos. All activity was at Whalers Cove.
- 1944-1950 Monterey Sand Company used Point Lobos to quarry sand, sending it to Navy shipyards in the San Francisco area.
- 1960 Point Lobos was established as the first underwater reserve in the U.S.
- 2007 Whalers Cabin added to the National Register of Historic Places.
- 2007 Point Lobos Marine Reserve expanded and incorporated into a network of Marine Protected Areas in Central California.

# Become a part of Point Lobos

Long considered the “crown jewel” of California’s State Parks, Point Lobos State Natural Reserve is a magnet for nature lovers the world around. While State Parks is working to find creative ways to sustain our statewide system of parks, our partnership with them is allowing Point Lobos to flourish. The Foundation is the sole source of funding for Point Lobos’ model volunteer program, protects the Reserve’s environmental health, ensures a great visitor experience, makes infrastructure improvements, and funds important education programs allowing schoolchildren and people with disabilities to experience nature. **Join us today!**

Contributions are tax-deductible. Members receive the beautiful and informative Point Lobos Magazine, a 20% discount on items sold within the Reserve, voting privileges, invitations to member-only events including the after-hours Moonlight Walk, and most importantly, the knowledge that you are part of a special community supporting this magnificent State Natural Reserve.

Membership materials are available at the Whalers Cabin, Information Station or at the entrance to the Reserve. Memberships and donations can also be made online at **[pointlobos.org](http://pointlobos.org)**.



Printed on recycled paper by the Point Lobos Foundation  
in partnership with California State Parks  
© 2017 California State Parks