

Heceta House

by Keli M. Osborn

The clock is being turned back at Heceta Head.

The home of the Heceta lighthouse keeper assistants is being restored to its original architecture of the late 1800s. The U.S. Forest Service, Lane Community College, and private contractors are repairing the aging coastal landmark and replacing many of the elements changed or removed over the years.

Heceta House has been a favorite classroom and retreat site, but remodeling over the last two years has interrupted public use. With many construction and maintenance efforts now complete, Heceta House is again open for business to many nonprofit groups.

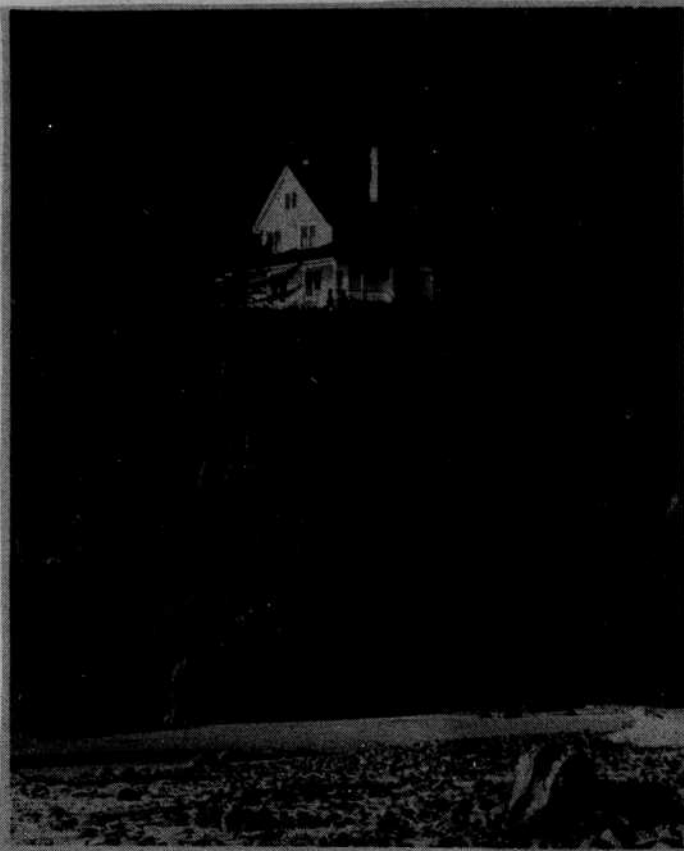
The site is operated by Lane Community College, which leases the property from the U.S. Forest Service on a long-term, low-cost basis. This allows LCC to use Heceta Head for its own educational purposes and make it available to others.

Heceta Head is located 13 miles north of Florence on Oregon's Highway 101. Since 1978, the site has been included on the National Register of Historic Places. The house, garage, lighthouse tower and two oil houses are all listed on the register.

But it isn't just its historic status that has gained the site public recognition. The house is reported to be haunted.

Caretaker Harry Tammen reports that he, his wife and their guests were turned ashen-faced by a high-pitched scream while playing cards one night. In another incident, the Tammens discovered that rat poison left in the attic had been exchanged for a silk stocking.

In yet another incident, a worker was cleaning an attic window when he caught a strange reflection. Turning around, he saw a gray-haired, elderly woman in an 1890s-style gown. He quickly left the attic and waited several days before returning to Heceta House. Later, while working on the house exterior, he accidentally broke an attic window. He repaired the window from the outside, but left broken glass on the inside.



Heceta House is located next to the Heceta Lighthouse, 13 miles north of Florence. It is available for rent for retreats and seminars, through Lane Community College.
Photograph from LCC Archives

That night, unaware of the worker's mishap, the Tammens were awakened by noise in the attic. It sounded as though someone was sweeping up glass. The next day, they found the broken glass swept into a neat pile.

More ghostly incidents are reported in *Heceta House: A History and Architectural Survey* recently reissued by LCC to raise funds to restore and develop Heceta House.


Heceta Head was named after Don Bruno de Heceta, a Portuguese credited with exploring much of the Northwest coast in the late 1700s. More than a hundred years after de Heceta's visit—after the United States acquired the Oregon Territory and a state was created—construction was begun on a lighthouse at Heceta Head. Its lamp was first lit on March 30, 1894.

In 1932, completion of a highway increased the flow of tourists and ended the relative privacy of Heceta Head residents. Then, in 1934, electric power was installed at the station. When the station was switched to remote control in July 1963, lighthouse keepers no longer were needed.

According to former LCC board member Catherine Lauris, the college wanted to preserve the historic site for the public. Under terms of the lease, LCC pays rent through repair and maintenance work, and by providing a full-time caretaker.

LCC makes Heceta House available to educational, scientific and historical groups for a fee. For information about renting the site for a seminar or retreat, interested persons should contact Wendy Westfall at the college—747-4501, ext. 2558.

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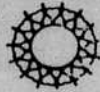
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