

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION

of the
**CAPE BLANCO
 HERITAGE SOCIETY**



CBHS BOARD MEETINGS: Currently held at Point.B Studio at 10:00 AM on the 2nd Tuesday of every month.
PLEASE NOTE: Our meetings are open to everyone who would like to attend. We invite and encourage anyone interested in CBHS to participate!

A Glimpse Into Cape Blanco's Ancient Geology



Aerial photo by Lois Miller shows the tectonic layers of Cape Blanco.

CBHS Archives

Cape Blanco was named by the Spanish Captain Martin de Aguilera in 1603. He named the cape for its steep sheer chalky cliffs that appeared white from the sea. Cape Blanco means *White Cape* in Spanish. Up close, the chalky “white” cliff is actually a yellow sandstone, but sitting against the dark black basalt does make the southwestern flank appear white from out at sea.

The cape is geologically situated on three faults and tectonic plates known as the Blanco transform fault zone (BTFZ). The aerial photo above shows one of these faults. The center “white” cliff, has fault lines on both sides. The most obvious fault can be seen on the right side where the “white” cliff lays against the black cliff.

Lighthouse keepers noted earthquakes in their log books throughout the years, including one a few days after the Great San Francisco Earthquake of Apr. 18, 1906. It was noted in the logs by 2nd Assistant Otto Heins that the tower swayed for a minute on Apr. 23.

The white layer-caked seacliffs of Cape Blanco mark Oregon's tenuous, delicate, most westerly advance into the hazardous sea. Cape Blanco is as close as land comes to the spreading Juan De

Fuca Ridge that births seafloor a hundred miles or so to the west.

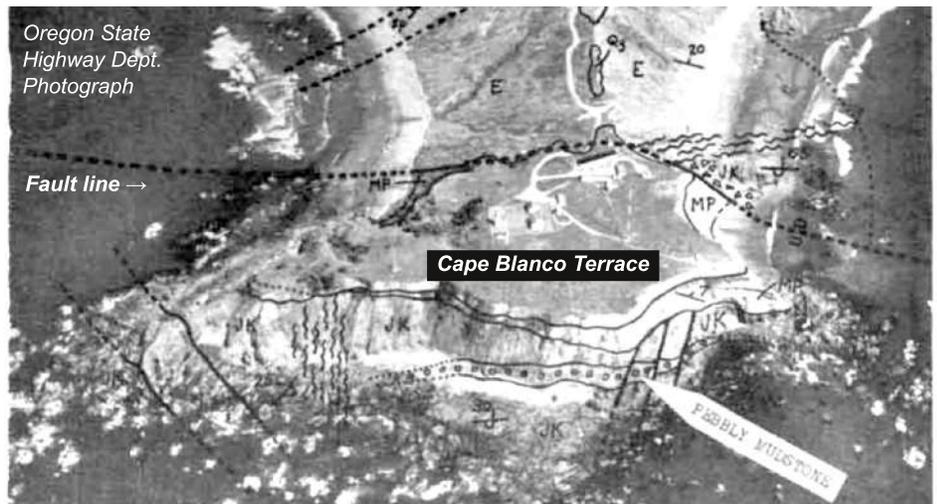
Here the earth has moved and moved again for at least a million years, and maybe the last 10 million. In fact, Cape Blanco is rising. As much as 35" in the last century, nearly 32' in the last 1,000 years. It has risen 175' above the constantly pounding surge during the past 80,000 years, according to Harvey Kelsey of Western Washington University.

The tell-tale evidence for this uplift is found in the flattened surfaced pauses in the coast's steep topography known as “marine terraces”. These

“benches” are ancient beaches that have uplifted far above sea level.

Examination of the terrace surfaces shows that they are tilted. To the north of the cape the terraces slope north. To the south they slope south. Cape Blanco is situated at the center, the axis of a growing upwarp called an “anticline”. The Cape Blanco Lighthouse rests atop the resulting 80,000 year old Cape Blanco Terrace.

Sources: [“Coast Proves Upwardly Mobile \(The Oregonian\)”](#) by geologist Ellen Morris Bishop and photographer Steven Michael’s [“Oregon—Like No Other: Cape Blanco Lighthouse.”](#) 🌟



Aerial photo of Cape Blanco from west showing formations, faults, and the latest Jurassic or Early Cretaceous pebbly mudstone deposit. (R.H. Dott, Jr., ORE BIN, Vol 24/No. 8, Aug. 1962)

The Women Lighthouse Keepers of Oregon

PART ONE ~ In honor of women's history month, researcher Curtis Burkholder is compiling a list of female lighthouse keepers of Oregon. These women not only tended the oil lamps and sounded the fog signal but also took charge of the light station they faithfully served at. His list begins with the women lighthouse keepers of Cape Blanco and the vicinity.

Cape Blanco Lighthouse, Port Orford.

Name: Mabel E. Bretherton.

Years served: (1903-1905).

Position: Second Assistant Keeper.

Mabel first served at the Coquille River Lighthouse in Bandon as Temporary Assistant Keeper in 1903 after her spouse, Assistant Keeper Bernard J. Bretherton drowned in the Coquille River. After his death, Mabel would be temporary assistant keeper until a new assistant keeper arrived to replace her. Mabel is widely considered the first female keeper in Oregon.

Bernard passed away on Feb. 10, 1903 at the age of 42. He is buried in Bandon while Mabel is buried in Portland. She passed away at the age of 49 on Jan. 1, 1923. Bretherton would later be followed in service at the Coquille River Lighthouse in 1925 by Marie Langlois who served as Assistant Keeper with her

husband, Oscar Langlois, one of several lighthouse keepers from the famous Langlois lighthouse keeping family. Another woman keeper was also attached to Cape Blanco for a brief period, a "Mrs. Alexander." Date of service is unknown. Source: Jim Gibb's "Oregon's Seacoast Lighthouses".

I became interested in lighthouse history and the dedicated service of the lighthouse keepers when I first toured the Cape Blanco Lighthouse at the age of eight in 2008. My 2nd great-granduncle Carl Bellgardt was the Assistant Keeper at the original Point Hueneme Lighthouse near Oxford, California.

~ by Curtis Burkholder ✨

Note from the Editor ~ The remainder of Curtis's list will appear in the next edition of our quarterly, *The Heritage Journal*, in May 2025. Our citizen historians are researching his findings which contain some new discoveries with help from the US Lighthouse Society. We consult their excellent [J. Candace Clifford Resource Catalog](#) for definitive information of keepers which only includes government employees who kept a government-operated light. Stay tuned for more discoveries!



The Cape Blanco Heritage Society is honored to have our short film "Meet Me At The Lighthouse" selected to be in the Oregon Coast Film Festival in 2025! See the video at saveourlighthouse.net.

Become a MEMBER of the CAPE BLANCO HERITAGE SOCIETY



OUR MISSION: To provide interpretative and educational services for the Cape Blanco Light Station, Historic Hughes House and Ranch and the Port Orford Lifeboat Station. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and your donation is tax-deductible.

Mail this portion of the form with your check made out to:
Cape Blanco Heritage Society. P.O. Box 1132 Port Orford, Oregon 97465.

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