

Carmel

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Bringing Carmel History to Life

Former Point Lobos State Parks Guide Monica Hudson
Treats Visitors to Tours with Insider Details

BY MICHAEL CHATFIELD

The multitudes that have hiked its meandering miles of trails and have reveled in its gorgeous vistas of sea, land and mountain will tell you: Point Lobos is the crown jewel of the California State Parks system. And those who've been lucky enough to accompany Monica Hudson on a tour of this scenic wonder will attest: she is truly a gem of the Monterey Peninsula.

Hudson is the proprietor and sole employee of California Legacy Tours, providing walking outings to Point Lobos and other Peninsula points of historical and cultural interest. But her tours aren't your garden-variety, "John-Steinbeck-slept-here," "oh-look-a-sea-otter," canned commentary. Whether it's describing the residential subdivision that Point Lobos nearly became (and how it was saved from that fate), the details of the whaling, abalone canning and coal mining industries that once thrived there or the flora, fauna and geography of the land, Hudson has the goods. And better yet, often as not she has an intriguing, compelling human story to go with the facts.

How does she know all this stuff? First off, she's possessed of a deep and abiding curiosity about virtually everything around her. Her powder blue eyes are constantly searching, her ears always attuned to new information. That, and she's part of the family that used to own Point Lobos before deeding it to the State of California. And she still lives on



Photos: Kelli Udall

part of the property.

A native of Switzerland, Hudson was a teacher with a degree in childhood education when she met and fell in love with Carmel native John Hudson in the mid-1970s. They married, and she set out for her new life in America. "I knew nothing about this area and didn't have a clue where I was going," she laughs. "It could have

been Chicago for all I knew." John Hudson's roots go deep in the Peninsula. His grandfather A.M. Allan purchased Point Lobos in 1898, eventually forever putting an end to the previous owner's plans to subdivide and develop that magnificent piece of California coast.

The Hudsons made their home on family property near Point Lobos. As a young bride and a stranger in a strange land, Monica concentrated on helping with her husband's wrought iron fabricating business. Eventually she went to work for California State Parks at Point Lobos and Stevenson House in Monterey, doing everything from collecting entrance fees to guiding tours to trail maintenance to creating educational displays. Along the way she learned a lot about the history of the Point and its environs.

"A.M. Allan was a self-made man," she says. A Pennsylvania native, he went to work in coal mines at the age of 8. "From there, he became an engineer, a contractor, mining consultant and he built racetracks, including Tanforan in San Bruno." Allan was hired to troubleshoot an under-



The thrilling coastline of Point Lobos comes even more alive with historic tales from tour guide Monica Hudson. Hudson's family used to own the region before donating it to the State of California. Hudson has an extensive knowledge of the history of Monterey County, and has penned two historical books.



Clockwise from top left: A.M. Allan's partner, Gennosuke Kodani, and his wife at Point Lobos in the "Gallery" guest house; a whale in 1900 being processed at Whalers Cove, possibly for the last time; visitors enjoying a picnic at Cypress Grove; Allan's son-in-law, Tom Riley, cultivating land; painter William Silva's Paris salon card featuring Point Lobos.



Photo: K.B. Ninomiya

Photo: A.M. Allan



SALON DES ARTISTES FRANÇAIS PARIS 1926
L'HEURE TRANQUILLE
Peintre de Lobos, California.
par William P. SILVA

Photo: Allan family collection



Photo: Pacific Grove Museum collection



Photo: Allan family collection



Photo: Allan family collection

Abalone harvesting boats in Whalers Cove at Point Lobos in the early 1900s. Allan and Kodani are pictured second and third from right. A coal chute and a Japanese village are shown in the background.

performing coal mine then operating south of Point Lobos and was dazzled by the area. "The beauty here escapes no one," Hudson observes.

Upon leaving the State Park's employ, Hudson began conducting private tours of Point Lobos. This is where that degree in childhood education began to pay off. "Teaching kindergarten is the perfect training ground for a tour guide," she says with a grin.

In addition to Point Lobos, Hudson offers tours of historic Old Monterey—often in period costume—and on another subject dear to her heart: Robert Louis Stevenson. "Stevenson House [the 'French Hotel' building at 530 Houston St. in Monterey] has the most extensive collection of Stevenson's personal artifacts anywhere in the world," she says. "But most people have no idea why that is, or how the author came to spend time here." A self-described "Stevenson fan," Hudson has visited "nearly everywhere he went in his lifetime. He was a fascinating person." That kind of research informs and enriches the experience she provides to her clients.

In addition to her guide business, Hudson has authored two local history books in the "Images of America" series for Arcadia Publishing. She

was able to use her lifetime of knowledge and dozens of family photos for the Point Lobos book, but the Carmel-by-the-Sea version required scores of interviews with long-time residents. Not that she minded. "California history is my passion," she says; so for her, learning the history of our little village was like catnip to a calico. Many of the stories she gleaned while researching both books have found their way into her tour narrative as well.

What makes a tour special with Hudson isn't merely her vast and encyclopedic storehouse of knowledge. It's the way she reads her clients to learn just what would be of particular interest to them. If someone expresses an interest in wildflowers, sea otters, the geological makeup of a rock, how whalers plied their trade, or the lichen that adheres to cypress trees, she can speak eloquently on those and myriad other subjects. It's that kindergarten training again: "In that line of work—and this one—I've had to develop creative ways to explain concepts," Hudson says. "I'm a storyteller at heart."

For more information about the various tours and services offered by California Legacy Tours, call 831/324-3304 or visit www.calegacytours.com.