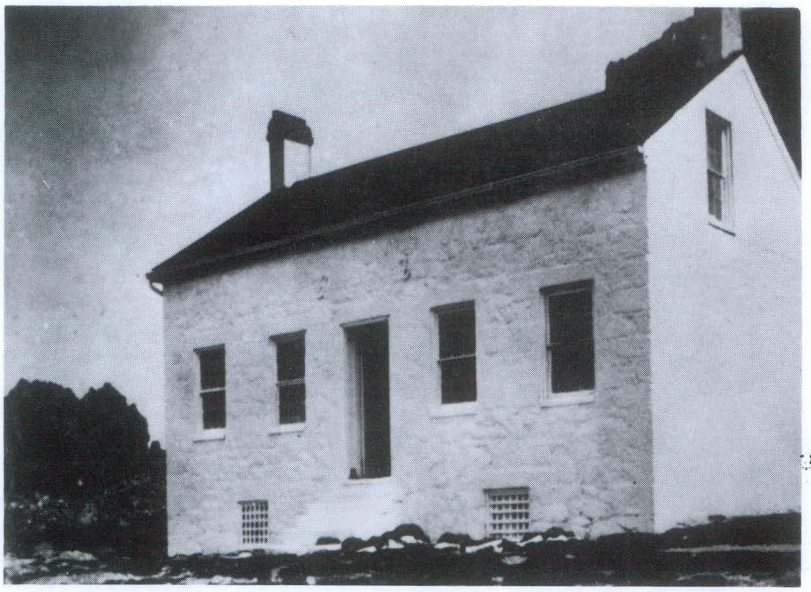
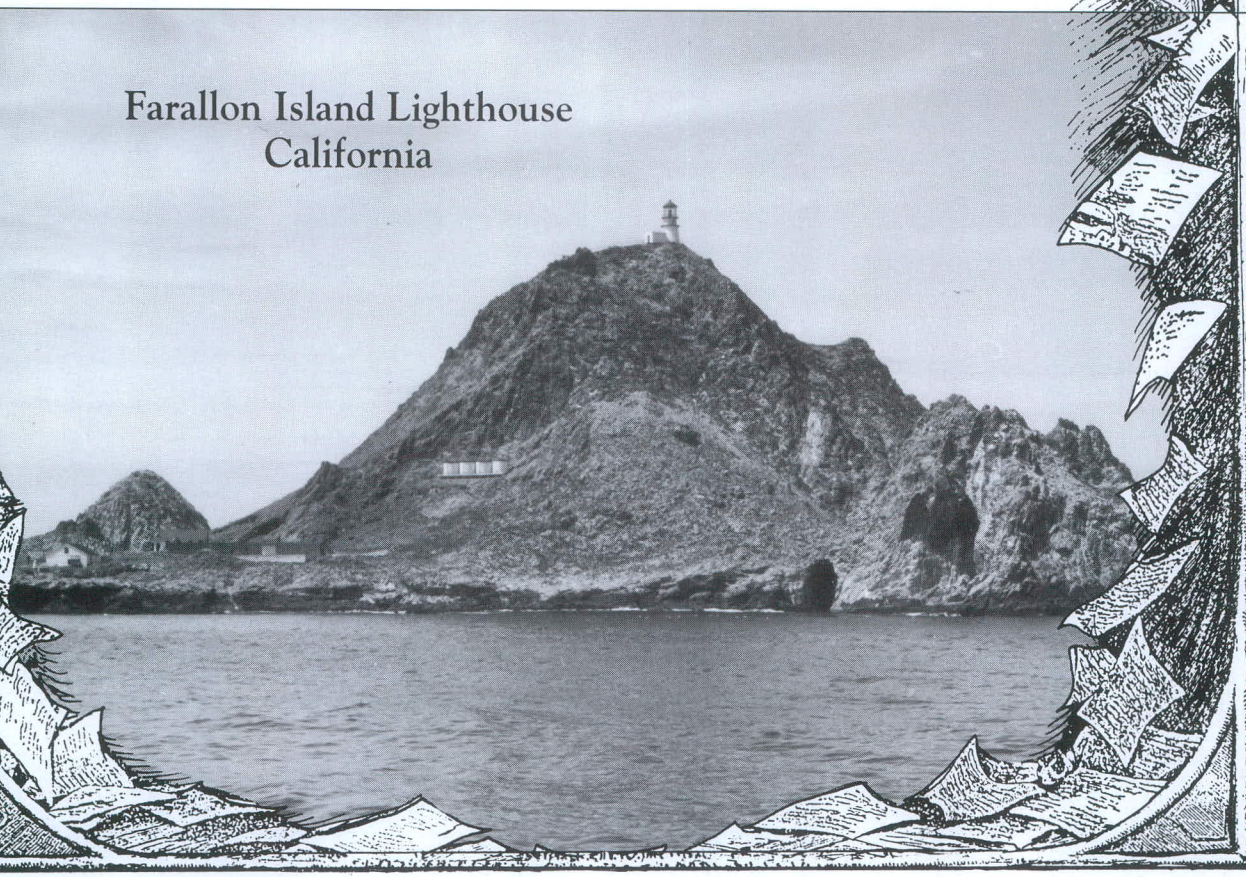
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Pages from the Past



Above – The Farallon Island Cape Cod style keeper's house was typical of the first 16 constructed on the west coast. Unlike most of the other stations it was separate from the tower. Below – The Farallon tower can be seen on the 425 foot high peak. Water tanks are located part way up the slope. USLHS photos.



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Keeper Amos Clift

30 November 1859

Dear Brother Horace,

As I have not written to you for some time, and have received several letters from you in the interium, I suppose it is about time to "spread myself" for the purpose and here I am. . . . I have heard from town (San Francisco) but once this month, and I will tell you, I am getting awful tired of this loneliness, it is almost as bad as the state prison, but I am in hopes that government will make some arrangements to have a vessel visit us regularly. I am trying hard for it and have written one or two "official" letters on the subject. Things at this island have always been in an unsettled state, and the enclosed extract will partially explain to you the causes. Before I came here this Egg Co. (see the history of the Farallons and the egg wars in Volume 5, #1) use to have things all their own way, as the former light keeper was a very ignorant man, and besides was a stock holder in the company and as long as he received his dividend, that was all he cared for, and government knew nothing of the actual state of affairs, but since I have been here "things have taken a turn," and they have ascertained that I am not so easily bluffed as was Mr. Wines. They have always claimed that the island was their property and that they had exclusive rights to the eggs. Whereas I believe it is . . . the property of the U.S. and that the light keepers have a right to the eggs . . . I think it will now be settled and the Egg Co. driven off the Island.

They tried their best this past spring to have me removed, for this very thing, and they may perhaps succeed finally, but I shall not abate my efforts in the least . . . if I succeed I may reap the benefits. The egg season is in May and June, and the profits of the company after all expenses are paid is every year from five to six thousand dollars, quite an item, and if this island is government property, I have a right to these eggs and am bound to try and gain it.

The Egg Company are, of course, bitter enemies to me, and will use their utmost efforts to effect my removal. But at present the Govt. authorities are in my favor. . . . If I could have the priviledge of this egg business for one season, it is all I would ask, and the Govt. might "kiss my foot and so up along."

Kate Say was married on the 10th inst. and she is now Mrs. Chas. R. Norton. Fast country this. I should like very well to have a good wife myself, if my circumstances were satisfactory, but until that time arrives, I suppose I must stuff myself up with the idea that,

"Depth of judgement most in him appears,"
"Who wisely weds in maturer years."

very refreshing, but however it is little better than the "fox and the grapes."

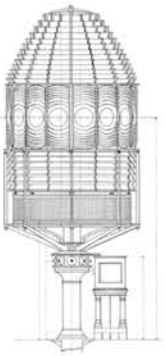
I suppose you are having fine times there this winter, those long evenings. I use to think great blessings to young people, and I presume you are making the most of them.

I expect to go to the city (San Francisco) the first of the month to hand in my returns and to get our rations, and I intend to look around a little to see if I can make any arrangements to go into some kind of business, for I have about made up my mind that I must make California my home for some years to come, and if I can get into a business there I intend to come home (Mystic, CT) and make a visit. . . . I am getting well along in years, and must make up my mind to something for I cannot make enough in ten years on this island to amount to much and as for living here alone, as I am now, for that length of time, I would not agree to do it today for one hundred thousand dollars. This is just the way I feel here . . . and I want to get out of it, for this Robinson Crusoe life would kill me in a short time. I had rather live among society and be poorer than Job's turkey, than live where I am, and have a fortune. This is the truth, your ideas of my good situation to the contrary nonwithstanding . . . write me often as you can for letters are all that keeps me alive here, and it is now more than a month since I have received any.

Your affectionate brother,

Amos

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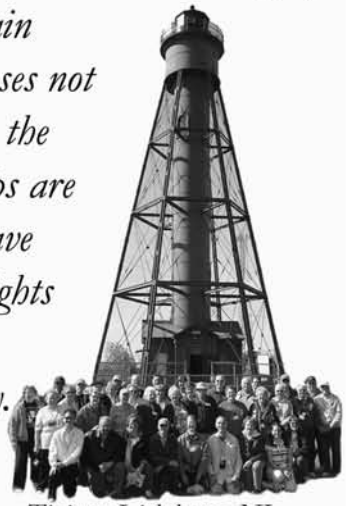
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