When the Steamer Came to the Farallones  
by Milton Ray

It always was a month at least,  
Till the steamer arrived from the shore, east,  
And then the busiest days began  
Of the uneventful, island year.

When, gladly acclaimed, the ship came at last,  
With trail of smoke, and deafening blast  
That far in the echoing caves would ring,  
The sea lions swift to the surf would slide;  
And out from many a lofty ledge,  
Where sheer cliffs wall the harbor edge,  
Would scatter far and wide in fear,  
Ten thousand querulous birds a-wing.

And then, the lone, gray mule in the pasture drear,  
Who had been staring out to sea,  
Or munching wire grass leisurely,  
Now, stiff-legged and tumbling ran,  
From bitter tasks to vainly hide  
'Neath the lowering roof of some cave mouth, near,—  
Poor, old, gray mule, bony and slim,  
The steamer brought no joy for him!

The ship's boat, loaded high and deep,  
From the anchored craft to the landing plied,  
Where a long-armed crane swung o'er the tide.  
Then up the rock-rough tower trail,  
Zigzag, narrow, long and steep,  
Which climbs the dominant Tower Crag,  
That laboring mule with its pack of oil,  
Forced and slow would slaving toil.

Or an unwilling car he now would drag  
On dull, unhappy, creaking wheel,—  
Along the track of rusty steel,  
That from the landing lazily led  
Round beach-coves strewn with storm-tossed wood,  
Through the high-walled pass with its whistling gale,  
And then, with the gently sloping bed  
That down the south slope slowly wound,  
Across the isle to open ground.

Here, on the broad and stony turf,  
Below the lone, wind-swept Tower Light,  
And facing towards the southern surf,  
The dwellings of the keepers stood,  
Red-roofed and spotless white.

Jerry, the mule purchased by Hart-  
man Bache, continued to live on the  
island even after construction was  
finished. Jerry hauled supplies from  
the landing and oil to the lighthouse un-  
til he died on Christmas night 1874. At  
the time of his death he had the distinc-  
tion of being on the island longer than  
any other resident. Jerry's replacement  
was Paddy, a mule also destined to live  
a long and productive life. To the  
anoyance of the keepers Paddy learned  
that "boat day" meant work day. On  
boat day Paddy was required to haul sup-  
plies, so when the tender's whistle was  
heard, Paddy would run off and hide  
among the rocks until she was brought  
back to do her duty.

Paddy, the second Farallon mule, giving a  
couple of the keeper's kids a ride. The T  
shaped structure in the background carried  
signal bell wires between various buildings  
on the island. Peter White photo.

Right—Cargo being lifted aboard the east  
landing of Southeast Farallon Island. The  
tender Lupine is hove to in the distance and  
both of the ship's boats are in view. The  
tender called once a month, weather per-  
mitting, to deliver food, mail, coal and other  
supplies. USLHS photo.