

The New Year News

California's Central Coast

1 January 2015

First Light

Since 1885 the first sign of land for ships arriving in San Francisco has been the Point Bonita Lighthouse, here welcoming the Panamanian-flagged container ship *Brussels Bridge* to the Golden Gate. Point Bonita was the last of California's 47 lighthouses to lose its keeper, being automated in 1980. Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Marin County. See an aerial video to get an idea of the lighthouse's setting at <http://youtu.be/Hec4pzWCHzY>.

First Light

Most of the people who've arrived in California the last 150 or so years have been looking for a new life.

For those who arrived by sea – either after a perilous trip through Antarctic waters at the tip of South America or across the planet's widest ocean from Asia where they lived or fought wars – a lighthouse beam was often the first indication their journey was nearly done and that second chance was about to begin.

Even people who don't make explicit resolutions at New Year's do, at some level, think of that day as a fresh start, a chance to wipe clean the slate and try again.

So lighthouses are the theme of the 2015 New Year's newsletter, which continues the coastal focus of past newsletters for this holiday. They're the symbol of arriving at a safe place or time for a fresh start.

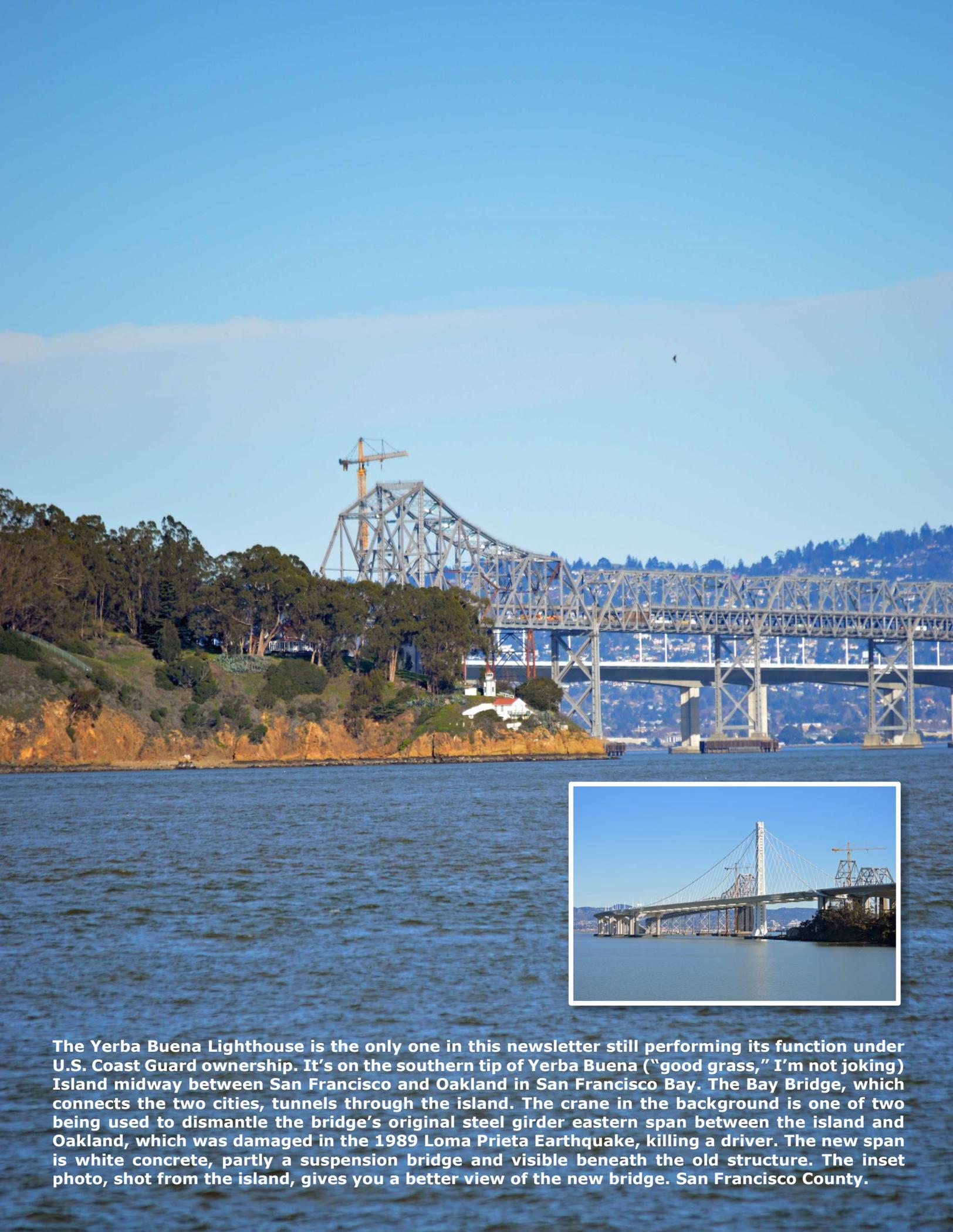
California's lighthouses stretch up the coast from Mexico to Oregon with nine inside San Francisco Bay.

A tall, white, cylindrical lighthouse with a dark lantern room on top, situated on a grassy cliff overlooking the ocean. The lighthouse is surrounded by several smaller white buildings and a flagpole with three flags. The sky is filled with large, dramatic clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden light.

Pigeon Point on the San Mateo County coast was originally called *Punta de las Ballenas* (Whale Point) for a nearby whaling station until 1853. That year the clipper ship *Carrier Pigeon*, on its maiden voyage from Boston to San Francisco, foundered on the rocks in fog. The 115-foot tall Pigeon Point Lighthouse – tied for tallest on the West Coast – was built in 1871 after two more major shipwrecks. The light's Fresnel lens, built in Paris, has 1,008 separate prisms and first served in the original Cape Hatteras, North Carolina lighthouse until it was removed during the Civil War. The lens is stored while \$11 million is raised to restore the complex. See a time-lapse video of the lens and its removal at <http://vimeo.com/33269785>.



Two pairs of tiny rock islands – the Sisters and the Brothers – lie on either side of the mile-wide San Pablo Strait in San Francisco Bay. Ships must pass through the strait to reach Vallejo and its former naval shipyard on Mare Island, the oil tanker terminals along the shore of San Pablo Bay, the automobile importing terminal at Benicia or to continue through the Sacramento River Delta for the inland port of Stockton. A light station was built on East Brother Island in 1874 to make navigation through the strait safer. The Coast Guard automated the light in the 1960s, ending the need for a keeper. The station was completely restored 34 years ago with private funds and now is operated as the East Brother Light Station Bed & Breakfast, which has five bedrooms. Rates include dinner, breakfast, champagne and boat transportation to and from Point San Pablo in Richmond. Proceeds are used to maintain the light station. Guests must be willing and able to climb a ladder from 4 to 12 feet from a bobbing boat– depending on tides – to reach the island. The B&B's website is <http://www.ebls.org/>. Contra Costa County.



The Yerba Buena Lighthouse is the only one in this newsletter still performing its function under U.S. Coast Guard ownership. It's on the southern tip of Yerba Buena ("good grass," I'm not joking) Island midway between San Francisco and Oakland in San Francisco Bay. The Bay Bridge, which connects the two cities, tunnels through the island. The crane in the background is one of two being used to dismantle the bridge's original steel girder eastern span between the island and Oakland, which was damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, killing a driver. The new span is white concrete, partly a suspension bridge and visible beneath the old structure. The inset photo, shot from the island, gives you a better view of the new bridge. San Francisco County.

Surf City USA



A sailboat moves past surfers catching a break at Steamer Lane beneath the Santa Cruz Lighthouse. See a 5-minute video of surfing here at http://youtu.be/V_VoagxJsUQ.

Before Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello roasted their first weenies on a beach, before Moondoggie (James Darren) and Gidget (Sandra Dee) fell in love in the sand, before Brian Wilson and his brothers took their first "Surfin' Safari," California's original beach boys were three Hawaiians.

Their Royal Highnesses Jonah Kūhio Kalaniana'ole, David La'amea Kahalepouli Kāwananakoā and Edward 'Abnel Keliiahānoui – nephews and adopted sons of the last Queen of Hawaii, Kapi'olani, – came to St. Matthew's Hall Military School in San Mateo, Calif., in 1885.

When they visited the beach at Santa Cruz on breaks, they wanted to practice the royal sport of

surfing, but no one in California had heard of such a thing. So the princes had a lumber mill carve three boards to their specifications from local redwood and became Santa Cruz's – and California's – first surfers.

Today's Santa Cruz Lighthouse, which is not the original structure built to guard the northern lip of Monterey Bay in 1869, houses the Santa Cruz Surfing Museum, which chronicles the 130-year history of California surfing and has a memorial to the Hawaiian princes.

Steamer Lane, the passage into the bay below the cliffs occupied by the lighthouse, is now the most popular surfing spot in Surf City USA.

Happy New Year



A boy fishes at Lighthouse State Beach – also known as Its Beach – in Santa Cruz.