

Timeline for Año Nuevo Island & Pigeon Point

Pre-1850s – sleepy area, ranching along coast, shore whaling activity from Punta de la Ballena (Whale Point).

1849 – California Gold Rush; San Mateo coast goes from minimal ship traffic to “super highway” status overnight.

1853 – Clipper ship *Carrier Pigeon* wrecks off Whale Point on her maiden voyage from Boston to San Francisco; all survive. Point is renamed Pigeon Point.

1865 – Clipper ship *Sir John Franklin* wrecks in between Año Nuevo and Pigeon Point; 13 of 16 drown, including 16 year-old Edward Church. Area is named Franklin Point.

1866 – Bark *Coya*, a collier or coal ship, wrecks between Año Nuevo and Pigeon Point. 27 of 30 drown, including the Captain’s wife and child.

1868 – Bark *Hellespont*, a collier or coal ship, wrecks between Año Nuevo and Pigeon Point. 11 of 18 drown.

1870 – US Congress appropriates funds for fog station at Año Nuevo and light/fog station at Pigeon Point.

1871 – Fog signal becomes operational at Pigeon Point.

1872 – Fog signal becomes operational on Año Nuevo Island. One-story keepers’ quarters built for two keepers and their families.

1872 – Light becomes operational at Pigeon Point. Two-story Victorian built for four keepers and their families.

1883 – Two Año Nuevo Island keepers and two townsmen drown while crossing between the island and mainland. Keepers’ wives were unsuccessful in attempting rescue; signaled passing steamer *Los Angeles* who searched in vain for survivors or bodies.

1887 – Schooners *JW Seaver* and *San Vicente* wreck off Año Nuevo Island in separate incidents. In the combined wrecks, 15 crew were lost.

1890 – First light installed on Año Nuevo Island, on top of the octagonal water tank.

1896 – Passenger steam ship *Colombia* wrecks in front of Pigeon Point’s light tower. All survive. Dynamited once salvage completed.

1906 – Two-story keepers’ quarters built on Año Nuevo Island.

1913 – Schooner *Point Arena* wrecks in front of Pigeon Point while loading lumber. Burned; 5-ton piece of bow discovered in 1983 and put on display at Año Nuevo.

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1914 – Año Nuevo Island light moved from water tank to a steel tower.

1920's – Rumrunners regularly used secluded coves between Año Nuevo and Pigeon Point for unloading contraband liquor. Also used the derrick at Pigeon Point.

1929 – Passenger steam ship *San Juan* rammed by oil tanker *SCT Dodd*, sinks in 5 minutes. 75 passengers and crew drown.

1934 – Pigeon Point Keeper Gerhard Jaehne rescues 11 fishermen from their wrecked fishing vessel, *Western Spirit*, in front of Pigeon Point's light tower. Jaehne receives Gallatin Award, US Coast Guard's highest honor.

1939 – US Coast Guard assumes responsibility for all lighthouses from the US Lighthouse Service.

1942 – 1945 – World War II sees US Coast Guard coastal lookouts stationed at Pigeon Point and Año Nuevo Island. Civilian Horse Patrol Lud McCreary spots an enemy submarine in the waters south of Año Nuevo Island; Davenport battery shells the bay; submarine's status unknown.

1948 – US Coast Guard decommissions Año Nuevo Island Light Station. Buildings abandoned to the sea lions and birds. Automated fog signal buoy anchored off southern tip of island continues to operate.

1953 – *BARC I*, an experimental Army amphibious cargo craft, sinks while being towed from Monterey to San Francisco. All 3 crew drown.

1958 – State of California buys Año Nuevo Island from the US Government and includes it in the newly acquired Año Nuevo State Reserve.

1976 – State Parks knocks down Año Nuevo Island light tower.

To present – Wrecks and vessel strandings still occur along the coast between Año Nuevo Island and Pigeon Point, mainly fishing vessels and pleasure craft. Pigeon Point continues to have a light signal; still an "active aid to navigation."

Sources:

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