

## Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary



Publication *Sailing Ships of New England*, C. B. Webster

Painting of *Noonday* under sail



Photo: San Francisco Maritime Research Center – SAFR 12979



Photo: *San Francisco Chronicle*

Angelo Alioto of Consolidated Fisheries with the bell of the *Noonday*. Captain John Tarantino of the trawler *Junta* while fishing found the bell entangled in his net in 1934.

## Clipper Ship *Noonday*

### History

*Noonday*, a medium clipper ship of 1177 tons was built in Portsmouth, New Hampshire in 1855 by Fernald and Petigrew for her owner Henry Hastings of Boston.

“Launched - the clipper ship Noon Day was launched at Portsmouth, NH, on Saturday forenoon, from the building yard of Messrs Fernald & Petigrew, Badger’s Island. The owner, Henry Hastings, Esq. of Boston, had invited many guests to launch the ship, and when fairly afloat, the whole party partook of a bountiful collation prepared by Mr. Hastings, to which ample justice was done. The ship has been built in the most thorough manner, under the supervision of Capt. Pearson, agent of the Boston underwriters, entirely of New Hampshire white oak, and in beauty of outline, and in all other points that tend to comeliness and strength, will compare favorably with any ship afloat.” The Boston Daily Atlas 28 August 1855

*Noonday*’s hull was painted black on the outside, blazoned on the headboards at the bow her name in letters of gold. Ornamented with gilded carved wood work of an American flag and eagle adorned her stern and home port Boston. The *Noonday* completed four westbound passages from Boston to San Francisco during her career; the fastest was completed in 117 days in 1857.

### Specifications

Nationality: American  
Class: Medium Clipper Ship  
Owner: Henry Hastings & Co  
Builder: Fernald & Petigrew  
Built Where: Portsmouth, New Hampshire  
Designer: Frederick Fernald  
Launched: 25 August 1855  
Hull Material: New Hampshire White Oak  
Masts: 3 Rig: Full-Rigged Ship  
Home Port: Boston, MA  
Tonnage: 1177  
Registered Length (feet): 181.5 OAL 197.0  
Registered Beam (feet): 38.5  
Registered Depth of Hold (feet): 23.6

### *Noonday*’s Final Voyage

On January 1, 1863, the *Noonday* was approaching the entrance to San Francisco harbor, 139 days out of Boston, weather clear, sea smooth but with a long swell on, the ship under all sail to main skysail and topgallant studdingsails and making 9 to 10 knots. When about eight miles west of the North Farallon, she struck a rock but glided clear. The shock was not sufficient to carry away the spars or rigging. However, her bottom had been stove and she immediately started to fill. Capt. Henry and his crew had only time to save a portion of their effects and take to the boats before the ship sunk in 40 fathoms. The pilot boat *Relief*, some two miles distant, picked up all hands. It appears that the rock that caused the disaster was covered by 18 feet of water; its existence was known to pilots but it had not been charted; it subsequently received the name of Noonday Rock. In spite of the depth, there were apparently some attempts made to salvage her cargo, in some reports valued as high as \$600,000. The steamer *Active* sailed from San Francisco on January 3, 1863, with the intent of grappling for the hulk and attaching hawsers. The results of that attempt are unknown. James Delgado & Steve Haller

## Clipper Ships

Only a small number of clippers were actually built, yet they captured public attention and acclaim and remain one of the best known, if not most famous of American ship types.

## Inbound Cargo: Boston to San Francisco

The *Noonday's* cargo provides a glimpse of commodity trade from Boston to San Francisco in 1863. "The ship and cargo was valued at \$600,000. Following is a list of some of her leading articles of cargo: 336 barrels dried apples, 1,336 packages boots and shoes, 33 quarter casks brandy, 2,775 boxes candles, 202 tons coal, 87 drums codfish, 1,105 bales of cordage, 33 bales and package merchandise, 27 bales duck, 100 bales gunny bags, 131 tons pig iron, 500 bars iron, 513 packages unspecified merchandise, 2,210 kegs nails, 2,831 cases (mostly coal oil), 250 cases olive oil, 263 bales, boxes and packages of paper; 317 barrels sugar, 232 cases yeast powder, 537 bundles telegraph wire, 960 packages iron pipe for the San Francisco Gas Company, 563 bars railroad iron, 377 pieces castings, and one engine. The railroad iron which she had on board we are assured, was not the San Jose Railroad. It was consigned to William T. Coleman & Co." Sacramento Daily Union 5 January 1863.

## U.S. Coast Survey 1875

"Noonday Rock, In October 1874, Lieut. Col. C. Seaforth Stewart, Corps of the

United States Engineers, provided means for increasing the depth of water at Noonday Rock, the position of which was determined some years ago by Assistant A. F. Rodgers of the Coast Survey. This danger was eighteen miles from the coast of California, and about three miles northwest of the North Farallon. As Fanny Shoal, its existence had been known; but there was much uncertainty in regard to its whereabouts previous to 1863. On the 2d of January, in the year, the ship Noonday, when the vessel by her reckoning was eight miles from the North Farallon, struck on the rock near midday, and within two hours sunk in forty fathoms.

When arrangements were complete for the operations proposed in submarine engineering, no suitable vessel could be procured at San Francisco, and the cutter Shubrick could not be spared from pressing duties in the light-house service. Under these circumstances, application was made to Lieutenant-Commander Taylor for the co-operation of his party in the steamer Hassler. The vessel accordingly left San Francisco on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October, and by nightfall a buoy was placed on the top of the rock, where the depth was found to be 20 ½ feet at low water.

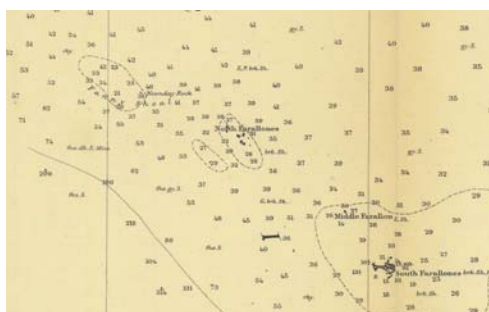
Subsequently, Lieutenant Weeden, of the Corps of Engineers, in close examination, by the aid of a diver, discovered that the rock did not terminate in a single point, but in three, and that the depth of one of the peaks was only fourteen feet at mean low water. Measurements made by the

Lieutenant Weeden were embodied by Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart in a published notice inviting proposals for the removal of the upper part of Noonday Rock, to insure an average depth of forty-five feet at mean low water. As the terms require the completion of the operation within the year 1875, and all the conditions are well known, the early removal of the obstacle in the seaward approach to San Francisco Bay is not a matter of doubt." U.S. Coast Survey Report 1875.

"The earliest work of record for the improvement of San Francisco Harbor and entrance consisted of the removal of Blossom Rock, in San Francisco Bay, in 1870, to a depth of 24 feet and at contract cost of \$75,000, and of the removal, in 1875, of Noonday Rock, in the Pacific Ocean, about 3 miles northwest of North Farallon Islands." Letter From the Secretary of War 1929.

## Lost - But Not Forgotten

"For seventy-one years the wreck lay at the bottom, forgotten by all the fisherman, whose nets became continually fouled on her, and even they did not know her name. On April 11th of this year [1934], the trawler *Junta*, Captain John Tarantino, while fishing north of the Farallones, found entangled in her nets a bell bearing the name Noonday. The relic was brought proudly to port by the fisherman and placed on display at Fisherman's Wharf, where the ship's history was recalled." San Francisco Chronicle 1934.



U.S. Coast Survey Hydrographic Chart 1865 (crop)

U.S. Coast Survey "Point Pinos to Bodega Head" chart with official name Noonday Rock

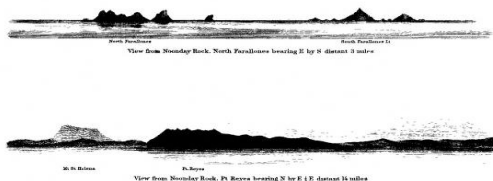


Illustration: *Pacific Coast Pilot* 1889

View of North Farallones (upper) and Point Reyes (lower) from Noonday Rock, circa 1889



Photo: Robert Lanham

Modern aid to navigation at Noonday Rock now warns mariners of the danger.