

## Shipwreck MV *Fernstream* - First Three-Dimensional Sonar Site Assessment Survey



San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park P82-019a.4183x

MV *Fernstream* at the dock in San Francisco.



Photo: Robert Schwemmer Maritime Library

MV *Fernstream*'s bow sinking off Lime Point Lighthouse in San Francisco Bay.



Photo: Robert Schwemmer Maritime Library

Above: MV *Fernstream* survivors in lifeboats under tow by a U.S. Coast Guard cutter; a U.S. Army tug stands by. Below: Survivors disembarking at Fort Mason.

## MV *Fernstream*

### History

MV *Fernstream* was built by Eriksbergs Mekaniska Verkstads Aktiebolag in Gothenburg, Sweden. The 416-foot steel-hull freighter was launched on July 4, 1949, followed by sea trials on October 6. The vessel was built for A/S Glittre, and managed by Fearnley & Eger under the Norwegian flag; it received a Det Norske Veritas classification. The vessel was primarily a cargo ship equipped with refrigerated cargo holds, but also had accommodations for passengers to bring additional revenue to her owners.

After World War II, Gothenburg shipyard was under contract to build similar class ships in the 8,400 deadweight tonnage range, delivering six vessels between 1948 and 1949. The freighters were powered by 7-cylinder diesel engines producing 5,650 brake horsepower with a top speed of 17.5 knots and cruising speed of 15 knots. Fearnley and Eger's fleet of vessels shipped cargo from the

United States to Asia, with some vessels transiting the world via the Suez Canal and returning to the United States. The company suffered two vessel losses in the 1950s, *Fernstream* in 1952 and *Belleville* in 1957.

### *Fernstream*

**Nationality:** Norwegian  
**Hull Number:** 384  
**Class:** Passenger – cargo steamship  
**Call Sign:** LFGI  
**Owner:** A/S Glittre  
**Managers:** Fearnley & Eger  
**Hull Material:** Steel  
**Masts:** 2 **Kingposts:** 8  
**Home Port:** Oslo, Norway  
**Registered Length (feet):** 416.1  
**Registered Beam (feet):** 58.1  
**Registered Depth of Hold (feet):** 25.5  
**Forecastle (feet):** 93  
**Gross Tonnage:** 4,980  
**Net Tonnage:** 2,796  
**Deadweight Tonnage:** 8,300  
**Machinery:** Diesel Engines  
**Cylinders:** 7 @ 29 1/8" Stroke: 55 1/8"

### MV *Fernstream* Collision and Sinking

On December 11, 1952, the SS *Hawaiian Rancher*, a cargo vessel of 8,353 gross tons, was inbound in San Francisco Bay and proceeding to an anchorage. The MV *Fernstream* departed the north side of pier 22 at 6:52 a.m. and was outbound with a crew of 42 and 11 passengers proceeding to sea for Manila, Philippines. *Fernstream* was fully loaded with 6,378 tons of cargo that consisted of primarily soy beans; the balance being general cargo and mail. The weather was foggy with visibility less than a half mile; the sea calm. Both vessels were sounding regulation fog signals; their respective radars manned by competent personnel. It wasn't long before errors in judgment of course and speed were made and both vessels collided at 7:30 a.m. off Lime Point Lighthouse. The vessels collided at an angle of approximately 20 degrees. The port bow and stern of *Hawaiian Rancher* first came in contact with the portside of the *Fernstream* just abaft the bridge, damaging one of *Fernstream*'s lifeboats and superstructure. It penetrated the hull at the after part of the engine room, damaging the watertight bulkhead to No. 4 hold. The bow of the *Hawaiian Rancher* withdrew from the hole in the *Fernstream* and within a few seconds *Fernstream* sank, all 53 were saved.



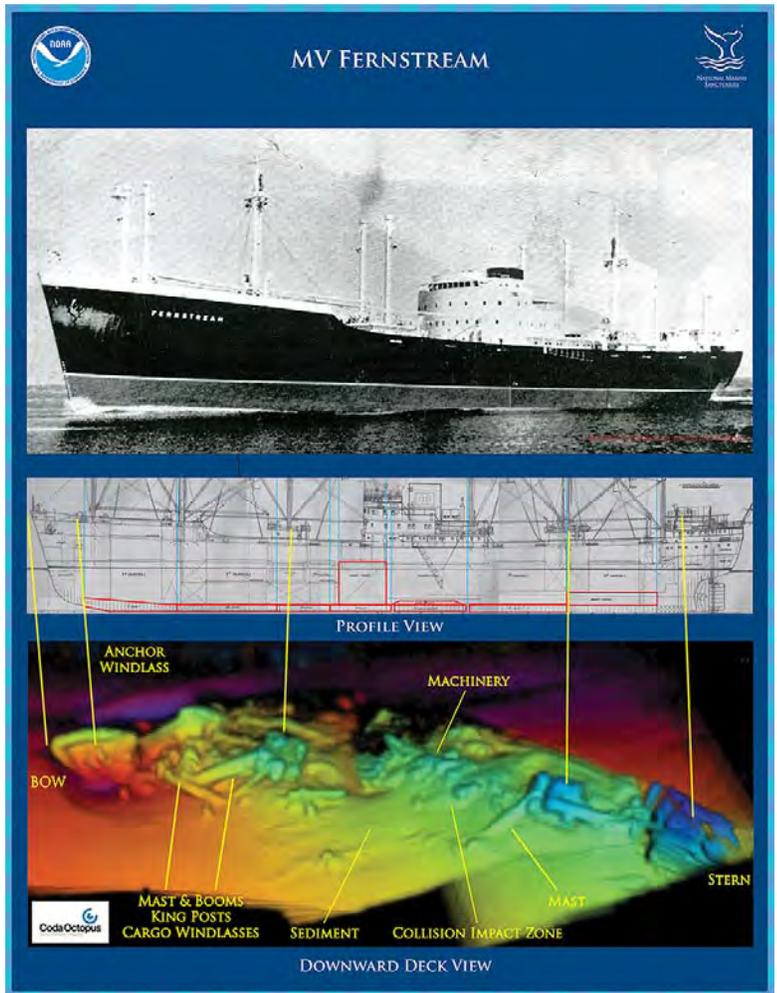
Photo: Robert V. Schwemmer NOAA

Present day photo of Lime Point and former lighthouse structure where the MV *Fernstream* and SS *Hawaiian Rancher* collided in fog on December 11, 1952.

### First 3-D Sonar Site Assessment Survey

Working with the San Francisco Police Department's Marine Unit, Coda Octopus conducted an Echoscope 3-D sonar survey of the shipwreck MV *Fernstream* in 2013.

Confirmed by the 3-D sonar survey and mapping, the shipwreck *Fernstream* sits upright with the fore-castle, partial remains of the stern-house and bridge-house, as well as the forward and after mast house structures are all visible. The hull has suffered from catastrophic collapse of the bridge-house structure; there is a severe breach in the steel hull on the starboard side forward of the bridge-house; masts, booms, and king posts have all collapsed onto the main deck



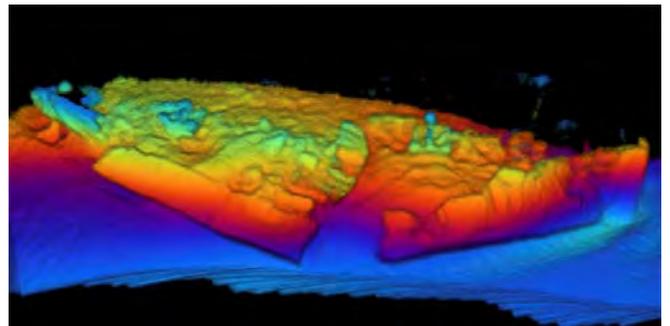
or possibly shelter deck; and the port side of the wreck is buried deep in sediment. The stern is the highest remaining structure above seafloor, but also in a state of collapse. The shipwreck appears to be listing to port in the bow. At the starboard breach in the hull, forward of the bridge-house structure, the bow is no longer in longitudinal alignment with the after part of the hull. Outside the wreck, the starboard side of the hull shows evidence of sediment scouring, more prominently in the bow, a typical occurrence with shipwrecks due to their position on the seafloor in prevailing currents.



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Credit: Coda Octopus

MV *Fernstream* shipwreck survivors at Fort Mason receiving a warm beverage.

SS *Hawaiian Rancher* with bow damage after the collision with MV *Fernstream*.

Coda Octopus 3-D image of the shipwreck MV *Fernstream* with a severe breach in the starboard hull forward of the bridge-house.