# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines* for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

	1. Name of Property		Day LIVED	
historic name Point Bonita Light Station			MAY 7 1000	
other names/site number			MAY 71990	
2. Location				
street & number Point Bonita		N/A	not for publication	
city, town Sausalito		N/A	vicinity	
state CA code	CA county Marin	code 041	zip code 94965	
			2699	
3. Classification Ownership of Property Category of Property		Number of Reso	Number of Resources within Property	
private	building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing	
public-local			_2buildings	
public-State	site		sites	
public-Federal			_1structures	
	object		objects	
		_3	_4 Total	
Name of related multiple property lis	sting:	Number of contr	ributing resources previously	
Light Stations in California	rnia	listed in the Nat	ional Register0	
4. State/Federal Agency Certifi	ication			
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Signature of certifying official	eets does not meet the Nationa		continuation sheet.	
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6. Function or Use			
Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)		
Transportation: water related.	Transportation: water related.		
Domestic: institutional housing.	Landscape: park.		
7. Description			
Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)		
	foundation <u>Concrete</u>		
Other: lighthouse.	wallsIron		
	Brick		
	roofCopper		
	other		

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Point Bonita Light Station is located at the tip of Point Bonita -- a rocky promontory marking the northern entrance to San Francisco Bay. The lighthouse tower and adjacent fog-signal building are built on narrow ledges blasted out of solid ridge top rock. These are the only significant structures remaining from the many older buildings and structures once constructed on the point. Fortunately, their distinctive architectural features are intact (or nearly so) and they are in quite good condition. A picturesque pedestrian suspension bridge connects the light station's buildings to the ridgetop trail. Since the station's founding in 1855 the following buildings have been constructed and demolished (or deteriorated):

1. Original Lighthouse 1855: Built too high for California's low fogs, the lens and lantern room were removed in 1877 and relocated atop the new one-story brick structure at the very end of the point.

2. Fog-Signal 1855: A cannon and powder magazine served as Point Bonita's (and California's) first fog-signal until 1857.

3. Keeper's Quarters 1855: Located near the original lighthouse on the higher elevation of the site. Demolished 1940.

4. Assistant Keeper's Quarters 1856: Located next to the Keeper's Quarters. Destroyed by the 1906 earthquake.

5. Bridge: In the early days of the station a wooden bridge was built around the point at the location of the present tunnel. It was anchored to the rock with huge iron rings, at least one of which is still in existance. The bridge was replaced by the tunnel in 1876 after repeated winter landslides.

6. Incline Tramway 1872: Installed to haul supplies from the ocean to the roadway leading to the light 100' above. The system consisted of a landing, derrick, incline, track rails and winch. Today, the incline slope is intact, traces of the landing wharf and derrick remain, and a portion of the brick turnaround for the winch remains at the top of the hill. In addition, much remains of the concrete tracks running along the roadway (today's pedestrian path) from the winch to the tip of the point.

7. Fog-Signal Building 1872: Located at the end of the point, this building was demolished in 1874 due to damage incurred in a landslide.

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8. Fog-Signal Building 1874: Built on the graded site of the 1872 fog-signal building, this building was later used for housing off-and-on until its demolition in 1960. Today, the outline of its brick and concrete foundation remains.

9. Oil Tank 1903: A 5,000 gallon metal tank located on the hill overlooking the lighthouse and fog-signal building. A pipeline was used to supply oil from this structure to the fog-signal building. Today, the structure lacks integrity due to its rusted-out deteriorated condition.

In addition, the Point Bonita Lifesaving Station was located northeast of the light station on Bonita Cove. The boathouse and landing were connected to an incline railway similar to the one used by the light station on the other end of the cove. Portions of the landing and rail tracks can be seen today at the bottom of the hill.

The Coast Guard presently maintains modern electronic aids-to-navigation devices clustered below the fog-signal building toward the water.

1. LIGHTHOUSE TOWER (1855 & 1877) -- CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE:

A metal lighthouse tower set atop a rectangular building with two one-story wings on the east and west facades. The building on which the tower rests is 24' X 14' and is made of white-painted brick. The north facade is pierced by two doors and two freestanding 2/2 double-hung windows. A decorative brick arch is recessed into the center of the north and south facades. The foundation is made of poured concrete. A surrounding concrete pad covers the rock ledge that the entire structure rests on. The lighthouse tower itself rests atop the railed platform created by the roof of the brick structure. The tower is a two-story twelve-sided structure containing the lamp room on the first level and the lens room (or lantern room) on the second. The first level is covered with iron plates belted together, the second level is made entirely of glass (with iron mullions). The lens room contains the original still-operating 2nd order Fresnel lens. The structure is topped with a copper dome and ball vent common to lighthouses of this time.

The integrity of the lighthouse is quite complete, although the present structure was completed at different times. The lens and tower date from the original Point Bonita Lighthouse, built higher up the hill in 1855. In 1877 this portion of the lighthouse was relocated and joined with the newly built brick base structure at the present location. The only alterations made to the structure since 1877 have been the erection of a small wooden storage shed at the northwest corner and the placement of a door and metal shed next to the lamp room to facilitate entry to the railed platform. A watch room had been built above the west wing in 1950. This was removed by the Coast Guard in 1980 to restore the building to its original appearance. This combination of lighthouses from two different periods has produced a design unique among California lighthouses.

2. FOG-SIGNAL (1903) -- CONTRIBUTING BUILDING:

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One one-story rectangular brick building built 13' below the lighthouse on the western edge of the point. The four sides of the building contain a total of seven double-hung 4/4 windows. One metal double door is found at the entrance, and one original four-panel wooden door is found several feet to the south. The top of the windows and doors are arched. The arched brickwork surrounding the doors and windows forms a decorative element of the building. A stringcourse of bricks connecting the arches and encompassing the building further adds to the decorative brickwork. The hip roof is bisected by a smaller cross gable on the east and west facades. Original fog horns are still attached to the gable end on the west facade. The roof is covered in red-stained wood shake. The interior contains two rooms: one designed for the fogsignal boilers and machinery and the other for a work room. Like similar California fogsignal buildings, the roof trusses and beams are open to the floor below. Unlike other fog-signal buildings, however, there is substantial fluted woodwork surrounding the windows and doors. Most fog-signal buildings had strictly utilitarian interiors. The architectural integrity of the building is intact except for several plasterboard partitions erected in the boiler room. It also appears that a former door on the south facade has been bricked in at one time. The building appears to be in very good condition.

#### 3. TUNNEL (1876) -- CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE:

A tunnel was cut through the rocky promontory at Point Bonita after landslides in 1872, 1874, and 1876 had damaged the path to the point. The tunnel is 118' long, 6'4" high, 6' wide at the base, and 4' wide at the top. An iron ring, which was used to anchor the original bridge around the point, is still embedded in the rock of the north facade. In later years concrete portals were constructed at the two ends of the tunnel. A steel gate is presently located at the north entrance to control access to the tunnel.

4. SEARCHLIGHT GENERATOR BUILDING (1912) -- NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING:

A rectangular, one-story concrete building with two doors and four windows. The interior of the building is covered in verticle tongue-and-groove paneling. The architectural integrity is intact. Structurally, the building is in very sound condition although many cosmetic repairs need to be made. The building is non-contributing because, although located on the light station grounds, its operation was technically part of the U.S. Army's search and rescue efforts.

#### 5. SUSPENSION BRIDGE (1954) -- NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE:

A suspension bridge of wood and cable connecting the pedestrian path to the lighthouse and fog-signal building. This was constructed in 1954 to help solve the access problem caused by continuing erosion at the end of the point. Although quite interesting and beautiful, it is non-contributing due to its relatively recent construction date.

The Point Bonita Light Station contains a total of two contributing structures, one contributing building, one non-contributing structure and two non-contributing buildings.

8. Statement of Significance	
Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other prope nationally XX statewide locally	rties:
Applicable National Register Criteria 🔀 A 🗌 B 🔀 C 🗌 D	
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)	3
Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)Period of SignificanceMaritime History1855–1940Transportation1877–1940ArchitectureCommerce	Significant Dates           1855, 1877
Cultural Affiliation	
Significant Person Architect/Builder N/A Unknown	

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Point Bonita Light Station meets the requirements for registration as defined in the multiple property submission "Light Stations in California." The station's significance is evaluated with respect to the historic context Maritime Transportation in California: 1842-1940. The station derives significance under Criteria A and C. Criteria A is satisfied by the association of the complex with California's critical reliance on maritime transportation and the aids that made navigation possible. Criteria C is met by the presence of the architecturally distinctive late 19th century lighthouse structure and early 20th century fog-signal building.

The station fully meets registration requirements for its property type. It contains an intact lighthouse tower (in this case with intact lens as well) and an associated fogsignal building. The architectural integrity of the station's historic buildings is very high and their condition is very good. The tower and fog-signal building, clustered together at the end of the rocky point, give a cohesiveness to the station site. This is heightened by the building's separation from the main access path by a pedestrian suspension bridge. This bridge, existing in the shadow of the Golden Gate Bridge, gives an element of grace and whimsy to the lighthouse site. Point Bonita is the only lighthouse in the United States (perhaps the world) approached by a suspension bridge.

The Point Bonita Lighthouse was established in 1855 to mark the northern entrance to San Francisco Bay and to warn of local navigational hazards. Point Bonita itself is a sharp, rocky promontory jutting out in the water at the northern entrance to San Francisco Bay. As early as 1850 the U.S. Coast Survey had recommended that a lighthouse be constructed at this critical location.<sup>1</sup> President Taylor had authorized the Coast Survey in 1849 to inspect and recommend sites for lighthouses along the California coast. Altogether, 16 lighthouse sites were recommended for California, four of them in the Bay Area -- Alcatraz, Fort Point, Farallon Islands and Point Bonita.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime, the Gold Rush had made San Francisco a West Coast boomtown, and the Bay was increasingly filled with maritime traffic from around the world. Despite the urgent need for a lighthouse at the entrance to the Bay, however, Point Bonita Lighthouse was not funded by Congress until 1853 -- the last of the Coast Survey recommended Bay lighthouses to receive appropriation. In an 1853 letter to the Secretary of the Treasury, the Superintendent of the 1853 Coast Survey stresses the urgency of funding for Point Bonita and explains why the other three funded lighthouses cannot serve as a suitable entrance marker to San Francisco Bay. Fort Point, he See continuation sheet concludes, cannot be adequately viewed from

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a southern approach. This was an especially important consideration in the Gold Rush years when the majority of coastal traffic was arriving by way of Cape Horn or Panama. Alcatraz, the letter goes on, is located too far inside the Bay to be of much use as an entrance marker. And the Farallon Island Lighthouse, while valuable in the general navigation of the coast, is more useful "showing its own position and the surrounding dangers, than as a guide to the heads."<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the coast provides no other natural landmark in the vicinity of the Bay that is "so well known or remarkable . . . as could be readily and promptly distinguished during a clear night."<sup>4</sup>

While the station remained unbuilt, scores of shipwrecks occurred while trying to find a safe passage into the Bay. Few captains dared sail their vessels through the Golden Gate after sundown. Even those approaching in the daytime encountered fogs, swift currents, and other navigational hazards.<sup>7</sup> The largest wreck to occur in the vicinity of Point Bonita was that of the sidewheeler steamship Tennessee on March 6, 1853. Fortunately all 1000 passengers and crew made it safely to shore at Indian Cove (later renamed Tennessee Cove in memory of the shipwreck).<sup>0</sup> Ironically, Congress had finally authorized and appropriated \$25,000 for the Point Bonita Lighthouse just three days before the wreck on March 3, 1853. Construction continued to be delayed however, and in August 1853 Richard Hammond, Superintendent of Lights and Collector of Customs in San Francisco, wrote directly to the Secretary of the Treasury to try and expedite the construction of the light.<sup>8</sup> More months passed and still no action was forthcoming from Washington. On September 29, 1854 a petition was submitted to the Secretary of the Treasury from the Branch Pilots Association and Merchant Ship Masters urging that there be no more delay in the construction of the lighthouse. Finally, on November 15, 1854 -more than a year and a half after Congress appropriated funding -- the lighthouse inspector of the 12th Lighthouse District received authority to solicit contracts for the light's construction." The work was completed by local contractors and the Point Bonita Lighthouse beamed its first rays out to sea on May 2, 1855.<sup>10</sup>

In lieu of the standard plan of a tower within a Cape Code style house used for the other early West Coast lighthouses, at Point Bonita the Lighthouse Board chose a separate site for each of the structures. The tower stood at an elevation of 260' near the edge of a cliff which had a steep drop down to the ocean below, while the house stood about 440 yards inland to the southeast, at a lower elevation. The two structures were most likely separated because of the practice of maximizing visibility by placing towers at the highest point of the land -- in this case a spot of land not large enough for a house and a tower. This decision would later prove to be the lighthouse's undoing, as its light proved to be too high to be seen through the frequent low clouds that rolled in through the Golden Gate. But at the time, it appeared to be a wise maneuver.

Soon after the light went into operation, the Lighthouse Board turned its attention to providing a fog-signal at this often fog-bound location. A surplus army cannon requisitioned from the Benicia Arsenal was installed at Point Bonita on August 6, 1856 and became the West Coast's first operating fog-signal. The cannon was to be fired every half-hour, day and night, during foggy weather. Since only one Lighthouse Officer was hired for this position, the long hours -- and often sleepless nights -- led to a

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rapid succession of unhappy attendants. Finally, on March 18, 1858 the cannon was replaced with a mechanically-struck fog bell that required little more than winding every six hours.<sup>12</sup>

The extreme isolation of the early station also contributed to the unhappiness of lighthouse employees. It was typical of the early lighthouse system to make no provision for transportation other than occasional visits by the lighthouse tender.<sup>13</sup> The nearest provisions for supplies were located in San Francisco — accessible only by boarding a steamboat in Sausalito after a three hour trek over mountainous terrain. Once in San Francisco, lighthouse personnel found their meager government salaries to have skant purchasing power in Gold Rush San Francisco. By March of 1856, just 10 months after the station opened, Point Bonita had gone through two Keepers and five Assistant Keepers.<sup>14</sup> The issue of the isolation was resolved somewhat in the 1860's with more ranches in the area and a new overland trail completed to Sausalito. But the issue of low pay near a high-priced city would plague lighthouse personnel for the rest of the 19th century and through the beginning of the 20th.<sup>15</sup>

After several years of operation it became clear that the type of fog on the Pacific Coast often occurred at a higher elevation than the ocean fogs of the East. Oftentimes the Point Bonita light would be obscured by fog at the 300 foot level, while lower elevations remained clear. Lighthouse authorities decided that a new tower and fogsignal would need to be constructed on the tip of the point at a much lower elevation. Construction proved difficult due to the precariousness of the terrain. A tunnel was eventually cut through the side of the rock in 1876 to eliminate the cliff-hanging wooden platform that skirted the 200' shear cliff. In the early 1870's a landing was also constructed near the new lighthouse site along with a winch and lift to haul material up the side of the cliff. The new fog-signal, an up-to-date steam siren, was completed in 1872. A portion of the fog-signal building fell to the sea in a winter storm two years later. In 1875 the tip of the point was leveled and the fog-signal building pulled back from the edge of the cliff. The new lighthouse began operating in 1877. It was composed of a new one-story brick base and the relocated lantern room and lens from the original lighthouse. A dome was added to the top of the former lighthouse and it became used as a daymark. The present fog-signal building was constructed in 1903, replacing the previous fog-signal buildings built in 1872 and 1875. A new Keeper's duplex was completed in 1908, the previous one having been rendered uninhabitable by the 1906 earthquake. The last major construction project on the station occurred in 1954 with the construction of the suspension bridge connected the lighthouse and fog-signal with the path along the point. Years of erosion had produced an unrepairable chasm that could only be spanned by a bridge. Point Bonita lighthouse was automated in 1980 -- the last lighthouse in California to do so. In 1981 it was transferred to the National Park Service and was opened for tours in 1984.  $^{16}$ 

Buildings and structures no longer standing on the site include the 1855 lighthouse, 1855 fog-signal, Keeper's quarters, Assistant Keeper's quarters, bridge, incline tramway, 1872 fog-signal building, 1874 fog-signal building, and 1903 oil tank.

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The particular significance of the individual structures and buildings remaining on the site are as follows:

LIGHTHOUSE TOWER (1855 & 1877)

The lighthouse tower is significant as the principal element of the light station. Its metal tower and lens date from the 1855 lighthouse constructed at the top of the hill. This portion was relocated to the top of the new one-story brick base in 1877 to allow for greater visibility at a lower elevation during the station's frequent fogs.<sup>17</sup> The structure fully meets requirements of its property type; it is a substantial structure built to contain a Fresnel lens (in this case a 2nd order lens) and its architectural integrity is very nearly intact (including the lens). Its hybrid parentage makes it a very distinctive structure. But in many ways it is very representative of similar California lighthouses built in similar locations. Its short stature and large lens was typical of California lighthouses built on rocky headlands. This contrasts with the little, relatively low-power lights common in New England, or the tall, narrow towers of the Middle Atlantic States and the South. The architectural integrity of the structure is nearly intact. Before the Coast Guard turned the structure over to the National Park Service in 1981, they restored the structure to its original appearance by removing a watch room that had been constructed on the roof of the west wing.<sup>18</sup> The structure is presently in good condition.

FOG-SIGNAL BUILDING (1903)

This building obtains significance as a contributing element of the light station. It replaced fog-signal buildings that had been built in 1872 and 1874. Its construction at the very tip of the point below the lighthouse was intended to make the sound signal more audible to maritime traffic.<sup>19</sup> The structure meets registration requirements for its property type. It is similar to other fog-signal structures in its large interior space arrangement and in its exposed truss and attic beams. It is different than most other California fog-signal buildings, however, in the degree of attention paid the interior woodwork detail. The architectural integrity of the structure is nearly intact and its condition appears to be very good.

Since its founding in 1855 the station has had continued significance. Its significance since 1940, however, has not been shown to be exceptional, although it continues to serve as a navigational aid.

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#### NOTES

1. Ralph Shanks, <u>Lighthouses of San Francisco Bay</u> (San Anselmo, CA: Costano Books, 1976), p. 33.

2. Anne Coxe Toogood, <u>Historic Resources Study: The Bay Area Community, Golden</u> <u>Gate</u> (Denver, CO: National Park Service, 1977), p. 206.

3. Richard D. Cutts, Pulgas Camp, California, to Secretary of the Treasury, Washington, D.C., July 6, 1853, found in U.S. Department of the Treasury, <u>United States</u> <u>Coastal Survey for 1853</u> (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1854), p. 179.

- 4. <u>Ibid</u>.
- 5. <u>Ibid</u>.
- 6. Toogood, p. 208.

7. U.S. Lighthouse Board, <u>Laws of the U.S. Relating to the Establishment, Support,</u> and <u>Management of the Lighthouses</u> (Washington, D.C.: A.O.P. Nicholas, 1855), p. 177.

- 8. Toogood, p. 208.
- 9. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 210
- 10. <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 212-213.
- 11. Ibid.
- 12. Shanks, p. 36.
- 13. <u>Ibid</u>.
- 14. Toogood, pp. 216-217.
- 15. Shanks, pp. 34-36.

16. Shanks, pp. 33-39; Toogood, pp. 219-233; also see James Gibbs, <u>Lighthouses of</u> the Pacific (West Chester, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 1986), p. 83.

17. Shanks, p. 39.

18. John Martini, Chief of Visitor Services, Point Bonita/GGNRA, interview by author, Point Bonita, California, September 2, 1989.

19. Shanks, pp. 36, 38.

9. Major Bibliographical References				
Gibbs, Jim. Lighthouses of the Pacific. West Holland, F. Ross. Americas Lighthouses, Their				
Brattleboro: S. Green Press, 1972.				
Martini, John, Chief of Visitor Services, Poir				
2 September 1989, Point Bonita, Californi				
Munro-Fraser, J.P. <u>History of Marin County</u> .	Washington, D.C.: Bower & Co., 1880.			
Shanks, Ralph and Janette. Lighthouses and Lifeboats of the Redwood Coast. San				
Anselmo: Costano Books, 1978.				
Toogood, Anne Coxe. Historic Resources Study:	The Bay Area Community, Golden Gate.			
Denver: NPS, 1977.				
U.S. Department of the Treasury. United State D.C.: GPO, 1854.				
U.S. Lighthouse Board, <u>Annual Report</u> , various				
U.S. Lighthouse Board, Department of the Trea				
Establishment, Support, and Management of	the Lighthouses. Washington, D.C.:			
A.O.P. Nicholas, 1855.	See continuation sheet			
Previous documentation on file (NPS):	State the state of a difference device			
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)	Primary location of additional data:			
has been requested	State historic preservation office			
previously listed in the National Register	Other State agency			
previously determined eligible by the National Register	K Federal agency			
designated a National Historic Landmark	Local government			
recorded by Historic American Buildings	University			
Survey #	Other			
recorded by Historic American Engineering	Specity repository:			
Record #	Golden Gate National Recreation Area			
10. Geographical Data				
Acreage of property14 acres				
UTM References A [1_0] [5]4_1]3_4_0] [4_1]8_5[6_8_0] Zone Easting Northing				
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	Zone Easting Northing			
c 1,0 54,1500 4185260				
	See continuation sheet			
Verbal Boundary Description				

Beginning at a point 100' south of the road to Point Bonita, and known as Point 'A' and thence running southwest in a straight line for 2000' to the coastline known as Point 'B' and from there following the coastline at the high tide mark, for approx 1000' to Point 'C' and from there continuing along the coastline at high tide level to Point 'D' and from there running to the tip of Point Bonita. See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification** 

The boundary of the Point Bonita Light Station embraces the buildings and immediate setting historically associated with the complex.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared	1 By	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
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city or townS	anta Rosa	state CA	zip code95407_

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Point Bonita Light Station Point Bonita Sausalito, CA Marin County

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