

VESTIGES of *Lands End*



Farallon Islands

The Farallon Islands are a group of seven islands located approximately 30 miles west of the Golden Gate. On clear days the islands can be seen in the distance from the cliffs of Lands End. The islands were originally called the “Islands of the Dead” by the Ohlone, the native inhabitants of San Francisco, who did not set foot upon them because they were believed to be the place where the dead resided.

During European explorations the islands were discovered by Sir Francis Drake and later named “Los Farallones de los Frailes” by Juan Francisco de Bodega in 1769. In the 1800s the islands were exploited by fur traders until the seal population on the island was depleted by 1841. The islands were again exploited during the Gold Rush for sea bird eggs in high demand by the influx of gold miners. During this time a lighthouse was installed on the South Farallones Island. As a result of human activities on the islands the sea bird population was seriously reduced, and other wildlife and plant species were eliminated by invasive species introduced by lighthouse keepers.

The North and Middle Farallones were declared wildlife refuges in 1906 and the South Farallones Island was added in 1969. Today only the researchers of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary inhabit the islands.