

The History and Significance of the Adolph Sutro Historic District: excerpts from the National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form prepared in 2000.

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I. SIGNIFICANCE

The area located on point Lobos and Lands End overlooking the Pacific Ocean in the westernmost portion of San Francisco has since the 1850s been developed and used by San Franciscans and visitors to the city to experience the scenery and recreational opportunities associated with the shoreline, beach, and ocean. Characteristics of this cultural landscape have combined activities related to the natural features of the area — scenic panoramic views, access to the beach and ocean for hiking and swimming, opportunities to see plant and animal communities — with “tourist” activities — restaurants, swimming, museums, buying souvenirs, and “having been there.” The foundation of this cultural landscape has always been the natural features — ocean, beach, cliffs, views, plant materials, animal life, and the sites, sounds, smells of the ocean. These have provided the reasons that people wanted to come to site and have wanted to shape it to reflect recreational attitudes of the specific time. Through the years the landscape has evolved, specific structures built to provide recreational-related activities have come and gone or changed, but the Sutro Historic Landscape District continues to be a vital place for San Franciscans and regional, national, and international visitors to the city to come and do all the things people have always done in this landscape by the sea.

The Sutro Historic Landscape District is located just west of the Golden Gate, on a dramatic promontory overlooking the Pacific Ocean, where the rugged Point Lobos coastline turns abruptly south. Directly offshore are the Seal Rocks, which in 1887, at Adolph Sutro’s urging, were designated a wildlife preserve by the United States Congress, to protect the colony of sea lions residing there. Below and south of the district stretches the five mile long Ocean Beach strand that has attracted beach-goers since the earliest days of settlement in San Francisco. The scenery, seals and the beach have combined to continuously attract countless visitors. This, in turn, has drawn development to cater to the crowds. By the mid-1850s, travelers could rest and take refreshments at the Seal Rock House located at the foot of the cliff near Seal Rock or at Ocean House four miles to the south on the western end of the Mission Dolores trail to the beach. A popular day trip from San Francisco during that time consisted of a coastal loop journey

from Fort Point at the Golden Gate, to Seal Rock, along the hard sandy beach to Ocean House, and back downtown.

Of the many attractions and resorts on these "outside lands," which were built by a variety of entrepreneurs, the remains of those developed by Adolph Sutro are the most significant and enduring. The third Cliff House site, the ruins of Sutro Baths, and Sutro Heights, with its landscaping and rocky Parapet form the nucleus of Sutro's influence in developing what is now the Sutro Historic Landscape District as an attraction and recreational area for the public. Today, the combination of natural features and built amenities attract people to make the excursion to this area as they have done since the 1850s.

Since 1976, the area has been part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and is administered by the National Park Service. The Sutro Historic Landscape District is approximately 78 acres and is roughly bounded on the north by the Pacific Ocean, the east by Fort Miley, 48th Avenue, and the Outer Richmond residential neighborhood, on the south by a vacant lot and Ocean Beach, and the west by the Pacific Ocean. It contains several distinct areas — Sutro Heights Park, Cliff House, Sutro Baths Site, and Lands End— and is accessed by Point Lobos Avenue/Great Highway. These areas have been a continuing part of the cultural landscape throughout the district's period of significance.

II. HISTORY

In 1993, the National Park Service completed a Cultural Landscape Report on the Sutro Historic Landscape District (NPS 1993). The following history is excerpted from that report and edited for this NRHP nomination.

PREHISTORIC AND HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The earliest known evidence of human occupation in the Sutro District are the remains of three Native American shell mounds located at the site of Sutro Baths. The Point Lobos Archeological Sites were listed in the National Register in November, 1976. Dated to sometime after 500 A.D. but prior to 1769 A.D., these mounds are the cultural remains of the area's aboriginal inhabitants known as "Ohlone" or "Costanoans." Although generally residing inland, the Ohlone made periodic trips to the shore to fish and gather salt. Consequently, these shell piles contain only the remains of shells, bones, and seeds, and no artifacts or other cultural material. Spanish settlement in 1776 sharply curtailed Ohlone activity in this region; within a few decades the Ohlone had been moved inland to the Mission San Francisco de Asis de Dolores.

From the late eighteenth century until the middle of the nineteenth century the area now occupied by the Sutro District was part of Rancho Punta de Lobos, a

large Mexican land grant. Following the formal acquisition of California by the United States in 1848, these lands became part of the City and County of San Francisco. Although comprising the westernmost tip of San Francisco, the area around Point Lobos was considered remote and inaccessible for most of the nineteenth century and came to be known as the Outside Lands.

EARLY SETTLEMENT AND VISITATION AT POINT LOBOS

By 1854, Point Lobos bluffs had been homesteaded by a potato farmer named Chambers, but remained relatively undeveloped. Narrative descriptions dating from this period indicate that the adventuresome visited Point Lobos to pick the wild strawberries native to the area. Indeed, for a brief period of time the site was known as Strawberry Hill. Hikers and horseback riders reached this portion of the Pacific coast on one of several trails crossing the six miles of sand dunes that lay between downtown San Francisco and the sea. By the mid-1850s, travelers could rest and take refreshment at Seal Rock House located at the foot of the cliff near Seal Rock, or at Ocean House four miles to the south on the western end of the Mission Dolores trail to the beach. (This is today's Sloat Boulevard.) A popular day trip from San Francisco consisted of a coastal loop journey from Fort Point at the Golden Gate, to Seal Rocks, along the hard sandy beach to Ocean House, and back downtown.

INITIAL RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: 1850s-1880

With the rapid influx of people and money associated with the California Gold Rush, San Francisco developed quickly during the 1850s. Between 1850 and 1860 the local population grew from 35,000 to 56,000. More significantly, the entire city changed abruptly from a ragged frontier town with unpaved streets and crudely constructed wooden buildings into a modern, well-organized, and almost elegant city.

In the late 1850s, Charles C. Butler, a well-known San Francisco real estate magnate, purchased 160 acres of land around Point Lobos. Although Butler had planned originally to hold the land until profitable to sell, he soon decided to develop the site as a fashionable resort. In 1862, Butler joined forces with Senator James Buckley and James Phelan to form the Point Lobos Road Company. In February, 1863, work began on a road that would lead from Point Lobos cliff to the site of the proposed new resort, and then to the beach below. Point Lobos Road, completed in several months at a cost of \$175,000, provided a direct route from the end of Bush Street (at today's Presidio Avenue) past the site of the Cliff House to Ocean Beach.

When completed, the Point Lobos Road was 110 feet wide, paved part in macadam and part in rolled and watered clay. One side of the road was developed as a mile-and-a-half long clay speedway for fast-trotting horses. An

1871 account described the speedway as "the broadest, hardest, smoothest and longest track in the State." Simultaneous to the development of the Point Lobos Road, another road was completed from downtown to the Ocean House, thus facilitating the popular coastal loop excursion. By 1863 a horse drawn stagecoach made the trip from Portsmouth Square to the Point Lobos area each Sunday.

Simultaneous with the development of Point Lobos Road, Butler and Buckley oversaw the construction of the first Cliff House. Described as "a house of fair dimensions encircled by a balcony," the first Cliff House was a relatively simple, one-story, frame and clapboard structure.' Early photographs of the first Cliff House show no landscape embellishments around the building other than a paved pull-in and sidewalk between the front facade of the building and Point Lobos Road. Indeed, the most noticeable feature of the Cliff House was its skillful siting on a cliff overlooking Seal Rocks, providing a breathtaking three-quarters panorama stretching from Ocean Beach to the south over to Marin County to the north.

Butler placed Captain Junius Foster, later the manager of the International Hotel in San Francisco, in charge of the operation of the Cliff House. Butler's plan for the Cliff House was to develop a fashionable resort for affluent San Franciscans. The prohibitively high cost of traveling to the site by carriage, and paying tolls and a night's lodging at the elegant inn, contributed to the exclusivity of the enterprise for nearly two decades. Early Cliff House guests included members of prominent families of San Francisco, including the Crocker, Hearst, Stanford, Vandewater, and Latham. In 1868, owing to his success, Butler had the Cliff House enlarged to three times its original size with additions to both the north and south ends. Other alterations included a platform added to the road side of the Cliff House to shelter visitors from the wind, and a broad, seaside verandah that could be used as an outdoor dance floor.

During the 1870s, Cliff House began to decline in popularity as an exclusive resort. By 1877 the public road built by the City of San Francisco through Golden Gate Park to the beach was providing all classes of people access to the Cliff House vicinity. Increased competition from new establishments developing along the shore influenced Butler to attempt to lure new patrons by offering gambling, alcohol, and late hours. By the late 1870s the Cliff House was attracting a less fashionable clientele. Visitors described the resort as "down at the heels."

CHANGE IN LATE-NINETEENTH CENTURY SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco's tremendous growth as well as the changing social and economic conditions of the time influenced the development of Sutro's recreational

complex at Point Lobos during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. As described by Oscar Lewis in *San Francisco: Mission to Metropolis* (1966):

Few cities had witnessed so many dramatic events in so brief a period of time: its transfer to the sovereignty of the United States; the struggle for order that culminated in the Vigilance committees; the decline of the California placers and the rise of the Comstock's silver mines; finally the changes brought about by the Civil War and the accelerated development of northern California's natural resources.

This prolonged state of upheaval continued in the 1870s and 1880s, an era marked by sharp economic swings, high levels of unemployment, and increasing racial tensions between whites and Chinese immigrants. The last quarter of the nineteenth century also experienced rapid population growth, with an increasingly narrowing gap between the numbers of men and women. An economic survey published in 1877 indicated that San Francisco had 21,000 buildings, and that more than 1,500 foreign and domestic ships arrived at San Francisco's ports in that year.

Another unique feature of late-nineteenth-century life in San Francisco was the large numbers of people who lived in hotels or lodging houses rather than single family residences. A peculiar hold-over from the more transient Gold Rush period, the popularity of the hotel or rooming house as a permanent residence endured into the twentieth century, and long after the ratio of men to women had established an equilibrium. Consequently, late-nineteenth-century San Francisco featured an usually large number of restaurants, and even those San Franciscans who lived in single family residences were more likely to eat in dining establishments than their contemporaries in other American cities. The variety and quality of food and lodging in late-nineteenth-century San Francisco contributed to its cosmopolitan flavor, visitors considered it an unusually urbane and sophisticated American city for its size.

An additional significant characteristic of late-nineteenth-century San Francisco was the popularity of gambling or speculation. Starting with the gold rush, and continuing into the 1870s with the profits from the Nevada silver mines, the typical San Franciscan "preferred to risk his savings in highly speculative ventures that promised large and fast returns rather than in more conservative enterprises where the profits, though surer, were likely to be small. As a result of the universal popularity of speculation, the local economy was characterized by rapid fluctuations from prosperity to collapse. Building programs in the city responded to swings in the local economy. In general, private construction would surge ahead during prosperous years, with public works picking up the slack during economic declines. With the decline of the silver boom in the late 1870s, for

example, there was a significant public works program that included repaving streets, installing granite crosswalks, and the construction of schools, firehouses, and other facilities.

Despite the tremendous influx of money into the city during the late nineteenth century from gold and silver mining, little effort was put into the development of public parks or gardens. Instead, wealth was displayed in the construction of grand mansions, and luxurious hotels and restaurants. According to historian Oscar Lewis, "the city's growth during the gold rush days had been so rapid that development of recreational facilities, had received little attention." As early as 1855 Frank Soule, one of the authors of *The Annals of San Francisco*, had noted that

Over all these square miles of contemplated thoroughfares there seems to be no provision made by the projectors for a public park — the true lungs of a large city. The existing plaza, or Portsmouth Square, and the other two or three diminutive squares, delineated in the plan, seem the only breathing holes intended for the future population of hundreds of thousands. This is a strange mistake, and can be only attributed to the jealous avarice of the city projects in turning every square vara of the site to an available building lot... Not only is there no public park or garden, but there is not even a circus, oval, open terrace, broad avenue, or any ornamental line of street or building or verdant space of any kind other than three or four small squares alluded to; and which every resident knows are by no means verdant, except in patches where stagnant water collects and ditch weeds grows.

As late as 1866 Frederick Law Olmsted, after a visit to San Francisco, stated:

The most popular place of resort is a burial ground on a high elevation scourged by the wind with no trees or turf. I have more than once seen working men resort with their families to enjoy a picnic in the shelter of the tombstones. This state of things is positively wasteful and destructive of the sources of wealth and prosperity possessed by the city.

In 1868, the City of San Francisco acquired the future site of Golden Gate Park, a one-half mile wide tract of land that fronted on the ocean and extended three miles inland, in response to this lack of public open space. The initial plan to develop the site as a park was ridiculed as "a dreary waste of shifting sand hills" that would never become an attractive park. Nevertheless, in 1871, under the auspices of William H. Hall, work began on the development of the 1,017-acre

park. By the end of the decade so much had been accomplished that guidebooks described day trips to the new park, which by that time featured two miles of roads and paths, more than 135,000 trees and shrubs, and a greenhouse and nursery.

DEVELOPMENT OF ADOLPH SUTRO'S RECREATIONAL COMPLEX: 1881-1898

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the Point Lobos area grew from a sparsely developed and exclusive scenic retreat into a day-use, recreational complex serving both local residents and tourists. Adolph Sutro, a German-born engineer who made his fortune in the late 1860s and 1870s through the design and construction of a massive tunnel that drained and ventilated the flooded shafts of the Comstock Lode silver mines in Nevada, was the driving force behind this transformation that contributed to the changing character of San Francisco during this period. The construction of the Sutro Tunnel, which provided the basis for countless fortunes in silver, is recognized also as having improved significantly the working conditions of the miners themselves, and diminished risks to their health and safety. This combination of ingenuity and benevolence characterized Sutro's later work in San Francisco.

Between Sutro's 1881 purchase of the property and his death in 1898, he developed the gardens at Sutro Heights, oversaw the construction of the massive Sutro Baths, had the Cliff House rebuilt as a chateau-style palace, and instituted an inexpensive passenger railroad service linking downtown with the Point Lobos area. A 1928 aerial photograph (see photo 93) showed the relationship between the three areas developed by Sutro: the heights, the baths, and the Cliff House. Initially Sutro also had planned to locate a library containing his extensive collection of books at Sutro Heights, reasoning that the beauty of the site would prove inspirational to scholars. However, Sutro abandoned this plan after several experts warned him that the Point Lobos salt air would damage his collection.

When Sutro moved to San Francisco in the late 1870s, he initiated an aggressive campaign to purchase real estate in the city, much of which was still undeveloped. Indeed, it is said that at one point Sutro's holdings equaled one twelfth of San Francisco's area. Although Sutro purchased a significant amount of downtown property, his efforts were focused largely on acquiring the area known as the Outside Lands, located on the far western edge of the city.

Sutro Heights

Sutro first encountered the future site of his Sutro Heights home in March, 1881, while on a visit with his daughter Emma to the home of Samuel Tetlow. Tetlow's small frame cottage was located on a promontory overlooking the Cliff House and Seal Rocks and provided breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean, Mount

Tamalpais, and the Golden Gate. Tetlow, owner of the Bella Union Music Hall in San Francisco, had purchased the dwelling in November 1860 from James Butler, the first developer of the Cliff House. Legend has it that Sutro was so entranced with the site that he made a deposit of \$1,000 (on a total sale price of \$15,000) for the cottage and an adjoining 1.65 acres that very afternoon. Since the surrounding land was also for sale, Sutro was able to acquire the 21.21 acres adjacent to the cottage as well as 80 acres of shore lands bordering Fort Miley and part of the future Lincoln Park." This land included the Cliff House.

At the time that Sutro first visited his new residence, Tetlow apparently had enlarged the cottage and started a small garden. Four tiers of picket fences, intended to prevent erosion, stood between the cottage and the steep hillside overlooking the Point Lobos Road. Sutro's renovation of the cottage retained its relatively modest appearance, belying its ownership by a man of Sutro's wealth and stature.

In contrast to his restraint at renovation of the cottage, Sutro concentrated his efforts on the immediate development of elaborate gardens that eventually would cover the twenty-acre site. Sutro laid out the grounds to take advantage of vistas of the ocean and Seal Rocks. The design of the Sutro Heights gardens reflects, in part, a response to natural features and site conditions, including its topography, physical setting, hydrology, and climate.

Early Site Work

Much of the early site work consisted of creating an environment conducive to the growth of tender garden plants and included the construction of tall, wooden, slat fences on the north and west exposures and the planting of eucalyptus, cypress, and pine tree wind breaks. Sutro's plans depended on extensive site grading to create the numerous terraces that later developed into individual garden rooms defined by paths, plantings, and gentle slopes. Another significant feature dating from the site's initial development was "The Old Grove," a grouping of cypress, pine, and eucalyptus trees planted approximately 10-15 feet on center and located in front of the Sutro residence. Once mature, the trees were pruned to provide an overhead canopy with shaded lawn below. Eight axial walkways radiated from a central point below, giving the grove a formal appearance, and establishing it as a central organizing element.

Circulation

Prior to Sutro's acquisition of the site, the main entrance to Sutro Heights was located on lower Point Lobos Avenue (currently at the junction of Serpentine Drive and Ivy Lane), from which point a road climbed up the site's steep north slope. Around 1883, a new main entrance to the site was developed at Palm Avenue on the corner of 48th Street and Point Lobos Avenue; the original

entrance on lower Point Lobos Avenue came to be used as the service or private entrance. The development of the Palm Avenue entrance as the primary entrance to the site responded to the 1883 placement of a major depot (the Ocean Terrace stop) of the Park and Ocean Railroad directly across the street. The low fares offered by the railroad resulted in increased visitation by San Franciscans who frequently made Sutro Heights the first stop on their trips to the Point Lobos shore.

It appears that by around 1883 prominent gates marked both the main and private entrances. The main gate was a highly decorative wood structure more than 25 feet tall and flanked by two statues of reclining lions. This truss-like structure consisted of a central carriage entrance arch and half arches on each side for pedestrian passage, supported by decorative wood columns. The carriage entrance was secured by side-hinged double gates and the two pedestrian entrances had similar single gates. The gate at the private or service entrance on lower Point Lobos Avenue has been described as a smaller wooden structure flanked by statues of animals. In addition to the two Point Lobos Avenue entrances, secondary entrances were located along the east and southeast edges of the site, and each was marked by a minor gate.

Three main roadways were created at Sutro Heights as part of the initial development of the property: Palm Avenue, the Esplanade, and Serpentine Drive. Palm Avenue — lined with palm-like *Dracena draco* trees, edged with a carefully trimmed lawn and linear flower beds, and terminating with a carriage turnaround marked by planters, statues, and a fountain — was the most formal. Graded and graveled with crushed local sandstone, the main roads on the site were intended for pedestrians, and limited carriage and horseback use. Wherever necessary for proper drainage, roads on the site were lined with concrete swale gutters, approximately one foot wide. In 1891 a system of brick-lined catch-basins connected with terra-cotta drain pipes was installed on the Esplanade, to prevent the erosion of the cliff below. The entire length of the Esplanade was lined with an ornamental wooden post and chain fence to define the overlook, and keep visitors away from the cliffs below.

Along with the main roads, narrower secondary paths, also paved with crushed stone, passed through the gardens and were limited to pedestrian use. These secondary paths led the visitor through the gardens in a meandering, leisurely style, and featured lookouts, seating areas, and garden structures.

Planting Scheme/Vegetation

Sutro created a thick forest of trees interspersed by small formal and semi-formal flower beds and planting displays. The outdoor rooms created within the forest, linked by a series of paths within the tree canopy, provided the light and shelter

necessary for successful plant cultivation. The terraced garden rooms were designed to feature specific plants, a piece of sculpture, or a scenic view. All featured an open central lawn framed by decorative plantings and surrounded either by forest or open to the west with a view of the ocean. As shown on maps from 1882 and 1895, several of these areas had descriptive names such as the Rosarium, the Oval, and the Adonis.

Along with the garden rooms, Sutro incorporated several other planting features. A map of the site dated 1885 shows a hedge maze, located in the northeast corner of the grounds, remnants still can be found on the site. Carpet beds or parterres were another prominent planting feature. The greatest concentration of planting displays was arranged along Palm Avenue in front of the carriage turnaround. Intricate parterres were located to the west of Palm Avenue opposite the conservatory. Popular in England and America during the Victorian era, these beds consisted of finely trimmed displays of annual or seasonal flowers arranged in various shapes and patterns. Historic photographs of Sutro Heights taken during this period show an American flag, with the date "1889," and the another bearing the name "Sutro Heights." Known to have been in place by 1885, these flower beds required extensive maintenance by skilled gardeners and horticulturalists.

The Gnomes Arbor Vitae, another striking garden feature at Sutro Heights, was a sculpted hedge of American Arborvitae [*Thuja occidentalis* o] in front of the conservatory. The hedge consisted of a straight segment approximately 130 feet long with two 60 foot lateral rows of Thuja radiating from its center at 60-degree angles and creating three wedge-shaped planting areas with a Norfolk Island Pine centered in each. At maturity, the hedge reached a height of twenty feet, and despite the extensive pruning it required, appears to have been well-maintained into the 1920s.

Sutro used largely drought-tolerant plant materials, many of which were native to similar climates in the Mediterranean, Australia, New Zealand, and South America. Species were selected for quick growth and tolerance to seaside conditions. Constant changes of the plant materials used in the beds and annual borders as Sutro experimented with new species and patterns kept a large staff of gardeners employed. The major forest trees planted on the site included Monterey cypress and pine, maritime pine, and eucalyptus. Dracena palms and Norfolk Island pines were used as specimens and accents. Shrubs included hydrangeas, roses, rhododendrons, Hebe, and Coprosma with Phormiums as accents. Hedges were of yew and arborvitae. Annuals and perennials used in beds and borders consisted of geraniums, salvias, chrysanthemums, and violas. Agaves grew in planters and beds. The formal carpet beds or parterres included a variety of succulents, trimmed herbs, boxwood, and miniatures.

A spring located below on the future site of the Sutro Baths supplied water for the gardens. Windmills pumped the water to a 50,000 gallon storage tank located on 48th Avenue at A Street and to another 15,000 gallon tank located atop the parapet. The water was then gravity-fed from these two high points to the various portions of the site. Portable sprinklers aided in garden irrigation.

Statuary/Site Furniture

Numerous statues, planters, and fountains were located on the grounds at Sutro Heights. During his 1883 tour of Europe, Sutro arranged for the casting of more than 200 pieces of sculpture in Belgium, which were shipped from Antwerp to San Francisco in 1884. The sculptures, along with rustic benches, chairs, and tables, were displayed on the grounds at Sutro Heights. Sutro's intent was for the statuary to provide accessible examples of European culture to the visitors in the park. In addition planting urns flanked sculptures, such as "Venus de Milo" and the fountain located in the center of the carriage turnaround, as well as providing borders for the terraced lawn near the conservatory. Other planting urns served as carpet bed focal points.

Buildings and Structures

A variety of buildings and structures were associated with the development of the gardens at Sutro Heights. Buildings and structures ranged from utilitarian garden sheds to an elaborate glass-paned conservatory. Built primarily between 1881 and Sutro's death in 1898, these structures served an integral role in the overall site design at Sutro Heights and served as organizing elements, focal points, and destinations.

One of the first major structures built following the remodeling of the residence was the rock and sandstone parapet located immediately west of the residence. Sited on the highest point of the estate, the parapet continues to provide breathtaking views of the surrounding coastal scenery to the north, west and south. Since its completion in 1895 the parapet has been a major focal point, observation platform, and Sutro Heights visitor destination.

As built, the parapet was a curved sandstone wall that extended in a semicircle for 280 feet. Two 100-foot walls projected from the north and south ends, creating a partial "D" shape. A small storage cellar with an arched doorway, possibly used as a wine cellar, was located on the north wall. Between the two rear walls a sloping ramp provided access to the top viewing platform. On the western side of the parapet there was a narrow stone staircase connected to the Esplanade. The parapet floor was covered with crushed native sandstone. Thirty stone crenelations, each topped with either a concrete statue or planting urn and linked together with iron pipe railings, defined the top edge of the parapet. Initially,

freestanding chairs, and two large, Parrott model cannon pointing to the sea (each with a stack of cannon balls) were located on the parapet.

Around 1890, the southwest exposure was terraced with several low rock retaining walls to reinforce the structure and prevent further soil erosion. The resulting exposed site was developed as a rock garden and planted with a variety of drought and stress tolerant plants including Agave, Aloe, iceplant, and other succulents.

Another significant landscape structure at Sutro Heights was the *Dolce far Niente* Balcony, a long terrace-like structure constructed in 1884-1885 on the cliff face below the South Esplanade and overlooking Ocean Beach. This elegant structure consisted of a cantilevered wood deck protruding from the cliff face and supported by wooden posts. The posts extended upward through the deck, terminating in a series of open wooden arches framing the ocean view to the west. A continuous decorative railing linked the posts at the deck level, and the open area below the deck was screened with lathes to give the structure a finished appearance from the beach below. Two stairways descending from the Esplanade provided access to the 250-foot-long balcony,

The gallery, built around 1884 and located at the northeast end of the parapet, was a one-story wood building featuring shingle siding and a sharply-pitched shingled roof. A Queen Anne-style tower joined the gallery to the adjacent parapet; the tower actually resting atop one of the crenellations. Until well into the 1920s, the gallery operated as a photograph and souvenir concession; visitors could have their picture taken with the panoramic view of the parapet in the background, rent special glasses with which to view Seal Rock, and purchase postcards and other gifts.

The well house, built around 1885, is the last surviving building from the Sutro era remaining at Sutro Heights. Built on an elevated foundation of cut and dressed sandstone, this small wood-frame structure originally featured carved wooden posts, iron grillwork doors on the north and south facades, decorative shingles, and finials capping each roof end. Sited at the top of Serpentine Drive, the well house marked the entrance from the lower gate to the central garden area. Although it is not clear whether the structure ever actually housed a well, it did contain the plumbing for the pair of drinking fountains mounted on opposite sides of the structure. The fountains featured scallop shell basins.

The tank house and observation tower located at the southeast corner of the parapet and adjacent to the residence was built around 1884. This two-story building with white clapboard siding was built by Sutro to house and screen the twin 15,000 gallon water tanks located on the rear of the parapet. However, an

1886 photograph showing the building labeled as "observatory" indicates the structure's alternate use as a viewing station that provided visitors with an elevated view of the surrounding panorama. Subsequently a taller, three-story, wood observation tower of a similar design was constructed adjacent to the tank house to the north. This structure, which featured a cantilevered, glass-enclosed observatory on top, soon became a landmark recognizable from a great distance.

The conservatory was an elaborate greenhouse structure built to house Sutro's collection of climate-sensitive tropical plants. Centrally located on an elevated mound east of the terminus of Palm Avenue, the structure was cruciform in plan, with a central ventilation tower. Built entirely of small glass panels mounted in wood frames, this ornate garden structure was supported by internal wood framing. The interior, which held a lush variety of palms, ferns, tropical flowers, and statuary, provided visitors with an impressive botanical display.

Two gatekeeper's houses were built around 1885-1886, one at the main gate and one at the lower gate. Once Sutro Heights was open to the public a guestbook was kept at the main gate house. Both buildings were octagonal, wood-frame structures clad in horizontal tongue in groove siding, with pointed roofs and metal weathervanes in the shape of roosters. It appears that these were movable buildings with no foundations. In addition, several sheds located on the access road to the residence were used to store gardening tools and provide shelter for small animals.

Public Response to Sutro Heights

Sutro Heights opened to the public in 1885. By this time a trip from downtown San Francisco on the Park and Ocean Railroad cost 20 cents round trip, significantly less expensive than the sum to hire a private carriage. The enthusiastic descriptions of the gardens by visitors from this period indicate that a trip to Sutro Heights was well worth the cost. In November of 1885, a reporter from the Salt Lake City *Daily Tribune* provided the following sketch of Sutro Heights:

There are two very massive gateways with lodges, the first being guarded by two huge sphinxes, and through which is a narrow drive leading to the private gardens a quarter of a mile up the Cliff House Road, and nearer town in the main entrance, even larger than the lower or private one. This is guarded by two enormous lions couchant, copies of Sir Edwin Landseers lions at the base of the Nelson Column, Trafalgar Square, London. The main drive is very wide, perfectly level, and forms a junction with the lower drive in the center of the grounds, and extends round the bluff rock overhanging the sea, and from which you look down on the seals. Above you to

the right, the bluff still rises about twenty feet, and on the extreme summit is built a massive stone wall, castellated in true Norman style, that resembles a piece of the terrace at Windsor Castle, or the battlements of Northallerton, and much admired, especially by those who have seen it from the ocean. The gardens are laid out beautifully, in the center of which is a very large conservatory, and to which, in addition is being made, and at every turn, or junction of roads, or foot paths, is placed some piece of statuary, rustic chairs, tables, and in fact everything that luxury or comfort can demand. There are several hundred chairs and not less than one hundred pieces of fine statuary.

Records from 1889 indicate that trees and hedges had begun to mature; perennials were established; and irrigation systems were operating successfully. A full-time staff of seventeen — ten gardeners, a tree man, a coachman, driver, gatekeeper, machinist and helper, and a road maker — maintained Sutro Heights. In *Album of Sutro Heights*, an 1890 promotional brochure, Sutro's design ability is praised:

Possessed of a sound knowledge of perspective gardening, having an acquaintance with practical botany above the common, he [Sutro] laid out the walks, superintended the making of the terraces and flower beds, chose the plants best suited to the soil and climate, directed the planting of the shrubs and trees and the result surpassed his expectations. The wilderness of sand has bloomed and blossomed into a scene of fairy-like beauty. The air is redolent with fragrant shrubs and flowers, peace and calm and sunshine seem to reign perennially and the dreams of the gallant knights of Queen Elizabeth's court seem here to have their fulfillment. Winding walks, fringed with beds of exquisite flowers, backed by flowering shrubs, show bright and sunny against the green of fair-shaped trees of every shade from the darkest to the lightest; open spaces where banks of flowers bum in vivid masses of color, quiet, retired, nooks from which glimpses and vistas of the blue waters of the Pacific in strong contrast with the white sails of passing boats can be seen. Lawns whose tender and delicate green can compare with that of England, broad carriage drives and esplanades from which the ever-changing face of the ocean, with its surrounding beauties of cliff and shore winding bay and spray-dashed rocks is visible all testify to the soundness of imagination that could devise and the practical skill that put into execution this work of beauty.

Sutro used his seaside estate for entertaining a wide variety of visitors. In 1886 Sutro hosted the president of the University of California, and the following year he invited California's leading viticulturalists to a four hour breakfast at Sutro Heights. In 1887 he hosted a luncheon at Sutro Heights for sixty female teachers from the Pioneer Kindergarten Association. In 1891 President Benjamin Harrison dined at the heights after visiting the Cliff House. Other notable guests included William Jennings Bryan, Andrew Carnegie, Oscar Wilde, and Kate Douglas Wiggin. Despite the fact that the gardens at Sutro Heights were adjacent to his residence, Adolph Sutro encouraged their public use. In 1895 a production of *As You Like It* staged at Sutro Heights attracted an audience of 5,000. School children also visited Sutro Heights; in 1888 Sutro invited 220 six-year olds to a picnic on the grounds. The general public responded to such well-publicized accounts of Sutro's activities by visiting Sutro Heights in increasing numbers.

The Cliff House and Ferries Railroad

When Sutro Heights opened to the public in 1885, it could be reached only by private or hired carriage or via the Park and Ocean Railroad, which ran along the southern edge of Golden Gate Park and then to Sutro Heights and the Cliff House. At a time when a clerk earned about twelve dollars a week, Adolph Sutro felt that a twenty cent, round-trip, railroad fare was scandalously expensive.

To make a visit to Sutro Heights more affordable, Sutro supported development of a new steam rail line designed to bring people from downtown to the Cliff House for half the cost of a fare on the competing line. The route linked downtown with Land's End along the present route of California Street, and around Point Lobos, terminating at Sutro Heights. Sutro also planned to include a branch line on Seventh Avenue to provide economical access to Golden Gate Park. Although the franchise for this new rail line was issued to Adolph Sutro's cousin Gustav Sutro, Adolph Sutro invested significantly in the project and paid for the grading and laying of track on the three-mile stretch where the line would pass through his own property between City Cemetery and the cliffs of Point Lobos. This new transportation alternative was not only less expensive for Point Lobos area visitors, it was also more scenic and provided the visitor with views of rugged shoreline, picturesque cemeteries, and "excellent views of the Golden Gate, Fort Point, the headlands of Marin County, and many other points of interest."

In 1887, the Sutros sold their franchise in the new rail line to the Powell Street Railroad Company. However, a stipulation in the deed of sale provided that the company must provide service from downtown to the Sutro Heights area for the five cent fare as originally intended. In 1888 the completed new rail line — the Cliff House and Ferries Railroad — provided widespread access to the area formerly known as "the Outside Lands."

The new rail line was immediately popular. Two special locomotives pulled the Sunday open air coaches which were filled to capacity, with some sixty persons in each car. Four lighter locomotives handled the daily traffic.

The steep bluffs along the line plagued the early years of the railroad's operation. In March, 1889, Sutro received a letter from his son-in-law that the railroad had been closed because of a landslide. Two months later he reported to Sutro that "this new R.R. [sic] has such a bad reputation at present that people are afraid to ride on it. The trains are irregular and the road looks so dangerous." However, despite his son-in-law's warnings, the Cliff House and Ferries Railway improved, and continued, for the time being, to provide regular service to the Sutro Heights area.

Sutro's Aquarium

Sutro's interest in natural history and marine studies led him to spend a significant amount of time watching the sea lions who played on the rocks near Point Lobos. Indeed, Sutro's efforts led to Congressional passage of an 1887 act granting the Seal Rocks to the City and County of San Francisco in trust for the people of the United States, thereby protecting the seals' home. In addition Sutro developed the idea of creating an ocean pool, or aquarium, among the rocks north of the Cliff House.

Sutro chose a site located in a cove just north of the Cliff House as the site for the aquarium. A semi-circular wall 15 feet thick and 14 feet wide was constructed adjacent to the ocean on the northwest corner of the cove to create a basin. Water was let into the basin by means of a tunnel 8 feet high and 153 feet long cut through an adjacent cliff, allowing ocean water to pour in during high tide. A small door in the tunnel controlled the amount of water delivered into the basin, and in one corner there was a subterranean outlet which allowed water to recirculate back to the sea. As designed by Sutro, small marine animals would pour into the basin with the high tide and, as the tide receded, become visible with only four feet of water remaining at low tide. A network of rock paths crossing the basin provided bolder visitors with the opportunity for a closer look at the marine specimens uncovered during low tide. In addition a heated, glass-enclosed pool was sited on higher ground above the tidal basin and featured a stocked supply of more exotic sea creatures.

The basin and tunnel were completed on September 3, 1887. The project was acclaimed as an impressive engineering feat by the creator of the famous Comstock Tunnel. An article from the San Francisco *Chronicle* dated September, 1887, described the workings of Sutro's aquarium as follows:

The method by which the sea-water is conducted into the basin is exceedingly ingenious, and was devised by Mr. Sutro himself. On the other side of the point from where the aquarium lies is a natural shelf. Mr. Sutro observed how this caught the water from the combers at high tide and determined to make use of it. At great expense a tunnel was excavated eight feet high and 15 (sic) feet long, through the solid rock, its floor having a slight inclination from the before mentioned shelf down to the basin and it is through this tunnel that the water comes at extreme high tide, and for about two hours before and after.

The Development of Sutro Baths

Sutro continued to expand his ocean front complex with the development of a massive public bath house, or swimming facility. It is not clear whether Sutro had conceived of the notion of the baths when he began work on the aquarium, or if the idea of a swimming complex was a later development. Sutro's motivation for developing a classical-style bath is not known.

Interest in recreational swimming increased in both England and North America during the nineteenth century. The first modern English bath or America pool opened in Liverpool in 1828. By the 1860s swimming clubs in British and American cities were holding inter-club competitions; competitive swimming was included 'in the first modern Olympic games in Athens in 1896. The design and layout of classical Roman bath or *thermae*, built around the first century, influenced the design of nineteenth-century baths in the United States. Three particularly influential models were the Roman *thermae* of Titus, Caracalla, and Diocetian, the ruins of which were accessible to nineteenth-century travelers." Adolph Sutro, who had traveled extensively throughout Europe and the United States, may well have viewed both the ruins of the classical Roman baths as well as a variety of modern swimming facilities.

A number of freshwater swimming facilities existed in the San Francisco Bay area in the late nineteenth century. A large public bath house existed in Oakland from around 1880, and Lurline Baths at Bush and Larkin streets opened in 1894 and remained in operation until 1936, getting its water from the Ocean just south of the Cliff House. In addition, it appears that other attempts were made, though unsuccessfully, to allow San Francisco bathers to enjoy the healthful but very cold waters of the Pacific. A prospectus of the Floating Sea-Bath Company of San Francisco, dated March, 1878, captured the popular enthusiasm for bathing at that time, while clearly defining the challenge presented to those interested in ocean bathing in the icy waters of the Pacific:

Bathing is an art in itself, like dining. It has been well said that for one man who dines there are ten who merely eat, and in like manner,

those who perform ablutions only that they may clean do but wash, while the true bather enjoys every moment. Pleasure is an essential item of the real bath, and among the most active of its beneficial forces. There can be no doubt that a great number of our citizens would seek to enjoy the tonic effects of sea bathing, but for the low temperatures of the water.

Sutro may have been aware of this proposal for temperate salt-water baths in San Francisco. Regardless of Sutro's knowledge of other bathing ventures, the Floating Sea-Bath Company's scheme of a massive floating bath house and heated pool complex-measuring 340 by 100 feet-makes Sutro's grand scheme for an ocean-side bath seem tame by comparison.

Whatever the precise model or rationale, the development of a public bath, providing wholesome entertainment for as many as ten thousand San Franciscans at once, was compatible with Adolph Sutro's populist tendencies and his dreams of providing inexpensive recreation for the general public. According to Sutro biographer Robert Stewart, "the Sutro Baths were Sutro's last great building project, his last effort to name something for his family and perpetuate the name Sutro. In many ways the baths were a summation of all of Sutro's objectives."

The initial work on the ambitious baths project proceeded haltingly. Between 1887 and 1889 Sutro attempted three times to erect a bulkhead from the aquarium to the rock under the Cliff House to provide a foundation for the proposed baths. The first two times the seawall was constructed it sank into the sand, resulting in the loss of more than \$70,000 worth of concrete. However, by the fall of 1889 the third attempt at building a wall was successful. An 1896 advertising brochure for the baths described the fortifications in great detail:

All of the Bath buildings are protected on the west side by an enormous breakwater, 400 feet long, 20 feet deep, 25 feet wide at the top, and 75 feet wide at the base, that contains 450,000 cubic feet of rock. There is also another breakwater running east to west, 300 feet long, 25 feet wide at the top, 75 feet wide at the base, and 20 feet deep, that contains 300,000 cubic feet of rock. These two breakwaters furnish security against any possible contingency of a stormy sea. Indeed, there has been nothing omitted in the construction of the vast building or in its thousand details that could give security or add comfort to the visitor within the gate.

In 1890 Sutro offered a \$500 award for an architectural design for the baths building (the winner of which has been lost to the record), and work on the baths proceeded throughout the early 1890s. Sutro's records and correspondence during the early 1890s describe a flurry of activity relating to the baths project,

including blasting of rock to line the fresh water pond, planting loam on the slopes, building a road from the cottage to the construction site, making gutterways and a cave, dumping clay over sandy slopes to check erosion, hauling sand from the cave and from Ocean Beach south of the Cliff House to make cement, and hauling lumber from the San Miguel property to the work site.

The entrance to the baths from Point Lobos Avenue was a small structure built in the form of a small classical temple. From this entry one descended a broad stairway, lined with potted palms, to the museum gallery, which contained a series of glass exhibition cases filled with selections from Sutro's vast collection of artwork, archeological artifacts, and curios. From the gallery the visitor could proceed, either by elevator or down the grand staircase, to a massive enclosure containing the six saltwater swimming tanks of varying sizes, shapes, and water temperatures. The largest of the pools was L-shaped, with a length of 275 feet and a depth ranging from three and a half to nine feet. The other five saltwater pools all measured twenty-eight by seventy five feet, with pool depths ranging from two to six feet. All of the pools were heated to different temperatures by live steam. Holding a total of 1,685,000 gallons of sea water, the construction of the pools required more than ten thousand barrels of concrete. Adjacent to the bath area on three sides rose tier upon tier of bleacher-like seats, providing seating for thousands of spectators. Overhead, a massive arched glass roof made from 100,000 square feet of stained glass and supported by 600 tons of iron girders gave the baths a light and airy appearance, and provided breath-taking scenery. Above the baths were three levels of alcoves, balconies and balustrades, a restaurant on each of the three floors, galleries, an amphitheater, and a promenade.

At its dedication in November 1894, the Sutro Baths could be compared to only a few buildings in the United States in terms of scale and technical achievement. Spreading over three acres in size, the baths were compared by one contemporary writer to "the famous ablution resorts of Titus, Caracalla Nero or Diocletion." Not only were the Baths magnificent to behold, they were lauded as breathtakingly modern and technologically sophisticated.

Promotional literature prepared for Sutro Baths in 1896 described the engineering required for the construction and daily maintenance of the baths:

Striking as is the first view, familiarity only makes it more striking. Its size impresses the visitors at once, yet it is not oppressive owing to the lightness and airiness of the structure. Tier upon tier of seats rise to the galleries, while at their base are the swimming tanks. The water for these is supplied by an ingenious use of ocean waves. A basin scooped out of solid rock receives the water that dashes over

the top, thence it is conducted to a settling tank; by numerous small canals it makes its way into the various swimming tanks, of which there are six in all, the largest one containing the sea water in its natural state, the others being heated to different temperatures to suit the varying requirements of visitors. As stated, the baths are filled by the ocean itself. Should, however, the tides be so low as to necessitate pumping, preparations have been made for this, and water can be forced in at 6,000 [gallons] a minute by means of a large turbine pump placed at sea level in a cave-like excavation hollowed out by the solid cliff and heretofore driven by means of a steam engine...The mere emptying of the tanks entails a difficulty, but the emptying of them so as to prevent the once used water from again entering the tanks requires ingenuity. The refuse water is the main outlet into which all of the tanks ultimately empty, piped hundreds of feet to the side of the headlands, thence passed into the tidal currents away from the baths.

This article ends with a short table summarizing pertinent facts and figures related to the baths:

Length of Baths, 499.5 feet
Width of baths, 254.1 feet
Amount of glass used, 100,000 superficial feet
Iron in roof columns, 600 tons
Lumber, 3,500,000 tons
Concrete, 270,000 cubic feet
Seating capacity amphitheater, 3,700
Seating capacity promenade, 3,700
Holding Capacity, 25,000
Salt Water Tanks, 6
Capacity of Tanks, 1,804,962 gallons
Fresh water plunge tank, 1
Toboggan slides in baths, 7
Swinging rings, 30
Spring boards, 1
Private dressing rooms, 517
Club room capacity, 1,110
Time required to fill tank by waves, 1 hour
Time required to fill tank by pump, 5 hours

The daily maintenance and operation of Sutro Baths was a Herculean task. Each day the foreman in charge of ventilation and temperature completed a detailed record of existing conditions inside and outside the baths, including weather

conditions, humidity and air temperature inside and outside of the baths, and water temperatures in all of the six tanks. In addition, the foreman recorded general remarks and observations regarding necessary repairs, attendance, and recommendations.

With several railroads providing transportation to the area by the late 1890s, a visit to Sutro Baths crowned an all-day family excursion to the shore, including stops at Sutro Heights, the Cliff House, and Ocean Beach. Between seven in the morning and six in the evening, Sutro Baths were open to the public for a fee of ten cents for adults and five cents for children. A visit to the baths offered a wide variety of activities in addition to swimming, including band concerts, exhibitions of swimming and diving, talent shows, and other amusements.

Typical of the progressive spirit of Adolph Sutro, Sutro Baths was designed to provide its visitors with educational as well as recreational opportunities. The entrance to the baths was used as a kind of museum, featuring a multitude of glass cases filled with stuffed birds and animals, Egyptian mummies, and other edifying objects including paintings and statues. Sutro's biographer reflected that Sutro eventually managed to include examples of nearly all of his hobbies except book collecting. In addition to the attractions offered inside the baths, outside visitors could enjoy the thrilling Firth Wheel, Mystic Maze, and Haunted Spring — all amusement features that Sutro purchased at the close of San Francisco's 1894 Midwinter Fair.

The War with Southern Pacific

In the midst of the construction of Sutro Baths, Adolph Sutro again became embroiled in a dispute over rail service to the area. In 1893, the Cliff House and Ferries Railway experienced another change of hands when it was purchased by the Market Street Railway Company, a subsidiary of the massive Southern Pacific Railroad. At that time the fare was increased to ten cents once again, overriding Sutro's original stipulation that a five cent fare must be maintained. Adolph Sutro responded with outrage, stating:

I had intended Sutro Heights as a breathing spot for the poor people as a benefit to the public. I felt grieved, and I chafed under the contemptible meanness of these people who, while I kept these places open here at a cost of \$20,000 a year at least, and in some cases a good deal more, that they should get every nickel out of the people who visited.

Indeed, Sutro went as far as offering to donate Sutro Heights to the City of San Francisco and to charge a nominal fee at the Sutro Baths, then under construction, if the Market Street Railway would reinstate the five cent fare.

When Southern Pacific refused to cooperate, Sutro took dramatic action, fencing his property and charging an entrance fee to anyone who had taken the railroad to the beach. Sutro's tactics were successful: railroad travel to the beach immediately dropped by 75 percent, significantly reducing profits to the Southern Pacific. In 1894 Sutro decided to build yet another railroad to the area, to ensure once and for all a reasonable fare to the beach. He obtained a franchise to build an electric rail line on Presidio Avenue running along Clement Street, one block south of the rival line on California Street. Sutro also began development of a branch on Eighth Street, serving Golden Gate Park, and arranged for free transfers at Presidio Avenue to the Sutter Street line, which was also independent from Southern Pacific's monopoly.

In July of that year, owing largely to his passionate battle against the Southern Pacific monopoly, Adolph Sutro was nominated as the Populist candidate for mayor of San Francisco. Although accepting the nomination with reluctance, Sutro carried on a vigorous campaign, focusing on an anti-railroad and pro-people platform. Though one of three candidates, he received more than half of the votes, easily winning the election, which was actually a double victory, for just days prior to the election Southern Pacific had conceded to his demands to lower fares.

Events at the Cliff House

Along with his efforts spent developing new features at Point Lobos, such as Sutro Heights, the baths, and the railroad, Adolph Sutro spent a considerable amount of time and money on maintaining the one pre-existing feature on the site, the Cliff House. When Sutro acquired the Cliff House in 1883 the well-known inn had lost its original illustrious reputation, and was suffering from poor management, neglect, and a less than desirable clientele. The first step that Sutro took to upgrade the establishment was to replace Junius Foster, who had managed the restaurant for more than twenty years, with James M. Wilkins. By 1887 the reputation of the Cliff House improved as a family establishment and meal prices were lowered. Little evidence remains of any physical improvements that may have occurred during this period, however, owing to the heavy damage that the Cliff House received when the schooner *Parallel*, laden with a cargo of more than 1,500 cases of dynamite, exploded offshore in January, 1887. The blast seriously damaged the Cliff House, leaving windows shattered and doors hanging off their hinges. Despite extensive damage, there are no reports that the Cliff House ceased operations as a result. In 1889 the building was remodeled, including the relocation of the kitchen to a site adjacent to the dining room, the installation of water closets, and exterior repainting.

In 1894, less than five years after the completion of these renovations, the first Cliff House burned to the ground. Sutro, seemingly undaunted by this setback,

immediately hired architects Ermile S. Lemme and C.J. Colley to draw plans for a new, more elaborate Cliff House to replace the first. By July, 1895, grading and site-work had been completed and construction on the second Cliff House was progressing. On February 1, 1896, Mayor Sutro sponsored a formal opening for the second Cliff House and the new Sutro Railroad, including a band concert and banquet for the city of San Francisco's Board of Supervisors.

Referred to at the time as Sutro's gingerbread palace, the second Cliff House has been described as "a picturesque structure in the design of a chateau with spiraling towers." Whereas the original Cliff House had been relatively simple in its design and construction, a contemporary description of the second Cliff House portrays a sprawling maze of dining rooms, curio shops, and parlors:

Looking from the ocean, the building consists of four stories and an attic, while from the Point Lobos Road, beside the attic, there are only two clear stories. The lowest one is devoted to the polishing of shells, manufacture of curios, and the electric plant for the lighting of the house and the running of the elevator, and contains sleeping rooms for the necessary attendants. On the second floor refreshments will be sold at the price of city restaurants. There are twenty dining rooms on this floor, also shell and curios rooms. The third floor doors can be enlarged or diminished at pleasure. The attic is used chiefly as a means of approach to the rooms in the turrets, three of them fitted up as private dining rooms, and the fourth containing the largest camera obscura west of Chicago. Springing from the main roof, in its center, rises the handsome square tower, which, according to present plans, is to be used as an observatory room for from which coining of vantage, visitors may enjoy the magnificent and extensive view of the sea and shore, of plains and lofty mountain chains. A verandah, 16 feet wide, open at the fourth but enclosed by glass on the lower three floors, runs around the ocean side of the Cliff House. The inside fittings and furniture have been chosen by Wilkins and Pearson, and are in keeping with the style and beauty of the building.

Among both its fans and its detractors, the second Cliff House achieved the status of a local cultural landmark. *Here Today: San Francisco's Architectural Heritage* (Junior League of San Francisco 1968) described it as follows:

The gingerbread palace that Sutro built was one of the most conspicuous and fanciful monuments in the west. Six stories high, surmounted by towers and turrets, this jig-saw masterpiece was the fitting termination of Victorian San Francisco.

Completion of the second Cliff House marked the second wave of popularity for the resort. Along with continuing to serve countless families and lesser known guests from all over the nation, the Cliff House in the 1890s hosted a variety of celebrities including James Flood, James Fair, John Mackay, and Claus Spreckels; presidents Hayes, Grant, McKinley, Roosevelt, and Taft; and a variety of artistic personalities including Sarah Bernhardt, Adelini Patti, Mark Twain, and Bret Hart. As Adolph Sutro's final contribution to the Point Lobos area, the construction of the second Cliff House marked the completion of his recreational complex by the sea.

THE DEATH OF ADOLPH SUTRO IN 1898

In 1897 Sutro ended his relatively unsuccessful term as Mayor of San Francisco with relief, stating honestly:

What have I accomplished as mayor? Very little. The Mayor is little more than a figurehead... I have always been master of a situation; I have always had a number of men under my employment, and they did as I told them. I could not manage with politicians.

Merely one year after his return to private life it became obvious to his friends and family that Sutro's mental capacities were deteriorating, and the court soon appointed his oldest daughter, Dr. Emma Merritt, as his guardian. At the time of Sutro's death in August, 1898, at the age of sixty-eight, creditors and Sutro's other children challenged Emma Merritt's appointed role as guardian and executrix of the Sutro estate.

Following Sutro's death, Emma Merritt called for an inventory and appraisal of the property, and found the estate to be deeply in debt. In 1899 Merritt sold the Sutro railroad for the sum of \$215,000 to Robert F. Morrow who renamed it the Sutter Street Cable Car line. Although this sale helped to alleviate financial burdens, Emma Merritt struggled for twenty years to settle the estate. Consequently the condition of Sutro's Point Lobos properties deteriorated.

SUTRO HISTORIC LANDSCAPE UNDER OWNERSHIP OF EMMA MERRITT: 1898-1938

Sutro Heights Park

Despite financial difficulties, Emma Merritt attempted to maintain Sutro Heights for the enjoyment of the public. Reductions in the grounds staff from eleven to three resulted in decreased maintenance and supervision of the gardens. Plantings requiring intensive maintenance were replaced with those requiring less care, and the upkeep of paths, walks, and structures was neglected. By 1904,

the Sutro residence, which had deteriorated significantly, was being used as a caretaker's residence.

In 1920, the ownership of Sutro Heights was transferred to the City of San Francisco under the condition that it be "forever held and maintained as a free public resort or park under the name of Sutro Heights." The Merritts retained a lifetime residence on the property. Between 1920 and 1933 the Merritts continued to allow visitors access to Sutro Heights, but provided for minimal maintenance of the site. Although not officially responsible for the maintenance of Sutro Heights during this period, the City of San Francisco conducted two emergency repairs on the Sutro property made necessary by the 1920 widening of Point Lobos Road, which had destabilized the western cliff face. These repairs included construction of a reinforced concrete roadbed on a section of the Esplanade in 1924 and erosion control measures on the adjacent cliff face to support the west flank of the heights promontory.

In 1933, at the request of Emma Merritt, the City of San Francisco agreed to assume maintenance of Sutro Heights but there was no major improvement or rehabilitation of the grounds. A December, 1935, program of the San Francisco Garden Club presented a description of the garden at Sutro Heights as ghostly and neglected, though tempered by hope for the future:

There is a feeling of age about the cypresses at Sutro Heights; left largely to themselves they seem under the spell of some enchantment, and many of the statues are moss grown now. But men are at work here, a splendid rock garden is being planted on the escarpment facing the Cliff House and wood cutters are removing dead branches and making a clearing among the trees. The Shakespeare play given there in the open long, long, ago may be followed some day by an open air theater, who knows! And all the beauty of development on this wonderful place may be awakened as by the magic wand of some magician.

Cliff House

At Sutro's death in 1898, his flamboyant, second Cliff House overlooking Seal Rocks was still a major attraction for visitors to the Point Lobos Area. In August, 1899, the Cliff House was the receiving station for the first wireless message sent on the Pacific Coast; the signal announced the approach of the U. S. Army transport *Sherman*, arriving home from Manila with California troops from the Spanish American War.

In 1904 the Sutro Estate appraised Cliff House and its surrounding 7 acres at a value of \$125,000. Sutro properties lining the road to the north of the Cliff

House, including a photography gallery, fruit stand, coffee kiosk, tourist information booth, and stables, were valued at \$32,150.

In 1906 James Wilkins, who had managed the Cliff House for twenty-one years, was replaced by local entrepreneur John Tait, who bought Wilkins's lease in June 1907. Tait immediately began an ambitious renovation of the Cliff House, with plans to spend up to \$80,000 to rewire, install new plumbing, refurnish, and redecorate. The renovation was brought to an abrupt halt on September 7, 1907, when the ornate, frame structure caught fire and burned to the ground. The fire represented a tragic loss to the floundering Sutro estate and to Tait, who had spent nearly \$55,000 on the renovation and had as many as 100 men working on the building during the three months prior to its destruction.

While it was an unmitigated disaster for John Tait, the Sutro Estate, and those who had grown fond of Adolph Sutro's fanciful seaside resort, the fire that destroyed the second Cliff House did provide the opportunity for an architectural rebirth at this by now cherished San Francisco site. The call for such a change had been announced even before the fire, when in his 1905 Master Plan for San Francisco Daniel Burnham recommended that the Cliff House and its adjacent structures be destroyed and replaced with a simpler structure that would not obstruct the sweeping views of the headlands to the north.

Burnham had served as the lead planner of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, which "changed the course of urban building in the United States." (Roth, 1979) Whereas before the Exposition urban architecture was characterized by a pervasive eclecticism rich in historical reference, after the Exposition there was a decided effort by civic elites to create in the burgeoning polyglot American cities an urban architecture that expressed the civic order they longed to create. To achieve this urban form Burnham and others employed the classical architectural vocabulary found in the buildings of ancient Greece, Rome and subsequent episodes in the Classical revival. In 1904 Burnham had been hired by such an elite, the Association for the Improvement and Adornment of San Francisco, to design a master plan for San Francisco at a time when his renown as the foremost advocate of this urban architecture based upon classical precedent had reached international proportions. Apparently, Burnham's proposal also had the support of many locals who fondly remembered the first Cliff House and opposed the pretension of Sutro's palace.

The second Cliff House represented the antithesis of what was required of urban architecture for Burnham and other architects of his generation whose interest resided in creating a new urban architecture based upon the simplicity, severity, and grace of Classical precedents. The destruction of this building by fire thus

provided the opportunity for the design of a building more in keeping with a newly emerging urban order.

One year following the destruction of the second Cliff House, Emma Merritt applied for a permit to construct a third Cliff House on the site of the first two; work commenced in 1908 on a three-story, steel-reinforced concrete building. In choosing the Reid Bros., she chose the foremost regional practitioners of this new urban architecture. They, more than any other architects, were reshaping the urban landscape of San Francisco at this time with classically inspired designs. Their work was primarily in the downtown district, but they also built classically inspired residences, churches, and leisure facilities in a range of neighborhoods in the city.

The use of reinforced concrete to rebuild the Cliff House not only reflected an obvious desire to avoid a repetition of the fire that consumed the previous structure, but also the material's widespread popularity in the years following the earthquake and fire. "Thus, after the fire there was immediately a great deal of reinforced-concrete construction of whole buildings and vastly increased use of it in fireproofing, floor slabs, curtain walls, and foundations. An article in the June 1907 *Architect and Engineer* stated 'It is safe to say that there has never before been near as much work of this character going on in any one city at one time.'" Besides seventy-eight reinforced-concrete buildings in the burned district, the immense new cell house at the military prison on Alcatraz and the construction newly underway at the Cliff House reflected this trend. (Corbett, 1979)

As designed by James (1852-1943) and Merritt Reid (1855-1932), the rectangular, classical revival building cost approximately \$75,000 to construct. With its regular window openings divided by pilasters across its four facades, its strong cornice lines clearly dividing the three-floor elevation, and its simple classical architectural detailing, the Cliff House was a hallmark of the early twentieth century search for order in urban architectural form. It also carried out the principles of Burnham's plan, transforming the site from one dominated by an oversized fanciful monument to one where the structure was tailored to the landscape, and built in a refined and sober style. In the Cliff House, the Reid Bros. realized the tenets of this new urban architecture, which commonly achieved clarity and harmony through "a return to classic principles of design and, often, to the literal reuse of classical forms." (Roth, 1979)

Born in New Brunswick, Canada, the Reid Brothers first practiced in Evansville, Illinois. The commission to design the Hotel Del Coronado (today a National Historic Landmark) brought them to San Diego in 1886. They established their practice in San Francisco in 1889 and during a career that ended with the death of Merritt Reid in

1932, designed many significant buildings (in San Francisco). These include the Fairmont Hotel, the First Congregational Church at Post and Mason, the Music Pavilion in Golden Gate Park, the Call Building at 74 New Montgomery, the Fitzshugh Building (demolished), and 901 Market and 979 Market (both for Hale Brothers Department Store)... Although well regarded before the earthquake, the Reid Brothers attained the pinnacle of their success as they helped rebuild San Francisco. The Cliff House, reopened to the delight of San Franciscans on July 1, 1909, was a significant example of their work from this watershed period of their career. It embodied the salient features of their designs of this time: a well-proportioned building constituting a monumental mass, reinforced concrete walls with steel beams floors for stability and fireproofing, and restrained Classical Revival detailing...In planning the relationship of the building to its site, the Reid Brothers, in effect, realized Burnhams's concept for a modest building facilitating views, articulated in his 1905 master plan for the city. By designing a building that rose just one story above grade at street level, for example, the Reid Brothers preserved the sweeping ocean vistas from Sutro Heights Park...In addition, a wide viewing deck surrounded the rear and sides of the building, bringing visitors into direct contact with the coastline and views of the distant horizon. From the building's interior, rows of picture windows pierced the massive walls on all three floors, framing views of the ocean and headlands beyond (Scolari 1997).

When completed, the Cliff House stood out as a singular work within the career of the Reid Bros. Architects who designed buildings within the urban street grid, the Cliff House commission challenged them to design a building in harmony with the stark beauty of the landscape at Lands End. They responded to this challenge by siting the building in such a way as to encourage an appreciation of the natural beauty of the location, and designing it in a restrained manner to compliment rather than dominate the landscape. The Cliff House is the only example from the Reid Bros. career of such a comprehensive site design.

On July 1, 1909, a gala celebration, to which its faithful patrons were invited, inaugurated the new Cliff House. The very next year, *The Architect and Engineer* assessed the impact of the Reid Bros. on the architectural development of the area:

The comprehensive and varied types of buildings designed by Messrs. Reid Bros. and illustrated in this number of the Architect and Engineer are to a considerable extent typical of the development of architecture in San Francisco. Certainly none in their profession have

done more to attract the attention of the outside world to this city by meritorious examples in architecture and engineering.”

The third Cliff House prospered for almost a decade, experiencing yet another resurgence of popularity reminiscent of the 1890s. But in 1918, with the involvement of the United States in World War I, the U.S. Army ordered closure of all establishments within one half mile of military installations. Owing to its proximity to Fort Miley, the Cliff House stood closed for two years. In 1920 Cliff House re-opened under the new management of Richard Roberts. Renovations at the same time included a three-story, reinforced concrete addition on the north side of the building and enclosure of the front entrance, on the east side of the building. At the same time Point Lobos Avenue outside of the Cliff House was widened from 20 feet to 60 feet, creating a four-lane asphalt road with an adjacent concrete sidewalk on the ocean side. Although a 1910 map does, in fact, show the road right of way passing very close to the front of the building, the actual widening of the paved surface undoubtedly altered the feeling and appearance of the area in front of Cliff House. The Cliff House, which again declined in popularity, closed once more in 1925 and would not open again until 1937. (The closure of the Cliff House was probably due in part to Prohibition as well as the closure of the railroad.)

Sutro Baths

Sutro Baths continued to operate as a swimming center, first under the management of Emma Merritt, and then Adolph's grandson, Gustav Sutro, until 1937. At that time, a section of the baths, which had experienced diminished attendance and profits, was converted to an ice skating rink. Some drop in attendance at the baths during the 1920s and 1930s is attributable to the closing of the famous coastal route of the railroad in 1925, following a massive landslide. The closing of the coastal route (then owned by the United Railroads of San Francisco) made a day-long excursion to Point Lobos considerably less appealing as did deterioration of both Sutro Heights and the Cliff House.

Additionally, in the early 1930s, the California Board of Health issued a series of stringent regulations regarding the construction, operation, and maintenance of public swimming pools. Compliance with Board of Health requirements would have required costly renovations.' Finally, the persistence of the Great Depression throughout the 1930s significantly reduced the number of people who could afford a recreational excursion.

SUTRO HISTORIC LANDSCAPE AREA DURING THE CITY PARKS ERA 1938-1976

Sutro Heights Park

Changes to the park's vegetation in the years after the Sutro Era ended were due primarily to wind damage to the maturing stands of trees, a decline in maintenance activity and discontinued residential occupation and management of the site.

Until the early 1920s the gardens remained in relatively good condition with the plantings maintained in a state of maturity. The garden's condition declined after Emma Sutro deeded maintenance responsibility to the City in 1933, and it accelerated after her death in 1938. There was no longer an on-site presence to ensure interest in maintaining the original historic landscaped setting. Untrimmed aged shrubs became overgrown and brush grew rampant, destroying the original rhythm of the spaces. The tree canopy became considerably thinner as top heavy trees were lost to the strong winds which buffeted the site. The 1949 tree survey reveals a number of holes in the once dense canopy.

The City of San Francisco's 1950 Master Plan for the site proposed a variety of changes that reflected the maintenance needs and public recreational desires of the time. Large lawn areas for playing fields were proposed, with tennis courts, children's play fields and public restrooms. Although little of the ambitious plan was acted upon, much of the site's level central terrace is now lawn, as the plan proposed, and visitor parking is in exactly the same configuration as that shown in the plan.

In 1937, the city submitted a proposal to the Works Progress Administration (WPA) for the rehabilitation of the grounds at Sutro Heights. When Emma Sutro Merritt died in residence at Sutro Heights in 1938, the WPA was in the process of further stabilizing the western slopes at the heights through the construction of an elaborate series of artificial concrete cliffs. Following her death, the WPA proceeded to demolish the aging Sutro residence, then in a state of serious disrepair, the remains of the conservatory, entrance gates and fences, the Dolce far Niente Balcony, and the structures on the parapet. At that time some new plant material was added, paths and road surfaces were upgraded, and the remaining statues were cleaned and repaired. The rear stone wall of the parapet was removed and replaced with a concrete retaining wall across the entire rear edge. Staircases were constructed at both ends of the wall to provide access to the parapet terrace. In total, WPA "improvements" to Sutro Heights cost \$90,994.

During World War II, Sutro Heights was closed for security reasons because of its proximity to Fort Miley. At this time a pair of concrete base end stations for range finding were constructed adjacent to the Parapet as part of a seacoast

fortification defense network. In 1949 the City of San Francisco commissioned a plan for the rehabilitation of the park. Probably due to lack of funds, little of the plan was implemented. However, an irrigation system was partially installed, and whether through intentional design or incremental changes, most of the planting beds are now lawn, as was called for in the plan. Between the late 1940s and the 1970s there was considerable vandalism and neglect at Sutro Heights.

Cliff House

The Cliff House did not reopen again until 1937 when two brothers, George K. and Leo C. Whitney, purchased the establishment from the Sutro Estate. In anticipation of the increased patronage associated with the World's Fair, to be held in San Francisco in 1939, the Whitney brothers renovated the electrical and plumbing systems at the Cliff House, and incorporated a curio shop and modern restaurant. About that time another small addition, built in the California Mission style of wood, adobe, and tile, was added to the north face of the building to provide an entrance to an exhibition (no longer present) of models of the twenty-one California missions.

The Whitney brothers remodeled and enlarged the Cliff House again in 1949 resulting in the expansion of the dining room, the construction of a special banquet room, an addition on the south face of the building, and a new top story. The exterior of the building also was altered, cladding the entire (east) street front in a modern façade that overlaid the original exterior. The Whitneys (who also purchased the Sutro Baths from Gustav Sutro in 1952) continued to operate the Cliff House, though somewhat unprofitably, until 1973. At that time an investment group called "We Four" leased the establishment with the goal of resurrecting the Cliff House as an elite eating establishment. The building has not been significantly altered aside from exterior painting since the 1950s.

Sutro Baths

In 1951, battered still further by an even steeper drop in attendance at the baths during World War II, Gustav Sutro offered the property for sale, explaining to reporters that despite his efforts to promote the baths, he had been unable to raise the \$25,000 to \$90,000 necessary for their proper restoration. Apparently Sutro had hoped that the City of San Francisco would purchase the baths; instead George K. Whitney, owner of the Cliff House and Playland-at-the-Beach (located at the foot of Point Lobos Avenue) was the purchaser. Whitney converted all of the swimming tanks to one large ice skating complex, and developed a small museum in the baths building. Despite Whitney's efforts to keep the complex open, he lost control of the baths in 1964 when his mother sold the controlling shares of the property to Robert D. Fraser, developer of two of San Francisco's apartment skyscrapers, the Fontana and the Comstock.

Fraser quickly developed plans to raze the massive structure and erect a 200-unit apartment complex and restaurant overlooking the ocean. However, in June, 1966, in the midst of negotiations regarding this development and with demolition already underway, a fire at Sutro Baths burned the once-splendid structure to its foundations. As with the destruction of the Cliff House sixty years earlier, thousands of spectators came to watch the blaze. The public sentiment that arose following the fire may have impeded Fraser's development plan for the site which the National Park Service purchased in 1973 from Cliffside Properties and incorporated into the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Currently the Sutro Baths site is a ruin of Adolph Sutro's massive, late-nineteenth-century structure.

SUTRO HISTORIC LANDSCAPE DURING THE GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA ERA 1976-PRESENT

In 1976, the National Park Service, acquired the land within the Sutro Historic Landscape District. It became a part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. As part of its management of the features within this area, the National Park Service has completed a number of documentation, environmental, and management plans related to the historic resources within the Sutro Historic Landscape District. It completed its General Management Plan in 1980 with the benefit of over 100 public workshops held throughout the Bay Area and input of over 10,000 individuals. The area that comprises the Sutro Historic Landscape District was designated in the General Management Plan as a "Historic Resources Zone" with a management goal of enhancement of the resources. "All of the areas within this (enhancement) subzone were developed originally as recreation spaces and still derive their primary value from recreation use. Management practices will be directed at preserving the basic integrity of their settings and the specific structures within them" (Borjes 1997). A Detailed Comprehensive Design Plan was completed by the National Park Service in 1993 in order to further define the management direction of the district and its Historic Resources zoning designation. A Cultural Landscape Report was required as part of the resource documentation phase of the project in recognition of the historic values inherent in this site and its components (ibid.). This Cultural Landscape Report became the foundation of viewing and managing the area as a historic landscape.

Sutro Heights

In 1976, the City of San Francisco transferred ownership of Sutro Heights to the National Park Service, to be managed as part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. National Park Service management efforts since that time have attempted to identify and preserve the historic features remaining on the site. Concrete headers, planters, fountains, and statues were removed for storage and cataloging. Reproductions of the remaining statues, including the entrance gate

lions, the Stag and Diana were cast and re-erected on the site. In the late 1970s selective archeological investigations were undertaken at the conservatory site, on the parapet, along the Esplanade, and the *Dolce far Niente* Balcony. In 1986, the well house (the only remaining historic structure on the site other than the front parapet wall) was partially restored. Also at that time the parapet stonewall mortar was repointed and terrace planters below the wall restored.

Overgrown areas have been cleared of undergrowth-, current maintenance includes pruning and trimming trees for both appearance and safety. Some trees have been removed. In addition, new landscape elements such as lawns and planting beds have been introduced.

Sutro Heights today continues to provide open space for strolling or other forms of passive recreation but presents a simpler appearance than in its heyday. The main entrance to Sutro Heights Park, located in the northeastern corner of the site off Point Lobos Avenue, is marked by statuary Lions on each side that are reproductions of the originals. Palm Avenue, the broad promenade is lined still, in part, by Palm trees. Intermittent groupings of trees and shrubs — scant reminders of Sutro's complex planting arrangements — still survive as does the well house. The grassy area surrounding the well house presents the remains of the area once known as "Shady Lawn." There are still views of the ocean and surrounding coast from the semi-circular parapet located at the western end of the site, and at intervals along the oceanfront side of the park.

Cliff House

In 1977, the National Park Service acquired the ownership of the Cliff House. The building contains a restaurant (operated since 1975 by Peanut Wagon Inc. and the family of Danny Hontalas), gift shop, and museum of arcade machines. The General Management Plan prepared by the National Park Service in 1980 stated that:

If necessary further study determines that the present Cliff House still possesses sufficient structural soundness and integrity..., the exterior facade will be restored to its former (pre-1949) appearance. A Historic Structures Report for the Cliff House was completed in 1987 but did not accomplish the necessary detailed structural analysis called for in the General Management Plan. The reports' discussions were based solely on visual inspection of the structure and an admission of lack of knowledge of the structure's vertical/lateral load capacity and the condition of its foundations (Borjes 1997).

Subsequent studies (The Cliff House Evaluations) were completed in 1996:

These reports included structural, life safety, accessibility, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and geotechnical evaluations, an environmental conditions assessment, and a (sic) economic feasibility analysis. The Evaluations revealed that “although the condition of the 1909 structure is good” and the 1909 structure has structural integrity as expected, seismic upgrading of the building is necessary to meet existing codes. Two feasible seismic retrofit schemes are proposed that...will provide the required strength and ductility to meet the anticipated demand” (ibid.).

Sutro Baths Site

In 1976, the National Park Service acquired the ownership of the Sutro Baths site. Planning and assessment of Sutro Baths was included in the General Management Plan, Detailed Comprehensive Design Plan, and Cultural Landscape Report. The ruins of the baths continue to attract and fascinate the public (Newitz 1999). The site is heavily visited by people who examine the remains of the baths and experience the feeling and setting of the site. Interpretive programs are also available.