

Cliff House Architecture

Each new remodel dramatically changed the look of the Cliff House. The 1863 Cliff House was a modest building that looked like the home of some prosperous citizen.

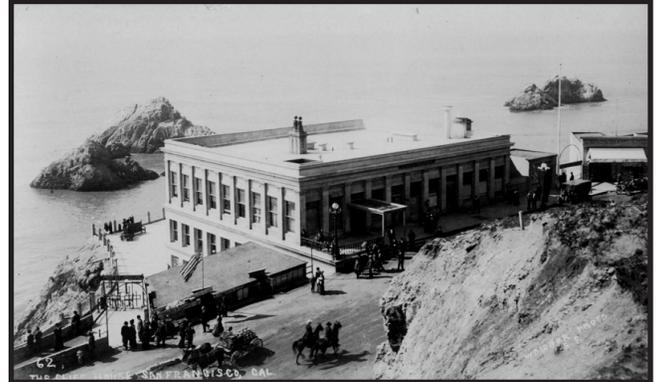
In 1868 the building tripled in size. Two wings were added, and a castle-like archway built over the entrance to the balcony that surrounded the building.

After the original Cliff House burned in 1894, Adolph Sutro built the most extravagant version of this local monument. Sutro's ornate Victorian Cliff House had eight stories, four spires, countless turrets and decorative moldings, and an observation tower. Though Sutro's Cliff House was a must-see San Francisco attraction, it was ridiculed and thought of as an architectural eyesore by some.

The Victorian Cliff House also fell victim to fire, in 1907. The third Cliff House was erected by Sutro's daughter Emma and was built in a neoclassical style of reinforced steel and poured concrete.

In 1937 neon signs were erected by new owner George Whitney. The Cliff House was remodeled in 1949 and a "modern" redwood façade added to the building's exterior. In the 1970s, the redwood façade was painted blue, complete with frothy waves.

In 2004 the Cliff House was once again remodeled in a modern style that accentuates the natural beauty of its surroundings and restores some of the building's original neoclassical elements.



From top to bottom: Original 1860s Cliff House; Victorian Cliff House; Third Cliff House rebuilt after 1907 fire; Blue Cliff House during the 1970s.