

freestanding chairs, and two large, parrott model cannons 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, ice plant, 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 (see photo, History #6). 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 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 façades, 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, 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.

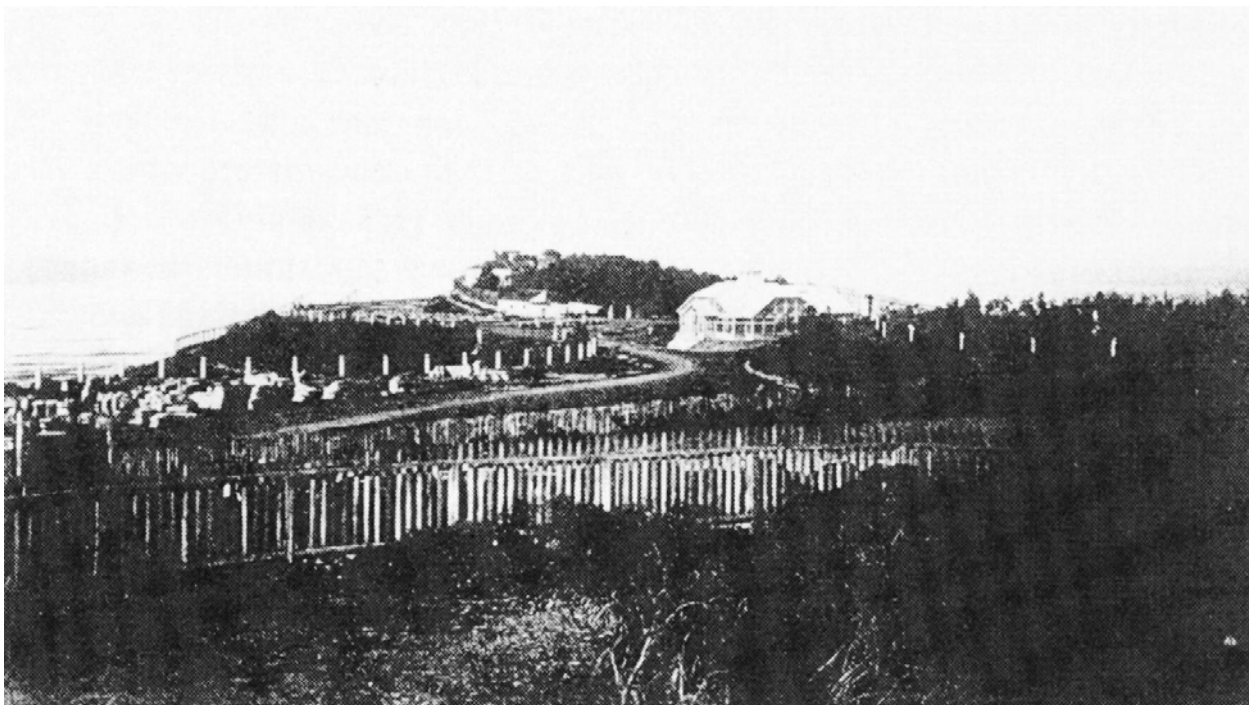
The conservatory was an elaborate greenhouse structure built to house Sutro's collection of climate-sensitive tropical plants. Centrally located on an elevated mound east of the terminus of Palm Avenue, the structure was cruciform in plan, with a central ventilation tower. Built entirely of small glass 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.

When Sutro Heights was opened to the public in 1885, Sutro wanted to make a trip there more affordable for everyone. He supported the 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 (see photo, History #7). 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.

In 1887, the Sutros sold their franchise in the new rail line to the Powell Street Railroad Company. In 1888, the completed new rail line, the Cliff House and Ferries Railroad, provided widespread access to the Sutro Heights area.



*History #3: Sutro Heights from the reservoir, 1886. (CLR, 1993)*