

When Adolph Sutro acquired the Cliff House in 1883, it had been suffering from poor management and neglect. Sutro's first step was to replace Junius Foster, who had managed the restaurant for twenty years, with James M. Wilkins. By 1887, the reputation of the Cliff House had improved as a family establishment. However, not much evidence remains of any physical improvements that have occurred during this period owing to the damage the Cliff House received when the schooner *Parallel*, which had 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 its operations as a result. The building was remodeled in 1889.

Sutro's interest in natural history and marine studies led to the development of an ocean pool, or aquarium, among the rocks north of Fisherman's Cove and the Cliff House (see photo, History #8). A semi-circular wall fifteen feet thick and fourteen feet wide was constructed adjacent to the ocean on the northwest corner of the cove to create a basin. A tunnel, eight feet high and 153 feet long cut through an adjacent cliff, allowed water to pore into the basin during high tide. A small door in the tunnel controlled the amount of water delivered into the basin and a subterranean outlet allowed water to circulate back to the ocean. As designed, small marine animals would pour into the basin with the high tide and, as the tide receded, become visible in the four feet of water remaining at low tide. A network of rock paths crossing the basin provided 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.

Sutro continued to expand the range of his ocean front complex with the development of a massive public bath house, or swimming facility. 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.

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 for 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 main entrance to the baths from Point Lobos Avenue was a small structure built in the form of a small classical temple (see photo, History #9). 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, each 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 10,000 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 (see photo, History #10). 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.

A variety of structures associated with the development of the gardens at Sutro Heights were constructed during the 1890s. One of the first major structures built following the remodeling of the Sutro residence was the rock and sandstone parapet located immediately west of the residence. Since its completion in 1895, the parapet has been a major focal point, observation platform, and Sutro Heights destination. Around 1890, the southwest exposure was terraced with several low rock retaining walls to reinforce the structure and prevent further soil erosion.

In 1893, the Market Street Railway Company, a subsidiary of the massive Southern Pacific railroad, purchased the Cliff House and Ferries Railway. The new owners increased the fare to ten cents once again, overriding Sutro's original stipulation that a five-cent fare must be maintained. Sutro offered to donate Sutro Heights to the City of San Francisco and to charge a nominal fee at the Sutro Baths if Market Street Railway would reinstate the five-cent fare. When Southern Pacific refused to cooperate, Sutro fenced his property and charged an entrance fee to anyone who had taken the railroad to the beach. In 1894, Sutro decided to build another railroad to the area in order to ensure a permanent reasonable fare to the beach. He obtained a franchise to build an electric line on Presidio Avenue running along Clement Street, one block south of the rival line on California Street. Sutro also began the development of a branch on Eighth Street, serving Golden Gate Park, and he arranged for free transfers at Presidio Avenue to the Sutter Street Line, which was also independent from the Southern Pacific's monopoly.

In 1894, less than five years after the completion of renovations to the structure, the first Cliff House burned to the ground. Sutro immediately hired architects Emile S. Lemme and C.J. Colley to draw plans for a new more elaborate Cliff House to replace the first (see photo, History #11). By July 1895, grading and site-work had been completed and construction on the second Cliff House was progressing. On February 1, 1896, Sutro sponsored a formal opening for the new Cliff House and the new Sutro Railroad.

In 1897, Sutro ended his relatively unsuccessful term as Mayor of San Francisco. 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 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.

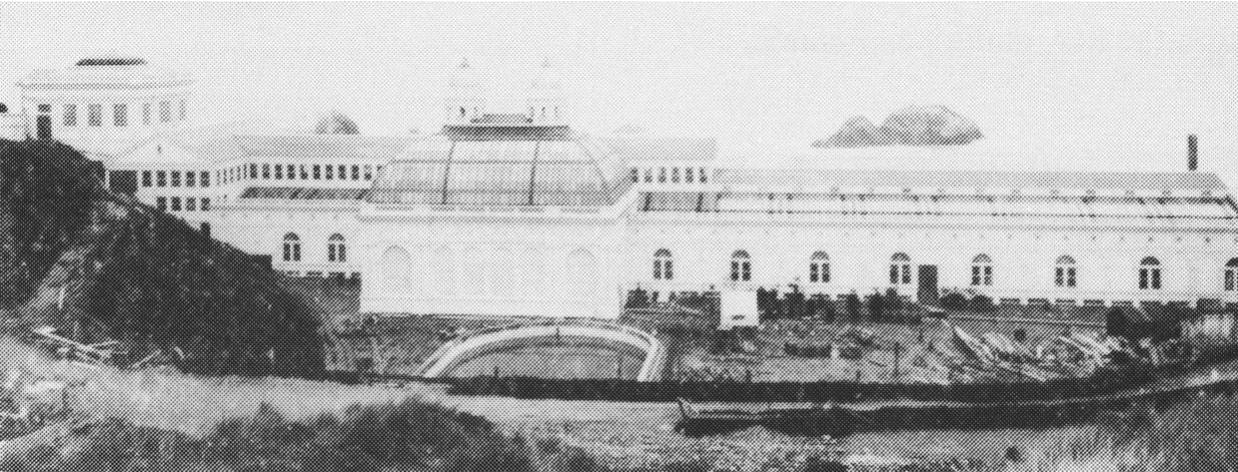
Following Sutro's death, Emma Merritt called for an inventory and appraisal of the property, and found the estate to be deeply in debt. In 1899, Merritt sold the Sutro railroad for the sum of \$215,000 to Robert F. Murrow who renamed it the Sutter Street Cable Car line. Although this sale helped to alleviate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



History #8: Aquarium, swimming pond, and sea wall. (CLR, 1993)



History #9: Front entry to the Sutro Baths. (CLR, 1993)



History #10: Sutro Baths facing west. (CLR, 1993)



History #11: Second Cliff House and surroundings. (CLR, 1993)