

VESTIGES of *Lands End*



Left: A kiddie car ride at Playland; *Center:* Playland in the 1970s; *Right:* Children take a ride down the giant wooden slide in the Playland Funhouse.

Playland at the Beach

George and Leo Whitney took over management of the 10-acre Ocean Beach amusement park “Chutes at the Beach” in 1926. The brothers soon changed this to Playland at the Beach, the name by which it would be known to countless San Franciscans. Playland’s attractions included the Big Dipper, Alpine Racers, and Diving Bell, and the Fun House with its mirror maze, spinning wheel, and giant wooden slide.

Laffing Sal, an animated mechanical doll, would greet visitors to the Fun House with a maniacal laugh that could inspire both amusement and terror in the beholder. Sal can still be seen (and heard) at San Francisco’s Musée Mécanique. The “Its-it” ice cream confection was invented as a Playland snack.

Over the 50 years of its operation, Playland became a beloved icon of childhood in San Francisco to generations of city dwellers and visitors. Playland was operated by the Whitney family until it was sold to a real estate developer in 1972. The park’s structures were demolished that year.

For more stories about Playland at the Beach, visit www.outsidelands.org/playland.php. To hear Laffing Sal, visit www.museemechanique.org.