

Merrie Way

At the close of the Midwinter Fair of 1894, many of the buildings and attractions were sold at auction. Adolph Sutro bought several rides and attractions to construct his own "Pleasure Grounds" above Sutro Baths, where the Lands End Lookout parking lot is today.

American amusement parks became popular in 1895 after George Tilyou transformed Coney Island from a seedy place of ill repute to a controlled access venue that provided mechanized rides and thrills. This was the template for many successful American amusement parks.

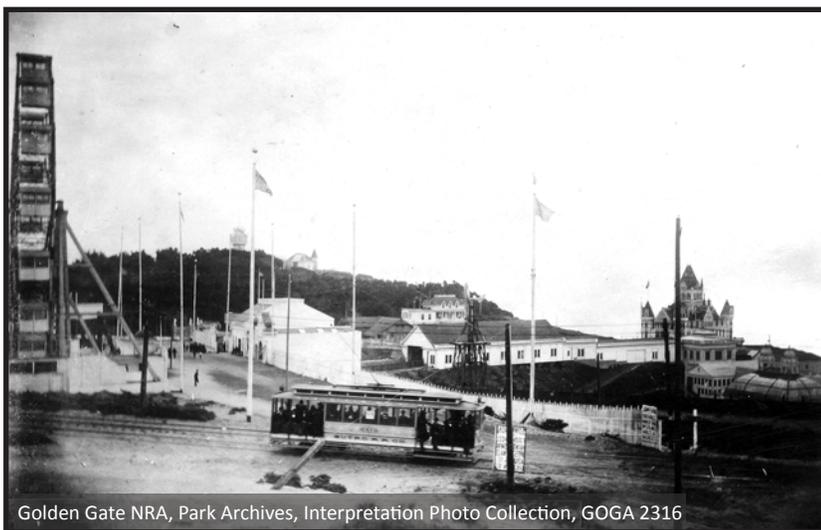
The amusement park boom lasted into the 1910s. It was inspired by the popularity of World's Fairs and Expositions that were organized in cities throughout the country. This success can also be partly attributed to the availability of cheap public transportation and the increase in leisure time due to new labor standards.

By 1898, Sutro's Pleasure Grounds included such rides as the Mystic Maze, Haunted Swing, Swings on a Platform, Scenic Railway, and the iconic Firth Wheel. The grounds also had concession stands built from the Midwinter Fair kiosks. These sold food and souvenirs along Merrie Way and Point Lobos Road.

Sutro's Pleasure Grounds, or Merrie Way, did not last long. By 1900, many of the amusements and attractions were in disrepair or closed. The last large vestige of Merrie Way disappeared when the Firth Wheel was removed in 1911. The street sign marking Merrie Way can still be seen at Point Lobos Road near the Lands End Lookout Visitor's Center.



Courtesy of Greg Gaar



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Top: The Firth Wheel and Scenic Railway, ca. 1895-1910; *Middle:* Sutro Railroad car headed past the Firth Wheel with Haunted Swing building in the background and the Cliff House and Sutro Baths in the far background, ca. 1895-1907; *Bottom:* The Firth Wheel with Sutro Baths and the Cliff House in the background, ca. 1895-1907.