

VESTIGES of *Lands End*



Golden Gate NRA, Park Archives, Interpretation Photo Collection, GOGA-2316

Sand dunes dot the shoreline along Ocean Beach where the Richmond and Sunset Districts stand today, ca. 1865.

Sand Dunes

Before the development of San Francisco's Richmond and Sunset districts, the route to Lands End from downtown traversed an expanse of 100-foot high sand dunes. The dunes shifted continually in the relentless winds that blow in from the Pacific Ocean, often covering shrubs and even small buildings in their paths.

The dunes were described by early visitors as windswept and desert-like, desolate and forbidding. Some were covered with dune scrub vegetation, such as mock heather, Chamisso's lupine, deerweed, dandelion, knotweed, and cobweb thistle. These plants helped to stabilize the dunes in the face of driving winds. Firewood gathering by early residents depleted the scrub communities and intensified the shifting motions of the dunes.

Though the dune landscape could be harsh and uninviting, residents described brilliant displays of seasonal wildflowers. The admiration of these was the purpose of many a happy family outing to the dunes -- at least when the fog was out!