

VESTIGES of Lands End

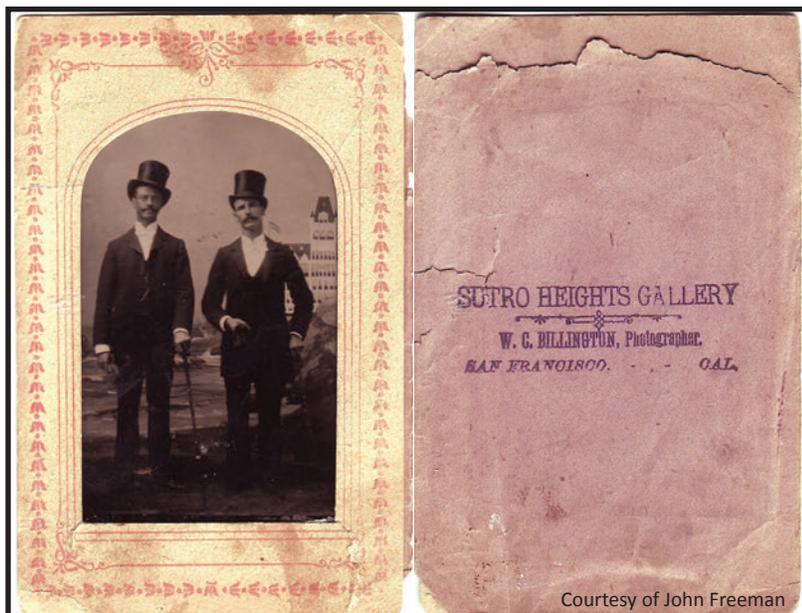
Billington Photographers

William Charles Billington and partner Thomas Thomson opened the Sutro Heights Gallery on the Sutro Heights parapet in 1894. The Gallery was a photography studio that offered visitors souvenir tintypes of themselves in front of painted Cliff House backdrops, as well as photographs of scenic Lands End landmarks.

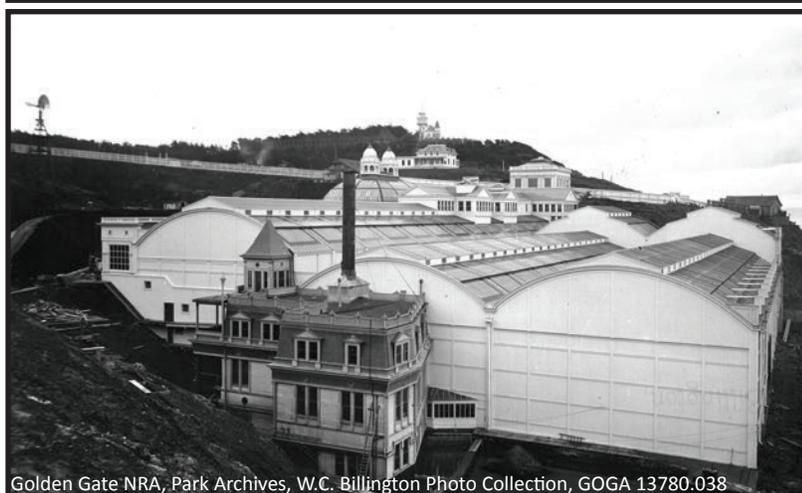
In 1896 William opened a gallery on Point Lobos Avenue -- the Cliff Photo Gallery. His younger brother, John, joined the business in 1900. Together they operated the gallery until 1907 when William died of heart failure during a trip to visit family in Canada. That same year business was further interrupted by the fire that destroyed the Cliff House. John resumed operations of the Cliff Photo Gallery once the Cliff House reopened in 1909, running the studio until his death in 1925.

A third studio, the Seal Rock Gallery, located on Point Lobos Ave. between the entrance to Sutro Baths and the Cliff House, was opened by John Billington in 1910. The studio was run by Louis Ringseis after John's death for another 3 years until shutting down in 1928.

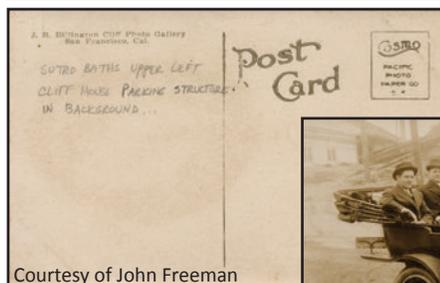
The Canadian-born Billington brothers took many photographs of visitors and scenery around Lands End. The Billington body of work consisted of three categories: scenic photos, personal tintypes, and real photo postcards. Their work, along with that of many other photographers that captured the place and its people, lets us look into the world of turn of the 20th century Lands End.



Courtesy of John Freeman



Golden Gate NRA, Park Archives, W.C. Billington Photo Collection, GOGA 13780.038



Courtesy of John Freeman



Top: Sutro Heights Gallery tintype with studio backdrop, ca. 1897-1900; Middle: W.C. Billington scenic photo of Sutro Baths, 1907; Bottom: J.R. Billington real photo postcard, ca. 1910-25.