

VESTIGES of *Lands End*

Firth Wheel

When the Midwinter Fair of 1894 came to a close in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, many of the Fair's items were sold. Adolph Sutro purchased a variety of the event's remnants including the Firth Wheel.

This impressive structure was a slightly smaller version of the Ferris Wheel, which made its debut at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. The Firth Wheel was 100 feet in diameter, and weighed 192,000 pounds. Its 16 cars could hold up to 160 passengers. Each ride on the attraction took about 20 minutes.

The Firth Wheel was in place on Merrie Way above Sutro Baths by 1895. The centerpiece attraction of Sutro's Pleasure Grounds, it was surrounded by other rides like the Haunted Swing and Scenic Railway.

In 1911, after years of disuse, the Firth Wheel was eventually removed when it was severely damaged by a winter storm.



Courtesy of Dennis O'Rorke

The Firth Wheel and Haunted Swing at Sutro's Pleasure Grounds, ca. 1895-1907.