CLIFF HOUSE TO REOPEN WEDNESDAY
GEORGE J DURAIND
San Francisco Chronicle (1869-Current File); Dec 4, 1920; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The San Francisco Chronicle (1865-1922)
pg. 7

CLIFF HOUSE TO REOPEN WEDNESDAY

Richard P. Roberts Secures Lease, Remodels Building to Make It a First-Class, Modern Resort

Historic Playground of San Francisco to Once More Be Scene of Gayeties, Echoing Joys of Former Days

By GEORGE J. DURAIND

THE Cliff House is to reopen its doors as a first-class resort, and in a way worthy of its best days.

Next Wednesday evening December 8, under the control and management of Richard P. Roberts, it will again function as one of the representative institutions of the West.

This will be glad news to every San Franciscan, whose local pride has been hurt by the closing of its doors for two years, owing to the curtailment of the drinking privilege, and at a time when more than ever before tourists from all parts of the world were flocking to California.

Naturally these visitors repaired to the Cliff House, whose fame had spread from pole to pole and over the seven seas from Singapore to Iceland, and from Colombo to Capetown. Its closed doors making San Francisco appear like Venice without its Campanile, or Paris without its Louvre, not only excited wonder, but called forth in many instances from distinguished guests reflections by no means complimentary to the civic spirit of a city that could thus permit a historic resort which had played such a large part in its life and development, and which stood for so much in the way of beautiful scenery, to be closed up like an abandoned cemetery.

For the Cliff House is not only a part of San Francisco, like Golden Gate Park, the City Hall, the Civic Auditorium, and the Museum of Fine Arts.

In a very large sense it is much more than any of these representative institutions, because it stands for many larger things—things aesthetic, things historic, things racial and international in a way.

Beautiful Natural Setting Is Famous

No city in the world has a more beautiful natural setting than San Francisco, especially at this part of its territory, where land and sea combine to produce its grandest effects, ranging from the tender and lovely to the majestic and awe inspiring. The Cliff House has always summed up this magnificent combination of light and shade, of wind and wave, of beach and surf, of mountain and sea, of sky and horizon.

This famous resort, which has been photographed more extensively, and sent around the world on more postal cards than any other building on earth, was built on a commanding promontory, projecting into the ocean, from which viewpoint could be seen at a glance all the wonders and glories of nature over which poets and great writers rhapsodized. It was the last house one saw upon sailing away on the waters of the Pacific, and it was the first to be seen upon entering the Western gateway of the United States. So that it may be well said that the Cliff House sits like a queen on the last boundary line of America, marking the ultimate frontier of occidental civilization.

Cliff House Recalls Days of Argonauts

When you told of a visit to the Cliff House all the associations connected with the glories of nature arose in one's mind, so that artistically the word Cliff House came to mean in the imagination of the world, one of the noblest spots on the globe, it came to mean the Golden Gate, the Seal Rocks, Tamalpais in the distance, the wide stretches of the Pacific, the sanded beach, the magnificent sunsets, whose colors enchanted the beholder, things esthetically supreme.

Historically the Cliff House recalls the pioneer days of the West, for it was here where took place the gayest parties and reunions of the golden age of California. The Cliff House was built by one of the great argonauts, Sam Brannan, after whom is named Brannan street in San Francisco.

Sam Brannan was one of the noted characters in the early life of the state. He came to California as a Mormon missionary, but soon developed an aptitude for business that put him in the front rank among the developers of the West, whose energy and far-sightedness built up the tier of great states which are the glory of our Republic.

He was never known to let an opportunity pass. One day a ship loaded with building material, destined for Sacramento, was wrecked on the beach near Point Lobos. Sam Brannan bought the derilict and its cargo, and utilized the material in constructing the first Cliff House, which he put under the management of Captain Foster, one of those born bonifaces of the ages, who can play the ideal host to all the world.

End of Trail of Western Pioneers

When this original Cliff House was burned down, and a second erected, and that too went up in flames, Adolph Sutro, designer and constructor of the famous Sutro tunnel in the Comstock, who had acquired the property, built his celebrated Gothic Castle on the site, which was likewise destroyed in 1907, when the present structure was erected.

Under the management of Captain Foster, who ran the first and second Cliff Houses for over twenty years, the resort achieved a world reputation for the character of its menus and special dishes. It became the rendezvous of epicures from every country as they visited San Francisco. The terrapin stews, welsh rarebits and filets of duck prepared at the Cliff House became the delight of the gourmets of the period. A dinner at the Cliff House, when given by a party or a club, was always an event. No tourist passed through the city on the transcontinental trip without a visit to the resort.

J. M. Wilkins, who succeeded Foster, running the place for Adolph Sutro for another generation, kept up the high character of the resort, both as a scenic attraction and a place where epicurean repasts could be secured at almost a moment's notice. It was here where celebrated men—princes, a King, lords, dukes, earls, statesmen and Presidents—congregated, just as they went to the Riviera or Monte Carlo, because it was a world-famous resort, a place where the most beautiful scenery on earth could be seen, and where, at the same time, could be enjoyed the most delightful dishes prepared by chefs whose creations equaled those of the renowned hostelries of Europe.

It was here where Presidents Grant Hayes, McKinley and Roosevelt sat on the veranda and watched the hundreds of sealions as they hobbled over the jagged rocks, or sprawled at full length in the sun, or leaped from point to point, or plunged into the foaming waters, making graceful detours through the circling eddies, riding upon the rolling billows, and returning again to join their comrades on the rocks.

Internationally the Cliff House stands for something still more significant. It marks the end of the white man's journey across the continents and the seas, the terminus of the pioneer's march toward the West as he founded empire after empire following the setting sun. Beginning in that ancient Aryan day he crossed two hemispheres, and finally ended his journey at the Pacific when he confronted the Orient. There were no more empires to found and no more virgin lands to conquer. The Cliff House stands at what may be called Land's End, marking the last Western stand of the races that built up the world's noblest civilizations.

Standing for these great things, associated in the minds of the world with some of the earth's sublimest scenery, linked historically with the days of the Argonauts, representing the empire builders' last step toward the West, the Cliff House has always been not only a part of San Francisco, but a possession of all mankind, which everyone who visited California was anxious to see. It lives in the heart of the world like a splendid antique, a fine classic or an immortal masterpiece, something that must be cherished and preserved because around it is the glamour of romance and the light of high ideals.

Closing was Blow To Civic Pride

For these reasons it seemed a sad blow to the people of San Francisco when the Cliff House was permitted to close its doors. Thousands of people in the last two years have come to our city from all over the world, and among them were many distinguished characters, men and women whose opinions carried great weight in their own countries. These guests visited the Cliff House and wondered how such a virile and spirited people as live in San Francisco, endowed with such imaginative power, such creative ability, such magnificent capacity to achieve in many directions, such love of the beautiful in music, song and art, could permit such a representative institution as the Cliff House to die or even close its doors for a minute. Such neglect was almost incomprehensible to them, bringing forth invariably comments of disapproval and regret. With the Cliff House dead, it seemed as if part of the natural landscape was obscured or destroyed.

Every San Franciscan, therefore, will rejoice when it is announced that the Cliff House is to be permanently reopened under auspices which insure its functioning as a world resort and attraction for many years to come.

The man who is going to be the host at the new Cliff House is one whose previous career is a guarantee that it will be conducted in a way to give entertainment and pleasure to its patrons and satisfaction to all who visit it. His name is Richard P. Roberts, a native of San Francisco.

High Ideals of Richard P. Roberts

The new Cliff House is going to be conducted as a high-class resort entirely worthy of such an imperial city as San Francisco. Richard P. Roberts realizes that in opening the Cliff House he becomes not only the owner and manager of a beach resort, but that in a very large way he is representative of San Francisco itself and stands as the city's host to all the world of visitors that come to California.

The chief aim of Richard P. Roberts, who has a keen eye to see what are the real attractions of the Cliff House, will be to make visitors feel that they are entering a place memorable in the world's history, a resort with a unique distinction and charm. He knows that what really made the Cliff House in the past such a fascinating resort was not alone the building, the celebrated cuisine, the jovial host, but also the historic associations, the old memories, the wonderful scenery, the symbolic significance of the spot as the last outpost of the white man's civilization after completing the conquering cycle of the generations. These could not burn down and will forever remain as an imperishable part of the inheritance of San Francisco.

For this reason, while reproducing every attraction that made the Cliff House famous in the past, as to beauty of decoration, excellence of cuisine, courtesy of treatment and incomparable service, and adding other new ones, Richard P. Roberts is going to preserve the historic atmosphere that has become attached to this hostelry and is going to make his management dignified and conservative, where all the best families may visit, sure that they are getting the best that the ablest modern management can provide.

Beautiful Portico In Pompeian Style

Accordingly Roberts is going to his task in the right way. He knows that success depends upon first impressions, and he wants the opening day to show all San Francisco that he intends to make good in his new venture, and give the world a Cliff House worthy of its most glorious days. He is sparing no money in his remodeling and redecorating of the present fine building, and in the introducing of new features that will tend to make the resort attractive and give it distinction.

C. O. Clausen, a San Francisco architect with many fine buildings to his credit, has been engaged to remodel and redecorate the structure that was built on modern lines to replace the medieval castle of Adolph Sutro. He has introduced many important and vital changes, both in the interior and exterior of the building, which make it radically different from what it was before.

One of the most interesting of these new features is the construction of a main entrance portico, which is to be known as the Pompeian Court. This portico is carried out in the Grecian Doric style of architecture, and gives an effect of elegance and dignity to the entire building. The interior of the portico is finished with Caen stone walls covered with delicate lattice panels. The floors are of dark red terra cotta tiles, with a magnificent fountain in the center, while around the sides will be terra cotta boxes and vases set along the walls in which will be flowers and palms, giving an enchanted garden effect. The illumination of this handsome Pompeian Court will be accomplished by an indirect system, throwing a soft light reflected from the cornices.

Dining-room in Ivory and Gold

While the new Pompeian entrance is going to charm thousands by its originality and beauty, the Cliff House is going to have one of the finest dining-halls in the country. The interior lobby is decorated in blue and gold, and the main dining-room in ivory tints with various colors glazed to blend with the draperies, with panels finished in an aerochrome effect.

The drapery arrangements of the main dining-room are after the style of an old Italian salon, in colors ranging from a light peach shade to a deep Du Barry rose, interspersed with high lights of reseda green. The lambrequins are made of Italian cut velvet, the design of which was copied from an old Papal banner, and made up in large panels trimmed with silk fringe and tassels. The hangings are of deep rose silk velour. Some idea may be had of the beauty of these draperies when it is said that some of them cost as high as $25 a yard.

The main reception-room is done entirely in bronzes and blues of taffeta and silk damask, the upholstery following out the same color scheme. The entire draperies, furniture, upholstering and new carpets have been designed and furnished by William F. Cody, interior decorator.

The special interior lighting features designed by Archie T. Newsom are going to largely contribute to the success of the new Cliff House. In the main ballroom the electrical wall candle brackets are to have large parchment paper shields in French design, to follow the spirit of the draperies. The colors will run into terra cotta backgrounds with design picked out in varied greens. These shields are mounted on odd-shaped metal frames bound in gold braid.

There are six large ceiling fixtures also in parchment. Each unit is of four floral panels mounted on a cylinder frame and draped with cords and decorative drops. The coloring follows that of the wall shields.

It is proposed to furnish eight tables with small lamps in the shape of old Spanish galleons under full sail, the lighting to be in the sails. The lamps are to shine out alone during moonlight numbers.

In the smaller dining-rooms wall candle brackets have parchment shields designed in a similar manner to those in the larger hall. The coloring follows that of the draperies.

In the stair hall there are two wrought iron torcheres placed at the entrance of the main dining-room. These follow the coloring of the wall paper, which is a fine example of French Chinois of the Louis XVI period. The parchment cylinder shades have small painted motives taken from the spirit of the period.

Joe Houser Will Assume Direction

Even the kitchen has been thoroughly remodeled, all the old stuff removed and a complete new equipment installed representing the last word in ovens, ranges, the handling of dishes and the manipulation of food products prior to cooking. This kitchen will be worthy of the new master chef, who is going to create marvelous menus that will delight the epicures of the future.

An entirely new steam heating plant to keep the building at a comfortable living temperature has been installed, so that on the coldest days the Cliff House will be as warm and cozy as the best of homes.

Lovers of the Cliff House will be glad to learn that the whole dining service and control of staff organization is to be under the popular Joe Houser, who for the last three years before its close made hosts of friends by his efficient management. He has been making a special study of some of the best resorts in the country and is prepared to introduce many new features that are going to give the new Cliff House a wide reputation when tourists come to visit it and carry with them on their travels the story of these innovations.

The new Cliff House will serve daily luncheons, afternoon teas and regular dinners with distinctive menus at $2.50 a plate. At all hours an a la carte service will be conducted, so that visitors may avail themselves of any dishes that their fancy may desire.

The regular dinners will be served in the main dining hall, where an orchestra of six pieces will discourse fine music for the patrons, dancing being permitted as in all first-class resorts.

The main feature of the Cliff House dinner will be something absolutely new, so characteristic as to give the place a unique distinction among bon vivants. This new feature will be the serving of whole boned stuffed squab chickens, the menu changing every night with a different flavor in the stuffing. This succulent dish is to be prepared under the supervision of a celebrated French chef who was one of the culinary masters of the Waldorf-Astoria in New York, and who has been specially engaged to create new dishes for the Cliff House patrons.

The Cliff House management also expect to make their afternoon teas characteristic of the resort. There will be two attractive services, one for 50 cents and the second for 75 cents. At the 50-cent service will be given hot light muffins, marmalade and gems, with tea, chocolate and coffee. At the 75-cent service will be served lobster, shrimp, crab salad, or chicken a la king, with muffins, gems, followed with ices, creams and cakes, with choice of tea, chocolate or coffee. These teas are going to be the delight of tourists and motorists from all over the world.

The Cliff House will also feature a regular Sunday morning breakfast at a very reasonable price.

Outside Also To Be Beautified

Nor has the outside of the Cliff House been forgotten. A general clean-up has taken place in the surrounding territory. The Supervisors have appropriated the money for a new roadway leading up from the main boulevard to the Cliff House, and around up the hill to the car lines. Arc lights will be strung along these thoroughfares, so that passageway will be easy in the night time.

It has also been decided to cut away about forty feet from the main bulkhead of rock projecting into the road, so as to increase the space for taking care of the thousands of automobiles that visit the Cliff House on Sundays and holidays.

Owing to these many improvements, initiated by the new owner, visitors to the Cliff House will hardly recognize it, so great have been the changes produced by the new management. Richard Roberts has certainly put the place in a first-class condition. Those who attend the opening are going to be greatly surprised at the splendid results attained in the way of artistic effects.

The aim of the new proprietor is to make the Cliff House attractive to all the first families of San Francisco, as it was in its palmiest days, and to also serve the general public in a way to make them feel that the resort is a part of San Francisco itself. Richard Roberts says that he is going to strive to be worthy of the goodwill of all by the high quality of his attractions, the efficiency of his services and the reasonableness of his prices.

This is why the opening day of the new Cliff House is going to be a gala day for all San Francisco. Thousands will flock to the new resort to testify their appreciation of the efforts of the new owner to restore to the city one of its most historic institutions.

The night of this opening day will be forever memorable to all visitors, for the reason that on this occasion is going to be put into operation the new lighting effects of the exterior of the building and surrounding territory. The entire exterior of the building will be treated in light colors, and will be illuminated at night by flood lighting, projected from powerful searchlights on Sutro Heights. This system of indirect light is going to produce effects similar to those achieved on the main buildings of the Panama-Pacific Exposition.

Strong searchlights will also be thrown upon the surf so that in the evening the beautiful water effects can be seen. From the water lights will be thrown upon the building from the sea side, which will make the Cliff House stand out in the universal darkness luminous with a soft glow, that will make it look from a distance like some enchanted castle on the Rhine, a golden glory of the night.

The story of the Cliff House would be incomplete without mention of those who in no small measure are to be instrumental in again placing the Cliff House among San Francisco's beloved institutions. These people are the men and firms whose energy and ability have combined in the remodeling and decorating of the Cliff House, and to those who will supply its table with the choicest of things to eat and drink.

H. O. Clausen, architect, Hearst building, must be given credit for the entire remodeled Cliff House. As architectural chief, Clausen has brought to bear the knowledge he has acquired during his years of work in San Francisco.

Elsewhere in this Chronicle is described fully the work of W. F. Cody, decorator, 723 Mission street. It is Cody that may be thanked for the soft, restful system of draping that gives the first impression of the beauties of the Cliff House.

The lighting fixtures are also more fully described in a previous paragraph and are the work of Archie T. Newsom, 14 Montgomery street.

The firm of D. Zelinski & Sons, painters and decorators, 422 Turk street, were intrusted with the redecorating of the Cliff House, and the result of their efforts is a matter of congratulation to both the members of the firm and to Roberts. D. Zelinski & Sons are without a doubt the leading firm of painters and decorators in California, and the beautiful schemes of decorating that adorn many of the varied show places of California are the handiwork of their organization.

Perfect Workmanship Enhances Illusion

The Cliff House, with its myriads of lights, required perfect workmanship in the installation of the electrical wiring. This most important feature was intrusted to the old San Francisco Electric Company, of which Gus Baracco is the proprietor. Baracco's shop at 515 Broderick street was selected by the Cliff House management because of its reputation for high-grade electrical installation.

Those who elect to dine at the Cliff House will find they are served with the best that the market affords. As the fame of the Cliff House extends the world over, so does the fame of Del Monte canned fruits and vegetables, and so this far known product of California is to be given a prominent place in the Cliff House menu.

From the John Wieland Brewery Cliff House patrons will be served with "Extra Pale," the San Francisco product that, like the Cliff House, needs no introduction.

The meats will be supplied by the California Meat Company, 572 Clay street. The California Meat Company is an old established firm and will supply the Cliff House diners with the best meats the market affords.

The ice used is made from distilled water under modern hygienic conditions and supplied by the National Ice Company.

The fountain menu of the Cliff House will contain dozens of delicious drinks based on pure fruit and pure fruit syrups and flavors. These are to be furnished by the Magnus Fruit Products Company, 301 Howard street, the San Francisco firm whose products are becoming nationally known and are the acknowledged leaders in their respective lines.

Local Products to Grace the Tables

Another San Francisco product will occupy a prominent spot—El Prime cigars, manufactured by E. Cose & Co., 113 Front street. El Prime is becoming one of the most popular brands of cigars on the market and come in many shapes and sizes.

A slogan that is rapidly becoming famous is "Drink Rainier—You Can't Tell the Difference," and it will be good news to the thousands of families who have Rainier in their home, to know that they can obtain this famous beverage at the Cliff House.

California is the land of sunshine, fruit and flowers, our fruits are many and are shipped the world over. The Cliff House will feature California fruits and it will be supplied by Charles L. Goetting & Sons of the California Market.

Bon vivants will find the season's delicacies, such as terrapin, trout, etc. These will be received daily from Beck & Co., 1319 Steiner street.

Among the musicians who created undying fame, we find the name of Mozart and whether or not there is anything in the connection of names, it is a fact that smokers of clear Havana cigars have for years made the Mozart cigar the cigar of their choice. The Mozart and the La Azora, a mild Havana cigar, will be sold at the Cliff House and are distributed by M. Blaskower, 201 Montgomery street.

Imported Delicacies From Many Lands

Imported table delicacies to delight the palate will be furnished by Rathjen Bros., Inc., grocers, 272 O'Farrell street.

It is an old saying that "bread is the staff of life" and Manager Richard Roberts will supply his patrons with bread from the bakery of Boudin Brothers, 387 Tenth avenue, especially those delicious French loaves and rolls so indispensable to the epicure.

During the Panama-Pacific Exposition the firm of Rathjens & Kupfer, 1231 Pacific street, put on the market what was known as the "Exposition frankfurter." Since that time the sale of this tasty delicacy has grown by leaps and bounds, so Exposition frankfurters, the best on the market, may be had at the Cliff House.

Carbonated beverages including such national known drinks as Coca Cola, Hires Root Beer, etc., will be kept at the proper temperature at the Cliff House. These beverages will be supplied through the Majestic Bottling Company, 13 Beideman street. The Majestic company is one of the largest in the West and its products enjoy an enviable reputation.

Wherever you find men congregate you will find Optimo cigars, for Optimos have been the choice of lovers of tobacco for years gone by. Optimo is an exclusive cigar. It combines both the healthy influence of a mild brand of Havana tobacco with the bouquet that only comes from the proper age of the finest selection of tobacco. Optimo cigars will always find a favorable place among Cliff House patrons and are distributed by Ehrman Bros. & Co., 546 Third street.

Oysters and shell fish will be cooked by a master chef and will be served in one hundred and one various ways. To insure but the best of this commodity the Cliff House will have its tables supplied by the Cable Oyster Depot—F. & O. Tofanelli, proprietors, 1442 Polk street.

Finest of Coffee For Connoisseurs

Among men's peculiar whims nothing is of greater importance than a good cup of coffee. It starts his breakfast right in the morning. It is the end of a perfect dinner. An exclusive brand of coffee will be served at the Cliff House and will be supplied by the Van Winkle Coffee Company, 510 Clay street.

No caterer who prides himself on serving his patrons with the best would fail to carry a full line of the old reliable Gato, a clear Havana cigar from fully matured Havana leaf, having a delightful, mild, full flavor. Gato cigars are distributed by S. Bachman & Co., 331 Front street. This firm also distributes High Life cigar, formerly imported from Cuba, but now made in the United States of the same high-grade Havana tobacco.

From far across the seas—Italy, France and Spain, come delicacies to tempt with their delicious flavors. The tourist who has traveled the world over and has tasted various good things each country has had to offer, will be surprised at the way the Cliff House is prepared to serve him with the delicacies of the foreign countries. The firm of P. Monteverde & Co., 563 Washington street, who are among the leading importing wholesale houses of San Francisco, are entrusted with the supplying of these foodstuffs to the Cliff House.

There is another product typical and exclusive of San Francisco, and that is Jackson's Napa Soda. Known around the world, Napa soda, ginger ale, etc., is a drink that all Californians may be proud of. Napa soda will always be found on the Cliff House menu.

Among the housewives of San Francisco who know where the best may always be counted upon, the firm of O'Brien, Spotorno & Mitchell in the California Market is a household word. For years this firm has been the leading purveyor in San Francisco of poultry, and the best from this immense establishment will be served at the Cliff House.

Artistic Printing Added Feature

The artistic printing of the Cliff House menus can be credited to the well-known firm of Upton Bros. and Delzelle, Inc., 144 Second street.

What is more of a delight to the feminine eye than beautiful table linens spick and span from the laundry? Here again is another feature, though seemingly small, which has a great bearing upon the success of any dinner. The table linens at the Cliff House are always clean and "fresh from the laundry," and the excellence of the appearance of the table-covers may be attributed to the high character of the work done by the Diamond Laundry, 3340 Eighteenth street.

Numerous other firms in San Francisco, among them L. Scatena & Co., 104 Washington street, are extending to Mr. Roberts their co-operation and best wishes.

PRESENT CLIFF HOUSE TO BE REOPENED DEC. 8, UNDER THE MANAGEMENT of Richard P. Roberts, who has secured a ten-year lease from the Sutro estate. Center, the new proprietor.

Cliff House No. 2, the second of the famous resorts.

Main parapet of the original Cliff House

Gothic castle built by Adolph Sutro (Cliff House No. 3), which was burned in 1907

View of the famous Seal Rocks, which are so attractive to visiting [illegible]

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.