

Port Walk #24

The Edge of the City

If you were standing here during the Gold Rush, you'd have been hundreds of feet from shore. Between 1867 and 1889, the first of the City's seawalls was built, providing the waterfront with a solid edge.

The Hidden Seawall

You may not see them, but two concrete seawalls lie beneath your feet. The more recent of the two was built between 1890 and 1910 to expand the City's waterfront. Finding the seawalls can be difficult. The only clue may be a crack in the pavement where the soil has settled. Buildings, roads, and parking areas now conceal the line where land once met water.

In 1850, ships visiting San Francisco anchored at Yerba Buena Cove (today's Financial District). Newly arrived Henry Meiggs saw an opportunity to make North Beach a competing shipping point. He built a 1,600-foot-long pier out from Powell Street, graded roads, and sparked a real estate boom. Unfortunately, Meiggs financed his efforts with swindled funds and had to flee to Peru to avoid arrest.

Abe Warner, Proprietor

Entertainment attractions appeared in the Fisherman's Wharf area as early as the 1880s. This is Abe Warner in his Warner's Cobweb Palace, a popular saloon named for the spiders and webs that adorned the bar. In front of the saloon, a trap door opened so swimmers could jump into the Bay. Behind the bar, there was a display of curios and animals brought in by sailors from around the world.