




# SUNNYSIDE CONSERVATORY

## TIMELINE


EVENTS	CONSERVATORY OWNER	YEAR	DETAILS
Property Purchase	H. Taylor & Ida B. Taylor	1891	The Taylors purchased seven 25-foot lots from Sunnyside Land Company on Sunnyside Avenue and built a Victorian style house, first listed as 230 Sunnyside Avenue.
Original Construction	W.A. Merralls & Temperance Merralls	1898	Taylor sold the property to Merralls, who constructed the Conservatory to be an extension of the outer grounds. Cost of the structure: \$7,000
Conservatory Rediscovered	Ernest Van Beck and wife	1919	Property purchased by Ernest Van Beck and wife. Purchase price: \$12,000. It is said that the Conservatory was rediscovered by Ms. Van Beck after clearing overgrown brush.
Property Subdivided and Sold	Pat and Walter Anderson	1970	Pat and Walter Anderson purchased the easternmost lot with the Conservatory and built a home.
	Robert & Ruth Anderson	1973	Property sold to Robert and Ruth Anderson. Purchase price: \$70,000
City Landmark # 78		1975	Sunnyside Conservatory declared Landmark # 78 by City and County of San Francisco.
Demolition Permit		1978	Permit to demolish the Conservatory structure granted in error but revoked a month later. 30% demolition was completed including the east wing
Purchased by City	City and County of San Francisco	1980	Property purchased by Recreation and Parks Department with funds approved by the Open Space Advisory Committee.
Partial Reconstruction		1987-1988	The City provided partial reconstruction including roof replacement and construction of new fence at Monterey Boulevard.
New Gate at Joost Avenue		2001	Metal gate at Joost entrance by metalsmith Mary Revelli. Funded by San Francisco Beautiful.
Renovation Project		2001	Renovation plans began. Project by Recreation & Park Department, Department of Public Works in collaboration with Friends of the Sunnyside Conservatory.
Renovation Completed		2009	The restoration of the Conservatory and grounds is completed.

1891




\*1

1905



\*2

1919



\*3

**PHOTO CREDITS**

\*1: PUBLICITY OFFERING ORIGINAL LOTS FOR SALE, 1891  
Photo Source: Greg Gaar Collections

\*2: VIEW OF SUNNYSIDE DISTRICT, CONSERVATORY IN DISTANCE. CIRCA 1905  
Photo Source: Greg Gaar Collections

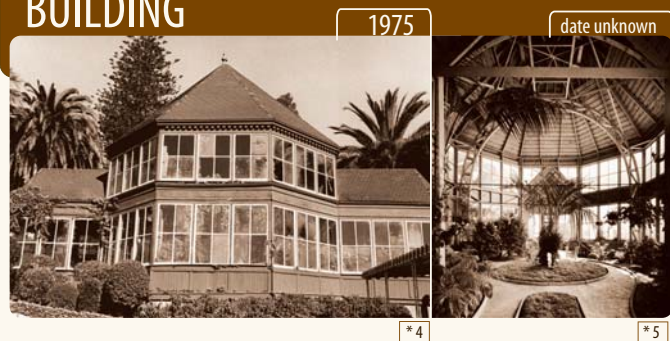
\*3: SUNNYSIDE CONSERVATORY CIRCA, 1919  
Photo Source: Glass negative rediscovered in the attic of Merralls's home

\*4: SUNNYSIDE CONSERVATORY, 1975 (showing both wings)  
Photo Source: San Francisco History Center

\*5: SUNNYSIDE CONSERVATORY, date unknown  
Interior photo showing historic Pindo Palm  
Photo Source: Book "Here Today", San Francisco Architectural Heritage by the Junior League of San Francisco, Inc., 1968

**TEXT CREDITS:** Sunnyside Conservatory Historic Structure Report by Architectural Conservator Christina Wallace, May 2002  
"The Sunnyside Districtic" articles written by Thomas W. Malim, 1976

## BUILDING



Sunnyside Conservatory is a fine example of a Victorian era conservatory. Victorian conservatories typically had more than five sides, had an apexed roof structure surmounted with a finial. Sunnyside Conservatory is an octagonal faceted structure that was constructed to maximize natural light. The land it is sited on was once part of a larger piece of property that was subsequently subdivided.

Sunnyside Conservatory housed a wide collection of plants that were of special interest to the owners. Concrete paths on the conservatory interior divided the walkways from the planting areas. A concrete driveway provided access from the east side of the property to a parking area at the rear of the structure.

## TREES

Most of the palm trees and pine trees on the grounds of the Conservatory are those originally planted by the Merralls.

There are two significant palm species on the site; the most notable palm is the *jubaea chilensis* (Chilean Wine Palm) across from the west wing of the conservatory. This palm is significant due to its size and age. There are only a handful of these palms of this stature within San Francisco. The common name refers to the past use of the sap from the trunk of this palm to produce a fermented beverage in Chile. The sap is also boiled down into a syrup and sold as *miel de palma*. Collecting the sap requires cutting down the tree, one reason why this species is now uncommon in the wild. The tree is now protected in Chile to prevent indiscriminate harvesting. The tree also produces small round fruits that are about 2–3 centimetres (0.79–1.2 in) in diameter. The fruit has a very hard outer shell and has a whitish meat on the inside.

*Phoenix canariensis* (Canary Island Palms) make up the majority of the palms found in the conservatory garden. Other palms include *butia capitata* (Pindo Palm) and *trachycarpus fortunei* (Chinese Windmill Palm). A significant pine tree on site is the *araucaria heterophylla* (Norfolk Island Pine) located north of the west wing.

Sunnyside Conservatory and the Conservatory of Flowers located at Golden Gate Park are the only public conservatories in San Francisco.

## DO YOU KNOW WHAT A CONSERVATORY IS?

- It is a building used to "conserve" exotic and rare plants and fruits during the winter.
- They were popular in the United Kingdom during the Victorian Era. Europeans imported conservatory designs to America.
- It is believed that W.A. Merralls, who was originally from England, built the Conservatory as a present to his wife.

