

THE NEWS

Travel

Frisco myths debunked from atop tower

Coit Tower offers view

From the Coit Memorial tower set atop San Francisco's Telegraph Hill, you can review three popular myths.

Number one: The Golden Gate Bridge, arching its back over the Bay in the distance is ... well, sort of golden. It is, in fact, painted a dull burnt red called "International Orange."

*By Lois J. Peterson
News Contributor*

Number two: All seagulls are created equal. This is another fallacy.

The seagulls around San Francisco defy all previous experiences of the scruffy, argumentative birds that swoop around the ragged English cliffs of Cornwall or insolently hang out at Granville Island in Vancouver. Here, their Californian counterparts are uniformly well groomed, plump and pristinely white-bellied. They hold still in practised poses for the tourists who circle the Coit Tower in their quest for the best vantage point from which to photograph the city spread below.

Lillie Hitchcock Coit was a woman ahead of her time. Born in 1846, the daughter of a prominent surgeon, she was obsessed with San Francisco's fire department from an early age. Legend has it that, still decked in bridesmaid's regalia, she once left a wedding to

pursue a fire truck on its errand of mercy. Never one to respect convention, Lillie smoked, drank, packed a pistol and, on one occasion, joined an all-male camping expedition without her husband's knowledge.

But the local fire department was her greatest love, and in her early teens, Knickerbocker Company Number 5 adopted her as its mascot. Upon her marriage to financier Howard Coit, she had the number 5 embroidered on her wedding linens.

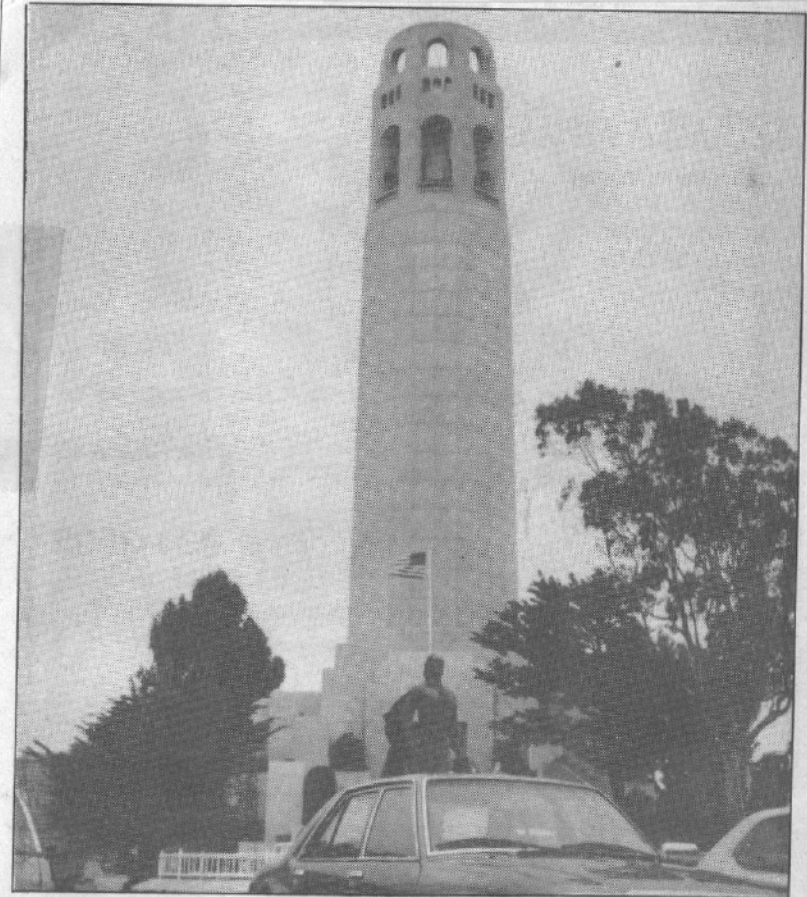
When she died in 1929, Lillie left \$150,000 for the "beautification of the city that I have loved."

Some of that bequest was used to build the 210 foot Coit Memorial Tower, which stands 274 feet above sea level and bears

a strong resemblance to a fire hose nozzle — a resemblance that is said to be purely coincidental. In its circular lobby, bold and brave murals, which are currently being

restored, portray a city at work.

Oh yes, and myth number three: They call it Frisco. Not so. Please give it its full name. Those who live here call it San Francisco.



San Francisco's famous Coit Tower affords visitors a telling view of the City by the Bay.

NEWS Photo by Lois J. Peterson