

Books about San Francisco Recommended by Geographers

- Gunther Barth, *Instant Cities: Urbanization and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver* (1975.) A detailed account of San Francisco's early history.
- Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (1999.) A stirring environmental history enlivened by graft, sex and murder.
- James Brook, Chris Carlsson and Nancy J. Peters (eds.) *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture* (1998.) Essays on San Francisco topics, from labor history, murals and graffiti, and food politics to suicide, La Raza culture and politics, gay men's leather culture, and more.
- Albert S. Broussard, *Black San Francisco: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the West, 1900-1950* (1994.)
- Robert W. Cherny and William Issel, *San Francisco: Presidio, Port, and Pacific Metropolis* (1981.) A short (129 pages) overview of the city's history.
- Tom Cole, *A Short History of San Francisco* (1981.) A good short general history including material on the city's leftist political movements.
- Peter Dallman, *San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum* (2005.)
- Richard E. DeLeon, *Left Coast City: Progressive Politics in San Francisco, 1975-1991* (1992.) A political scientist's first-hand analysis of SF progressive politics.
- Samuel Dickson, *San Francisco Kaleidoscope* and *The Streets of San Francisco* (both 1949.) These classics tell about people and times in old SF -- all the famous personalities (Emperor Norton, etc.) and what SF was like back when.
- Philip L. Fradkin, *The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906* (2005.) A definitive history of a city caught in one the country's greatest urban disasters.
- Greg Gaar, *San Francisco: A Natural History* (2006.)
- Harold Gilliam, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Bay: The Struggle to Save San Francisco Bay* (1969.)
- Brian Godfrey, *Neighborhoods in Transition: The Making of San Francisco's Ethnic and Nonconformist Communities* (1988.) Explores Latin American immigration into the Mission District and gentrification in the Haight-Ashbury.
- Chester Hartman, *City for Sale: The Transformation of San Francisco* (2002.) Detailed account of how San Francisco has been transformed by vertical and horizontal expansion of its downtown.

- William Issel and Robert W. Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932: Politics, Power, and Urban Development* (1986.)
- Helen Jarvis, *Work/Life City Limits: Comparative Household Perspectives* (2005.)
Socio-anthropological case studies of three workers in the gentrifying city.
- Mark Klett, Philip L. Fradkin, Rebecca Solnit, Michael Lundgren and Karin Breuer, *After the Ruins, 1906 and 2006: Rephotographing the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire* (2006.)
- Oscar Lewis, *San Francisco: Mission to Metropolis* (1980.)
- Roger W. Lotchin, *The Bad City in the Good War: San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oakland, and San Diego*, (2003.) Urban California during World War II; challenges the view that WWII was a "second gold rush" for California.
- Malcolm Margolin, *The Ohlone Way: Indian Life in the San Francisco-Monterey Bay Area* (1978.) Stunning descriptions of peoples and places in the Bay Area before Europeans arrived.
- Glenna Matthews, *Silicon valley, Women, and the California Dream: Gender, Class, and Opportunity in the Twentieth Century* (2003.)
- McGovern, Stephen J, *The Politics of Downtown Development: Dynamic Political Cultures in San Francisco and Washington, D.C.* (1998.)
- Amy Meyer, *New Guardians for the Golden Gate: How America Got a Great National Park* (2006.) An insider's account of a grassroots coalition that created Golden Gate National Recreation Area.
- Anne Vernez Moudon, *Built for Change: Neighborhood Architecture in San Francisco*
This work played an important role in the drafting of new planning codes for residential areas of San Francisco.
- Elizabeth Pepin and Lewis Watts, *The Harlem of the West - The San Francisco Fillmore Jazz Era* (2005.) A rich story of San Francisco's multicultural jazz district in the 1940's and 1950's based on archival photos and oral accounts.
- Poaol Polledri, ed. *Visionary San Francisco* (1990.) Interesting collection of history and artists' impressions of San Francisco.
- Christopher Pollock, *San Francisco's Golden Gate Park* (2001.)

Marc Reisner, *A Dangerous Place: California's Unsettling Fate* (2003.) The story of urban sprawl as a prelude to The Big One. Excellent if you want a good scare before visiting, or are interested in urban hazards and infrastructure dependency.

Chris Rhomberg, *No There There: Race, Class and Political Community in Oakland* (2004.) A rich and persuasive account to of urban political conflict in Oakland, 1920-1975.

Rand Richards, *Historic San Francisco, A Concise History and Guide* (1991.) Each section of this book tells about a different part of the city's history and sites and attractions one can visit to learn more about each era.

Hal Rothman, *The New Urban Park: Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Civic Environmentalism* (2003.) A premier environmental historian looks at the new phenomenon of urban parks, focusing on San Francisco's Golden Gate National Recreation Area as a prototype for the twenty-first century.

Mel Scott, *The San Francisco Bay Area: A Metropolis in Perspective* (Second Edition, 1986.) A classic overview of the (mostly) urban evolution of the Bay Area – growth and planning, illustrated with numerous maps and photos.

Robert O Self, *American Babylon: Race and Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (2003.) Traces the dialectic of suburbanization and black power in Oakland.

Randy Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk* (1988.) The first gay political biography by the first openly gay reporter in American's mainstream press.

Stephen Tobriner. *Bracing for Disaster: Earthquake-resistant Architecture and Engineering in San Francisco, 1838-1933* (2006.) An architectural historian's analysis of the ways that Bay area architects and structural engineers have learned from earthquakes, and have built much safer buildings and infrastructure as a result. Challenges some of Fradkin's conclusions regarding the topic.

Jules Tygiel, *Workingmen in San Francisco, 1880-1901* (1992.)

James E. Vance. *Geography and Urban Evolution in the San Francisco Bay Area* (1964.) Early critical exposition on the noncentric city.

Ethan Watters, *Urban Tribes* (2004.) This droll sociological examination of the pleasures of "yet to be marrieds" and their rotating networks of friends and acquaintances evokes the good times of San Francisco's dot-com boom.

Simon Winchester, *A Crack in the Edge of the World: America and the Great California Earthquake of 1906* (2005.) A magnificent story about San Francisco's biggest quake and its scientific, social and political repercussions.

Charles Wollenberg, *Golden Gate Metropolis: Perspectives in Bay Area History* (1985.)
Authoritative, readable and compact.

Bill Yenne, *San Francisco Then and Now* (1998.) Archival photos, rephotography and succinct captions.

Terence Young, *Building San Francisco's Parks, 1850-1930* (2004.) Covers the key individuals, political intricacies and physical difficulties in establishing San Francisco's park system. Examines how landscapes are altered, land use conflicts persist, and changing expectations of nature impact park management.

Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (1995.)

Guidebooks Recommended by Geographers

Adah Bakalinsky, *Stairway Walks in San Francisco* (1995.)

California Coastal Conservancy, *San Francisco Bay Shoreline Guide* (1995.)
Comprehensive and full of maps, this is a wonderfully complete guide to the Bay Area. To quote Robin Williams, "All that's missing are the smells."

Liz Gans, *Walking San Francisco* (1999.)

Jerry & Janine Sprout, *Golden Gate Trailblazer* (2001.) Where to walk, hike and bike in San Francisco & Marin County.

Ed Anderson and Patricia Unterman, *Patricia Unterman's San Francisco Food Lover's Guide* (Fourth edition, 2005.) The Bible for SF dining and gourmet shopping, organized by neighborhoods, with great maps by an SF geographer.

Wiley, Peter Booth *National Trust Guide: San Francisco* (2000.) Excellent summary history of S.F. and in-depth discussion of its architecture, organized by neighborhood. Great for self-guided walking tours.

Geographers' Favorite Books set in San Francisco and the Bay Area

Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia* (1975.) Utopian novel that embodies the Bay Area's environmentalist and feminist leanings.

Chritra Banerjee Divakaruni, *Mistress of Spices* (1997.) A dream-like novel written that interlaces different geographies, times, and sets of cultural expectations. Mostly set in Oakland.

Dave Eggers, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2001.) “Pure fiction, but it took me back to the Bay Area and Berkeley like no other has,” says an expat.

Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon* (1930.)

David Hunt, *Magician's Tale* (1999.) Beautifully designed thriller about perception and perversity; a color blind photographer roams the streets in search of truth and justice.

Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans* (1989.) An autobiographical hipster novel featuring “mean streets, cheap bars, late evenings and sad mornings.”

Gus Lee, *China Boy* (1992.) A coming of age story set in San Francisco in the 1950s.

Jack London, *Valley of the Moon* (1913.) A full Northern California tour, circa 1910, that will delight historical geographers.

Armistead Maupin, *Tales of the City* (1989.) Serialized stories about the residents of SF's Barbary Lane in the 1970s.

Bharati Mukherjee, *Leave It to Me* (1997.) An adopted young woman comes to San Francisco and lives in her Toyota Corolla parked in the Haight, searching for her biological parents.

Frank Norris, *McTeague* (1899.) White immigrant life, blue collar hard times, and greed in 19th century SF, Oakland, the Sierra and Death Valley.

Frank Norris, *The Octopus:: A Story of California* (1901.) Muckraking story of the Southern Pacific Railroad's role in California's Central Valley landscape and economy, in small (but important) part set in San Francisco.

George R. Stewart, *Earth Abides* (1949.) A post-apocalyptic classic set in San Francisco.

Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (1992.) In 1949, four Chinese women – recent immigrants to San Francisco – begin meeting to eat dim sum, play mahjong, and talk.

Sean Wilsey, *Oh the Glory of It All* (2005.) A recent memoir about growing up in the schizophrenic world of San Francisco high society. Not academic, but very well written and presents a more recent picture of San Francisco than McTeague.

Have titles to add? Please email in the above format to <nancyw@sfsu.edu>