

Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

HEARING DATE JUNE 26, 2017

RUSSIAN HILL BOOKSTORE

<i>Application No.:</i>	LBR-2016-17-078
<i>Business Name:</i>	Russian Hill Bookstore
<i>Business Address:</i>	2162 Polk Street
<i>District:</i>	District 3
<i>Applicant:</i>	Carol Spencer, Owner/Sole Proprietor
<i>Nomination Date:</i>	March 9, 2017
<i>Nominated By:</i>	Supervisor Aaron Peskin
<i>Staff Contact:</i>	Richard Kurylo legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Russian Hill Bookstore is a new and used bookstore located in San Francisco's Russian Hill neighborhood. Founded by Carol Spencer, who remains the owner/operator of the business, Russian Hill Bookstore was the outgrowth of Spencer's first store, Sunset Bookstore, which she ran from 1974 to 2001. When Russian Hill Bookstore opened its doors in 1993, it was one of many bookstores to be found along the corridor. Since 2000, however, over 10 bookstores have closed, leaving Russian Hill Bookstore as the only one left on the street. As one of only a handful of independently-owned used bookstores in the city's northern quadrant, Russian Hill Bookstore has become a popular destination for booklovers near and far.

As described in its application, the store is "an inventory of curated and hand-picked used books bought from and sold to the people who live in the neighborhood and the greater San Francisco area." Its collection reflects the interests and tastes of the neighborhood, as the store purchases its used books from those who live in the area. The store specializes in general and rare used books, new books in classics and best-sellers, and children's books and toys, as well as an expansive collection of note cards, carrying over 500 individual lines mostly created by small, local artists and printers. In addition, the store has procured a large number of rare used books from private libraries. Other genres commonly found at the store include fiction, history, science, philosophy, religion, art, freemasonry, metaphysics and occult. The local independent bookstore has been featured in countless blogs written by booklovers who have described Russian Hill Bookstore as the "quintessential American used bookshop," a "vital part of the community," and the "epitome of the classic used bookstore."

Russian Hill Bookstore supports community events and activities including those organized by the Russian Hill Neighborhood Association and functions as a community gathering space through its book releases and game board nights. Russian Hill Bookstore is in the midst of several major transitions. It recently changed locations as a planned seismic retrofit of the building at 2234 Polk Street was eminent as was the expiration of the store's lease to the space. The business was able to secure a new 10-year lease beginning May 1, 2017, for a space one block away on Polk Street, although rent is significantly higher at the new location. In addition, the business' founder, Carol Spencer, is retiring in June 2017. Spencer will leave the business to two of her long-time employees and apprentices, Benjamin Bellouin and Jessica Tsang.



CRITERION 1: Has the applicant operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

Yes, the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

2225 Irving Street from 1974 to 1975 (1 year)
2161 Irving Street from 1975 to 2001 (26 years)
2230-2234 Polk Street from 1993 to 2017 (24 years)
2162 Polk Street from 2017 to Present (0 years)

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

Yes, the applicant has contributed to the Russian Hill neighborhood's history and identity.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- Russian Hill Bookstore, as a new and used neighborhood bookstore, is associated with the literary arts.
- Russian Hill Bookstore has contributed to the history and identity of San Francisco and the Russian Hill neighborhood by serving as a community gathering spot and destination for booklovers. Its selection of rare, used, and children's books, as well as its expansive collection of hand-crafted notecards add to its novelty as a unique, neighborhood bookstore.
- The property at 2162 Polk Street is considered a "Category B Property" signifying that it is age eligible but has not yet been evaluated for historical significance. Further evaluation is needed to determine if the building or the business is associated with significant persons or events.
- The business has been cited in the following publications:
 - Prentice Hall, 4/1/1981, Book Scouting: How to Turn Your Love for Books into Profit, by Barbara Johnson (book).
 - SF Gate, 11/3/2014, "Top 20 Bay Area independent bookstores," by Seung Y. Lee.
 - The Bold Italic, 5/7/2014, "Why I Love Living in Russian Hill," by Melissa Chandler.
 - SF Gate, 7/10/2015, "Russian Hill: A hill I call my home," by Julie Balise.
 - AbeBooks.com, 9/12/2015, "San Francisco's Russian Hill Bookstore – Loved by Locals and Tourists," by Richard Davies.
 - AbeBooks.com, 9/14/2011, "AbeBooks Visits Three San Francisco Bookstores" (video uploaded on YouTube).
 - 3/23/2016, "Voices of Polk Street" (video uploaded on YouTube).

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

Yes, Russian Hill Bookstore is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define its role as a neighborhood bookstore offering new and used books, stationary, and toys.





SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
EDWIN M. LEE, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Russian Hill Bookstore qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Russian Hill location.
- Function as a bookstore selling new and used books.
- Business model that includes an inventory of curated and hand-picked used books bought and sold to the people who live in the neighborhood.
- Offering of general used books, new books in classics and best-sellers, antiquarian and rare books, comics, children's books and toys.
- Offering of stationary, cards, postcards and notecards created by local artists and printers.
- Tall pine bookshelves that line the wall from floor to ceiling.
- Ladders and library stools inside the store.
- Classic discount book bin outside of the store.
- Participation in community events.

CORE PHYSICAL FEATURE OR TRADITION THAT DEFINES THE BUSINESS

Following is the core physical feature or tradition that defines the business that would be required for maintenance of the business on the Legacy Business Registry.

- Retail book sales.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Russian Hill Bookstore currently located at 2162 Polk Street in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo, Manager
Legacy Business Program



Small Business Commission Draft Resolution

HEARING DATE JUNE 26, 2017

RUSSIAN HILL BOOKSTORE

LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY RESOLUTION NO. _____

<i>Application No.:</i>	LBR-2016-17-078
<i>Business Name:</i>	Russian Hill Bookstore
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<i>District:</i>	District 3
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<i>Nomination Date:</i>	March 9, 2017
<i>Nominated By:</i>	Supervisor Aaron Peskin
<i>Staff Contact:</i>	Richard Kurylo legacybusiness@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS APPROVING THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY APPLICATION FOR RUSSIAN HILL BOOKSTORE, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 2162 POLK STREET.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; or

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for more than 20 years but less than 30 years, has had no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years, has significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood or community and, if not included in the Registry, faces a significant risk of displacement; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on June 26, 2017, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore





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OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

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OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

BE IT RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission hereby includes Russian Hill Bookstore in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Russian Hill Bookstore:

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Russian Hill location.
- Function as a bookstore selling new and used books.
- Business model that includes an inventory of curated and hand-picked used books bought and sold to the people who live in the neighborhood.
- Offering of general used books, new books in classics and best-sellers, antiquarian and rare books, comics, children's books and toys.
- Offering of stationary, cards, postcards and notecards created by local artists and printers.
- Tall pine bookshelves that line the wall from floor to ceiling.
- Ladders and library stools inside the store.
- Classic discount book bin outside of the store.
- Participation in community events.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission requires maintenance of the below listed core physical feature or tradition to maintain Russian Hill Bookstore on the Legacy Business Registry:

- Retail book sales.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on June 26, 2017.

Regina Dick-Endrizzi
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –





SAN FRANCISCO

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Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2016-17-078
Business Name: Russian Hill Bookstore
Business Address: 2162 Polk Street
District: District 3
Applicant: Carol Spencer, Owner/Sole Proprietor
Nomination Date: March 9, 2017
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin

CRITERION 1: Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years? ☒ Yes ☐ No

2225 Irving Street from 1974 to 1975 (1 year)
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2230-2234 Polk Street from 1993 to 2017 (24 years)
2162 Polk Street from 2017 to Present (0 years)

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community? ☒ Yes ☐ No

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms? ☒ Yes ☐ No

NOTES: In 1974, Sunset Bookstore opened at 2225 Irving Street. In 1993, Russian Hill Bookstore opened at 2234 Polk Street in partnership with Sunset Bookstore. The two stores were consolidated as one business called Russian Hill Bookstore under the sole proprietorship of Carol Spencer upon Russian Hill Bookstore's opening in 1993. Russian Hill's founding year is therefore 1974 as demonstrated by the Consolidated Seller's Permit in their Legacy Business Registry application.

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: May 10, 2017

Richard Kurylo
Manager, Legacy Business Program



Member, Board of Supervisors
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

AARON PESKIN

佩斯金 市參事

March 9, 2017

Director Regina Dick-Endrizzi
San Francisco Office of Small Business
City Hall, Room 110
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Director Dick-Endrizzi:

I am writing to nominate Russian Hill Bookstore for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Russian Hill Bookstore has provided books, cards and toys to San Francisco residents and visitors for over two decades. The owner, Carol Spencer, is a veteran in the book business with over 40 years in the industry. She opened her first shop, Sunset Bookstore, in 1974. Over the course of the next couple of decades it evolved into the Russian Hill Bookstore. The store has been at its present location since 1993. Equipped with a knowledgeable and service-oriented staff, Russian Hill Bookstore continues to be a destination stop for both locals and tourists. Located on upper Polk Street, Russian Hill Bookstore contributes to the communal atmosphere its neighbors have come to know and love.

Russian Hill Bookstore would benefit greatly from being listed on the Legacy Business Registry, and I am delighted to nominate it for inclusion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Aaron Peskin".

Aaron Peskin

Section One:

Business / Applicant Information. Provide the following information:

- The name, mailing address, and other contact information of the business;
- The name of the person who owns the business. For businesses with multiple owners, identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business;
- The name, title, and contact information of the applicant;
- The business's San Francisco Business Account Number and entity number with the Secretary of State, if applicable.

NAME OF BUSINESS:		
RUSSIAN HILL BOOKSTORE		
BUSINESS OWNER(S) (identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business)		
CAROL SPENCER		
CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:	TELEPHONE:	
2230-2234 POLK ST.	(415) 929-0997	
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94109	EMAIL:	
	rsshllb@pacbell.net	
WEBSITE:	FACEBOOK PAGE:	YELP PAGE
WWW.RUSSIANHILLBOOKSTORE.COM	FACEBOOK / RUSSIAN-HILL-BOOKSTORE	RUSSIAN HILL BOOKSTORE

APPLICANT'S NAME	
CAROL SPENCER	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Same as Business
APPLICANT'S TITLE	
OWNER - SOLE PROPRIETOR	
APPLICANT'S ADDRESS:	TELEPHONE:
2020 14th AVE.	(415) 305-5359
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94114	EMAIL:
	BKSUNSET@PACBELL.NET

SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:	SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (if applicable):
0066338	

OFFICIAL USE: Completed by OSB Staff	
NAME OF NOMINATOR:	DATE OF NOMINATION:

Section Two:

Business Location(s).

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business. If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS:	ZIP CODE:	START DATE OF BUSINESS
2225 IRVING ST.	94122	9/13/1974
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?	DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATON	
<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	9/13/1974 - 1975	

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
2161 IRVING ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA	94122	Start: 1975 End: 7/31/2001

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
2230-2234 POLK ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA	94109	Start: 1993 End: PRESENT 2017

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
2162 POLK ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA		Start: 2017 End: PRESENT

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start:
		End:

Section Three:

Disclosure Statement.

San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified and a business deemed not current in with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for the Business Assistance Grant.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- ☒ I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- ☒ I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- ☒ I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- ☒ I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- ☒ I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- ☒ I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- ☒ I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

CAROL Spencer 4/26/17 Carol
Name (Print): Date: Signature:

RUSSIAN HILL BOOKSTORE

Section 4: Written Historical Narrative

CRITERION 1

a. Provide a short history of the business from the date the business opened in San Francisco to the present day, including the ownership history. For businesses with multiple locations, include the history of the original location in San Francisco (including whether it was the business's founding and or headquartered location) and the opening dates and locations of all other locations.

On September 13, 1974, Sunset Bookstore opened at 2225 Irving Street at 23rd Avenue as a general used bookstore serving the Sunset District west of 19th Avenue. In 1993, as part of a plan to expand the neighborhood used bookstore model, Russian Hill Bookstore was opened at 2234 Polk Street in partnership with Sunset Bookstore. The two stores were consolidated as one business under the sole proprietorship of Carol Spencer upon Russian Hill Bookstore's opening in 1993.

The bookshops operated in their two neighborhoods concurrently until mid-2001, when Sunset Bookstore was closed and its inventory of used books and merchandise, as well as fixtures and staff, were merged with that of Russian Hill Bookstore, which continues to serve the Russian Hill/Polk Street neighborhood as the last remaining bookstore, new or used, in the area. The neighborhood used bookstore under Carol Spencer has been in continual operation for the past 42 years. Expectations are for continued operation into the future under the same neighborhood used bookstore model.

When Russian Hill was chosen as the second location for the neighborhood used bookstore by Carol Spencer in 1993, the corridor was brimming with bookstores: the classic/antiquarian Acorn Books, the famous occult and spiritual bookshop Fields Bookstore, Rooks and Beckords, a primarily paperback fiction store, a cookbook/coffee table discount store, and a number of other small bookshops. Today, Russian Hill Bookstore is the only bookstore remaining on Polk Street and one of the only used bookstores left in the greater north end of San Francisco. The closest bookstores are Books Inc. in the Opera Plaza and in the Marina District, City Lights in North Beach, and the San Francisco Public Library's used bookshop Reader's Bookstore. With the loss of over 10 bookstores in the Polk corridor since 2000, Russian Hill Bookstore is now the only used bookstore servicing Polk Gulch, Pacific Heights, Nob Hill, Russian Hill, Fisherman's Wharf, North Beach, Cow Hollow, and Telegraph Hill.

With rental prices for retail spaces in San Francisco continuing to rise, it has become impossible for an independent used bookstore to open from scratch, without the built-up inventory, recognition, and contacts accumulated over 42 years of business.

Russian Hill Bookstore's lease ends at its original 2234 Polk Street location in May of 2018, at which point the landlord will conduct a planned retrofit of the space, during which the shop will be unable to operate. Therefore, finding a new home for the bookstore is imperative. A new location one block from Russian Hill Bookstore's current location, at 2162 Polk Street, recently became available, and has been secured as the new location for Russian Hill Bookstore with a new 10 year lease to begin May 1, 2017. Our current landlord has been generous in his

flexibility of our lease-end date in order to facilitate the smoothest transition possible. With the new lease comes a significant increase in rent. A used bookstore in San Francisco operates on the slimmest of margins. Inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry will provide considerable assistance, enabling Russian Hill Bookstore to remain in business for many years to come.

b. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for more than six months?

The business has not ceased operations for more than six months.

c. Is the business a family-owned business? If so, give the generational history of the business.

Carol Spencer is the original owner and sole proprietor of Russian Hill Bookstore.

d. Describe the ownership history when the business ownership is not the original owner or a family-owned business.

Russian Hill Bookstore is currently in a state of change. The original owner and sole proprietor since the business's inception in 1974, Carol Spencer, will retire in June 2017. Ms. Spencer will sell the business to two dedicated and tenured employees. With nearly 20 years of experience working at Russian Hill Bookstore between them, Benjamin Bellouin and Jessica Tsang, apprentices of Ms. Spencer, will uphold the legacy traditions instilled within Russian Hill Bookstore over the past 42 years. In a time when so many old bookshops are closing with the retirement of their long-time owners, it is rare to have successors familiar with the trade willing to extend the life of the business of a bookstore, with very limited financial gains.

e. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years, the applicant will need to provide documentation of the existence of the business prior to current ownership to verify it has been in operation for 30+ years. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.

Not applicable.

f. Note any other special features of the business location, such as, if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.

The present location at 2234 Polk Street was built in 1913 in the Roman-Renaissance Revival Style. The building is considered a "Category B Building" by the Planning Department.

The new location at 2162 Polk Street is also considered a "Category B Building" by the Planning Department.

CRITERION 2

a. Describe the business's contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community or San Francisco.

Every used bookstore is unique. Through the years, the individual book collection and atmosphere of a particular shop naturally takes on the personality of its neighborhood. It's difficult not to picture Russian Hill Bookstore when thinking of the Russian Hill neighborhood. In

many respects, with our focus on children's titles, art books and note cards, we have come to embody what it means to live in Russian Hill.

Russian Hill Bookstore has a reputation for carrying a large collection of distinctive and unusual book titles that most used bookstores have a tendency not to buy due to their slow turnover.

Over the years, we have developed a particular standing within the trade for our book collections in metaphysics/occult, Freemasonry, pulp paperbacks and art. We have numerous clients throughout the world who procure rare titles from two particular personal libraries that we acquired some years ago, whose collections are still being processed and placed on our shelves: the Orval Graves collection and the Henry C. Clausen collection. Orval Graves was a prominent and influential Rosicrucian and California Freemason based in the Bay Area. Henry C. Clausen was a lawyer, a former Assistant U.S. Attorney from San Francisco and the author of the Clausen Report, an 800-page report on the Army Board's Pearl Harbor investigation.

Two other personal libraries that we purchased recently from notable local personalities were from Doris Muscatine and Alan W. Jones. Doris Muscatine was a local author and pioneering chronicler of California's wine and food culture. Her books, which won many awards, include the classic "A Cook's Tour of San Francisco." Alan W. Jones was the Dean of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco from 1985 to 2009. A good portion of the spirituality and Christianity sections in our shop are currently stocked with titles from Alan Jones' personal collection."

b. Is the business (or has been) associated with significant events in the neighborhood, the city, or the business industry?

Over the years, Russian Hill Bookstore has made an effort to participate in community events when possible. Some recent events include the Russian Hill Neighborhood Association's Safety Fair, which was intended as a family friendly event with the participation of both the San Francisco Fire Department and San Francisco Police Department, and a book-release event for Veranda Magazine's latest title, *Veranda the Romance of Flowers*, where we worked directly with the publisher to provide copies for the event. We also worked closely with the wonderful Children's Librarian at the North Beach Branch of the Public Library, the Russian Hill Neighbor's Association, Jennifer Chambliss Bertman, who is a local and New York Times Best Selling Children's Book author, to host an author talk.

Has the business ever been referenced in an historical context? Such as in a business trade publication, media, or historical documents?

Owner Carol Spencer is referenced and cited in the trade publication "Book Scouting: How to Turn Your Love for Books into Profit" by Barbara L. Johnson, published by Prentice-Hall in 1981. The fictional bookstore, Hollister's, in Jennifer Chambliss Bertman's children's book series "The Book Scavenger," is based solely on Russian Hill Bookstore. Our bookshop was one of the first bookstores to be highlighted on the used book trade website ABE.com in their 2016 feature of independent used bookstores from around the world.

d. Is the business associated with a significant or historical person?

Local author Herbert Gold is a regular customer of ours, and we have visited his apartment in Russian Hill on several occasions to buy books from his personal library to resell at our shop. A few years ago, actor David Strathairn visited our shop searching for books on how to raise

llamas. New York Times bestselling children's book author Jennifer Chambliss Bertman, author of the San Francisco based series "The Book Scavenger," was a regular customer of ours, and within her Scavenger series the bookshop, Hollister's, which plays a pivotal role in the story's narrative, was based on Russian Hill Bookstore. Our shelves are populated with rare titles from the book collections purchased from the libraries of influential local personalities Orval Graves, Henry C. Clausen and Carl Djerassi. Adah Bakalinsky, author of the popular local guidebook "Stairway Walks in San Francisco," is another regular customer. Adah comes in often to sign a stack of her books that we keep near the counter, and to purchase the occasional greeting card.

e. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?

Used books are purchased from the people of San Francisco who bring them in to sell over the counter, or make an appointment for a house call. Russian Hill Bookstore is one of the few bookstores left that still make house calls. It is a necessary service for the elderly, as well as a service toward the preservation of the libraries and book collections of San Francisco's citizens.

It is these books and libraries that we are buying today, and those books collected over the past 42 years of business in San Francisco (many of which still line our shelves), that embody Russian Hill Bookstore's strongest legacy to the city. These books are the intellectual ashes of their previous owners, and by extension the intellectual ashes of San Francisco itself. These ashes rest at Russian Hill Bookstore, waiting to be picked up and scattered among a new generation.

f. Provide a description of the community the business serves.

Bookstores have always been a part of the intellectual infrastructure of a community. They are a community center and gathering place for its neighbors and tourists. Every neighborhood should have at least one independent bookstore. Over the past year not a day has gone by without numerous people expressing their concern and support for the future of Russian Hill Bookstore. We provide books and staff for special events organized by the Russian Hill Neighbors Association, and organize board game nights for the community. In a recently released book for young readers titled "The Book Scavenger" by Jennifer Chambliss Bertman, the used bookstore in San Francisco frequented by the main characters is based on Russian Hill Bookstore. We are a destination spot for book lovers and note card buyers, generating business for the many restaurants and bars that share our neighborhood. We have watched children grow up and bring their own children into our store. The bookshop has even hosted a wedding for a couple who met between our shelves. In many respects, we believe that Russian Hill Bookstore is the heart of the greater Polk/Russian Hill/Nob Hill area, reminding San Franciscans and tourists of what San Francisco once was, and what it can still be.

g. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/structure/site/object/interior?

The present location at 2234 Polk Street was built in 1913 in the Roman-Renaissance Revival Style. This building, as well as the new location at 2162 Polk Street, is considered a "Category B Building" by the Planning Department.

h. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?

Russian Hill Bookstore is the only bookstore remaining on Polk Street and one of the only used bookstores left in the greater north end of San Francisco. As used bookstores are quickly becoming a relic of the past, those that remain increasingly become destination spots for tourists and locals. The loss of Russian Hill Bookstore would negatively affect the other small businesses and restaurants in the neighborhood should those book seeking tourists no longer have a point of reference found in Russian Hill to dictate their journey.

With our collection of note cards, journals, board games, children's toys, stationary, calendars, gift wrap, etc., we have become a reliable staple for the community as a one-stop shop for gifts and everyday items. There is no other local business that offers the same variety, and Russian Hill Bookstore's closure would force local residents to travel outside of their neighborhood to procure everyday necessities.

CRITERION 3

a. Describe the business and the essential features that define its character.

Like its mother store in the Sunset, Russian Hill Bookstore was opened with the intention to blend seamlessly into its neighborhood. The business model for each location was the same: an inventory of curated and hand-picked used books bought from and sold to the people who live in the neighborhood, and the greater San Francisco area. The shop is continuously modified to meet the needs of its neighbors, and to act as a gathering place for the exchange of ideas, small business, and that particular nostalgia one feels when entering a used bookstore. Russian Hill Bookstore, with its general used books, new books in classics and best-sellers, antiquarian and rare books, children's books and toys, the largest and most varied note card collection in the Bay Area, calendars, board games, journals, gift wrap, etc., is the type of general store that meets the daily needs of the community, but which is rapidly becoming extinct.

Russian Hill Bookstore is also well known for having the largest, most varied and unique collection of notecards in the Bay Area. Notecards were first introduced at Sunset Bookstore, where at the time they were exclusively blank cards and postcards by classic photographers and illustrators. At Russian Hill, the notecard selection significantly expanded. We carry over 500 individual card lines, the majority of which are from small, local artists and printers, providing a market space for the city's small note card and merchandise businesses. Our theory is that there is a close relationship between the recorded thoughts found in the books that line our shelves, and the potential thoughts that will fill our blank notecards. Russian Hill Bookstore is an interactive store committed to the written word, whether it be printed between the covers of books or hand-written by the community.

b. How does the business demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the historical traditions that define the business, and which of these traditions should not be changed in order to retain the businesses historical character? (e.g., business model, goods and services, craft, culinary, or art forms)

As it has always been, and as it will be at its new location, Russian Hill Bookstore remains that classic and vintage used bookstore that an older generation once took for granted, but that has now become an uncommon beacon of nostalgia. It is designed to look and operate the same as its 1970s mother store, Sunset Bookstore. Tall pine bookshelves line the walls nine feet high,

with the top shelves holding antique sets and mammoth bindings. Ladders and library stools are scattered around the store, and the classic discount book bin rests out front. Rare and antique editions are kept in locked cabinets or tucked safely behind the front counter. The original stocking of spine out single copy books is done, as the shelves hold a maximum number of titles, similar to old library stacks. Comic books, vintage sheet music, old black-and-white photographs, cookbooks, genre fiction, history, science, philosophy, religion, one of the largest art book collections in the Bay Area, a large collection of books on Freemasonry, metaphysics and occult, etc. all can be found at Russian Hill Bookstore.

How has the business demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the special physical features that define the business? Describe any special exterior and interior physical characteristics of the space occupied by the business (e.g. signage, murals, architectural details, neon signs, etc.).

We continue to use the same tall oak bookshelves that have been with Russian Hill Bookstore since its inception in 1993, with many of the fixtures and shelves coming over from Sunset Bookstore upon that shop's closing, and dating back to 1974 – including our discount book bin that rests outside the shop. The new location at 2162 Polk occupies a space with a beautifully exposed, vaulted wooden beam ceiling. At our new location, we plan to have a mural painted on our book bin and one interior wall, to be produced by several local artists.

d. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30years; the applicant will need to provide documentation that demonstrates the current owner has maintained the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.

Not applicable.

Documentation to Support Claims of Historical Narrative

Bookstore Map Legend

1. Alexander Book Company – 50 2nd St.

Expansive bookstore, sells exclusively new books.

2. Argonaut Vintage Books – 786 Sutter St.

Bookstore dedicated to Western American history, featuring rare photos, maps & reference volumes.
Sells Antiquarian used books.

3. Books Inc. - 2251 Chestnut St.

Local chain bookstore, sells exclusively new books and sidelines.

4. Books Inc. - 601 Van Ness Ave

Local chain bookstore, sells exclusively new books and sidelines.

5. Book Passage – Ferry Building Marketplace

Bookstore featuring new copies of books, also hosts many community events and classes.

6. Booksmith – 1644 Haight St.

Bookstore and event space, carries exclusively new copies.

7. Browser Books – 2195 Fillmore St.

Bookshop, sells new copies only, carries a broad selections of literary genres.

8. Chronicle Books – 165 4th Ave in the Metreon

Modern Bookstore, sells only new books published by Chronicle Books.

9. Chronicle Books – 1846 Union St.

Modern Bookstore, sells only new books published by Chronicle Books.

10. City Lights Bookstore – 261 Columbus Ave

Historic Bookstore, sells exclusively new books, specializes in Beat-era roots, poetry & mainstream books.

11. Forest Books – 1748 Buchanan St.

Bookshop selling new & used books spanning modern fiction, world literature & Eastern religions.

12. The Green Apple Bookstore – 506 Clement St.

Expansive bookstore carrying a wide selection of literary genres, and music. Sells both new and used copies.

13. Kayo Books – 814 Post St.

By appointment only. Sells vintage pulp fiction & nonfiction, including rare & out-of-print titles.

14. Kinokuniya Bookstore – 1581 Webster St.

Japanese-based retailer known for its collection of Asian books & magazines, plus DVDs & stationery.
Sells exclusively new copies.

15. Louie Bros Bookstore - 54 Washington St.

Chinese language book and magazine store, carries new copies only.

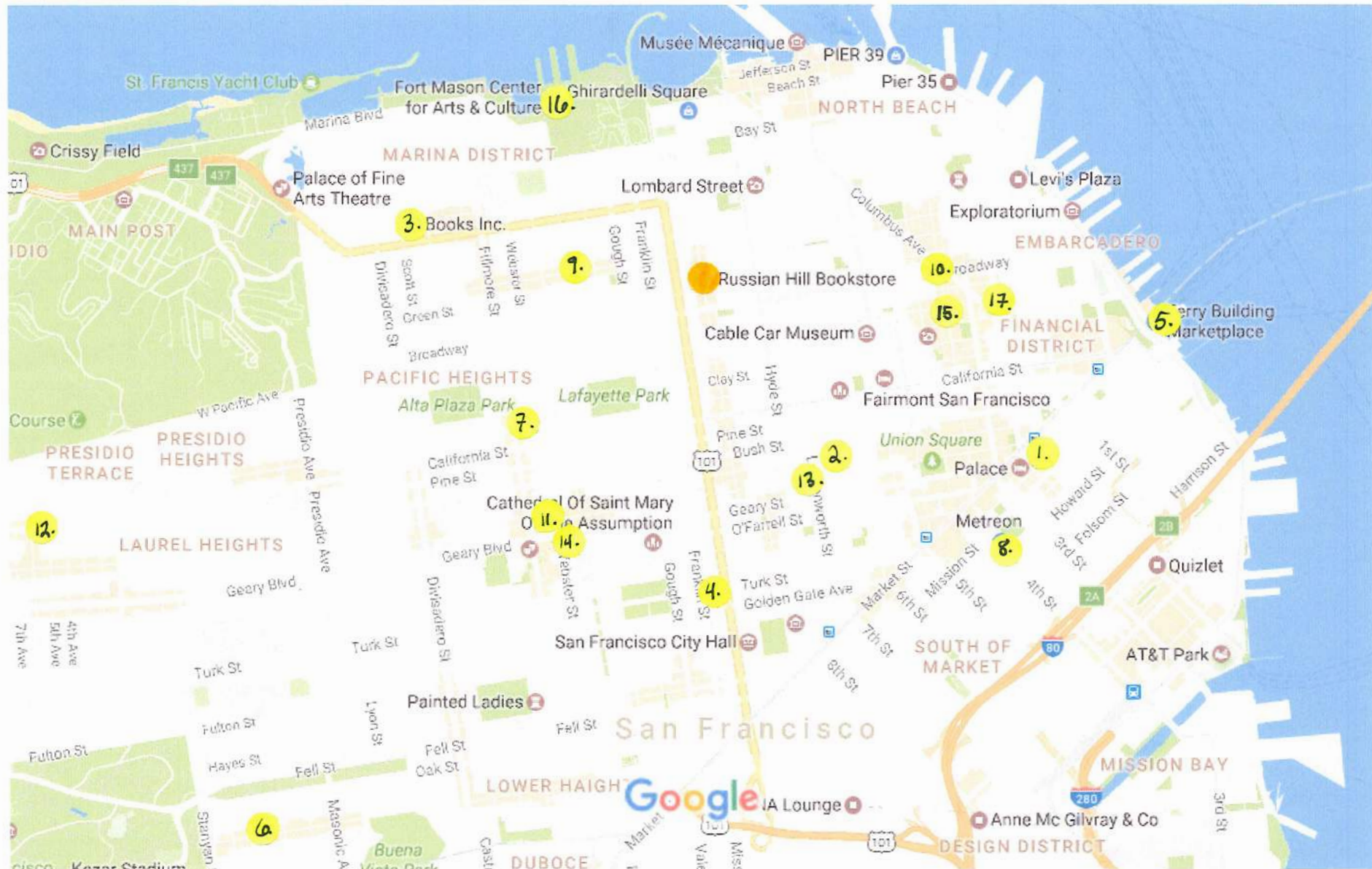
16. Reader's Bookstore - Landmark Building C. Fort Mason Center

Non-Profit Used Bookstore run by the Friends of the San Francisco Public Library.

17. William Stout Architectural Books - 804 Montgomery St

Specialty Bookstore stocking predominately new copies of architecture and design books.

Google Maps All Bookstores



Used Bookstore Map Legend

1. Argonaut Vintage Books – 786 Sutter St.

Bookstore dedicated to Western American history, featuring rare photos, maps & reference volumes.
Sells Antiquarian used books.

2. Forest Books – 1748 Buchanan St.

Bookshop selling new & used books spanning modern fiction, world literature & Eastern religions.

3. The Green Apple Bookstore – 506 Clement St.

Expansive bookstore carrying a wide selection of literary genres, and music. Sells both new and used copies.

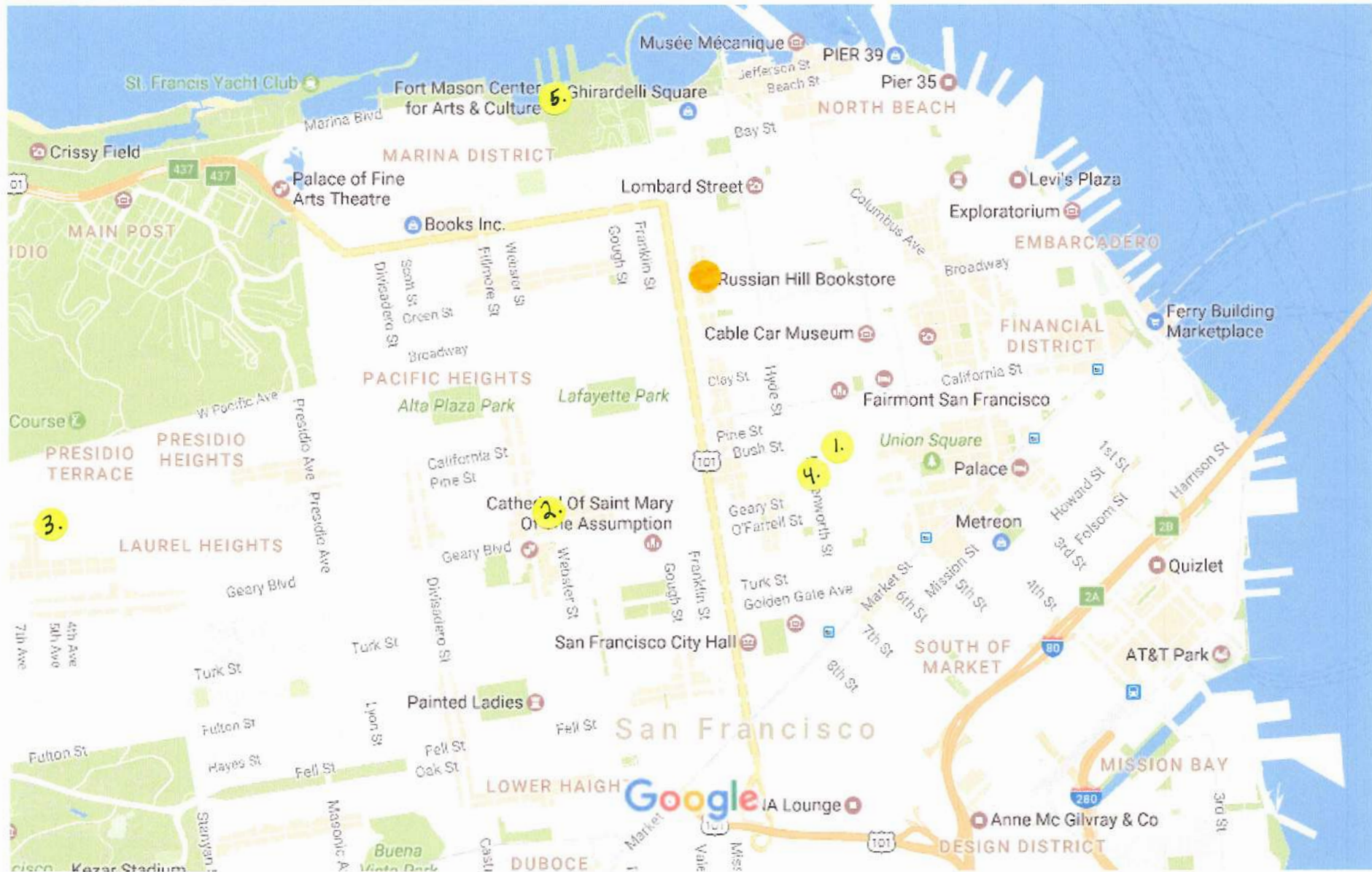
4. Kayo Books – 814 Post St.

By appointment only. Sells vintage pulp fiction & nonfiction, including rare & out-of-print titles.

5. Reader's Bookstore - Landmark Building C. Fort Mason Center

Non-Profit Used Bookstore run by the Friends of the San Francisco Public Library

Google Maps Used Bookstores



San Francisco Neighborhood Map



Above map demonstrates the different neighborhood boundaries of the North Eastern portion of San Francisco. The black stars on the map denote the used bookshops mentioned in the previous map as follows:

- ★ Argonaut Vintage Books at 786 Sutter St.
- ★ Forest Books at 1748 Buchanan St.
- ★ Kayo Books at 814 Post St.
- ★ Reader's Bookstore at Fort Mason Center
- ★ Russian Hill Bookstore at 2234 Polk St.

Section Five:

Supplemental Historical Documents

- **Historic Legal Documents**
- **Photographs**
- **Ephemera & Memorabilia**

CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

CONSOLIDATED SELLER'S PERMIT



CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT NUMBER

9/1/1974 SR X BH 19-635331

RUSSIAN HILL BOOKSTORE
CAROL A. SPENCER
2234 POLK STREET
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94109

THIS PERMIT DOES NOT

AUTHORIZE RETAIL SALES

IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED PURSUANT TO RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE BOARD
TO FILE CONSOLIDATED SALES AND USE TAX RETURNS UNDER THE ABOVE
CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT NUMBER.

THIS PERMIT IS VALID UNTIL REVOKED OR CANCELED BUT IS NOT TRANSFERABLE. IF YOU SELL YOUR BUSINESS,
OR DROP OUT OF A PARTNERSHIP, NOTIFY US OR YOU COULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SALES AND USE TAXES
OWED BY THE NEW OPERATOR OF THE BUSINESS.

FOR GENERAL TAX QUESTIONS PLEASE TELEPHONE OUR INFORMATION CENTER AT 1-800-400-7115.

BOE-442-M REV. 10 (6-00)

A MESSAGE TO OUR NEW PERMIT HOLDER

As a seller, you have rights and responsibilities under the Sales and Use Tax Law. In order to assist you in your endeavor and to better understand the law, we offer the following sources of help:

- Visiting our website at www.boe.ca.gov
- Visiting a district office
- Attending a Basic Sales and Use Tax Law Class offered at one of our district offices
- Sending your questions in writing to any one of our offices
- Calling our toll-free Information Center at 800-400-7115

As a seller, you have the right to issue resale certificates for merchandise that you intend to resell. Conversely, you have the responsibility of not misusing resale certificates. While the sales tax is imposed upon the retailer;

- You have the right to seek reimbursement of the tax from your customer
- You are responsible for filing and paying your sales and use tax returns timely
- You have the right to be treated in a fair and equitable manner by the employees of the Board
- You are responsible for following the regulations set forth by the Board

As a seller, you are expected to maintain the normal books and records of a prudent businessperson. You are required to maintain these books and records for no less than four years, and make them available for inspection by a Board representative when requested. You are also expected to notify us if you are buying, selling, adding a location, or discontinuing your business, adding or dropping a partner, officer, or member, or when you are moving any or all of your business locations. If it becomes necessary to surrender this permit, you should only do so by mailing it to a Board office, or giving it to a Board representative.

If you would like to know more about your rights as a taxpayer, or if you are unable to resolve an issue with the Board, please contact the Taxpayers' Rights Advocate office for help by calling toll-free, 888-324-2798 or 916-324-2798. Their fax number is 916-323-3319.


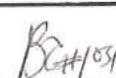
Please post this permit at the address for which it was issued and at a location visible to your customers.

THE STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION
Sales and Use Tax Department

POLICE DEPARTMENT PERMIT

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

FILE - PERMITS

Permit number 079572	Date granted 03/30/93 AMENDED: SEP 28 1994
TYPE OF PERMIT SECOND HAND DEALER	
Permission is hereby granted to NAME(S) Carol S. Martucci	
LOCATION 2230-2234 Polk Street, S.F. 94109	
BUSINESS NAME "RUSSIAN HILL BOOKSTORE"	
This permit is valid for the person, activity, and location herein designated for the <input type="checkbox"/> DAY <input type="checkbox"/> QUARTER <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YEAR	
Unless revoked or suspended by the Chief of Police during a current year/quarter or unless the permit is valid only for a specified time, it shall be deemed that application for a renewal has been made at the end of each year/quarter and the application granted under the same conditions, limitations and obligations as originally imposed.	
INSTRUCTIONS TO PERMITTEES: (References on reverse side) You are required to allow any police officer to inspect your premises (Municipal Code, Sec. 81). You may not transfer this permit to another person or allow him to conduct a separate business at a different location than that described on this permit (Municipal Code, Sec. 77). NOTE ANY CHANGE IN OWNERSHIP OR THE ADDRESS OF THE PERMIT HOLDER REQUIRES THAT A NEW APPLICATION BE FILED WITHIN 10 DAYS OF THE DATE OF CHANGE. FAILURE TO CONDUCT YOUR BUSINESS IN CONFORMITY WITH THESE REGULATIONS MAY SUBJECT YOU TO A CRIMINAL CITATION AND REVOCATION OF YOUR PERMIT.	
Pertinent information regarding this permit: STIPULATIONS: 1) Not valid for the sale of any used merchandise with serial numbers, unless accompanied by a Second Hand Dealer-State Permit. 2) No merchandise is to be displayed on the sidewalk.	
This permit is accepted subject to all legal obligations and requirements and to the conditions set forth above.,	Issued by  Chief of Police
Signature of Permittee:	CHIEF OF POLICE 

Registered Business L...

This dataset includes the



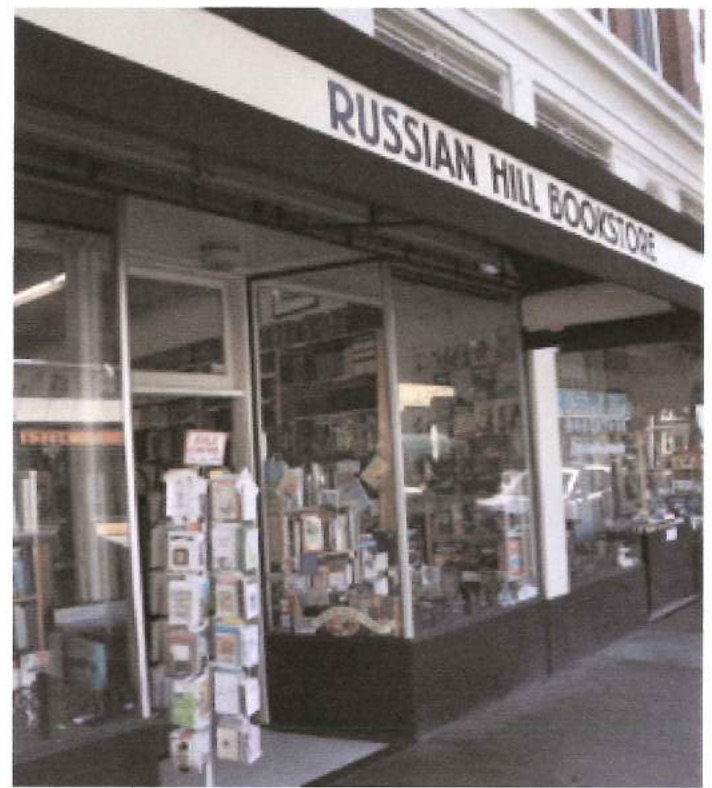
Location Id	0088338-02-001	Mail Zipcode	94109
Business Account Number	0088338	Mail State	CA
Ownership Name	Spencer Carol	NAICS Code	4400-4599
DBA Name	Russian Hill Bookstore	NAICS Code Description	Retail Trade
Street Address	2234 Polk St	Parking Tax	
City	San Francisco	Transient Occupancy Tax	
State	CA	LIC Code	P52
Source Zipcode	94109	LIC Code Description	
Business Start Date	01/01/1975	State 2nd Hand Dealer Jewelry/clothg/furn/books	
Business End Date		Supervisor District	3
Location Start Date	03/01/1993	Neighborhoods - Analysis Boundaries	Russian Hill
Location End Date			
Mail Address	2234 Polk St	Business Corridor	
Mail City	San Francisco	Business Location	(37.797396°,-122.422085°)

Exterior Photos of Russian Hill Bookstore



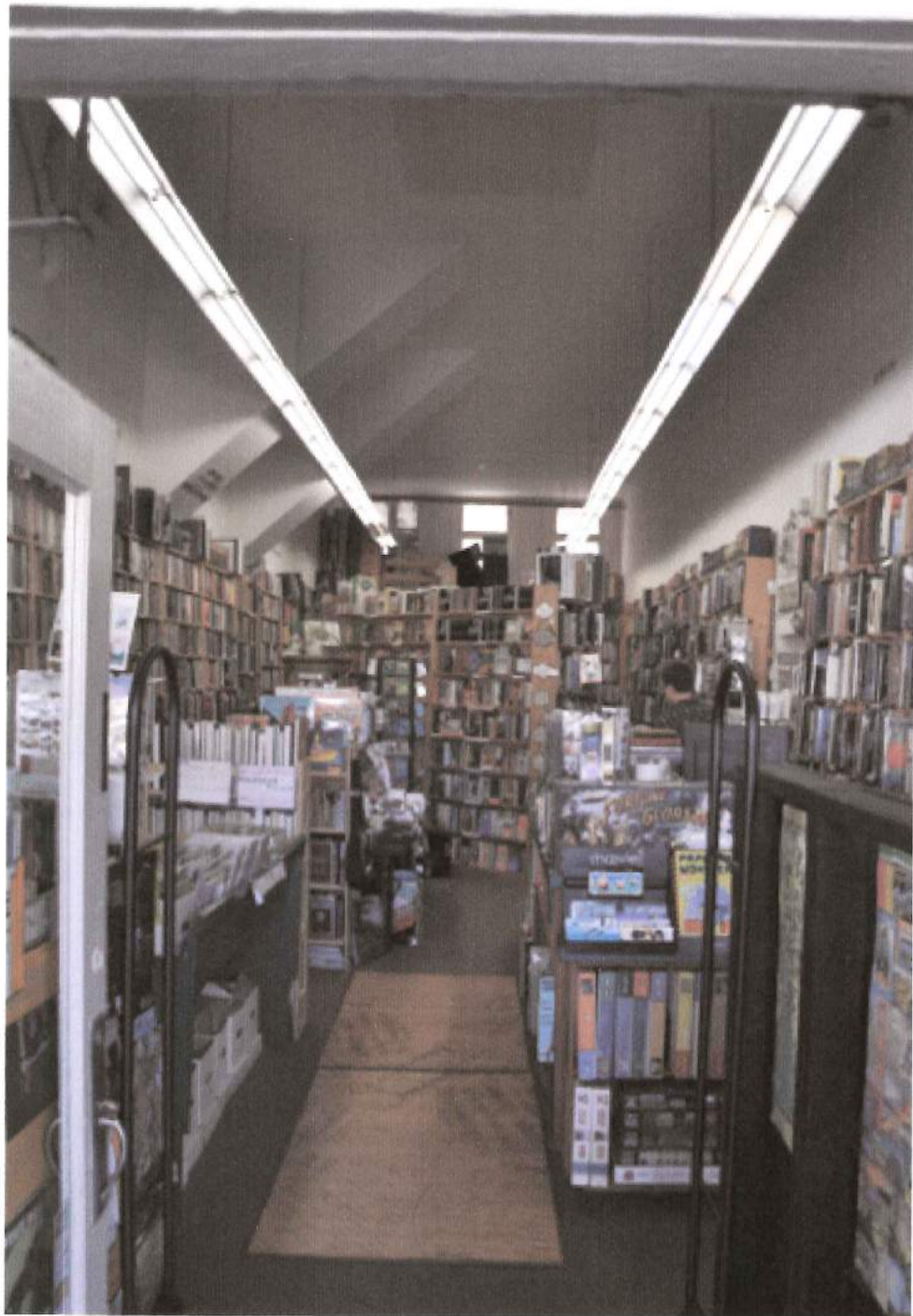
Above photos show the original awning signs and logo printed across shop windows.

Exterior Photos of Russian Hill Bookstore

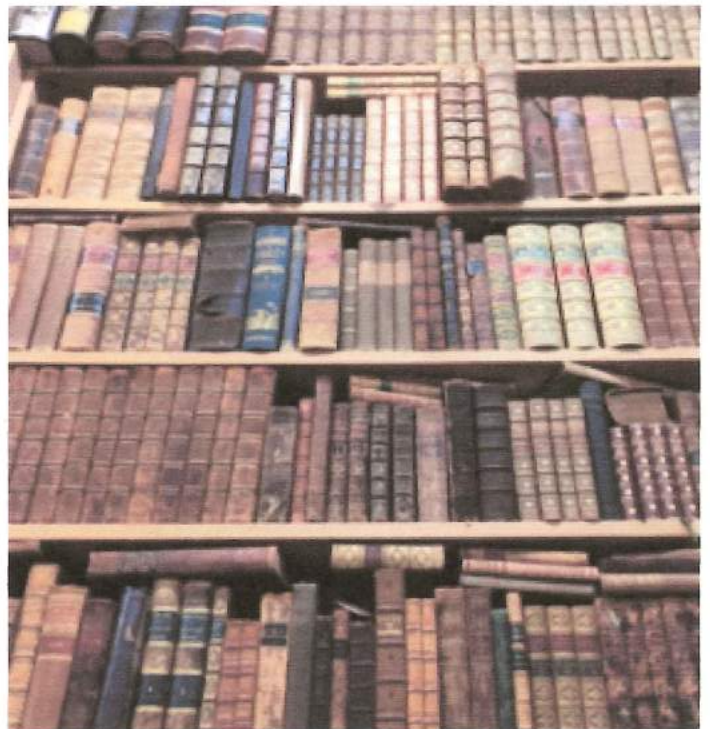
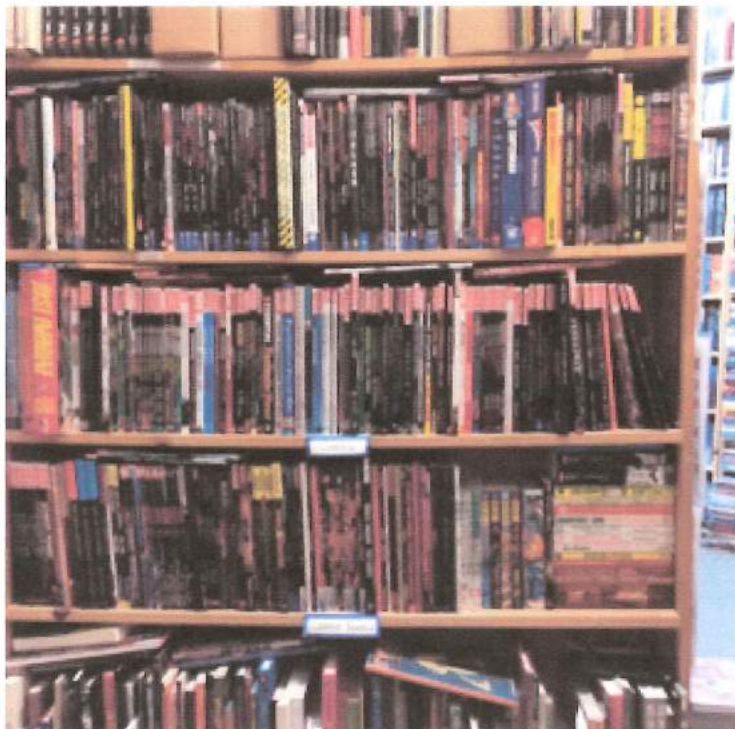
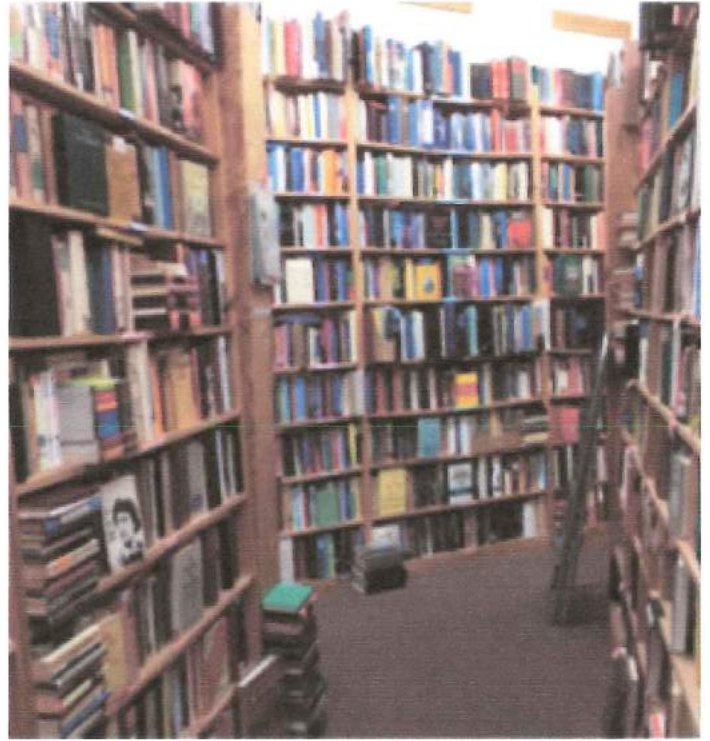
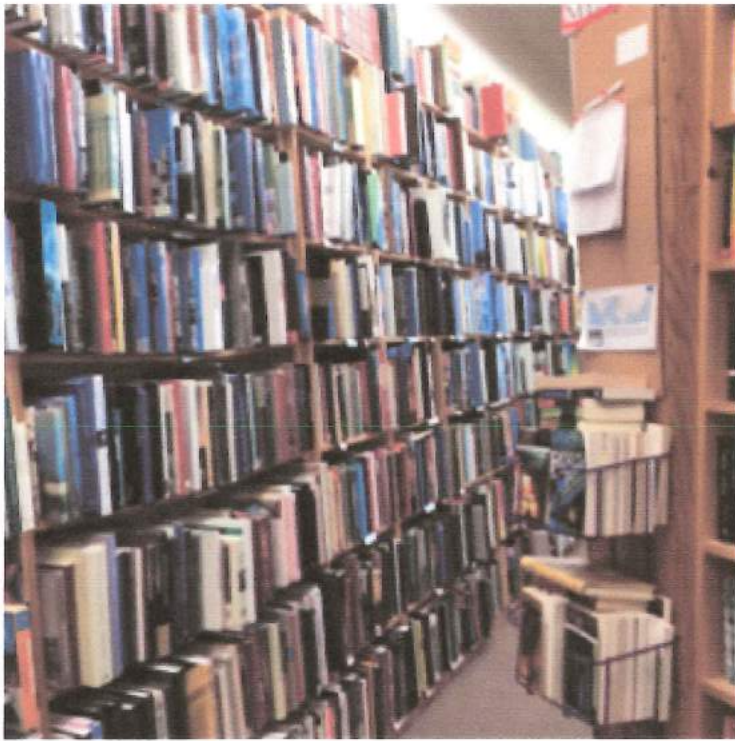


Above photos demonstrate current awning signage, logo printed across shop windows, and classic sale book bin.

Interior Photos of Russian Hill Bookstore



Interior Photos of Russian Hill Bookstore



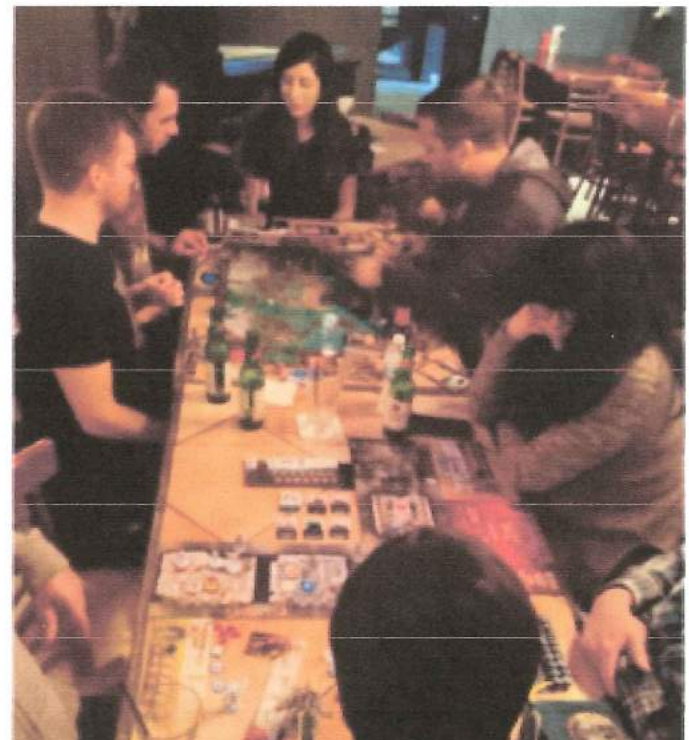
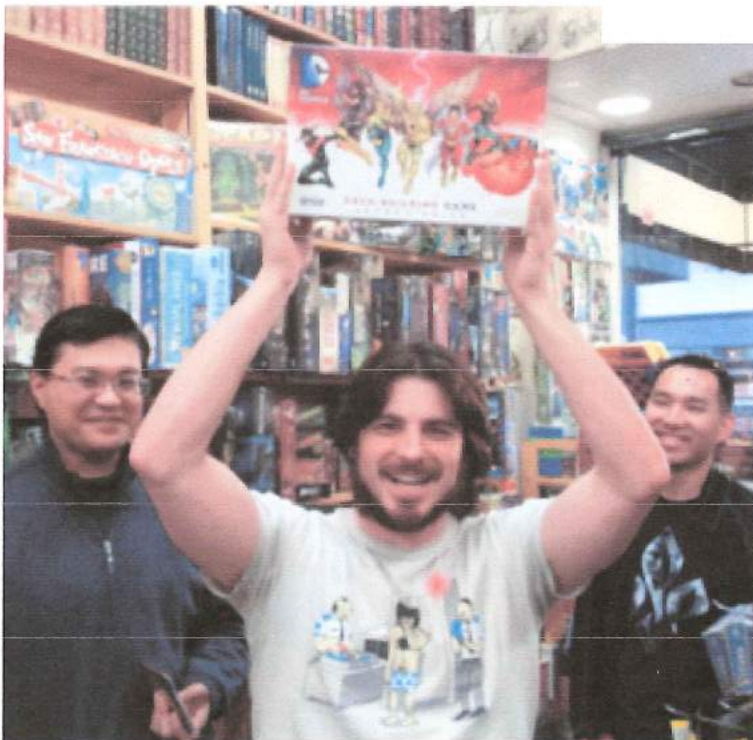
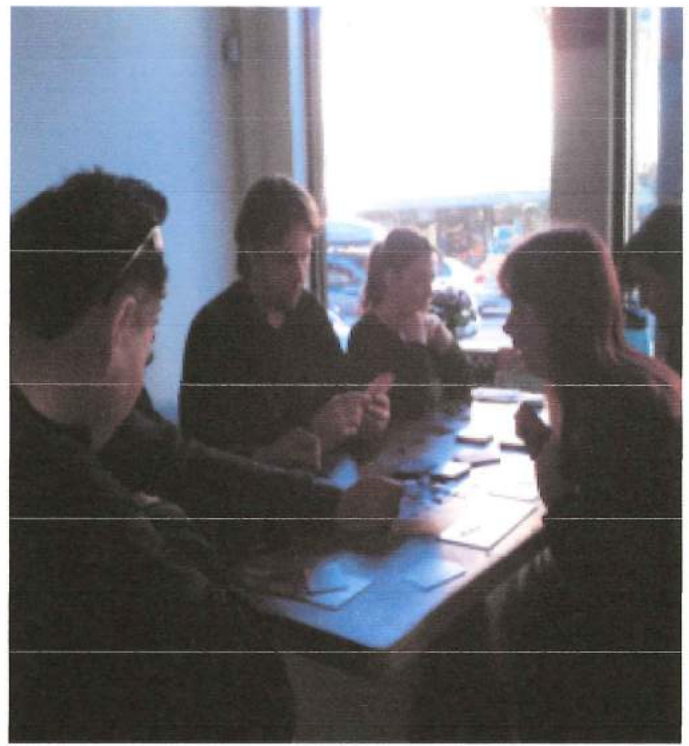
Above photos demonstrate the tall pine bookshelves, spine out single copy stocking, and ladders. genres featured are Art, Literature, Comic Books and Graphic Novels, and the Antiquarian titles above our counter.

Notecard Selection



Above photos show approximately half of our total selection of single notecards. In addition, we offer many styles of boxed notes.

Weekly Board Game Nights



Above photos showcase our long-standing tradition of weekly board game nights. Our staff partners with local cafes and bars for room to hold our game nights in hopes of bringing our community together. Occasionally, we will host events with prizes for our guests.



RUSSIAN HILL BOOKSTORE

RUSSIAN HILL BOOKSTORE

POLKER'S RESTAURANT



RUSSIAN HILL BOOKSTORE











ANTIQUE STYLE MAPS

15"

14" x 27 1/2"

USA

EUROPE

BRITISH ISLES

ITALY

EUROPE

FRANCE

WORLD



GET WELL

SMILE

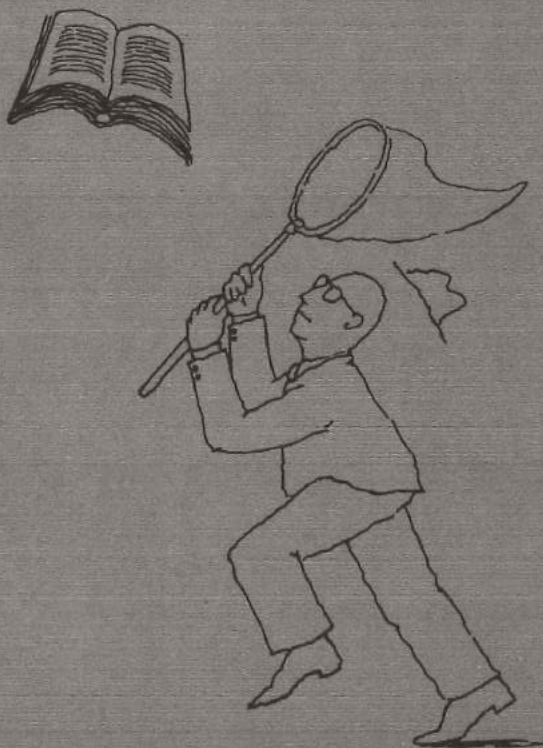
BLANK
BOXED CARDS

GIFT
BAGS

BARBARA L. JOHNSON

BookScouting

*How to Turn Your Love for
Books into Profit*



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CAESL
SPENCER
AT
SUNSET
BOOKSTORE

Working in a used-book shop, waiting on trade, seeing what people buy are the best ways to learn pricing and what will sell.

hours poring over dusty boxes of books, prowling streets in search of garage sales, and going to junkshops trying to track down salable volumes. Book scouts talk to people about the books they are trying to sell, and they listen to the want lists of books that people are

Subject: Community photos!

From: Emily Harrold <emilyharrold@gmail.com>

Date: 3/8/2017 11:46 PM

To: Russian Hill Bookstore <rssnhllb@pacbell.net>



Photos of staff, Russian Hill Neighbors, Children's Librarian from the North Beach Branch, and Local Author at an event to celebrate her debut San Francisco children's Book.



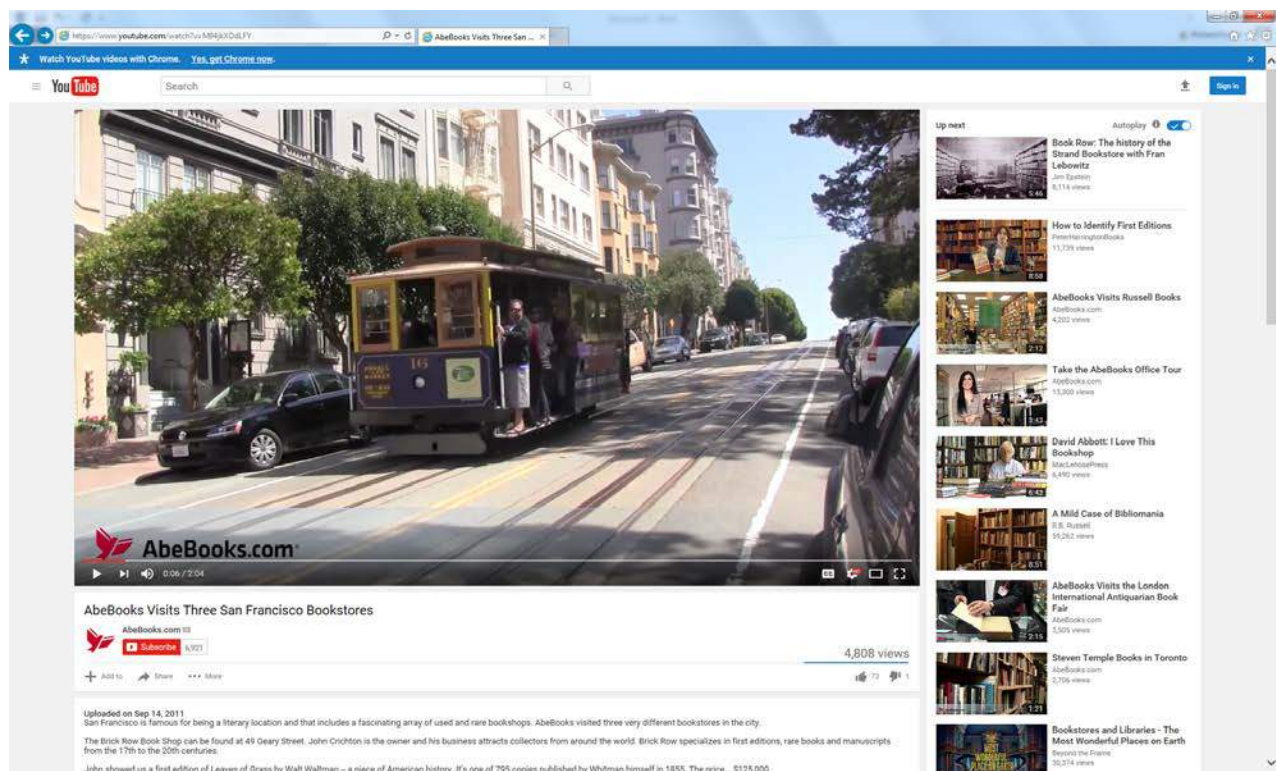
Staff representing the bookstore at the local fire and safety event hosted by the Russia Hill Neighbor's Association at Helen Wills Park on Broadway at Larkin.



AbeBooks Visits Three San Francisco Bookstores



<https://youtu.be/M94jkXOdLFY>



Uploaded on Sep 14, 2011

San Francisco is famous for being a literary location and that includes a fascinating array of used and rare bookshops. AbeBooks visited three very different bookstores in the city.

The Brick Row Book Shop can be found at 49 Geary Street. John Crichton is the owner and his business attracts collectors from around the world. Brick Row specializes in first editions, rare books and manuscripts from the 17th to the 20th centuries.

John showed us a first edition of Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman -- a piece of American history. It's one of 795 copies published by Whitman himself in 1855. The price... \$125,000.

He also displayed a letter written by a young John Steinbeck. It contains the line "I am collecting rejection slips from various magazines. I suppose that is part of the trail which one who wishes to write, must travel."

Search the Brick Row's books: <http://bit.ly/qOrJVf>

Next up is the Argonaut Book Shop on Sutter Street in the financial district. Like Brick Row, this shop has a long, long heritage. The Haines family has run this business since 1941. The Argonaut Bookshop specializes in books about history of California and the American West as well as Exploration and ephemera. It's a classic rare bookshop with unexpected gems on every shelf. Prices vary from affordable out of print books to rare first editions with four figure price-tags.

Search the Argonaut Book Shop's books: <http://bit.ly/oES1d7>

Our third recommendation is the Russian Hill Bookstore owned by Carol Spencer. It's a general used bookstore and buzzes with customers and has as a strong community feel. Carol, who has been selling books since the 1970s, offers books covering every genre from pulp paperbacks from the 1950s to cookbooks and modern bestsellers. She's a familiar face to booklovers in this part of town.

Staff are knowledgeable and friendly, and if you are searching for the quintessential American used bookshop then the Russian Hill Bookstore is it.

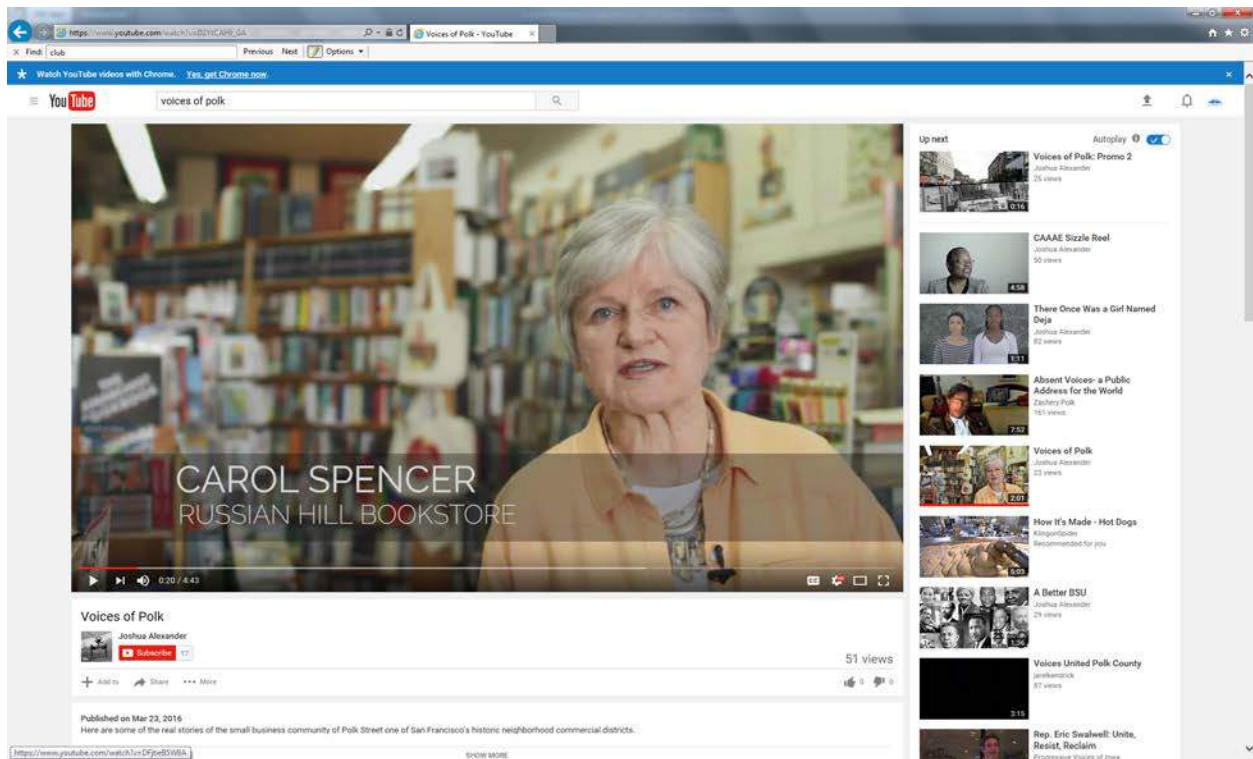
Search the Russian Hill Bookstore's books: <http://bit.ly/ooC5ii>

Visit AbeBooks.com to find books from these three booksellers: <http://www.abebooks.com/>



Voices of Polk Street

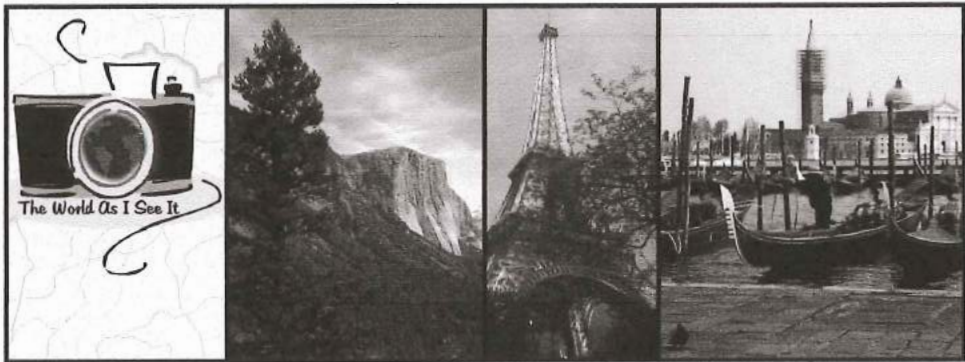
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArX8HL48OtA>



Published on Mar 23, 2016

Here are some of the real stories of the small business community of Polk Street one of San Francisco's historic neighborhood commercial districts.

- Home
- About Me
- Destinations
- Contact Me
- Media/Press



One Canadian gal with a passion to inspire you to get outdoors and explore

- Home
- About Me
- Lady of the Zoos
- More From Me
- Contact Me
- Destinations
- Media/Press

CALIFORNIA / OREGON / SEATTLE / UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FOLLOW:     

2

NEXT STORY

Writer Wednesdays – Frankie Thompson

PREVIOUS STORY

Writer Wednesdays – Lance Leuven

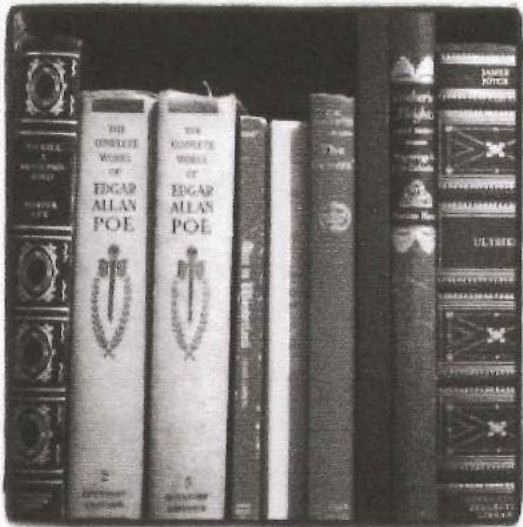
Best Bookshops on the West Coast

BY STEPHANIE · PUBLISHED MAY 18, 2014 · UPDATED APRIL 8, 2015

“Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most

GET GREAT TRAVEL READS SENT TO YOU VIA EMAIL

*accessible and wisest of counselors, and
the most patient of teachers.” ~ Charles
William Eliot*



As like many of those who have a passion for writing I also am a serious reader, but like any smart traveler I’m always trying to save my pennies for the next adventure, so where does my love for reading and my thriftiness lead me? It leads me threw the doors of many used bookshops in search of everything from the classics to mysteries and travelogues to wildlife tales. So, it’s no surprise that on my US West Coast Adventure I was in search of some great reads and found some of the **Best Bookshops on the West Coast**.



San Diego’s Upstart Crow Bookstore &

Join 245 other subscribers

Email Address

Subscribe

THE GAL BEHIND THE BLOG



Hey there, I'm Stephanie and am the Canadian gal behind The World As I See It. I have a passion for travel, wildlife and the great outdoors! Through my blog I will take you along on my journey exploring my own backyard of Ontario to cities around the globe. I hope you will be inspired to get out and explore!

TRANSLATE

Select Language ▼

THEWORLDASISEEIT



The World As I See...
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Be the first of your friends to like this



Coffeehouse

Located in San Diego’s Seaport Village, Upstart Crow is bookstore, café and gift shop. The “Upstart Crow” is in reference to a nasty nickname given to William Shakespeare by a fellow begrudging playwright. I loved the artsy atmosphere with its quirky tables and differing chairs (like out of an Alice in Wonderland Mad Hatter Tea party), there’s always something magical when surrounded by books, a cool vibe and a latte to stir the creative juices. Upstart Crow also has Shakespeare open readings, Open Mic Poetry, a Book Club and live music by local musicians every Saturday night.

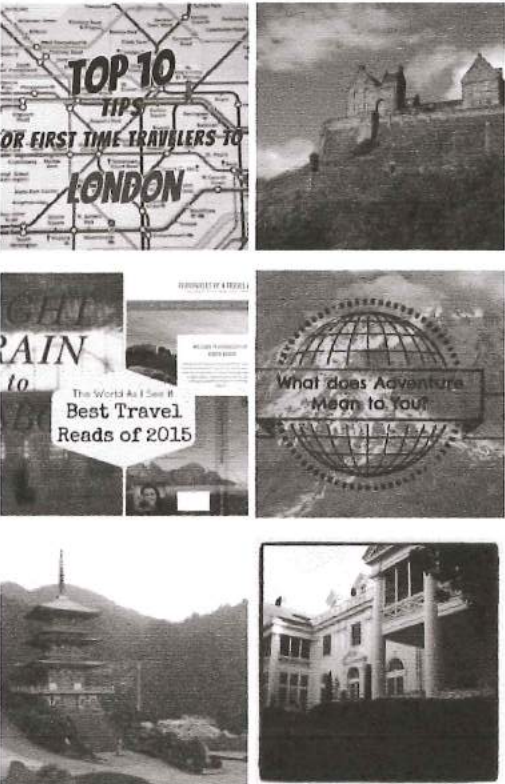


San Francisco’s Russian Hill Bookstore

Located on lively Polk street, Russian Hill Bookstore is the epitome of the classic used bookstore but with added bonuses like a fantastic array of gifts and stationary and new local books. Opened for over 20 years this little gem with floor to ceiling books is also known as the best card store in San Francisco.



MOST LIKED POSTS



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San Francisco's The Booksmith



Located in the eccentric neighbourhood of Haight and Ashbury, The Booksmith is a funky bookstore full of character. From the quirky staff to the colourful chalk art work signs for every theme and genre of books, you'll be pleasantly distracted. The Booksmith is approaching its 30 year mark and is one busy place that has strong community ties. With over 200 events every year, in store and offsite, from book swaps to hosting great authors and even a literary game night – The Booksmith has something for everyone and will surly entertain.



Portland's Powell's City of Books

While in Portland I knew I had to visit the World famous Powell's City of Books but I had no idea of just how large and truly spectacular it really was. At four levels high and covering an entire city block Powell's is a book lovers dream world, with over a million new, used and rare books to lay your

Tweets by @LadyoftheZoos

Stephanie Mayo Retweeted



Reading The Book

@Reading_TheBook

* NEW BLOG POST * Men of the Forest: the primates of Borneo readingthebook.blog/2017/02/26/men...

Men of the Forest: the primates of Bor...
Sometimes the last minute decisions can t...
readingthebook.blog

9h



Stephanie Mayo

@LadyoftheZoos

What does Adventure mean to You?
ow.ly/DmtkW #adventure #travel
#WeekendWanderlust



5h

Stephanie Mayo Retweeted



Canada

@ExploreCanada

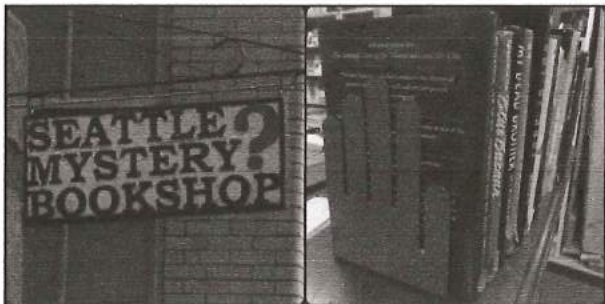
With its narrow streets, Old @quebecregion is an ideal neighbourhood to discover by foot! 📷: zengwish via IG. #ExploreCanada
#QuebecRegion



paws on. With over 40 years in the books, Powell's is a hub of activity with shoppers, browsers and café loungers. A must is a visit to the Rare Book Room on level 3 where you'll find old and out-of-print books and many with a hefty price tag. But it's the antiquated atmosphere that's amazing, shut off from the rest of the store, surrounded by classic bookshelves in what feels like an iconic author's, like Ernest Hemingway's, home library from decades past, you can not help but slow your pace and hold you breath and explore the wonder of these old text.



*Their oldest book is *De Bello Judaica* (*The Jewish War*) by Flavius Josephus and was printed in 1480 – with a price tag of \$12,500



Seattle's Mystery Bookshop

Seattle's Mystery Bookshop is by far the best mystery bookshop I've ever encountered! I was greeted by two lovely and charming ladies (one with a hankering to always read the ending first – of which she is doggedly working on breaking) who truly have a passion for all things mystery! Seattle's Mystery Bookshop has been around for nearly 25 years and was one of

The World As I See It

Follow On

CATEGORIES

Categories

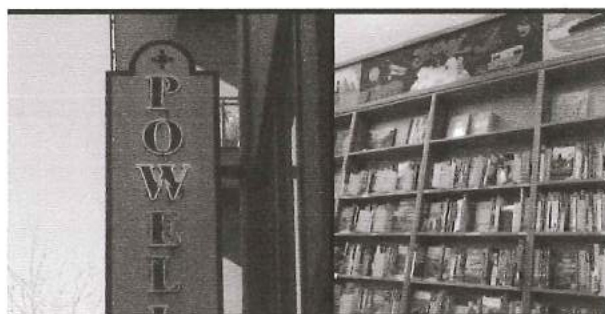
Select Category

To search type and hit enter

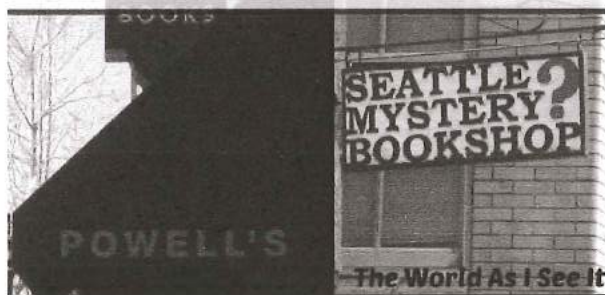
many used bookshops in Seattle. I loved how they took their decorating of the shop from out of a mystery novel with blood-red tablecloths, fake blood pools and droplets on the floor, bloody handprints on the windows and even in the form of bookends. With an extensive website, entertaining and chuckle worthy blog, and author events and book signings Seattle's Mystery Bookshop take the mystery out of where to shop!



Bookshops to coffeehouses and a side of mystery, I found my fair share of the Best Bookshops on the West Coast and am glad to have found some new favourites, many heavy souvenirs and will always be on the look out for the next good read!



Best Bookshops on the West Coast



What's your favourite bookshop?

Our blog has moved to a new site. Check it out!

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Bay Area Fun Food Fitness



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Best Bookstores for Kids in San Francisco

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Reading is an activity that is fun for all ages and a delight for parents to share with their children. Few gifts in life will have as lasting or beneficial impact as instilling in young minds a love of books and a thirst for learning. Plus few places are as cozy as a bookstore on a cold winter day or a respite from the sun on a hot summer day. Here are a few of our favorites that children and adults alike can enjoy together.

Books Inc.

Marina

Address: 3515 California Street, San Francisco

Phone: (415) 221-3666

Hours: Daily 9am – 7pm

Little tips: Kids events include Pajama Party Storytime (first Wednesday of the month) and numerous story times weekly

Other locations: Books Inc. also has locations in The Castro (2275 Market Street) and in the Marina (2251 Chestnut Street)

This charming bookshop is located in the Laurel Village section of Pacific Heights and boasts an excellent variety of new children’s books. The children’s section is a comfortable place to curl up and read with your children, and helpful staff is always on-hand to offer suggestions and aid in searches. In the unlikely event they don’t have a specific title you are searching for already on-hand, it can be ordered with ease for pickup onsite at a later date.

Green Apple Books

Inner Richmond

Address: 506 Clement Street, San Francisco

Phone: (415) 387-2272

Hours: Daily from 10am – 10:30pm

Little tips: Kid friendly book reviews and kid sized seating

This independent bookstore’s mammoth selection of new and used books is meticulously organized by genre and presented over two sprawling floors. Tucked at the back of the store is a sizeable children’s area, in which all holdings are neatly organized alphabetically and by subject in both the new and used sections for easy searching. Carefully hand-drawn pictures and kid-friendly reviews by Green Apple staff adorn the shelves and add to the boundless charm of this wonderful store. Size-appropriate seating for children makes this a truly perfect space for little readers to peruse and enjoy the world through the wonder of books.

Green Apple Books on the Park

Inner Sunset

Address: 1231 9th Avenue, San Francisco

Phone: (415) 742-5833

Hours: Daily from 10am – 10pm

Little tips: Metered parking only

Located in the Inner Sunset, Green Apple Books on the Park (sister store to Green Apple on Clement Street) was first opened in August of 2014. This enchanting new and used bookshop has a whimsically designed and comprehensively stocked children’s section with loads of seating and books for all ages. After working up an appetite stocking up on books, consider heading across the street to the very family friendly Park Chow restaurant for lunch or dinner.

Reader’s Bookstore

Marina

Address: Building C, Room 165, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco

Phone: (415) 771-1076

Hours: Daily from 9:30am – 5:30pm

Little tips: High quality used books; all proceeds benefit the Friends of the Public Library

Run by the Friends of the San Francisco Public Library, The Reader’s Bookstore specializes in high quality used books, DVDs, and music at very reasonable prices. The children’s section is inviting and includes kid-sized chairs for little readers to cozy up and read in or be read to. There is also a small wooden house that doubles as shelving for picture books, which young ones enjoy crawling into with their books. A large percentage of the wares here are in as-new condition and the entire store is clean and neatly organized. Since all books are donated you never know quite what you

will find, but are certain to have a lovely time looking. After loading up on wonderful new books, amble over to the adjoining Goody Café for home baked goods, salads, and a warming cup of tea.

Russian Hill Bookstore

Russian Hill
Address: 2234 Polk Street, San Francisco
Phone: (415) 929-0997
Hours: Daily from 10am – 10pm
Little tips: Metered parking only

Established more than 20 years ago, the Russian Hill Bookstore carries new and used books and contains a relatively small but very mighty children’s section. In addition to a first-rate assortment of books for all ages, this star of a bookstore carries a splendid selection of toys and gam too. Russian Hill Books’ location ensures that there is no shortage of places to stop in for lunch or coffee, including Blue Barn and Saint Frank Coff

Guest Blogger Natasha Babaian is a writer and photographer whose work has appeared in Insight Guides and Berlitz travel guides and Cape Life magazine. She lives in San Francisco with her husband and children. <http://www.nomadcamera.com>.

Photo Credit: Natasha Babaian

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SFGATE<http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Top-20-Bay-Area-independent-bookstores-5867224.php>

Top 20 Bay Area independent bookstores

By Seung Y. Lee Published 1:47 pm, Monday, November 3, 2014

From Moe's in Berkeley to City Lights in San Francisco, bookstores in the Bay Area have played an invaluable part in forging our local literary spirit. Even in the age of the decline of independent bookstores, many still stand strong, thanks to local grassroots support.

We've compiled 20 of the top bookstores that every Bay Area native and newcomer must check out. It may not be a complete census of the high-quality bookstores in the Bay Area, but it serves as a starting point for any book lovers preparing to make a literary pilgrimage.

1. Aardvark Books

Located in San Francisco's Castro neighborhood, Aardvark Books might be the quintessential Bay Area independent bookstore: narrow hallways with towering bookshelves on both sides, an incredible array of affordable used and new books, devoted staff, and yes, even a cat. (*227 Church St., San Francisco*)

2. A Great Good Place for Books

A Great Good Place for Books might have to rebrand itself as A Great Good Place for Books *and* People. Thanks to a friendly, sociable staff and owner, this small bookstore in Oakland's Montclair district is a great place to visit if you're looking for some good company. (*6120 La Salle Ave., Oakland. www.ggpbooks.com*)

3. Alley Cat Books

Alley Cat Books in San Francisco's Mission District embraces the neighborhood's Latino roots by selling books in both English and Spanish. (*3036 24th St., San Francisco. www.alleycatbookshop.com*)

4. Bird & Beckett Books & Records

Bird & Beckett Books & Records in San Francisco's Glen Park is not your traditional quiet, quaint independent bookstore. With live music performances and poetry readings, there's much vitality in this small bookstore. (653 Chenery St., San Francisco. www.bird-beckett.com)

5. Black Oak Books

Once located in North Berkeley, Black Oak Books relocated westward to San Pablo Avenue in 2009. Taking over what used to be a nightclub, the new Black Oak Books building has 30 percent more space than the old building. (2618 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley. www.blackoakbooks.com)

6. Builders Booksource

If you're a builder, architect, gardener, landscaper, designer, etc., visit Builders Booksource, a Berkeley bookstore catering to people with an interest in visual art or architecture. (1817 Fourth St., Berkeley. www.buildersbooksource.com/cgi-bin/booksite/index.html)

7. Christopher's Books

Christopher's Books is the neighborhood bookstore for San Francisco's Potrero Hill residents. Opened in 1991, Christopher's is a quaint emporium that continues to charm old and new customers, locals and visitors alike. (1400 18th St., San Francisco. christophersbooks.com)

8. City Lights

There's no bookstore in the Bay Area more famous than City Lights. As the bookstore that helped publish Allen Ginsberg's magnum opus, "Howl," City Lights is a literary landmark in San Francisco. (261 Columbus Ave., San Francisco. www.citylights.com)

9. Dog Eared Books

On the corner of 20th and Valencia streets in San Francisco, Dog Eared Books is a

tiny Mission bookstore that's been a local favorite since 1992. (*900 Valencia St., San Francisco. www.dogearredbooks.com*)

10. Green Apple Books

Green Apple Books perennially ranks as one of the best bookstores in San Francisco by other outlets and blogs. If you visit, make sure to check out the library-like second floor. They've recently opened a second outlet in the Inner Sunset. (*506 Clement St. and 1231 Ninth Ave., San Francisco greenapplebooks.com*)

11. Isotope Comics

If you've ever visited Isotope Comics in San Francisco's Hayes Valley, you've probably encountered the bookstore's owner, James Sime. Known for his passion for comic books, and eye-catching suits, Sime elevates Isotope as one of the most memorable Bay Area bookstores. (*326 Fell St., San Francisco. www.isotopecomics.com*)

12. Kayo Books

Kayo Books is more than just a regular bookstore: It's a mini-museum, preserving the ethos of pulp fiction, sci-fi, sleaze and pop-culture genres from the 1960s and 1970s. (*814 Post St., San Francisco. www.kayobooks.com*)

13. Linden Tree Books

Linden Tree Books in Los Altos is a must-visit for anyone with little kids. With a plethora of children's books, the bookstore can provide a fun family experience for all age groups. (*265 State St., Los Altos. www.lindentreebooks.com*)

14. Moe's Books

Forever memorialized in the movie "The Graduate," Moe's Books in Berkeley is a historic institution on storied Telegraph Avenue. Moe's provides four floors of books from every genre. (*2476 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley. www.moesbooks.com*)

15. Book Passage

Book Passage has not one but two stores — one in Marin and one in San Francisco — and not only stocks its shelves with great books, but brings in many authors for readings. (*Book Passage Marin, 51 Tamal Vista Blvd., Corte Madera; Book Passage San Francisco, Ferry Building, San Francisco. www.bookpassage.com*)

16. Mrs. Dalloway's

Tucked away in Berkeley's Elmwood, Mrs. Dalloway's bookstore sells many varieties of books, most notably in garden arts. (*2904 College Ave., Berkeley. www.mrsdalloways.com*)

17. Point Reyes Books

Located in Point Reyes Station, Point Reyes Books has plenty of small-town charm and hosts various community events. (*11315 State Route 1, Point Reyes Station. www.ptreyesbooks.com*)

18. Revolution Books

Berkeley wouldn't be Berkeley without some Marxist literature, would it? Revolution Books keeps alive the spirit of the '60s. (*2425 Channing Way, Berkeley. www.revolutionbooks.org*)

19. Russian Hill Bookstore

Russian Hill Bookstore is not only a great visit for its selection of books, but the Polk Street bookstore also sells a wide range of gift cards, stationery and board games, too. (*2234 Polk St., San Francisco. www.russianhillbookstore.com*)

20. Valhalla Books

The exterior facade of Valhalla Books won't impress the casual pedestrian, but once inside, the Mission District bookstore displays an eclectic range of used and new fiction. (*2141 Mission St., San Francisco.*)

Seung Y. Lee is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. E-mail:

New Neighbors



Bookworm's delight

Meet the crew at the new Russian Hill Bookstore: standing Carol Leone, Richard Martucci and Carol Martucci; sitting are John Bauman and Sheri Dean. This latest endeavor of Carol and Richard Martucci is now open at 2234 Polk. Carol is a 19 year veteran of the book trade. The bookstore features a wide array of new and used fiction titles with special emphasis on arts & crafts, history, outdoor, religion and cooking books. Custom orders on request. The bookstore also carries a large selection of unusual and handmade cards. It's open every day until 9pm. Call them at 929-0997.

NOBXRUSSIAN

A blog about the neighborhoods of Nob & Russian Hill in San Francisco

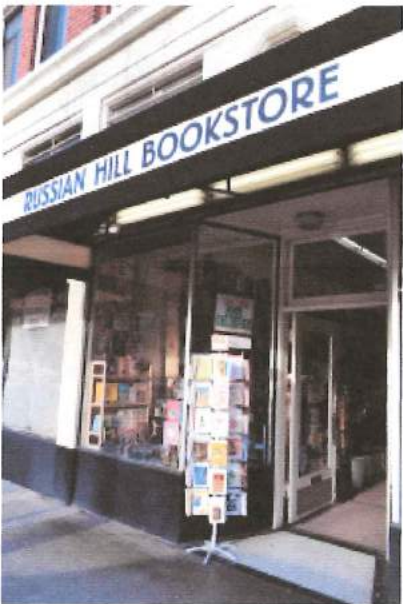
Spotlight: Russian Hill Bookstore

Posted on [March 19, 2012](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

When walking down Polk Street in the popular Russian Hill neighborhood you may stumble upon the treasure of the Russian Hill Bookstore. Known for its broad range of used books and their plentiful greeting cards, there is always something unique to find inside. Located in a prime location the small business owner shares her business secrets of success in the busy city of San Francisco.

“Carol always has just what I need and if not she is always able to get me what I want. I have been coming here for 11 years already and I absolutely love working with her!” said long time customer Barbara P.

Russian Hill Bookstore owner Carol Spencer has been in the used bookstore business since 1974. Her vast knowledge of used books and experience has managed to keep her business alive while others around her have failed. She uses her Master’s degree in Psychology and Theology to connect to her customers on a personal level and provide them with the best customer service.



Located at 2234 Polk Street



Owner Carol Spencer

Businesswoman

With some simple rules to follow she has managed to change careers and became an entrepreneur. Following her success in her first small business venture she opened another store in the trendy locale of Russian Hill. In her busy little store you can find her huddled by her desk answering multiple phone calls from repeat customers or getting information for the next estate sale. Being the owner of a small business is very time consuming and on this Monday afternoon I was able to catch a glimpse of her busy life of being a businesswoman on the go. She sits down and talks about her business strategies and how she fights the use of new technology and the mighty Kindle.

“Carol is amazing with how she is able to connect with her large customer base. She really cares about them and strives to meet their needs. I’m really happy to be here,” said part-time employee Jessica Tsang who has worked with Spencer for the past two years.

Spencer has two full-time employees and four part-time employees who work around the clock with her. She describes them as her family since she works closely along side them day after day and they’re all helping to run her business.

With her own methods of madness Spencer explains how she gets books for her store. The traditional ways of business are people coming in to sell or trade their books, estate sales and “scouting” which is going to antique shops or other bookstores in another city and buying what they can’t sell in their market and making a profit in your market. San Francisco has an immense population so Spencer can sell better than small town stores. She also uses garage and library sales to add to her collection.

Although she collects many new books she rarely accepts donations since they generally do not produce much value to her. Spencer makes it a fact that she does not use online databases like Ebay to check the value of a book but goes off of experience when purchasing. Russian Hill Bookstore does offer books for sale online.

She recommends used bookstore owners to know what subjects they carry, to know your boundaries, know what you are selling and always look at the condition, how often you’ve seen the book and the profit you can make.

From Banks to Bookstores

Born and raised in Illinois, Spencer got her first taste of a small business from her family. Her father had a small radio business and would eventually grow into the television business. Spencer recalls how she would spend a lot of time there and how her father’s shop had the first televisions for sale in her hometown.

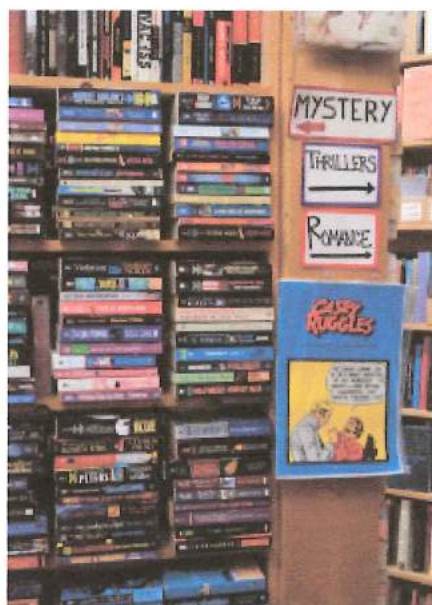
Spencer worked in downtown San Francisco in the bank scene as a Systems Analyst in the early 60s. Having arrived fresh from Illinois she married her college boyfriend and accepted an opportunity to see California. One of her college professors offered the newlyweds if they wanted to drive his spare car to California since he was moving there. The anthropology professor had recently accepted a job at San Francisco State University and was moving that summer. They jumped at the opportunity and drove in 1961 to San Francisco and never looked back.

Having recently quit her job downtown to finish her Bachelor’s Degree she decided to look into another business. It had been two years since she left the banking business and she wanted to try something new. A few of her friends had bookstores and suggested she try her luck with books. **In 1974 she opened Sunset**



Children's Section

Bookstore in the Sunset district in San Francisco with her husband. With great success at her Sunset store she moved onto the idea of opening at another location and started looking.



Different genres available at RHB

Russian Hill Bookstore

Spencer's second store opened in 1993 in the Russian Hill District. She initially picked Russian Hill because of the foot traffic and the bookstores nearby. Back before she opened the bookstore industry was a little different. People would go to specific neighborhoods and walk around from bookstore to bookstore depending on their specialties. Certain stores specialized in paperbacks while other ranged from science fiction to classical literature. People walked around depending on what they wanted.

"It was a completely different kind of retail environment at that time," explained Spencer. Yet she chose to stick to the general used bookstore idea. Her original bookstore in the Sunset District was directed towards families and children's books. Originally she knew she was not going to handle both stores since it was a lot to manage two small businesses. She decided then that Russian Hill Bookstore would become her main store. She closed Sunset Bookstore in 2001

and redirected her focus to her latest adventure.

Running two bookstores didn't come easy. A year after the opening the travel agency next door closed and Spencer was able to rent it and expand her bookstore. Her family moved into RHB and lived in the back behind the shelves. She recalls her son always complaining about cleaning up.

"Nathan hated comics. Back then we used to sell comics so his job would be to clean and straighten them up. He would yell 'I hate comics!' but I always told him that was going to pay for his college education," laughed Spencer. Her son would go on to become an engineer after he hung around Radioshack after school.

Russian Hill Bookstore also caters to all ages. The biggest event of the year would be Christmas where half of the front store on the right side is filled with boxed sets of holiday cards, toys and books for the occasion. There is also a Clean-Out Sale in January to clear some inventory and make room for new material.

Bookstore Evolution

Spencer credits her main success to her idea of "writer's eye" where books begin the image and then come the words. One of the main reasons she picked greeting cards were for the images. She believes images provoke emotions and words. By the greeting cards being blank the writer was able to let the images speak to them and help them write whatever they wanted.



Then comes the Kindle. Spencer describes reading as being too one-dimensional. She states that Kindles are too plain and don't let you enjoy the book.

Going through new books from an estate sale

“One of the selling points of books is the cover art. The illustrations that go with the words. You lose all that with a Kindle.”

Spencer goes on to say she will never buy one since books are more than just words. The illustrations are an expansion of words. They help you focus and solidify your words. As technology advances so does the evolution of books. With smart phones and tablets like the iPad coming out people are losing themselves to technology versus the soft paperback book in your hand. She hopes to keep in business by not subjecting to technology but simply showcasing the cover art and the original reason people like books so much: for the imagination.

“If I ever decide to retire and close RHB [Russian Hill Bookstore] it would not be just a regular store closing but a community bookstore that serves the area. I think about the 6 employees losing their jobs, another small business closing but also the community losing a bookstore. A lot of people depend on me.”

From the tourists walking down Polk Street to the regulars who come in for a new piece to add to their collection, Russian Hill Bookstore is a vital part of community.

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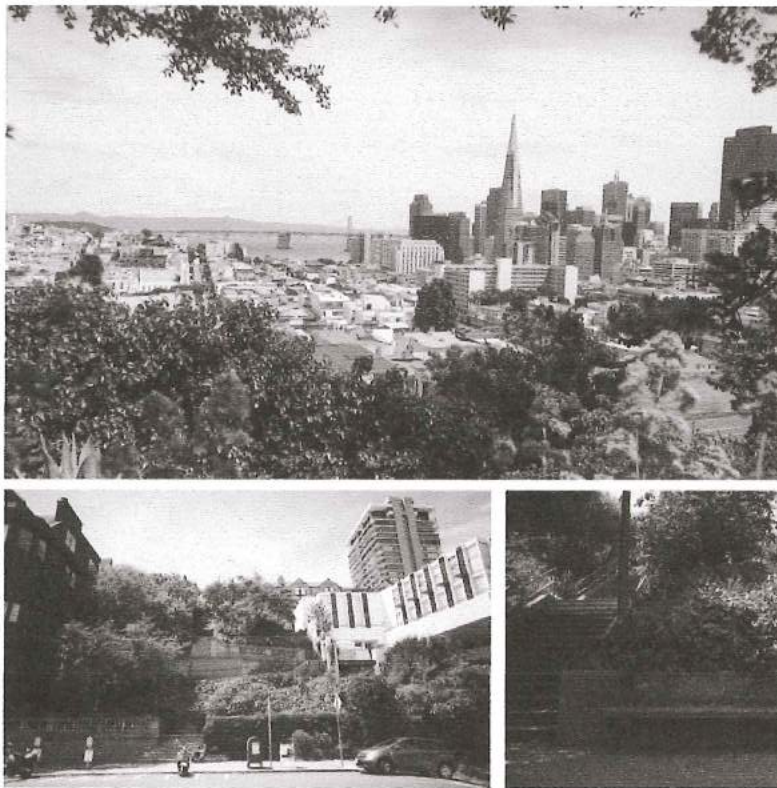
Why I Love Living In Russian Hill — The Bold Italic — San Francisco

By *Melissa Chandler*



Russian Hill is a neighborhood with that rare advantage of being tucked away, yet central to almost everything. I feel lucky that from where I live I can walk to Union Square, the Marina, Pacific Heights, Aquatic Park, Chinatown, or North Beach in about 15 minutes. This is also a neighborhood that eludes stereotypes. If the Mission = hipsters, the Marina = yuppies, SOMA = techies, and the Haight = hippies, Russian Hill is just a bunch of great people coming together to eat free pizza on Monday nights at Robberbarron.

On a sunny day there's nothing better than trekking up Leavenworth or Jones, where, upon cresting the hill, all steepness is immediately forgiven as you're hit with the sweeping blue of the Bay and some of the best views around of Alcatraz and Coit Tower. If you haven't taken a coffee, a blanket, and a book to the little patch of grass known as Ina Coolbrith Park at Taylor and Vallejo, please remedy this oversight immediately. The view from the park is amazing, and though it's teeny-tiny, there will be room for you. Every time I've headed up there to get in some reading and sunbathing, I've had it mostly to myself. Maybe visitors are too distracted by the hidden steps and lush gardens leading down to North Beach.

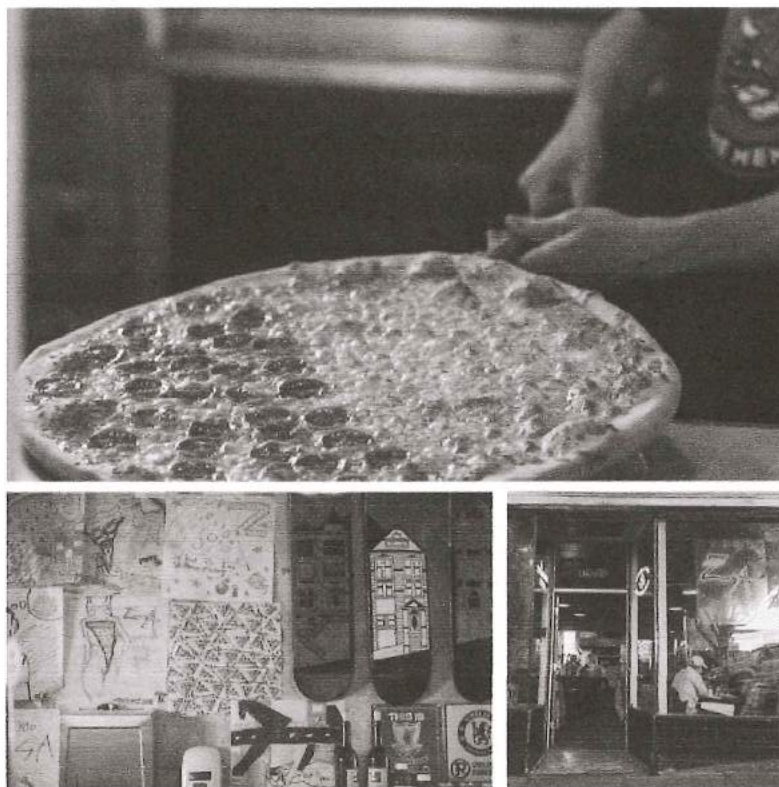


I sometimes wonder if everyone has a favorite signature neighborhood noise. In Russian Hill, I love dropping off to the rumbling of the cable cars on Hyde Street, a block down the hill from my apartment.

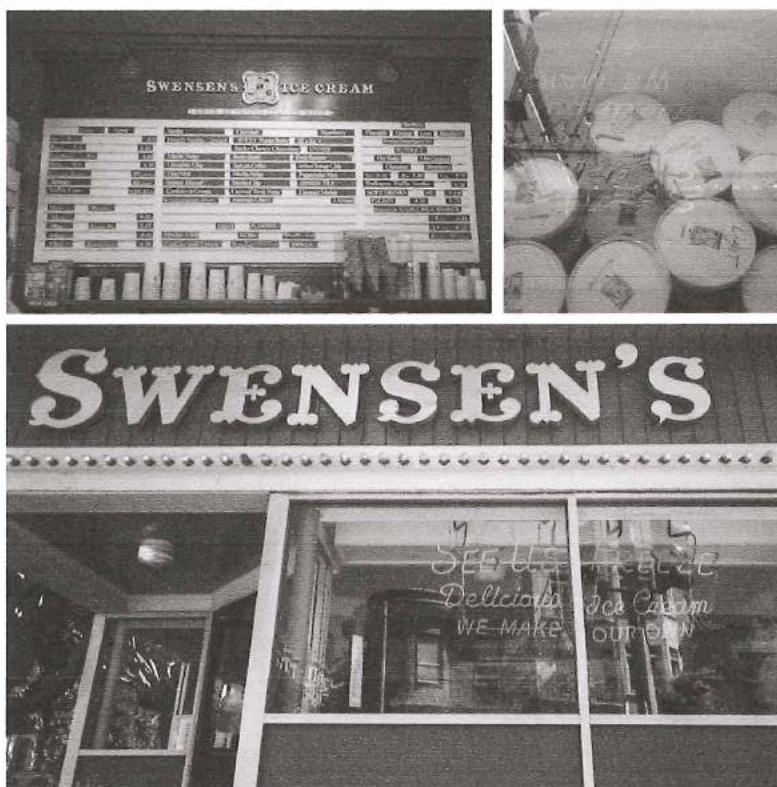
Speaking of Hyde, if sushi, pizza, and ice cream are the keys to happiness, this street has eternal bliss dialed within a one-block radius. Elephant Sushi at Hyde and Green is among the best I've had in the city. Try the sizzling mango sea bass. It arrives at your table foil-wrapped and lit with blue flames! Intimate and hip, this is a great date spot.



Nearby is Za Pizza, which wins hands down for most charming pizza spot in the city. It's small and warm, and the tables are usually occupied by families with kids. You can have a beer at the bar and catch a game on TV with your perfect New York-style cornmeal crust slice. The owners, Buzz and Brooks, filled me in on the deets of the house a block away at 29 Russell, where Neal and Carolyn Cassady lived, and where Jack Kerouac shacked up in the attic for a few months while he wrote *Visions of Cody*.

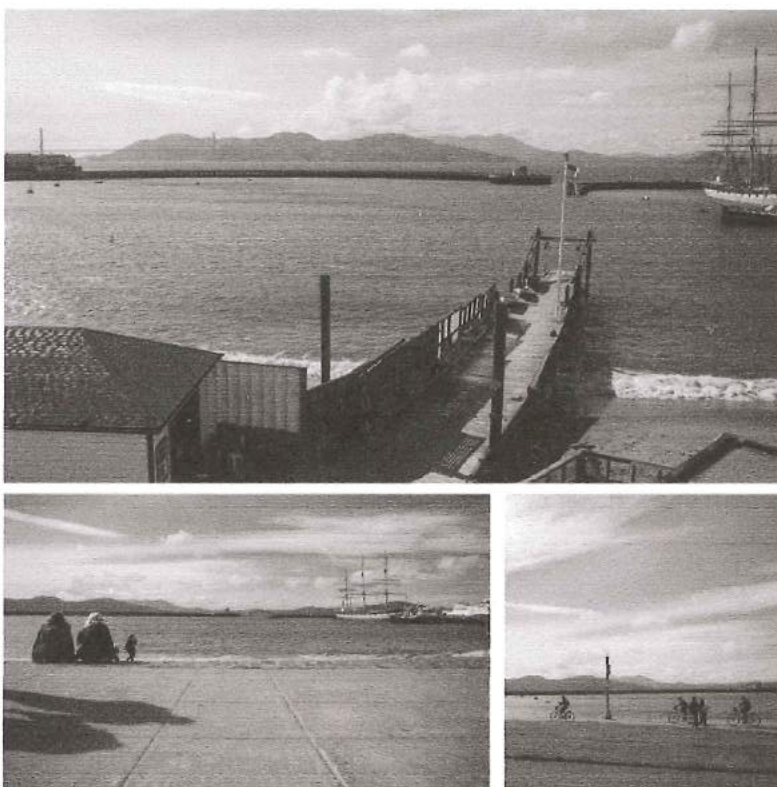


After checking out the Beat crash pad, head over to Swensen's at Union and Hyde and eat ice cream like it's 1949. I recommend a scoop of banana with a scoop of chocolate peanut butter. This location is nearly 70 years old, and it's the very first Swensen's, which went on to become an international franchise.

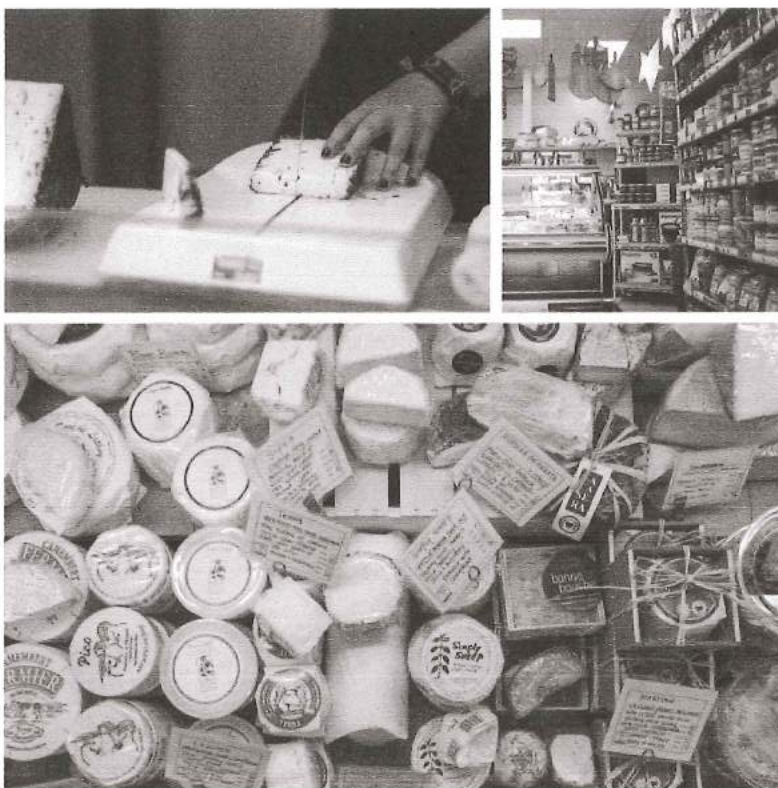


When it's time to burn off the ice cream, here's my favorite jogging route: up and over the hill on Leavenworth, past Lombard (where you'll see tourists with cameras at all hours, which is oddly comforting), and down to Aquatic Park, along the water. Do some zigzagging up and down the concrete bleachers to mix it up a little, then head onto the Municipal Pier. It's the perfect spot to stop for a rest and check out the boats, and to watch the Dolphin Club members swimming tirelessly in the Bay (most without wetsuits—my heroes.)

This particular part of the waterfront amazes me. Backed up against Ghirardelli Square you'd think it would be tourist central, but it hardly ever is (unless the Blue Angels are in town). The bleachers and the path next to the beach have a serene, dreamy quality, as if, in just this one pocket of the city, time has been slowed down by half. When it's time to run back, the hills are without mercy, but this is our cross to bear as San Franciscans. And what Russian Hill lacks in level running routes, it more than makes up for in great views. Not to mention that being a runner here gives you the gift of nice calves.



I've been in Russian Hill for four years now, and I don't think I can ever leave. I was tempted to say that this neighborhood has stolen my heart, but if you want cheesiness, you're better off checking out Cheese Plus at Pacific and Polk. It has everything you will ever want to bring on a picnic for the rest of your life. If you're not in a shopping mood, visit the window counter around the side, where you can order a coffee or a sandwich from the sidewalk and sit down at one of the outdoor tables.



Then wander down the street and leaf through used poetry and cookbooks at the **Russian Hill Bookstore** at Polk and Green. A visit to the neighborhood wouldn't be complete without a stop at Nick's Crispy Tacos, where the food is okay but the strip club-like décor of the lounge is classic, quirky San Francisco. Wind down your evening at a candlelit table in the back of Cresta's Twenty Two Eleven Club, our neighborhood's version of Cheers, where the bartenders are always up for a chat, and they make the best hot brandies on cold nights. See you there!



Check out more neighborhoods that we covered in our “Why I Love ...” series [here](#).

SFGATE <http://www.sfgate.com/living/article/A-hill-I-call-my-home-6375736.php>

Russian Hill: A hill I call my home

By Julie Balise and SFGate Updated 4:00 am, Friday, July 10, 2015



IMAGE 11 OF 18

Swensen's Ice Cream has served delicious desserts at the corner of Hyde and Union since 1948. Customers have a tough choice to make, between the flavors (like thin mint and blueberry cobbler) and sundae styles. Actor BD Wong talks about memories of visiting Swensen's Ice Cream on May 7, 2014. [less](#)

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the fourth installment of an occasional series focusing on the livability of Bay Area communities and neighborhoods.


Russian Hill is a summit I'm happy to call my home.

It's a beautiful neighborhood, with tree-lined streets and gorgeous, colorful homes. Since moving to Russian Hill a year ago, I've never managed to walk around the neighborhood without noticing the incredible views of the surrounding city and bay.


Look one way, you'll see Coit Tower; look another and you'll find the Golden Gate Bridge.

Tourists know Russian Hill for the wonderfully windy Lombard Street. It's worth seeing the block between Hyde and Leavenworth streets at least once, but visitors should beware the crowds, cars and selfie sticks that are sometime unpredictable. (Hint: Don't make this intersection part of your hills running route.) Lombard Street looked especially lovely during a recent visit.


MY NEIGHBORHOOD



Would you want to live in Pacifica?



Why the Marina is amazing — despite what you've heard



Why I think Berkeley is the best place to live in the Bay Area

Stay in Russian Hill a little while and you'll notice the shops, restaurants and energy around Polk Street. You can pick up a toy, treat or outfit for your pup at Bow Wow Meow, buy a book or two from **Russian Hill Bookstore**, or stock your fridge with organic goodies from Real Food Company -- but don't expect to meet a tight budget.

If you're keeping that fridge empty for whatever reason, you'll have no problem finding food and drink for all parts of your day on Polk Street. Cafe options include

The Brew, Saint Frank Coffee, Peet's Coffee & Tea and Starbucks. If you're more the tea type, DavidsTea is a few steps away.

Breakfast is quick and easy from The Bagelry (expect lines on weekends) and there are plenty of places serving a more leisurely brunch. Throughout the day, you'll enjoy options like burgers, pizza, empanadas, French and Thai cuisine on Polk Street. Nick's Crispy Tacos cuts prices for Taco Tuesdays, but I'm drawn to the cash-only eatery on quieter evenings. Grab a bottle of wine from one of Russian Hill's many shops, or explore the bar scene, which includes newcomer House Rules, Green

Sports Bar, Bullitt and Buccaneer.

With all the activity and options, Russian Hill can feel like a smaller version of the Marina District. Polk Street wakes up around 9 a.m. and stays active for the rest of the day, especially on weekends. If this buzz is too much for you, head up the hill two blocks to Hyde Street. Some of the neighborhood's finest dining is here. There's also the cable car line.

One of the first sounds I hear every day is the cable car bell. The Hyde Street line passes less than a block from my house, taking tourists and locals alike from downtown to Ghirardelli Square. During the summer, you'll hear the fog horn at all hours of the night. And when the Giants win the World Series, you hear honking horns and cheering on Polk Street.

Outdoor enthusiasts may be saddened to find that Russian Hill doesn't have any huge parks. Instead, the neighborhood is full of hidden gems, like Macondray Lane, where you can find peace from the noisy city. The Alice Marble Tennis Courts provide an incredible view of the city and bay, while giving tennis and basketball players a place to work out. (Walking uphill to the court is a workout by itself.) At the top of Vallejo Street, there's a small park overlooking North Beach and Chinatown.

Russian Hill's location in the city is perfect. Runners are about a mile from Fort Mason and two miles from Marina Green, depending on their starting point. Hungry residents will find more options than they need if they continue down Polk and Hyde streets toward Nob Hill, or take a turn toward the Marina or Chinatown. Hill aficionados have easy access to Telegraph Hill and Nob Hill. And tourists, you know Ghirardelli Square and Fisherman's Wharf are nearby.

My journey through San Francisco is just beginning, and there's no place I'd rather start my days than Russian Hill.

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MY JOURNEY

AN EXPLORATION OF LIFE AND LOVE

RUSSIAN HILL BOOKSTORE

July 13, 2015

If you know me or been reading my blog for any period of time, you know I love bookstores. When I was in California, I dropped in on Chronicle Books and got to talking with one of the employees. We talked about all sorts of things, books, bookstores, book sales, used books... the works. And it was she who suggested I visit the [Russian Hill Bookstore](#). It's located on Polk Street just a few stores down from Saint Frank Coffee.

What I loved about Russian Hill Bookstore was that it was quintessentially San Franciscan. It carried a wide variety of books and had just a quirky, laid back kind of feel. It was pretty busy for a weekday afternoon. I bought a few cards from their generous section of letterpress cards. This is the kind of place where I'd curl up on the floor and read in one of their cozy corners.



Hi. I'm Meg,
photographer & traveler.

I'm based in San Francisco & New
York and currently live in
Birmingham, AL.

I love life, and I love love.

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MY TRAVELS

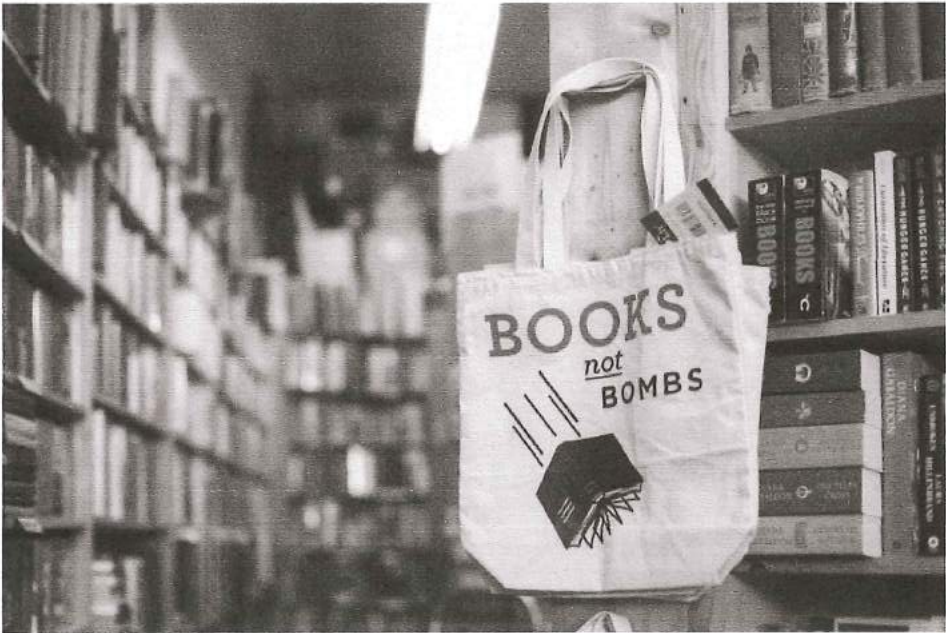
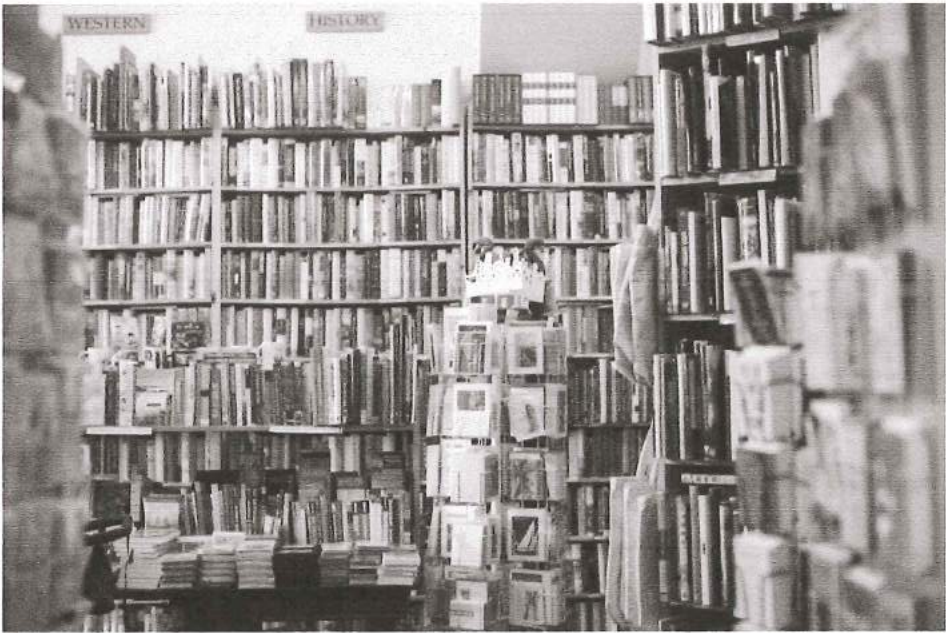


CURRENTLY
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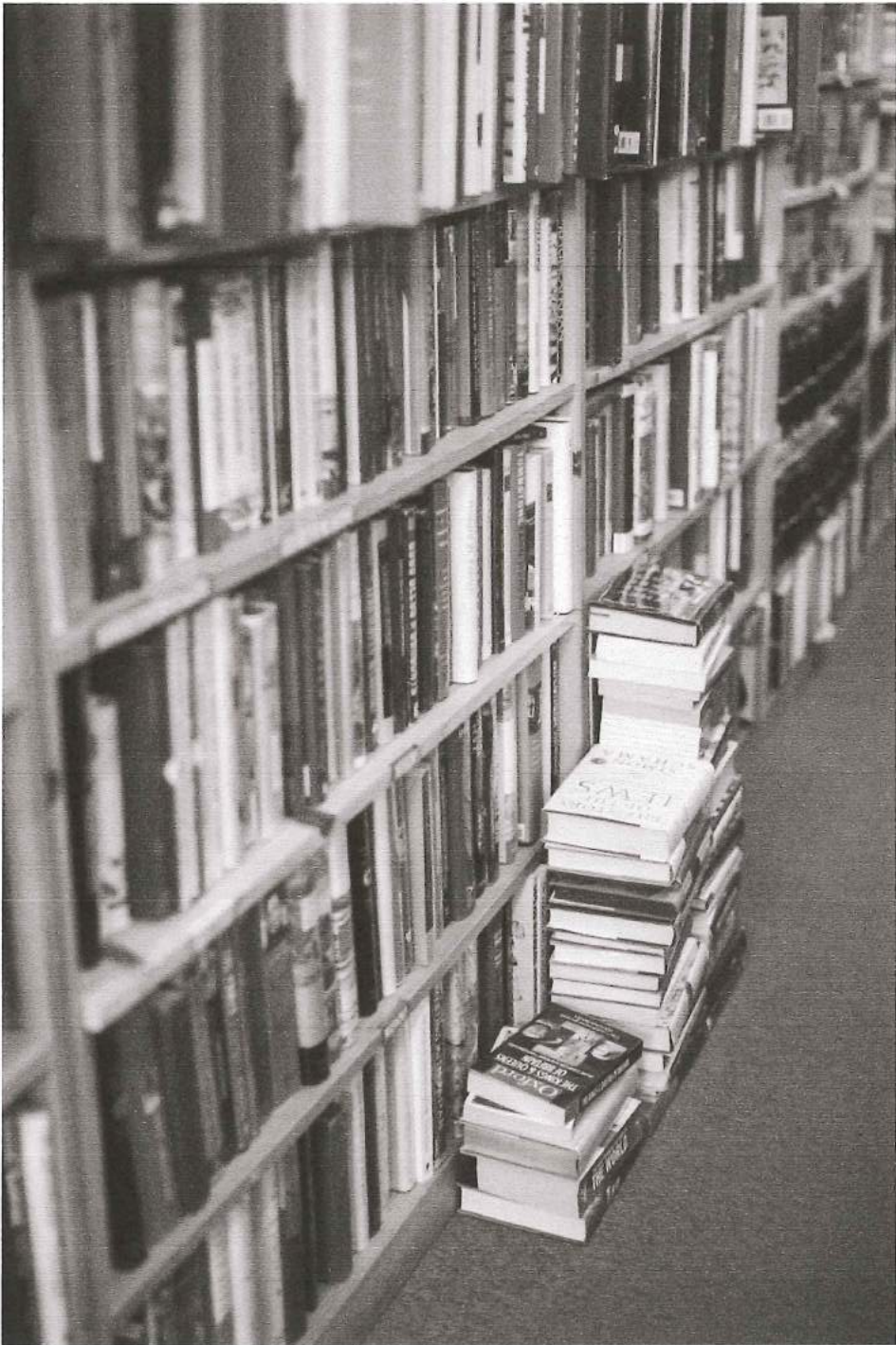


Check out my progress for 2017!

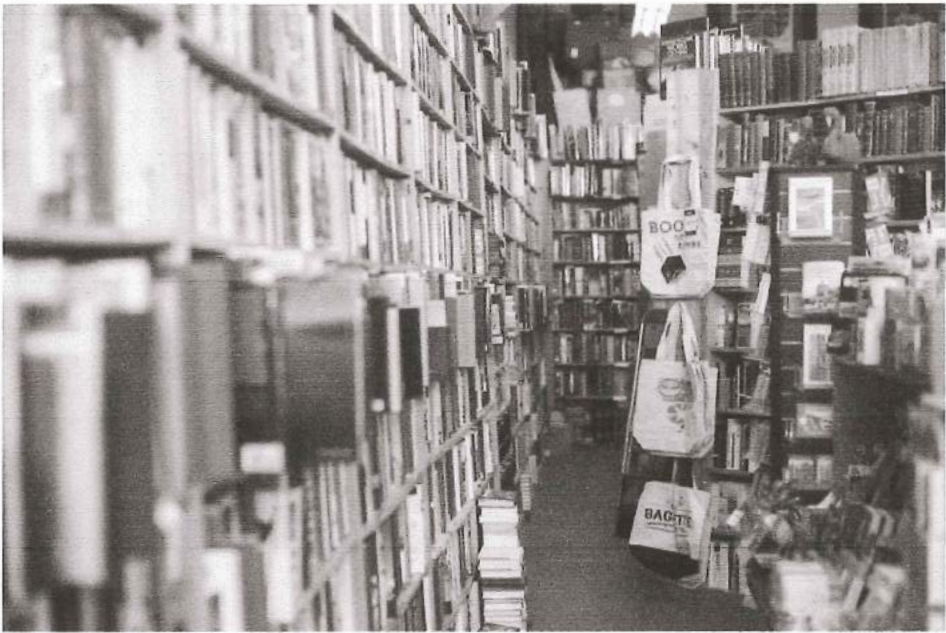
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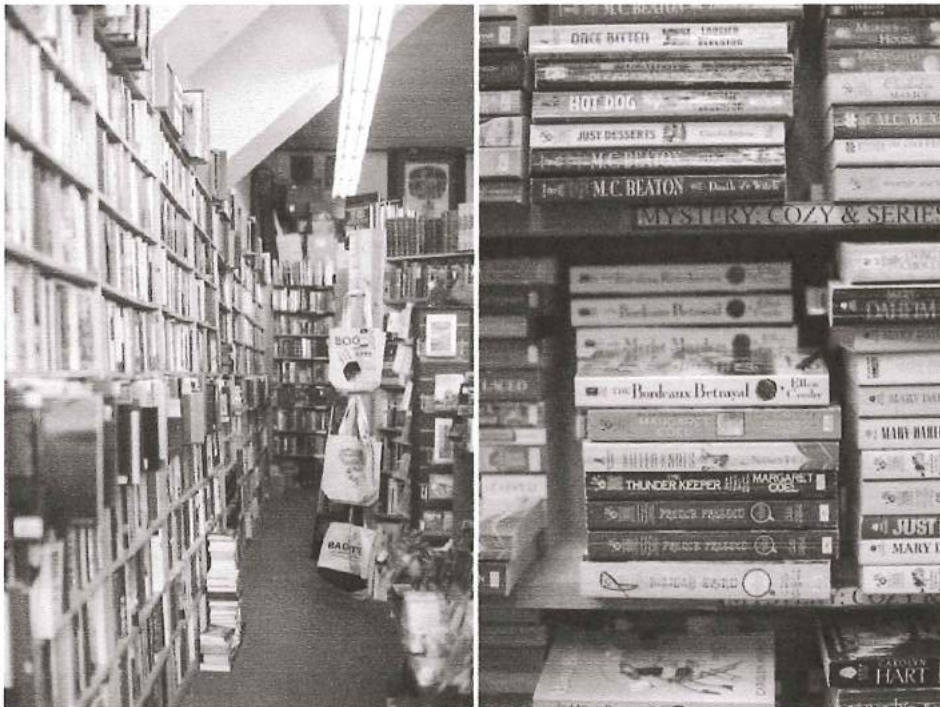














Russian Hill Bookstore, 2234-2230 Polk Street, San Francisco. April 15, 2015 | Canon 5d markii 50mm 1.2L

 Comment

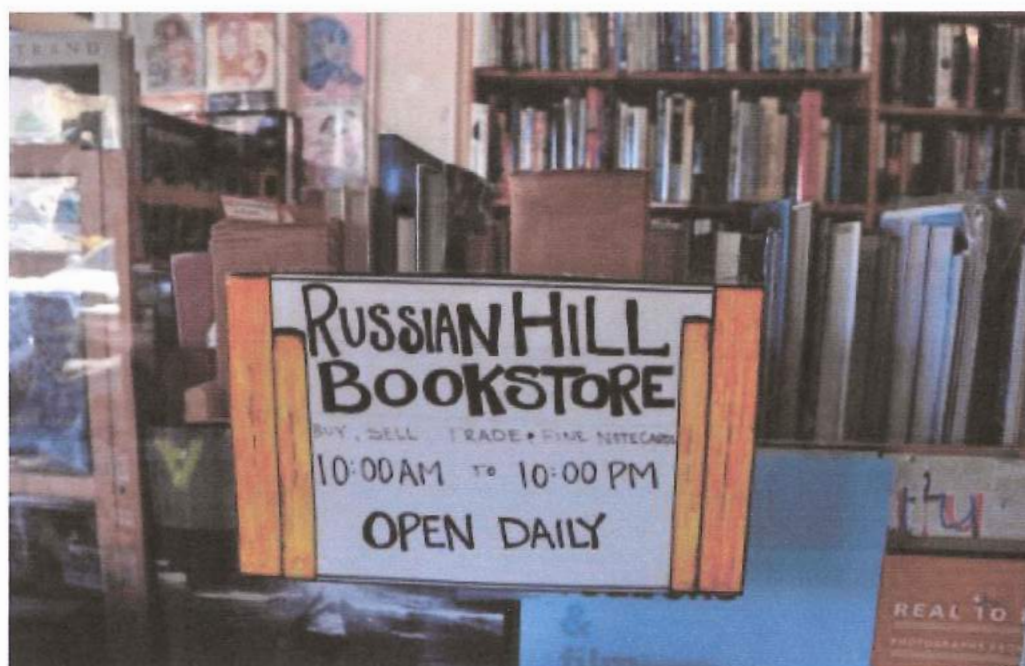
 Stateside

 Bookstore, San Francisco

1 Like

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San Francisco's Russian Hill Bookstore – Loved by Locals and Tourists



A sign in the window of the Russian Hill Bookstore

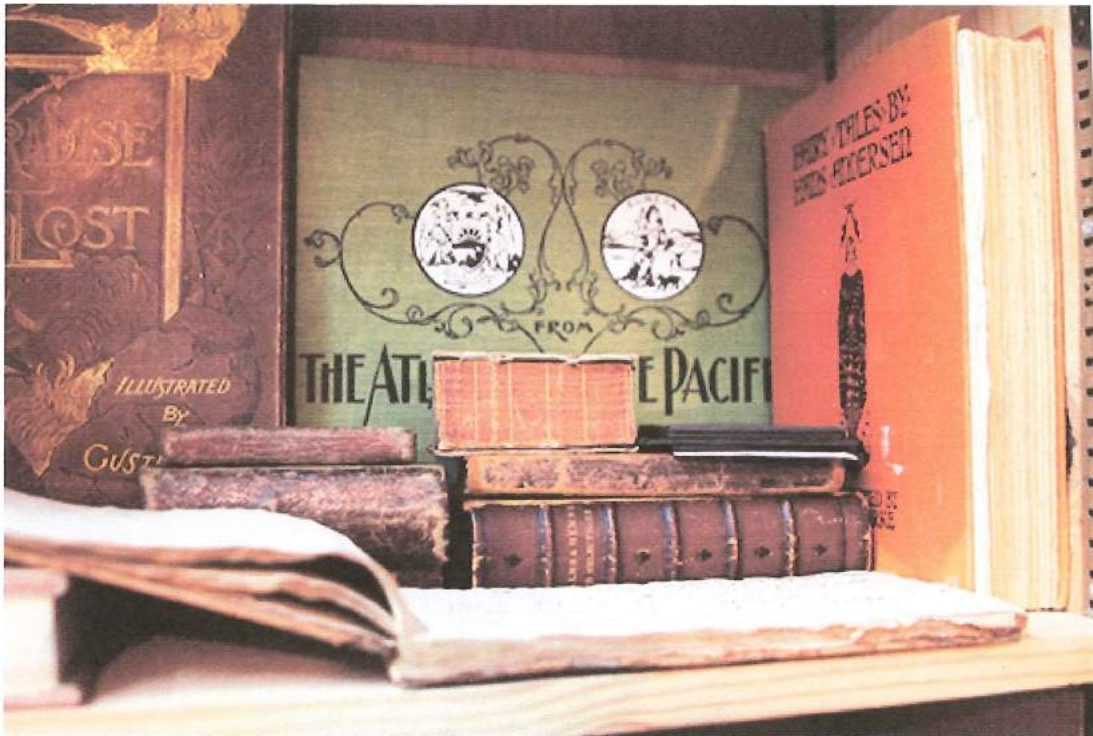
The Russian Hill district of San Francisco is a quirky area full of artists and creative types, and the [Russian Hill Bookstore](#) is a key part of that community.

Owned by Carol Spencer, who has been selling books for almost 40 years, the business can be found on Polk Street in the west side of the Russian Hill neighborhood. Late night book browsing is possible here as the store stays open from 10am to 10pm daily. There's usually a mix of tourists and locals perusing the shelves.

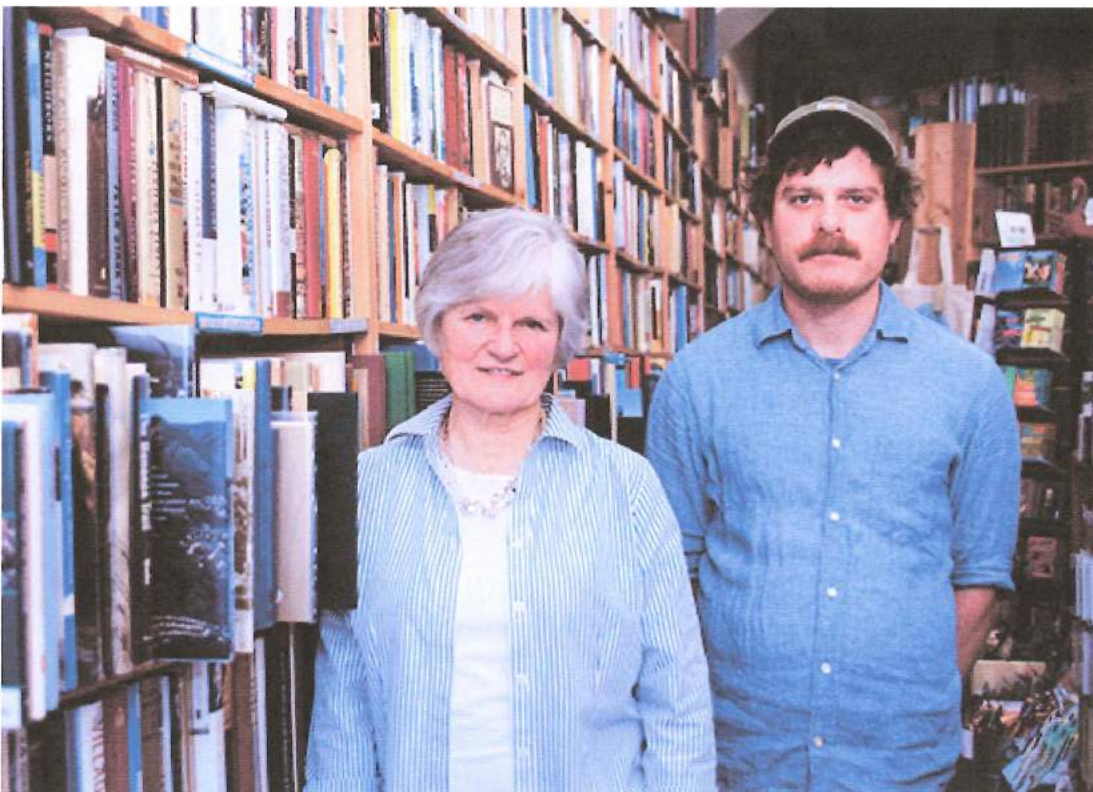
The neighborhood is one of San Francisco's oldest and dates back to 1806 when Russian ships regularly docked in San Francisco Bay.

It's a genuine community-based used bookstore with a fantastic selection of vintage paperbacks, including some remarkable pulp. You'll find lots of cookbooks, modern bestsellers and books about San Francisco. There is also a large selection on cards, journals, calendars, board games and gifts suitable for bookish types. This isn't a large bookshop but Carol makes every inch count and you won't be short of inspiration when you walk through the door.

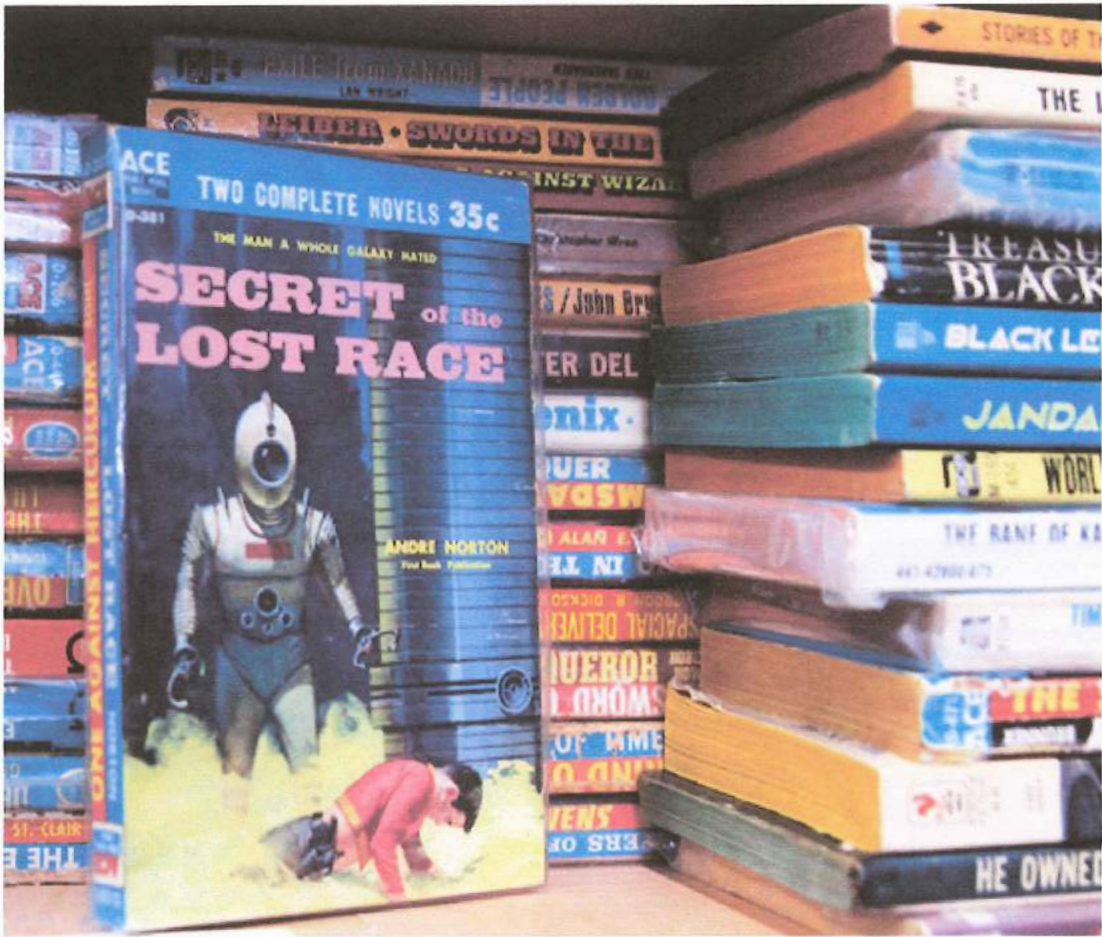
[Browse their books.](#)



Russian Hill offers many rare books



Carol Spencer and Benjamin Bellouin from Russian Hill



Vintage paperbacks abound like this Ace Double

Share



[bookstores](#)



About Richard Davies

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[AbeBooks' Literary Link Lineup](#)

3 Responses to "San Francisco's Russian Hill Bookstore – Loved by Locals and Tourists"

- 1.

G+1 0

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ReddEverywhere

Notes from a retired librarian on a mission

Don't get me wrong. It's not that I'm not on board with the whole ebook thing. I'm not quite like a bookstore with its neatly arranged shelves of books and art and suggested reading. I especially enjoy discovering small, independent bookstores and report back on as many of these gems as I can. That is my focus, but there is real books or reading. Hope you enjoy my blog and come back often.

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[My Favorites](#)

Monday, March 20, 2017

An Easy Walk

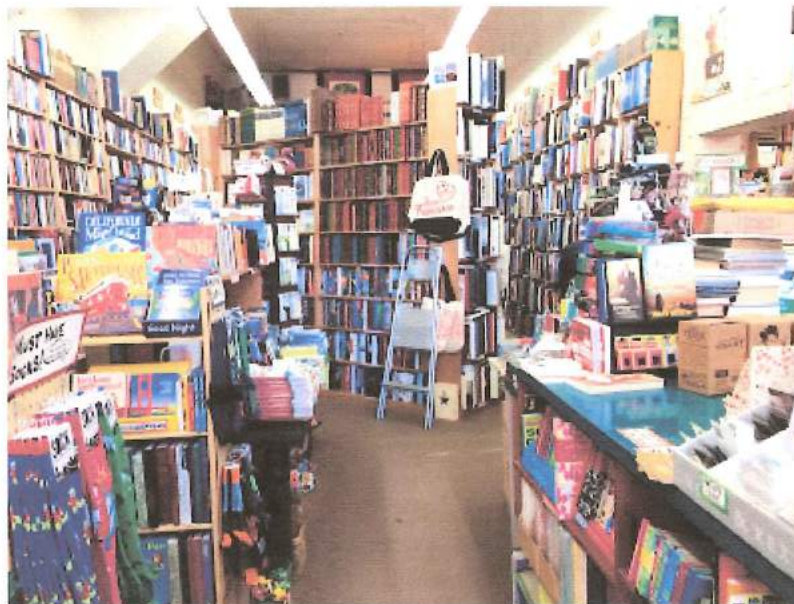
Russian Hill Bookstore

2234 Polk Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
415-929-0997
russianhillbookstore.com

There's nothing quite like visiting a bookstore that has been on my bucket list for several years. (See [previous post](#).) Likewise, there's nothing quite like discovering a charming bookstore completely new to me. After my tour of San Francisco's City Lights, I still had plenty of sunny afternoon left for exploration and, according to Google, pl



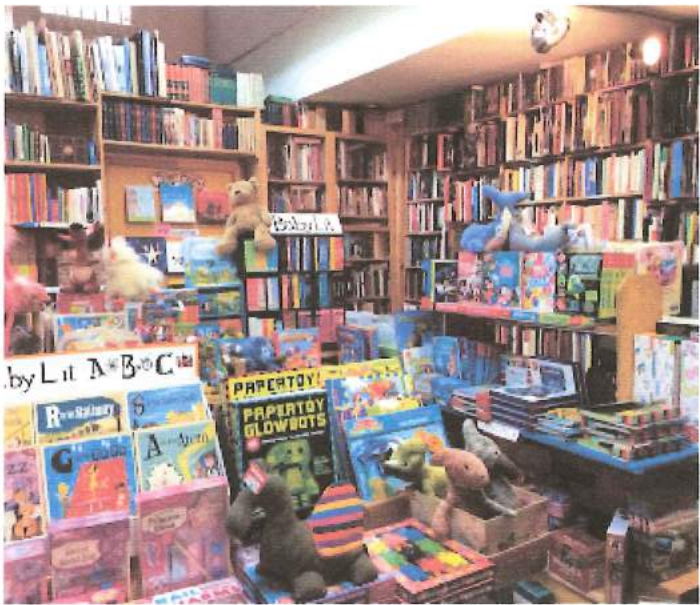
possibilities. I settled on one that judging by the map looked to be an easy walk, and went to Russian Hill Bookstore. I was enjoying a pleasant stroll through a section of Chinatown . . . and then . . . suddenly before me loomed the all-too-obvious inspiration for the name, Russian Hill. To call this a steep slope would be rather like calling *War and Peace* just a book. San Francisco natives, I'm sure, would chuckle, but bear in mind I am from Michigan. We have beautiful sand dunes and maybe some ski hills with some severe pitch, but not sidewalks. With no end in sight!! Nevertheless, I pressed on in firm belief that the cross street I needed was just a couple of blocks away. Five blocks later I encountered an even steeper portion of this "hill," so steep in fact that the sidewalk became a stair case. That's right. A sidewalk of steps! Ready to meet the challenge, I continued on, thinking that this bookstore had better be worth such bodily aggravation.



Fortunately, after a few blocks of sidewalk stair case, the terrain leveled out and the walk was smooth again from there. Fortunately also, I am happy to report that Russian Hill Bookstore was indeed worth the climb. A rack of greeting cards on the sidewalk in front of the establishment beckoned me inside with the suggestion that this store would be considerably different from the one I had just left.

Different indeed! Russian Hill boasts new and used books of all types as well as greeting cards, gifts, and a large selection of board games. Then there are the book bags, candles, scarves, tea towels, stationery items, and even old sheet music, not to mention stuffed animals and toys accenting the overflowing children's room. Leaving no bookshelf unadorned, this shop is loaded with fun from floor to ceiling.

Owner and lover of books since childhood, Carol Spencer readily filled me in on the history of this delightful shop. In the bookstore business since 1974, Carol opened this part of the store in 1993 in a space that once was a flower shop. A year later the business expanded into a former travel agency next door when Russian Hill's card and gift area was added.



Store owner, Carol Spenser

With so many unique and unusual items, I found this store to be a browser's paradise. I unearthed an abundance of gifts for friends and family members, and kept finding more and more things I had to have. I finally had to stop



myself when the grim reality of overloading my luggage to get my purchases back home dawned on me.



Russian Hill Bookstore heralded for its wide selection of cards for occasions, and the time of my visit could not have been better. A few days later, my husband and I would be celebrating our 28th anniversary, and I found the perfect card to give him (along with a pair of quirky socks and a unique beer glass). So much fun stuff, so little room in the suitcase.

It would be easy to spend several hours talking to Carol and perusing the books and things in this remarkable store. Easy that is if I hadn't had such an arduous journey getting here in the first place, a journey I peacefully reflected upon while enjoying an Uber ride back to my hotel after a demanding walk, well worth the effort.



Posted by [M Redd](#) at [2:09 PM](#)

Reactions: like (0) interesting (0) cool (0) meh (0)



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Legacy Business Application

for

Russian Hill Bookstore

Letters of Support

Russian Hill Community Association

1166 Green St. San Francisco, CA 94109 510-928-8243 rhcasf.com

April 14, 2017

Office of Small Business
Attn: Legacy Business Registration Application
City Hall, Room 110
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, 94102

Re: Russian Hill Bookstore – An ideal Legacy Business

Gentlepeople:

The Russian Hill Bookstore makes an essential contribution to our community and is extraordinarily well-deserving of “Legacy Business” status.

The Russian Hill Bookstore is a gathering place, a browsing place, a place for children and adults of all ages. The Bookstore is the source of a broad range of cards and stationary, unique gift ideas and, of course, shelves and shelves of books. It holds a special place in our community for all that it offers – interesting and unusual gift ideas as well as a welcoming place to simply scan the shelves.

The Russian Hill Bookstore is a well-known site – “I’ll meet you at the Bookstore” is a frequently heard exchange between neighbors.

The Russian Hill Bookstore is a linchpin for our community – one of those unique establishments that both define the community as well as support it.

We urge that the Russian Hill Bookstore be designated a Legacy Business and that it continues to serve the community that loves and enjoys it for generations to come.

Cordially,



Kathleen Courtney
Chair, Housing and Zoning Committee

Cc: Jamie Cherry, Jeff Cheney, Russian Hill Community Association; Robyn Tucker, Pacific Avenue Neighborhood Association

From: Julie Enright
Sent: Monday, April 10, 2017 3:05 PM
To: SFOSB (ECN) <sfosb@sfgov.org>
Subject: Russian Hill Bookstore - Legacy Business Applicant

Hi there,

I've lived in San Francisco for only 11 years now, but I am a die-hard customer of RHB. Very sadly, we've seen so many San Francisco bookstores forced to close their doors and I think it's terribly important to recognize the small businesses that make San Francisco and its neighborhoods so unique and wonderful.

Almost any gift I give to friends, co-workers or family typically comes from RHB. Their selection and attention to detail in their little shop is truly special. It's a labyrinth of history, knowledge and fun. I just wanted to convey my affection for this shop and hope it's considered in your decision making for their Legacy Application.

"A book is a gift you can open again and again." -Garrison Keillor

Sincerely,
Julie Enright

March 8, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

My husband and I live in the Russian Hill neighborhood, two blocks from the Russian Hill Bookstore. We are both retired college professors who love having an independent bookstore where we can browse and buy all kinds of wonderful books, from extremely scholarly works to thrillers. We have come to depend on our little bookstore as part of our life here, an oasis of intelligent, cultured volumes. My husband got his doctorate at UC Berkeley and always wanted to come back to the Bay Area when we retired, so when we were looking for a place to live, we chose this neighborhood because of Polk Street and the Russian Hill Bookstore.

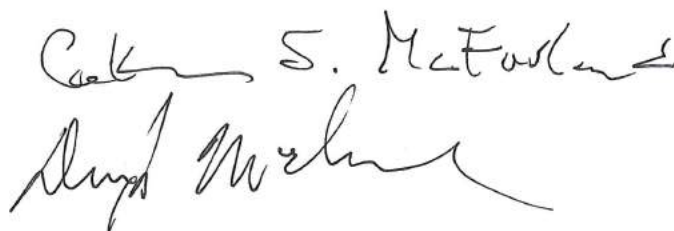
Because of the very well-read staff who stock the store, my husband and I are able to find exactly what we want, even books in his very esoteric field, which includes Renaissance, Latin, and Greek literature. To us the bookstore is the heart of our little village here, a place we visit almost everyday. Russian Hill Books is where we buy not only books in our fields, but books for our grandchildren in the fabulous children's section, and birthday cards for our large family. We can even bring in used books which the wonderful folks at the store will take as credit toward a used paperback mystery.

It is establishments such as Russian Hill books that deepen the cultural life of San Francisco, the most European American city. Independent bookstores are disappearing all over America. We must nurture ours. It is part of what makes this city so livable, so exciting, and so joyful.

Please consider Russian Hill Books as a Legacy establishment. It is a wonderful, friendly, learned little shop full of beauty and humanity, and San Francisco would be a lesser place without it.

Thank you,

Catherine and Douglas McFarland

The block contains two handwritten signatures. The top signature is "Catherine S. McFarland" written in a cursive script. The bottom signature is "Doug McFarland" also in a cursive script.

Subject: Support for Russian Hill Bookstore Legacy Status
From: [REDACTED]
Date: 3/9/2017 2:21 PM
To: rssnhllb@pacbell.net

To: Office of Small Business
Legacy Business Registration Application
From: Ian Maddison
[REDACTED] Hyde Street
SF, CA. 94109
Re: Russian Hill Bookstore

My name is Ian Maddison and I live with my wife and two young daughters at [REDACTED] Hyde Street in Russian Hill. I have lived in the same apartment for the past 11 years. I am also the Treasurer of Russian Hill Neighbors, the largest neighborhood organization in the north east portion of the city. I recently became aware of Russian Hill Bookstore applying for Legacy Business status. Though the business may not necessarily have the standard tenure required for such status, I feel strongly the type of business very much should be a factor to consider. Book stores are increasingly scarce and I fear my daughters may grow up without the ability to walk into a book store. Russian Hill Bookstore is a treasure and if Legacy Status can help the business stay in our neighborhood even one more year, then I fully support your department granting the request. Please help maintain the unique opportunity of having a book store in this neighborhood. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Ian Maddison
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Doris J. Mehler
[REDACTED] Broadway # [REDACTED]
San Francisco, CA 94109

March 10, 2017

Office of Small Business
Attn: Legacy Business Registration Application
City Hall, Room 110
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Application for Legacy Business status by Russian Hill Bookstore

I am pleased to hear from 'Russian Hill Neighbors' that Russian Hill Bookstore applied for Legacy Business status. I strongly support giving them this award.

I have lived on Russian Hill since 1974 and have been frequenting this lovely old bookstore regularly over the many years. I have found many little treasures there!

I would like to additionally express that I feel it is not only ethical but also smart to support local Small Businesses rather than letting the Big Box stores move in, take over, and destroy the local business infrastructure that has served our community so well for so long. What is gained by that? If the businesses are locally owned rather than by a big corporation in another state, the City benefits also, as more of our tax dollars stay in our community – and the community keeps its diversity.

We want to support our local neighborhood businesses, particularly those like Russian Hill Book Store which has added much charm and color to our great City and been good to and for us!

Sincerely,

Doris J. Mehler
Russian Hill Resident

To those at Russian Hill Bookstore,

I am writing to voice my support for Russian Hill Bookstore achieving Legacy Business status based on my personal experience as a patron for nearly a decade. I've spent the last nine years shopping at the bookstore and appreciate so many things about it. In particular, the greeting card selection is unparalleled. I send several cards a month, and I can't imagine finding anything comparable anywhere else!

They also stock a fantastic assortment of books that appeals to many genres. The selection of local authors and SF history books is truly impressive, and my family has so enjoyed all the interesting treasures we've bought over the years. Plus, being able to shop unique small gifts and board games on Polk Street has come in handy countless times.

Russian Hill Bookstore is both nostalgic and a breath of fresh air in the neighborhood. It enriches our community by offering a wide selection of unique, clever items. It also showcases local talent and offers dozens of affordable books in their sale bin. I can confidently say Russian Hill Bookstore is an immense asset to our neighborhood, and I would be happy to see them earn the Legacy Business status.

--

anné jude anderson

[digital portfolio](#)

[annejude.com](#)

March 20, 2017

Office of Small Business
City Hall
San Francisco, CA

Re: Russian Hill Bookstore

To whom it may concern:

I want to add my support and praise for the **Russian Hill Book Store** on 2230 Polk Street. This is a real gem in our neighborhood. It is a great source for both new and used books in addition to being a terrific place for greeting cards. The staff is knowledgeable and friendly.

Most important- it is a local store with warm people who love books and share that feeling with their neighbors. It was here when I moved to the city and really adds to the local and unique feel of this slice of Polk Street. It is a cultural landmark of our neighborhood.

If it were to leave and be replaced by another Nail Salon or Bar, that would be a real loss to those of us on Russian Hill.

Please visit this store and see for yourself what an asset it is to the community.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stan Adler".

Stan Adler
[REDACTED] Jones Street
San Francisco, CA 94109

March 23, 2017

Office of Small Business
City Hall
San Francisco, CA

Re: Russian Hill Bookstore

To whom it may concern:

I'm writing in support of Legacy Business status for the **Russian Hill Book Store** on 2230 Polk Street. This bookstore is a real treasure in our neighborhood. It is a wonderful resource, offering both new and used books, not to mention the best greeting cards in the city! The staff is knowledgeable and friendly.

Most important: it is a local store with character and charm, where people who love books can experience a sense of community and connect with their neighbors. It surely contributes to the local and unique feel of this slice of Polk Street. It is a cultural landmark in our neighborhood.

If it were to leave and be replaced by another nail salon or bar, that would be a real loss to those of us on Russian Hill.

Please visit this store and see for yourself what an asset it is to the community.

Thank you,

Lynn Jacobs
[REDACTED] Jones Street
San Francisco, CA 94109

April 5, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Claudia Kraehe, and I am writing in support of Russian Hill Bookstore receiving landmark status.

As a Senior Move Manager here in San Francisco, I have seen firsthand how important the Russian Hill Bookstore is to the community. Part of my work involves helping seniors who are moving from their homes of possibly 50 years due to the death of a loved one or financial or health issues. Some of these people are booklovers whose books are extensions of their souls, and giving them up represents an immense loss. When they learn that Ms. Spencer and her staff will come to their home to look at their book collection, they are relieved and delighted that at least some of their books will have a very special home. The fact that Ms. Spencer will pay for their books provides a boost to them at a time when they are spending a lot of money to move. While the circumstances leading to these seniors having to move cannot be helped, their situation is mitigated in being able to pass along their treasures to Russian Hill Bookstore, a place where some of them have shopped for years.

I truly appreciate the respect that Ms. Spencer and her staff show my clients in difficult times. Their gentle entry into seniors' homes, sometimes when there has been a death, is more akin to a ministry than that of a vendor.

On other occasions, when I have been in the store, I have seen a diverse clientele, from individuals who are well off to people who are homeless in there selling books. Each person has always been treated with dignity and courtesy.

Russian Hill Bookstore is one of those institutions that make me want to wave the San Francisco flag, and I urge landmark status for the store.

Respectfully,

Claudia Kraehe
Step By Step Downsizing

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

April 5, 2017

To Whom This May Come:

I've just heard that the Russian Hill Bookstore at 2234 Polk Street is applying for Landmark Status, and I'm writing in support of this effort. Russian Hill Bookstore is, in my opinion, an anchor business on Polk Street. It has long been a refuge for book lovers who choose to browse and discover something unexpected, and it is the best card shop in San Francisco, bar none! With its long business hours, Russian Hill sets a neighborly tone for Polk Street and encourages foot traffic which also benefits other businesses in this area.

At a time when more and more bookstores are closing and more businesses in general are succumbing to skyrocketing rents, we need places like Russian Hill Bookstore to support civic life in San Francisco.

With Best Wishes for Success,

Chris McMonigle
[REDACTED] Jones Street
SF, CA

Sacramento Street # ,

Sally Whitehead
[REDACTED] Vallejo St. # [REDACTED]
San Francisco, CA 94123

April 6, 2017

RE: Russian Hill Bookstore, 2234 Polk Street

To Whom It May Concern:

I moved into the Russian Hill neighborhood 5 years ago. One of the great places on Polk Street has always been the Russian Hill Bookstore. Always inviting, this is a place that not only sells books of all kinds, but is an integral part of the community.

Books new or used can be perused, even a collection of bargain used books in a bin outside the store. The staff has been wonderful in accepting and paying me for many books I no longer needed. They even visit people's homes to evaluate large collections of potential used books.

The bookstore also has an extensive collection of greeting cards for every imaginable and unimaginable situation, beautiful handmade cards and many that cannot be found elsewhere.

Bookstores are becoming an endangered species these days. It would be a shame if this wonderful bookstore would have to close due to rising rent costs. It has been for a long time and I hope will continue to be a valuable fixture to the neighborhood and city.

Russian Hill Bookstore is worthy of every kind of support from the city to keep it the gem that it is, serving our community so well.

Sincerely,

Sally Whitehead

Subject: In Support of Russian Hill Bookstore

From: Libby Klitsch [REDACTED]

Date: 4/7/2017 7:18 PM

To: rssnhllb@pacbell.net

Hello!

I have lived in Russian Hill for over 20 years with my husband. We both love this store and shop there often. It is a neighborhood gem! The proprietors keep the inventory of cards unique and plentiful – the best in the city. We have purchased most of our greeting cards there, but also find them a great resource for calendars, books, journals and gifts. They also have a great children's section.

I hope they can will stay a staple of Polk Street for generations to come!

Sincerely,

Libby Klitsch

Green Street
San Francisco, CA

Subject: Thank You -- and Of course, I endorse your application!

From: mbkrieger [REDACTED]

Date: 4/9/2017 9:47 PM

To: rssnhllb@pacbell.net

Dear Russian Hill Bookstore-- Owners and Employees

I have lived in Russian Hill for over 40 years and one component that makes this neighborhood so wonderful is it's bookstore, Russian Hill Bookstore, that carries such a wide and eclectic selection of books, learning tools, games, gifts and cards-- and other inventory that enrich the lives of everyone who visits and lives in this vicinity. I want this store to stay, grow and prosper as it serves and reaches young people as they raise their families and teach their children the everlasting value of books and reading. This retail establishment is an integral part of San Francisco and its application should be honored and approved!

Thank you for listening!

Sincerely,

[Myra](#) Krieger

[REDACTED] Green Street

San Francisco, CA 94109

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: Legacy Business Letter

From: John Belongie [REDACTED]

Date: 4/12/2017 8:32 PM

To: Carol Spencer <rssnhllb@pacbell.net>

To whom it may concern:

I'm writing today to provide my support in determining that Russian Hill Bookstore is both a cultural and historic treasure to the city of San Francisco and ask you to grant them Legacy Business status for the city. Russian Hill Bookstore is a historical destination as important as the other historic attractions of the city. Quality independent bookstores are cultural lifeblood to any city and yet they are becoming quite rare. At a time when many independent bookstores have not survived the last few decades it is important that we work to preserve the legacy of a true independent community bookstore. Not only does Russian Hill Bookstore contain a massive selection of rare and unusual books, it is unique in that it is the finest quality used bookstore for many miles. Russian Hill Bookstore continues to provide the city with it's wonderful selection, quality items, and knowledgeable and friendly staff. For those interested in literature and history I know of no other bookstore in the city which compares to the history, experience, and charm of Russian Hill Bookstore.

Sincerely,

John Belongié

Transmutation Publishing

Subject: endorsement for legacy business status

From: "Rosemary Lucier" [REDACTED]

Date: 4/13/2017 6:58 PM

To: <rssnhllb@pacbell.net>

Sir:

I strongly recommend Russian Hill Bookstore for legacy business status.

Since it opened over 20 years ago, it's been an integral part of the Polk St community. Its owners actively support and promote local activities. It provides unique merchandise that attracts shoppers to the street which benefits the other local merchants.

As the neighborhood and Polk Street shops have evolved over the years, the Russian Hill Bookstore has continued to stand out as a go-to destination for both neighbors and visitors.

Please count me in as a supporter of its legacy business status.

Thank you,
Rosemary Lucier

Subject: support for legacy business status

From: "Dennis Graves" [REDACTED]

Date: 4/15/2017 10:52 AM

To: <rssnhllb@pacbell.net>

Dear Sir:

I highly endorse legacy business status for the Russian Hill Bookstore.

Most businesses on our north side of Polk Street have come and gone over the years. The Russian Hill Bookstore has been the almost only constant. It provides affordable merchandise, an excellent selection of adult and children's books, and stimulating children's puzzles and games. The proprietors actively support neighborhood and merchant events.

Every shopping neighborhood needs businesses that demonstrate community spirit and outreach. Russian Hill Bookstore does just this. Please recognize it as a legacy business,

Thank you,
Dennis Graves

████ Vallejo St
San Francisco, CA
94109
April 14, 2017

Russian Hill Bookstore has been an important part of our family's life since it opened on Polk Street in the '90s. We go there regularly. I remember when our son was about 12, and it was his father's birthday. He rushed over to Russian Hill and brought back a book for his father on a dark December night. It is a good place to linger, and to look for and find good reading, good gifts, and good stationaries. There is no other place like it on the street. It is so important to our neighborhood.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jean Balibrera". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jean" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Balibrera".

Jean Balibrera

Subject: Supporting Russian Hill Bookstore

From: "Machtay, Henry" [REDACTED]

Date: 4/15/2017 4:06 PM

To: rssnhllb@pacbell.net

To whom it may concern:

Russian Hill Bookstore is an important part of my on-foot commute to and from work each day. I teach at Galileo HS and live just south of Broadway.

I've gone to Russian Hill looking for a specific book. I've also gone there when I've needed to buy gifts (my friends would prefer books or documents). Thanks to Russian Hill, I rediscovered the game Diplomacy — it had been an important part of my time as a high schooler, and I've now enjoyed a number of games with friends here in San Francisco.

This store deserves landmark status. And the Russian Hill neighborhood needs some of our longtime businesses grandfathered in. The next time there's an economic downturn, my neighborhood will be overloaded with empty storefronts (places that used to be neighborhood staples, but are now overpriced restaurants).

thank you,
Henry Machtay
94109

Hank Machtay
Media Arts, Galileo Academy, SF

"Behind every classroom misbehavior is a story. If you knew the stories, nine times out of ten they would break your heart."

Subject: Russian Hill Bookstore
From: Josh Rosenthal [REDACTED]
Date: 4/15/2017 11:00 PM
To: "Rssnhllb@pacbell.net" <Rssnhllb@pacbell.net>

To SF offices of Small Business :

I am a resident of Russian Hill.

The Russian Hill Bookstore is the most important legacy business on Polk Street. Every community needs a bookstore, and the closest used and new bookstores are NOT close - you have to venture deep into North Beach or Fort Mason to find one.

This store is not only a core part of our community - it ranks as one of the best used bookstores in San Francisco. The California-centric titles, the first-editions, the comprehensive sections for all genres, the signed books - where are you going to find this type of inventory in SF ? I would add that there are also very few bookstores or toy stores for children. This store has a nice selection of both. If you've walked around our neighborhood lately, there are tons of little kids and strollers now. These kids and their parents need a place to buy this merchandise - someplace in the real world, instead of Amazon !

I urge whomever it is that decides on such matters to preserve this Russian Hill institution. Not just for our community, but for the city as a whole.

There are very few businesses I would care to write about in these terms. Russian Hill Bookstores is one of them.

Thank you,

Josh Rosenthal

Peter Vliet
[REDACTED] Jackson Street
San Francisco, CA 94133
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

San Francisco Office of Small Business
San Francisco, CA

18 April 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

Whenever I visit a new city, there are two ways I can find my bearings: by enjoying local food and drink, and by checking out the nearest local bookstore. Both of these places, I have found, will nourish one's soul, but this day in age it is much easier to find purveyors of refreshment and fare for the body than for the mind. While it is easy to rue this new reality, a silver lining can be found in that it has impelled the best neighborhood bookstores to shine as indispensable constituents of a strong community. Russian Hill Bookstore is one such bookstore.

I moved to San Francisco almost two years ago and was, for a short time, content with the city's many tourist 'must-dos' and pleasant strolling routes. But as anyone who has been a newcomer knows, familiar and popular sights are only amusing for so long before loneliness sets in. One day during a ramble up Polk Street the SF fog seemed to miraculously open up, beaming a ray of light on a cart of dollar books out front of a storefront- the surest sign of a used book store. There, at the Russian Hill Bookstore, I found old friends like Tolstoy, Whitman, Ellison, and Rilke. The weekend hours melted away as I browsed titles new and used, contemporary and old, and felt at home once more.

San Francisco is home to world class local independent bookstores, some of which are more heralded than Russian Hill Bookstore. However, Russian Hill is the type of neighborhood bookstore that provides a modicum of stability and identity to Russian Hill and the Polk Street shopping district, and such distinctiveness between neighborhoods is one of the great vestiges of San Francisco in this era of rapid change in the city. I strongly encourage you to consider Russian Hill Bookstore for Legacy Business Status.

Sincerely,


Peter L. Vliet

Letter of Support for Russian Hill Bookstore

April 16, 2017

The City of San Francisco Office of Small Business

City Hall, Room 110, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, 94102

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to you because I believe that the Russian Hill Bookstore at 2234 Polk St. San Francisco, CA 94109 should be added to the City of San Francisco Legacy Business Registry.

Given the current state of society where virtually everything is available to us with the press of a button using our mobile phones, many small businesses that previously primarily served our needs are becoming obsolete. What we often forget is that these small businesses do not just solely provide us with goods to purchase, but they also positively contribute to the neighborhoods they serve in so many different and crucial ways. They add charm to our neighborhoods, they attract more people and families, they attract more businesses, and overall they directly impact the wellbeing of the community. When there are more businesses like Russian Hill Bookstore, the entire community thrives.

In the current climate where technology plays a heavy role in all of our lives, it is now more than ever important to protect the small businesses that make San Francisco uniquely San Francisco. The Russian Hill Bookstore is one of the great businesses in the Russian Hill neighborhood; there just is not anything else like it in this area. I personally love visiting this area on weekends. I love the thriving community on Polk Street and that the liveliness attracts just about everyone - from the elderly to families to the youth. The area has so much to offer from small cafes, local groceries, restaurants, and of course, The Russian Hill Bookstore. The Russian Hill Bookstore is one of my favorite businesses in this area. It offers a large and unique selection of new and used books and even holds community events like board game nights. This bookstore makes books, knowledge, imagination, creativity accessible to anyone and everyone. I know I am not alone in saying that I love being able to come in on a Sunday afternoon after having lunch at a neighboring restaurant with my cup of coffee to read and discover new books. It adds so much value to my life that Amazon.com could never add.

It would be a tragedy to see this small business be pushed out by big money and the ever rising costs of operating in the city. It would be so sad to see the Russian Hill neighborhood lose another one of its valuable small businesses. Without businesses like the Russian Hill Bookstore, San Francisco would lose its charm, character, and most importantly, its history. We do not need yet another cookie-cutter big business franchise, we need to preserve our unique and historical small businesses. It is so important that we support and protect this bookstore. They are paramount to the health of our neighborhoods and the San Francisco community.

Sincerely,

SF Local Resident,

Monica To

██████ Polk St.

San Francisco, CA 94102

Letter of Support

April 16th, 2017

Dear Office of Small Business,

My name is Tim Wu, and I am writing this letter to show my support for the Russian Hill Bookstore at 2234 Polk St. for its application to be added to the Legacy Business Registry of San Francisco. I want to first talk about what the Russian Hill Bookstore means to me, and then afterwards talk about why the bookstore is an important part of the neighborhood.

Russian Hill Bookstore to me is a place of creativity, discovery, imagination, and wonder. The Russian Hill neighborhood is one of my favorite places to go on weekends, and I like to walk into the bookstore on weekend afternoons to wander the shelves, looking for something new that I haven't seen before. My favorite part of the Russian Hill Bookstore is that its selection is so unique, and because of that I am bound to find something I haven't seen before. I talk specifically about the store's collection of history and philosophy books, which I consider to be one of the most profound and voluminous in San Francisco.

The Russian Hill Bookstore's collection of history and philosophy books is special to me on two dimensions: one, that the books carried are written during assorted time periods and not just all written in the present, and two, that the books are not all mass market books with a degree of popularity, and instead some are obscure or even scholarly books. The first factor is important because I want to avoid the bias of books only written in the present as reflecting solely the bias of the current times. The second factor is important because I like seeing books that I don't commonly see but nonetheless have a lot of signal. Discovering these types of obscure books is difficult at a mass online marketplace like Amazon because of the sheer volume of selection and the ranking of results. I like going to local bookstores like Russian Hill Bookstore to aid in the discovery of these types of books. Russian Hill Bookstore's selection is unique to me in this respect because it offers books in subject areas, especially history, that I don't see elsewhere in San Francisco.

I now want to turn to why I think the Russian Hill Bookstore is an important part of the neighborhood. When I visit a neighborhood, I always feel that the local bookstore reflects the interests of the people that live in that neighborhood. When I visit Russian Hill Bookstore, I get the feeling that people in the neighborhood have an appreciation for history and philosophy based on its selection. But not just the selection of the books themselves, but the mere existence of a bookstore in a neighborhood signals to me that the neighborhood values learning, knowledge, and curiosity, which I believe are positive values that produce more educated citizens and human beings. I feel that the loss of such an asset to the neighborhood is a great cause for sadness. Furthermore, the existence of the Russian Hill Bookstore not only reflects the current interests of the community but also can impact the interests of future generations of the community by promoting reading, curiosity, and love for learning. I feel that we should preserve these positive values and promulgate them to future generations.

For the above reasons, I hope that you will consider adding Russian Hill Bookstore to the Legacy Business Registry.

Sincerely,
Tim Wu
[REDACTED] Polk St
San Francisco, CA 94102

Subject: In favor of Legacy Business Status for Russian Hill Bookstore

From: Rachel Markowitz [REDACTED]

Date: 4/26/2017 11:17 AM

To: "RSSNHLLB@pacbell.net" <RSSNHLLB@pacbell.net>

Dear Russian Hill Bookstore,

We are so glad you are pursuing Legacy Business Status in San Francisco. You are totally deserving of it. Your bookstore is one of our favorite businesses in the whole city, a friendly, homey place devoted to upholding the used-bookstore tradition as well as offering a unique selection of merchandise.

We have lived in the neighborhood for over twenty years, and we have browsed your store for as long, whether to buy from your amazing greeting card collection, your wonderful used and new book collections, and your great selection of gifts (writing tablets, toys, puzzles, etc.). Now that we have kids, we love to visit your kids' alcove, where the toy box and books keep our little ones entertained while we look around.

In this rapidly changing city, long-lived independently owned businesses like Russian Hill Books help retain the character, charm, and community vibe of the neighborhood. We strongly recommend that the city grants you Legacy Business Status.

Sincerely yours,

Rachel Markowitz and Family

Filing Date: May 10, 2017
Case No.: 2017-006202LBR
Business Name: Russian Hill Bookstore
Business Address: 2162 Polk Street
Zoning: NCD (Polk Street Neighborhood Commercial)/
65-A Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0572/019
Applicant: Carol Spencer, Owner
2162 Polk Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin, District 3
Staff Contact: Desiree Smith - (415) 575-9093
desiree.smith@sfgov.org
Reviewed By: Tim Frye – (415) 575-6822
tim.frye@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Russian Hill Bookstore is a new and used bookstore located on Polk Street between Broadway and Vallejo Street in San Francisco's Russian Hill neighborhood. It also serves the Polk Gulch, Pacific Heights, Nob Hill, Fisherman's Wharf, North Beach, Cow Hollow, and Telegraph Hill communities, as well as out-of-town visitors and city residents from outside the immediate area. Founded by Carol Spencer, who remains the owner/operator of the business, Russian Hill Bookstore was the outgrowth of Spencer's first store, Sunset Bookstore, which she ran from 1974 to 2001.

When Russian Hill Bookstore opened its doors in 1993, it was one of many bookstores to be found along the corridor. Since 2000, however, over 10 bookstores have closed, leaving Russian Hill Bookstore as the only one left on the street. As one of only a handful of independently-owned used bookstores in the city's northern quadrant, Russian Hill Bookstore has become a popular destination for booklovers near and far. As described in its application, the store is "an inventory of curated and hand-picked used books bought from and sold to the people who live in the neighborhood and the greater San Francisco area." Its collection reflects the interests and tastes of the neighborhood, as the store purchases its used books from those who live in the area. The store specializes in general and rare used books, new books in classics and best-sellers, and children's books and toys, as well as an expansive collection of note cards, carrying over 500 individual lines mostly created by small, local artists and printers. In addition, the store has procured a large number of rare used books from private libraries. Other genres commonly found at the store include fiction, history, science, philosophy, religion, art, freemasonry, metaphysics and occult. The local independent bookstore has been featured in countless blogs written by booklovers who have described Russian Hill Bookstore as the "quintessential American used bookshop," a "vital part of the community," and the "epitome of the classic used bookstore."

Russian Hill Bookstore supports community events and activities including those organized by the Russian Hill Neighborhood Association and functions as a community gathering space through its book releases and game board nights.

Russian Hill Bookstore is in the midst of several major transitions. It recently changed locations as a planned seismic retrofit of the building at 2234 Polk Street was eminent as was the expiration of the store's lease to the space. The business was able to secure a new 10-year lease beginning May 1, 2017 for a space one block away on Polk Street, although rent is significantly higher at the new location. In addition, the business' founder, Carol Spencer, is retiring in June 2017. Spencer will leave the business to two of her long-time employees and apprentices, Benjamin Bellouin and Jessica Tsang.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

1974.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes, Russian Hill Bookstore qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- i. The business has been in operation for 43 years total – 27 years as the Sunset Bookstore and 24 years as the Russian Hill Bookstore (the two stores operated concurrently for eight of those years).
- ii. Russian Hill Bookstore has contributed to the history and identity of San Francisco and the Russian Hill neighborhood by serving as a community gathering spot and destination for booklovers. Its selection of rare, used, and children's books, as well as its expansive collection of hand-crafted notecards add to its novelty as a unique, neighborhood bookstore.
- iii. Russian Hill Bookstore is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define its role as a neighborhood bookstore offering new and used books, stationary, and toys.

3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

As a new and used neighborhood bookstore, the business is associated with the literary arts.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and/or architecture?*

The property at 2162 Polk Street is considered a "Category B Property" signifying that it is age-eligible but has not yet been evaluated for historical significance. Further evaluation is needed to determine if the building or the business is associated with significant persons or events.

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

No.

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

No.

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. Russian Hill Bookstore has been cited in numerous publications including, but not limited to:

Prentice Hall, 4/1/1981, *Book Scouting: How to Turn Your Love for Books into Profit*, by Barbara Johnson (book); SF Gate, 11/3/2014, "Top 20 Bay Area independent bookstores," by Seung Y. Lee; The Bold Italic, 5/7/2014, "Why I Love Living in Russian Hill," by Melissa Chandler; SF Gate, 7/10/2015, "Russian Hill: A hill I call my home," by Julie Balise; AbeBooks.com, 9/12/2015, "San Francisco's Russian Hill Bookstore – Loved by Locals and Tourists," by Richard Davies. AbeBooks.com, 9/14/2011, "AbeBooks Visits Three San Francisco Bookstores" (video uploaded on YouTube); 3/23/2016, "Voices of Polk Street" (video uploaded on YouTube).

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

- 2162 Polk Street

Recommended by Applicant

- Russian Hill location
- Function as a bookstore selling new and used books
- Business model that includes an inventory of curated and hand-picked used books bought and sold to the people who live in the neighborhood
- Offering of general used books, new books in classics and best-sellers, antiquarian and rare books, children's books and toys, comics,
- Offering of stationary, cards, postcards, and notecards created by local artists and printers
- Tall pine bookshelves that line the wall from floor to ceiling
- Ladders and library stools inside the store
- Classic discount book bin outside of the store
- Participation in community events

Additional Recommended by Staff

- No additional recommendations



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Historic Preservation Commission Draft Resolution

HEARING DATE JUNE 6, 2017

1650 Mission St.
Suite 400
San Francisco,
CA 94103-2479

Reception:
415.558.6378

Fax:
415.558.6409

Planning
Information:
415.558.6377

Case No.: 2017-006202LBR
Business Name: Russian Hill Bookstore
Business Address: 2162 Polk Street
Zoning: NCD (Polk Street Neighborhood Commercial)/
65-A Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0572/019
Applicant: Carol Spencer, Owner
2162 Polk Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin, District 3
Staff Contact: Desiree Smith - (415) 575-9093
desiree.smith@sfgov.org
Reviewed By: Tim Frye – (415) 575-6822
tim.frye@sfgov.org

**ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION
APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR RUSSIAN HILL
BOOKSTORE, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 2162 POLK STREET (BLOCK/LOT 0572/019).**

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the identity of San Francisco's literary community, Polk Street commercial corridor in the Russian Hill neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on June 6, 2017, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** that Russian Hill Bookstore qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends** safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Russian Hill Bookstore:

Location (if applicable)

- 2162 Polk Street

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

- Russian Hill location
- Function as a bookstore selling new and used books
- Business model that includes an inventory of curated and hand-picked used books bought and sold to the people who live in the neighborhood
- Offering of general used books, new books in classics and best-sellers, antiquarian and rare books, children's books and toys, comics,
- Offering of stationary, cards, postcards, and notecards created by local artists and printers
- Tall pine bookshelves that line the wall from floor to ceiling
- Ladders and library stools inside the store
- Classic discount book bin outside of the store
- Participation in community events

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations** are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs** its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file 2017-006202LBR to the Office of Small Business.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Historic Preservation Commission on June 6, 2017.

Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT

ADOPTED: