



Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

HEARING DATE NOVEMBER 14, 2016

CITY LIGHTS BOOKSELLERS AND PUBLISHERS

Application No.: LBR-2015-16-063
Business Name: City Lights Booksellers and Publishers
Business Address: 261 Columbus Avenue
District: District 3
Applicant: Elaine Katzenberger, Executive Director
Nomination Date: May 25, 2016
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

City Lights Booksellers and Publishers is a world-renowned independent bookstore and publisher that played an important role in the development of North Beach's literary community and which continues to influence the field of literature on an international scale. Peter D. Martin and Beat-era poet, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, opened City Lights Bookstore in 1953 at 261 Columbus Avenue on a triangular lot on the south side of Columbus Avenue between Broadway and Jack Kerouac Alley. Prior to its opening in 1953, San Francisco lacked a public space for writers and poets to come together and share their work. City Lights Bookstore was created with the intention of providing such a space and over the years blossomed into one of the nation's great literary centers and publishers, nurturing writers of the Beat Generation and counterculture movement. The first paperback bookstore in the country, City Lights continues to offer a large selection of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and literary and political journals. City Lights Publishers, established in 1955, nurtures local authors and promotes innovative writing in the areas in poetry, politics, and history. It published works of many of the authors of the Beat Generation and is known historically for its promotion of free speech and the avant guard. City Lights Bookstore and Publishers continues to be relevant today, playing a critical role in San Francisco's intellectual life through its bookselling and publishing, as well as its free literary programming and community collaborations to further cultural literacy throughout the city.

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:

261 Columbus Avenue from 1953-Present (63 years)

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



SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION

MARK DWIGHT, PRESIDENT
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

EDWIN M. LEE, MAYOR

Yes, the applicant has contributed to the North Beach 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:

- City Lights Booksellers and Publishers is associated with the literary arts, operating as a bookstore, publisher, community gathering space, and promotor of cultural literacy. Historically, City Lights Booksellers and Publishers helped nurture the Beat Generation of writers and continues to support innovative and politically progressive literature and poetry.
- City Lights Booksellers and Publishers and its location, 261 Columbus Avenue, are associated with significant events, persons, and architecture. The site is designated as City Landmark #228 for its significant contributions to major developments in post-World War II literature as a gathering place for intellectuals and literati and as a publisher of Beat Generation writers. The business is also significant for its association with the defense of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* and *Other Poems* in a landmark test of First Amendment protections. Ferlinghetti and his business partner, Shigeyoshi Muraō, were tried on charges of obscenity for publishing and selling "*Howl*." Their eventual acquittal, which determined that "*Howl*" was not obscene, established an important legal precedent. The site is also significant for its association with important persons, including Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who was a co-founder of City Lights, an internationally renowned poet, the first Poet Laureate of San Francisco, and an influential publisher of literature associated with the Beat Generation. Additional important literary figures associated with City Lights include Allen Ginsberg, Diane di Prima, Jack Kerouac, among others. The building at 261 Columbus Avenue is also found to be significant for its architecture. Built in 1907, the property embodies distinctive characteristics typical of small commercial buildings constructed after the 1906 earthquake and fire, and is a fairly rare survivor of a once common building type of its period.
- The business has been cited in the following publications:
 - New York Times, June 2016, "A Literary Bromance Now in its Sixth Decade," by Alexandra Alter
 - The Guardian, March 2016, "Interview with a Bookstore: San Francisco's historic City Lights," by Literary Hub
 - San Francisco Chronicle, December 2015, "Our SF: The Beats help build city's progressive future," by Peter Hartlaub
 - San Francisco Chronicle, July 2015, "Interview with Lawrence Ferlinghetti of City Lights," by Jonah Raskin
 - BBC Magazine, March 2014, "The radical readers of San Francisco," by Andrew Whitehead
 - Los Angeles Times, March 2014, "City Lights Bookstore has the true beat of San Francisco," by Pico Iyer
 - San Francisco Chronicle, October 2013, "The Literary City"
 - The Guardian, May 2013, "San Francisco's City Lights: the bookshop that brought us the Beats," by Evan Karp
 - San Francisco Chronicle, September 2012, "City Lights celebrates Banned Books Week," by Nellie Bowles
 - Vanity Fair, July 2012, "Suddenly that Summer," by Sheila Weller
 - New York Times, December 1, 2010, "A Book Lover's San Francisco," by Gregory Dicum
 - San Francisco Chronicle, May 2009, "City Lights: Study beacon of literary mischief," by John King
 - New York Times, September 2003, "Beat Mystique Endures at a San Francisco Landmark," by Dean E. Murphy
 - SF Gate, June 9, 2003, "SF Gate: City Lights Stories," by Hamlin Endicott; Los Angeles Times, August 14 2000, "Literary Landmark Gets S.F. Protection," by John M. Glionna



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- Featured on the Exploratorium's website for their series, "Driven: True Stories of Inspiration," January 2014
- Featured on the A.V. Club's website for the series, "Pop Pilgrims," May 2011

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

Yes, City Lights Booksellers and Publishers is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define its art of bookselling and publishing, as well as its tradition of offering high quality literary programming.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that City Lights Booksellers and Publishers 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:

- Offering of paperback and hardback literature and poetry
- Publishing function, particularly in the genres of poetry, fiction, cultural studies, politics, and history
- Free literary events and programs
- Nonprofit cultural literacy programs and collaborations

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include City Lights Booksellers and Publishers currently located at 261 Columbus Avenue in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo, Manager
Legacy Business Program



SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE CENTER / SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION
1 DR. CARLTON B. GOODLETT PLACE, ROOM 110, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102-4681
Small Business Assistance Center (415) 554-6134 / Small Business Commission (415) 554-6481

SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION
MARK DWIGHT, PRESIDENT
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR



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

Small Business Commission Draft Resolution

HEARING DATE NOVEMBER 14, 2016

CITY LIGHTS BOOKSELLERS AND PUBLISHERS

LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY RESOLUTION NO. _____

Application No.: LBR-2015-16-063
Business Name: City Lights Booksellers and Publishers
Business Address: 261 Columbus Avenue
District: District 3
Applicant: Elaine Katzenberger, Executive Director
Nomination Date: May 25, 2016
Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin
Staff Contact: Richard Kurylo
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS APPROVING THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY APPLICATION FOR CITY LIGHTS BOOKSELLERS AND PUBLISHERS, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 261 COLUMBUS AVENUE.

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 November 14, 2016, 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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SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION

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REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

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BE IT RESOLVED that the Small Business Commission hereby includes City Lights Booksellers and Publishers 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 City Lights Booksellers and Publishers:

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Offering of paperback and hardback literature and poetry
- Publishing function, particularly in the genres of poetry, fiction, cultural studies, politics, and history
- Free literary events and programs
- Nonprofit cultural literacy programs and collaborations

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on November 14, 2016.

Regina Dick-Endrizzi
Director

RESOLUTION NO. _____

Ayes –
Nays –
Abstained –
Absent –



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Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

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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? X Yes No

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

NOTES: NA

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: September 19, 2016

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

May 25, 2016

Director Regina Dick-Endrizzi
San Francisco Office of Small Business
City Hall, Room 110
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
regina.dick-endrizzi@sfgov.org
(415) 554-6134

Dear Director Dick-Endrizzi:

I am writing to nominate City Lights Bookstore for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

City Lights Bookstore is one of the most iconic independently owned and alternative bookstores in the nation. It was founded in 1953 by Peter D. Martin and Beat-era poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and came to fame in the 1950s and 1960s by being one of those eras' great literary centers, participating in the social movements that helped generate the progressive values that came to be known as the "counterculture" or "San Francisco values". It was the first all paperback bookstore in the country, but has since expanded to occupy three floors that include new hardcover fiction and nonfiction, a large selection of paperback fiction and literature, a basement floor of paperback non-fiction, and an upper floor of poetry. City Lights is also known for its publishing company, City Lights Publishers, which publishes books in poetry, politics and history. It continues to serve the literary community with a regular series of readings and events.

City Lights Bookstore would benefit greatly from inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry, and it is my honor to nominate it for inclusion.

Sincerely,

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

Aaron Peskin

**City Lights Booksellers & Publishers
San Francisco Legacy Business Registry Application**

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- Business / Applicant info — attached

SECTION TWO:

- Business Location — attached

SECTION THREE:

- Disclosure Statement — attached

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- Written Historical Narrative — attached

SECTION FIVE:

Historical Documents

- Historical Legal Documents — attached
- Photographs — emailed
- Ephemera and Memorabilia — emailed

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:		
City Lights Booksellers & Publishers		
BUSINESS OWNER(S) (identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business)		
Lawrence Ferlinghetti; Nancy Peters		
CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:		TELEPHONE:
261 Columbus Ave. San Francisco, CA 94133		(415) 362-8193
		EMAIL:
WEBSITE:	FACEBOOK PAGE:	YELP PAGE
citylights.com	@citylightsbooks	yelp.com/biz/city-lights-books

APPLICANT'S NAME	
Elaine Katzenberger	<input type="checkbox"/> Same as Business
APPLICANT'S TITLE	
Executive Director	
APPLICANT'S ADDRESS:	
261 Columbus Ave. San Francisco, CA 94133	
TELEPHONE:	
(415) 362-8193	
EMAIL:	
elaine@citylights.com	

SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:	SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (if applicable):
0005754	

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
261 Columbus Ave.	94133	1953
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?	DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATON	
<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	1953 - 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
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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.

Elaine Katzenberger 9/1/16 Janie Giff
Name (Print): Date: Signature:

City Lights Booksellers & Publishers Historical Narrative

“... one of the last countercultural outposts in a rapidly gentrifying city.”
—*New York Times*, June 2016

“The heart and the soul of bohemian San Francisco ...”
—*San Francisco Chronicle*, July 2015

“‘City Lights is not just a bookstore, it’s a church,’ one literary San Franciscan tells me. City Lights has a fair claim to be the world’s best-known independent bookshop.”
—*BBC*, March 2014

City Lights Booksellers & Publishers has been the heart and soul of literary San Francisco for over half a century, one of San Francisco’s most iconic and much-loved cultural institutions. A destination for visitors from across the country and around the world, for some, it’s a primary reason to visit our city.

The past few years have been especially notable, as City Lights moved through two year-long anniversary celebrations. First, in 2013 we marked the 60th anniversary of the founding of the bookstore, hosting a daylong open house birthday party attended by thousands of enthusiastic celebrants and an entire year of special programming, expanding upon our usual busy roster of public events. Notable among these was the inauguration of our summertime Sundays in Jack Kerouac Alley series, which presented many of the local authors and other talent that City Lights has helped to nurture over the years. Two years later, in 2015 we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the founding of City Lights Publishers, and throughout that year we hosted a number of special programs that attracted record crowds, both at the bookstore and in locations around the city. We published a number of anniversary titles, including *I Greet You at the Beginning of a Great Career*, a selection of the historic correspondence between City Lights founder Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Beat poet Allen Ginsberg. Also in 2015, we published our first-ever children’s book, *Rad American Women A-Z*, which literally became an instant national bestseller, authored and illustrated by two local educators and youth advocates. This year, the featured title of San Francisco Public Library’s “One City One Book” program is *Beautiful Chaos*, a memoir penned by the American Conservatory Theater’s longtime Artistic Director, Carey Perloff, and published by the City Lights Foundation, a non-profit arm of City Lights with the mission of furthering cultural literacy. The Foundation’s longtime association with Youth Speaks, a dynamic San Francisco-based youth empowerment program, has recently borne fruit in the publication of a book of poems by Chinaka Hodge, an exciting hip hop poet from Oakland who we first discovered at Youth Speaks as a teenager, and who is now a highly accomplished young woman with a book on the City Lights imprint, *Dated Emcees*, published in the spring of 2016. At the bookstore, we are currently gearing up for the “Dada World’s Fair,” which will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the international Dada movement. This will be a weeklong series of events to be held in various sites around San Francisco, a fertile collaboration between City Lights and a number of the city’s key cultural and educational institutions. The bookstore is full of curious readers every day, the publishing house is putting out exciting new titles that win prizes and launch careers, and overall City Lights is thriving, a vital force in the cultural and intellectual life of San Francisco in the 21st century.

And yet, like all small businesses in our city, the challenges posed by gentrification, development and displacement are daunting for us. While City Lights is one of the lucky few who do not face any threat of eviction (having secured our building in 1999), there are still daunting issues to be faced. A rapid escalation in the cost of living in San Francisco (and the greater Bay Area), for example, and the ongoing exodus of many of the city’s artists, writers and other cultural workers means that as an employer we are at a difficult crossroads. Where will the people who do the work of keeping City Lights alive and thriving be able to live? What is our future in San Francisco if a small business cannot

ever hope to pay its workers enough to secure them a reasonable quality of life? And, last but certainly not least, in the case of a bookstore/publishing house, the impact of technology itself on our business model cannot be over-emphasized. As reading habits shift, as “information” supplants knowledge and a culture of immediate gratification takes hold, what is the generally perceived value of books and bookstores? Who do we serve, and how well? Is our business model still viable; how do we adapt; are we sustainable into the future; and for how long; what should be done and what’s got to happen to insure that City Lights remains fiscally stable; how best do we work to insure the continuation of our core mission? These are all important questions, and for a small organization like City Lights, it goes without saying that every resource available is already being used to its fullest. To explore and attempt to find answers to these questions requires an arduous re-direction of resources, as we work to evaluate our role and our ability to fulfill it, both presently and into the future.

In sum, while City Lights is currently fiscally stable, staffed by dedicated, longtime employees, the need to preserve and protect its place in San Francisco is very real. And for that reason we are submitting an application for the city’s Legacy Business support. Because we believe that as the city changes dramatically, both in its physical aspect and in its cultural and political makeup, the role played by City Lights — with its ongoing commitment to its founding mission and values — is more important than ever.

How it all began...

City Lights was founded in 1953 by poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Peter D. Martin as the nation’s first all-paperback bookstore. As Ferlinghetti tells it, at that time there was no public place for writers and readers to experience community in San Francisco, and his goal in opening up a shop featuring books at popular prices, along with a wide range of literary and political journals, was to create a “literary meeting place” where all would feel welcome. In the early 1950s, San Francisco was teeming with writers, artists, poets and musicians, and North Beach, with its jazz clubs, its cheap rent and its neighborhood roots in political anarchism, seemed just the right place for his lively experiment. Keeping late hours — the store was open every day until after midnight — was a way to provide the opportunity for working folks and bohemian types alike to partake in the scene and to mingle with each other. The shop was an immediate success, as the city’s intellectuals and literati quickly made it their home base and meeting ground. As Ferlinghetti says, “Once we opened up the doors, we could hardly get them closed at night, the place was always packed!”

Two years later, in 1955, when Peter Martin set out for New York and Ferlinghetti became the store’s sole owner, he decided to expand the business to launch City Lights Publishers. Like many fledgling poets, he published his own first book, and brought out *Pictures of the Gone World* (still in print more than 60 years later) as Number One in his now iconic City Lights Pocket Poets Series. Within a year, City Lights had published its most famous, and still bestselling title, Allen Ginsberg’s groundbreaking *Howl and Other Poems: Pocket Poets Number Four*. *Howl* was a landmark book, a breakthrough for poetry and literature in general, both stylistically and in the themes it covered. A strident critique of middle-class complacency, consumerism and the capitalist structures that President Dwight D. Eisenhower would later name as “the military industrial complex,” *Howl* also celebrated the pleasures and freedoms of the physical world, including a tribute to homosexual love. Ferlinghetti and the bookstore’s manager, Shigeyoshi Murao were arrested for selling obscene material, and while the charges against Murao were dropped, Ferlinghetti was also charged with having published and disseminated obscenity. His successful defense of *Howl*’s literary merit at a contentious and closely watched trial set legal precedents that had far-reaching effects for literature, and with feature stories in periodicals such as *Life Magazine*, it also put City Lights and the Beat Generation squarely onto the nation’s cultural map. Lawrence Ferlinghetti became known as a stalwart champion of free speech and a publisher at the forefront of America’s burgeoning avant garde, and City Lights became the West Coast home of the Beat Generation writers. In the years that followed Ferlinghetti went on to publish many of the most iconic Beat authors, and a host of international writers as well,

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establishing a bridge between America's non-conformist youth culture, with its nascent anti-war and ecological movements, to the creative works and political trends of other countries and languages.

With his bookstore/publishing model, Ferlinghetti was not only able to create a vibrant and unique cultural space that directly served those living in North Beach and greater San Francisco, but at the same time he was able to transcend the walls of the physical bookstore and San Francisco itself by sending the books he published out onto a national and even international stage. The press has gone on to publish an illustrious list of authors, and with a backlist of close to 300 titles in print, City Lights Publishing has earned a solid reputation as a champion of innovative writing and progressive politics.

From a small, pie-shaped storefront slice of the building at the corner of Columbus and Broadway, City Lights has slowly expanded over the years, finally filling the entire three floors with its 2200-hundred-square-foot bookshop and the offices of its publishing house. In 1984, Nancy Joyce Peters, a poet and a long-time editor at City Lights, became a co-owner and manager of the business, and in 1999 she and Ferlinghetti negotiated the purchase of the 261 Columbus Avenue building from Ferlinghetti's longtime landlord. It is interesting to note that the property remained in the family of its original owners for 123 years, from 1876 until it was sold to City Lights. The current building was constructed in 1907, using the footprint of the site's original building, which had been destroyed by the fires of 1906. Designed by Oliver Everett, one of San Francisco's first licensed architects, the City Lights building is significant as one of the few remaining unaltered examples of the "Classical Revival" architectural vernacular of the era. With its original basement-level brick piers (structural columns) and its 85-foot frontage on Columbus Avenue, the building has several interesting features, including a long row of narrow clerestory windows, which have been carefully preserved. On July 16, 2001 the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously named City Lights Landmark #228 because of its "seminal role in the literary and cultural development of San Francisco and the nation, for stewarding and restoring City Lights Bookstore, for championing First Amendment protections, and for publishing and giving voice to writers and artists everywhere."

In 1988, Ferlinghetti met with the San Francisco Board of Supervisors with a proposal to rename 12 city alleyways to honor a list of San Francisco writers and artists. On his list was the one-block alley next to City Lights Books, which connected Chinatown's bustling Grant Avenue with North Beach's famed Columbus Avenue; this was to become Jack Kerouac Alley. Later, Nancy Peters collaborated with the Chinatown Alleyway Improvement Project to transform the alley, repaving it and closing it to car traffic. Once a garbage-strewn dumping place for the smelly wastewater from a corner fishmonger, the renovated alleyway is now an inviting pedestrian-only thoroughfare with decorative lampposts, hanging flower baskets, colorful murals and poetry from Eastern and Western cultures inscribed into the walkway, bridging the Chinatown and North Beach neighborhoods. City Lights makes use of the public space often to host free readings and events, and the Vesuvio Bar, another of the city's historic, independently owned small businesses, hosts an annual art fair and other occasional events.

Since October 1999, a brilliantly colored mural entitled *Vida y Sueños de la Cañada Perla* (Life and Dreams of the Perla River Valley) has adorned the City Lights exterior wall on Jack Kerouac Alley. This mural is a reproduction of Mexico City artist Sergio Valdéz Rubalcaba's original work that was painted in the jungle village of Taniperla, home to the Tzeltal Mayan people of Chiapas, Mexico. The original mural was demolished by the Mexican Army in a campaign to repress the Zapatista movement, and in solidarity with the indigenous peoples' struggle for justice, a group of local artists and activists was invited to reproduce the mural on the wall of City Lights. In the spirit of the Zapatista slogan "Todo para todos, nada para nosotros" [Everything for everyone, nothing only for us] the work was done voluntarily and cooperatively. The mural is a powerful statement that aligns with the core mission of City Lights; it's also a stunning backdrop for public events and is a much-photographed stop on any tour of North Beach.

City Lights Booksellers & Publishers Supplemental Historical Documents

Sections 1-4 of our application sent via mail with application form and fee. This document includes links to ephemera & memorabilia, including selected press, audio and video links, and descriptions of the photos in our dropbox folder.

Historical Legal Documents

A copy of our San Francisco Business Registration Certificate is enclosed with the mailed portion of the application.

Photographs & Scanned Images

Required and supplemental photos of City Lights can be viewed via dropbox at:
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ju2ybmoslra897n/AACMo5JnsRsJUnDo0_vyIsmBa?dl=0

The following describes the contents of the dropbox folder:

City Lights Building Photos Today

- Exteriors, interiors, and physical features

City Lights Ephemera

- 40th anniversary of City Lights on the cover of *SFBG*
- Bikes to Books map, where we partnered with Burrito Justice to create a map of literary San Francisco, which charted the streets named after historical literary figures in the city (the changing of the street names happened in 1988, after Ferlinghetti made the proposed the change to the Board of Supervisors). More about the map here: <https://burritojustice.com/bikes-to-books-map>
- The City Lights name pays homage to the Charlie Chaplin film with the same title; a copy of a telegram from Charlie Chaplin's office, giving Peter D. Martin permission to use the name of City Lights, originally for a magazine in 1952, is included
- 25th anniversary flyer, also paying homage to Charlie Chaplin
- Clipping from the Kerouac Alley naming ceremony in the *San Francisco Chronicle*

City Lights Event & Historical Photos

- Exteriors and interiors, some with Lawrence Ferlinghetti Nancy Peters pictured
- 50th Anniversary
- 60th Anniversary
- Scenes from the *Howl* trial, from *Life Magazine*

Select Press Links

“Mr. Ferlinghetti’s presence is still palpable at City Lights, one of the last countercultural outposts in a rapidly gentrifying city.”

—*New York Times*, June 2016

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/26/fashion/a-literary-bromance-now-in-its-sixth-decade.html? r=0>

“There are moments in the afternoon, when the fickle coastal weather allows, that the upstairs poetry room at City Lights – the bookstore Ferlinghetti founded in 1953 with Peter D Martin – fills with a perfect San Francisco light. It becomes easy, then, to forget you’re reading at the epicenter of mid-century counterculture, where the first bullets were fired in a literary revolution that would change America, the world.”

—*The Guardian*, March 2016

<https://www.theguardian.com/global/interview-with-a-bookstore-by-literary-hub/2016/mar/14/interview-with-a-bookstore-san-francisco-city-lights>

“One of the more cinematic moments in San Francisco history arrived on Oct. 3, 1957, when a judge handed down the verdict for perhaps the most important misdemeanor case in the city’s history. Judge Clayton W. Horn scolded the police in English and French before declaring that Allen Ginsberg’s poetry tour de force ‘Howl’ was not an obscenity. . . . It was arguably the turning point for the Beat Generation, which would spawn a memorable poetry scene and cultural era for the city.”

—*San Francisco Chronicle*, December 2015

<http://www.sfchronicle.com/oursf/article/Our-SF-The-Beats-help-build-city-s-progressive-6676634.php?t=b156a21d540a4808f6>

“The heart and the soul of bohemian San Francisco, Lawrence Ferlinghetti has altered the cultural landscape of readers and writers both locally and globally from his perch at City Lights, at 261 Columbus Ave. in North Beach. ‘I Greet You at the Beginning of a Great Career,’ a new collection of letters between him and Allen Ginsberg, tracks their friendship and explores the fellowship of poets born at City Lights Bookstore and its publishing arm, City Lights Books.”

—*San Francisco Chronicle*, July 2015:

<http://www.sfgate.com/books/article/Interview-with-Lawrence-Ferlinghetti-of-City-6363380.php>

“The city of San Francisco is home to some of the world’s best bookshops, including one which specialises in obscure political tracts and another which has become synonymous with the Beat literary movement. ‘City Lights is not just a bookstore, it’s a church,’ one literary San Franciscan tells me. City Lights has a fair claim to be the world’s best-known independent bookshop.”

—**BBC, March 2014**

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26776613>

“For decades, San Francisco's City Lights Bookstore has nurtured independent thinkers, Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac included. And it remains ahead of the curve — and clearly in love with the word.”

—**Los Angeles Times, March 2014**

<http://articles.latimes.com/2014/mar/21/travel/la-tr-san-francisco-city-lights-bookstore-20140323>

Inclusion in the interactive map of literary San Francisco, featuring booksellers, writers' passages related to the region, literary landmarks and highlights of authors living in the Bay Area

—**San Francisco Chronicle, October 2013**

<http://www.sfchronicle.com/theliterarycity>

“But even as tech companies buy out the poor neighbourhoods and the city's government buckles beneath their capital – cutting funding for the arts while giving tax breaks to dotcom start-ups – City Lights continues to flourish, providing an ever-fertile environment for writers, thinkers and the promise that they can change the world.”

—**The Guardian, May 2013**

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2013/may/25/san-francisco-city-lights-bookshop-beats>

“In honor of the 30th anniversary of Banned Books Week, the venerated San Francisco bookstore throughout October will be posting videos of local authors reading their favorite illicit literary scenes onto blogcitylights.com. The series, Banned Books Virtual Readout, will showcase diverse celebrities such as poet-novelist devorah major, film director John Waters, Chronicle TV Critic David Wiegand and San Francisco Poet Laureate Alejandro Murguia.”

—**San Francisco Chronicle, September 2012**

<http://www.sfgate.com/books/article/City-Lights-celebrates-Banned-Books-Week-3903374.php>

“San Francisco's official bohemia was North Beach, where the Beats hung out at Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights bookstore, and where espresso was sipped, jazz was worshipped, and hipsters did *not* dance.

—**Vanity Fair, July 2012**

<http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2012/07/lsd-drugs-summer-of-love-sixties>

“City Lights is the grande dame of the city's independent bookstores.”

—**New York Times, December 2010**

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/05/travel/05SanFran.html>

“Everyone knows City Lights, a fermenter of intellectual mischief since 1953 so integral to San Francisco's cultural landscape that in 2001 the Board of Supervisors proclaimed it Landmark No. 228 as a tribute to its ‘association with major developments in post World War II literature as publisher of Beat Generation writers.’ But the bookstore's post-1906 earthquake home also tells an architectural tale. A sturdy procession of arched masonry above wood and generous glass, it takes a stand without frills or affectation - dispensing with style in a shrug, ready to handle whatever the future might bring.”

—***San Francisco Chronicle*, May 2009**

<http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/City-Lights-Study-beacon-of-literary-mischief-3229409.php>

“Yet in the era of George W. Bush and John Ashcroft, the dissident Beat voices are enjoying a renaissance of sorts in antiwar strongholds like San Francisco, and Mr. Ferlinghetti and City Lights are once again feeling good about being simultaneously marginalized and essential.”

—***New York Times*, September 2003**

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/25/books/25LIGH.html?pagewanted=all>

“City Lights is a beacon of thought, shining brightly on the edge of an increasingly darkening, puritanical, world.”

“City Lights is more than a regional California institution to me. It is a spiritual home and sanctum of rich moral and spiritual replenishment for all of us who lived out our youthful years in that wonderful, hopeful and intellectual broth of the 50s, 60s, and early 70s.”

—***City Lights stories, on the occasion of our 50th anniversary, published in the San Francisco Chronicle*, June 2003**

<http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/SF-Gate-City-Lights-Stories-2610388.php>

“This bookstore is a cultural icon—in its heyday it put San Francisco on the map as the center of the leading literary movement of the day.”

—***Los Angeles Times*, August 2000**

<http://articles.latimes.com/2000/aug/14/news/mn-4044>

Select Audio and Video News Links

Featured on the Exploratorium’s website for their series, *Driven: True Stories of Inspiration*, January 2014

<http://www.exploratorium.edu/tv/index.php?project=99&program=1329>

Featured on the A.V. Club's website for the series *Pop Pilgrims*, May 2011

<http://www.avclub.com/video/san-francisco-city-lights-books-birthplace-of-a-li-56568>

“City Lights is community more than a bookstore,” clip from the panel on Universities and Literary Communities for the conference Tales from Two Cities; FORAtv, October 2013

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2SrWJtQhhE>

Trailer for Christopher Felver’s film Ferlinghetti, which premiered at the San Francisco International Film Festival in April, 2009

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vgec1sXIaiw>

Silent footage from 1957 produced by KPIX; includes scenes of Lawrence Ferlinghetti arranging copies of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl and other poems* in the store window, as their advertised pocket book of the week. Also features brief views of Columbus Avenue and Ferlinghetti smoking a pipe and adding other books to the display outside.

<https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/188468>

Trailer for the movie “Big Sur,” which mentions Ferlinghetti and shows the exterior of City Lights at around 1:02:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w71t2lFXDU>

Trailer for the movie “Howl,” which includes scenes from the trial:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytEORri27xE>

Other Audio & Video Links of Interest

City Lights YouTube channel:

We’ve taped readings for various special campaigns, separate from our bookstore events. Highlights include our Banned Books 2012 campaign, where local literary luminaries, including Lawrence Ferlinghetti, John Waters, devorah major, Alejandro Murguia, Stephen Elliott, Michelle Tea, and more, came in to read from a banned book of their choice in honor of the 30th anniversary of Banned Books Week and to celebrate free speech. Another highlight includes the *Rad American Women A-Z* series, where we invite local women writers, artists, and activists to come in and read about one of their favorite amazing female icons of history.

<https://www.youtube.com/CityLightsBooks>

City Lights podcast:

We record readings and events at City Lights as well as interviews with visiting authors and those published by City Lights.

<http://www.citylightspodcast.com/>

EVENT AND HISTORICAL PHOTOS

Exterior, 1950s



CITY LIGHTS BOOKS

AGENZIA

JAMES FUGAZI, BULOTTI & CO.

265

FRATELLI FORTE MGRS.

265

VIAGGI • ASSICURAZIONI • SPEDIZIONE di DENARO

BOOKS

ROCKET BOOK SHOP

ONE WAY

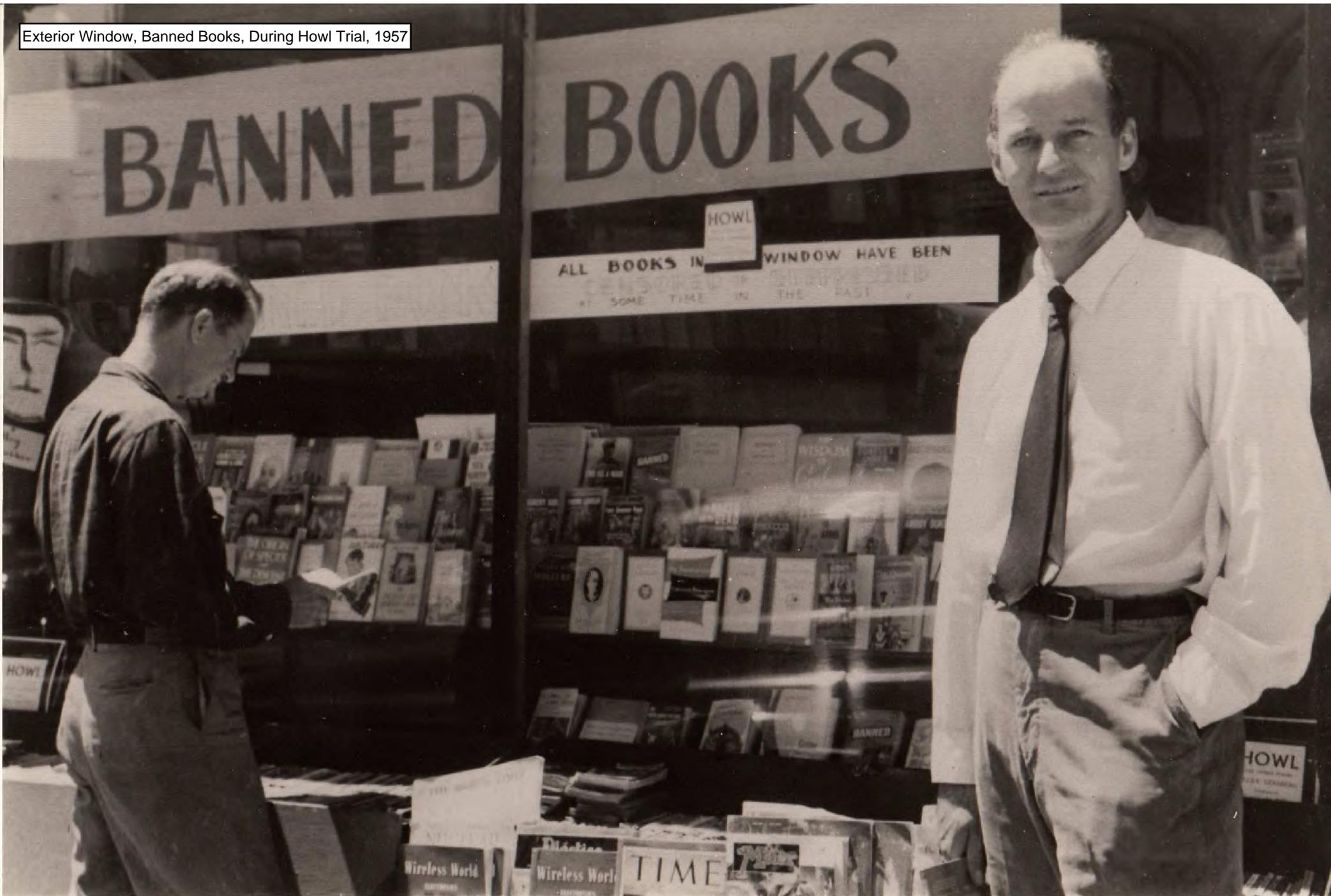
Interior, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, 1955



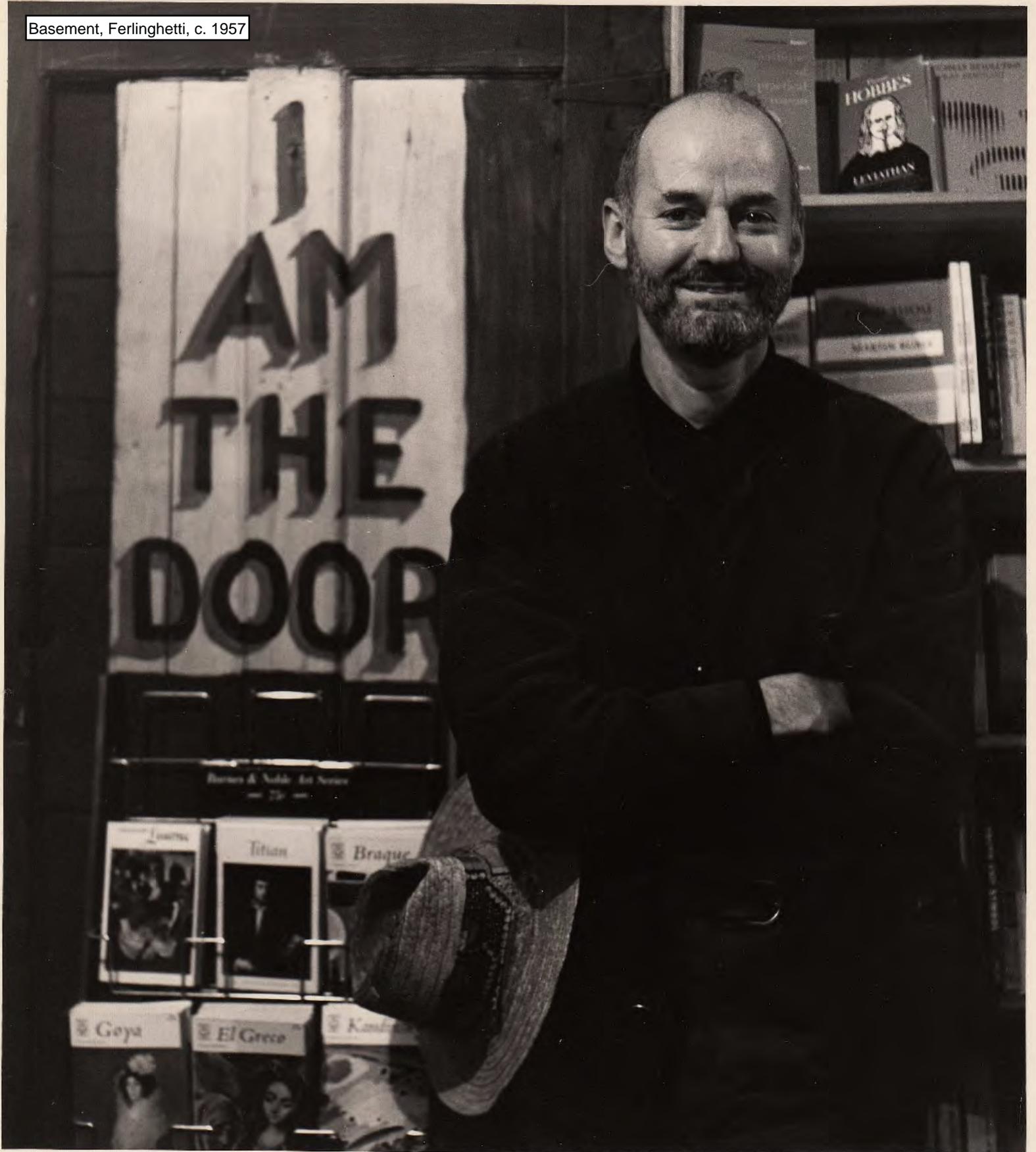
Interior, 1956



Exterior Window, Banned Books, During Howl Trial, 1957



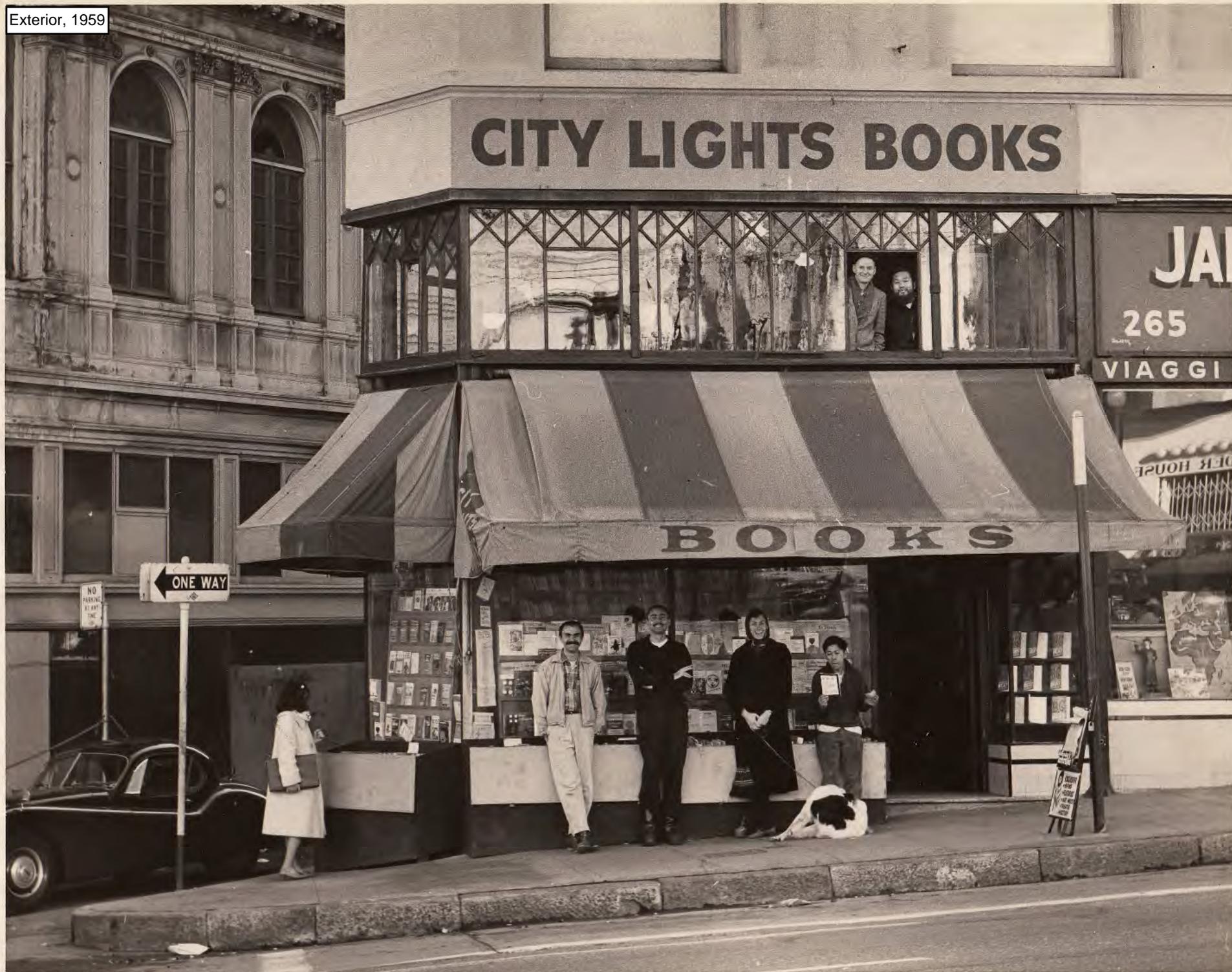
Basement, Ferlinghetti, c. 1957



Basement, 1958



Exterior, 1959



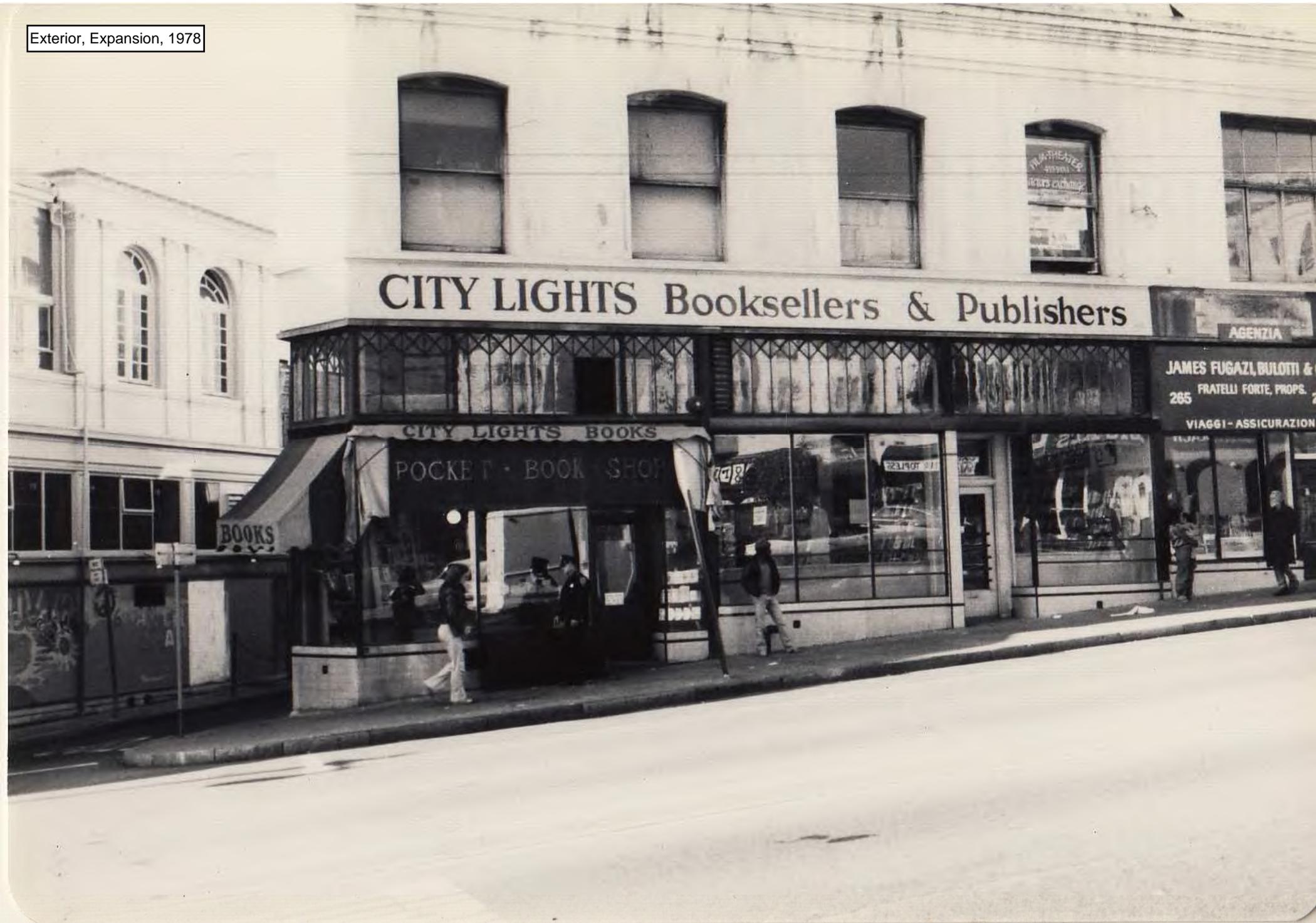
Exterior Alley, Michael McClure, Bob Dylan, Allen Ginsberg, 1965



Exterior Alley, 1973



Exterior, Expansion, 1978



Interior, Nancy Peters and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, 1978



50th Anniversary, Crowds



50th Anniversary, Exterior Facade



50th Anniversary, Ferlinghetti



50th Anniversary, Nancy Peters



60th Anniversary, Exterior Facade



60th Anniversary, Nancy Peters, Lawrence Ferlinghetti



Alejandro Murguía, Poet Laureate, Outside City Lights



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OPEN
BOOKS

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MIND

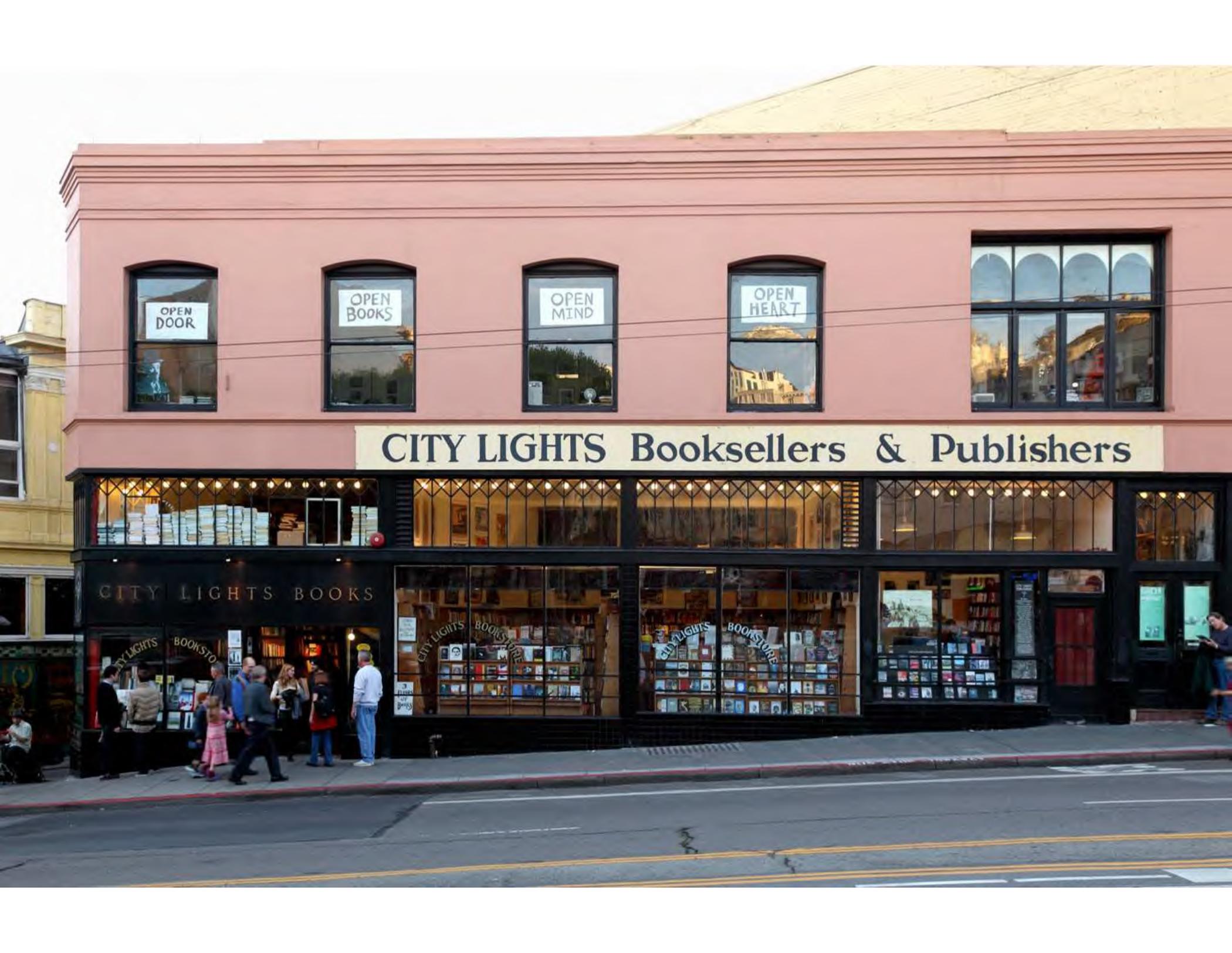
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HEART

CITY LIGHTS Booksellers & Publishers

CITY LIGHTS BOOKS

CITY LIGHTS
BOOKSTORE

CITY LIGHTS
BOOKSTORE



CITY LIGHTS BOOKSTORE

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READ HERE
14 HOURS A DAY

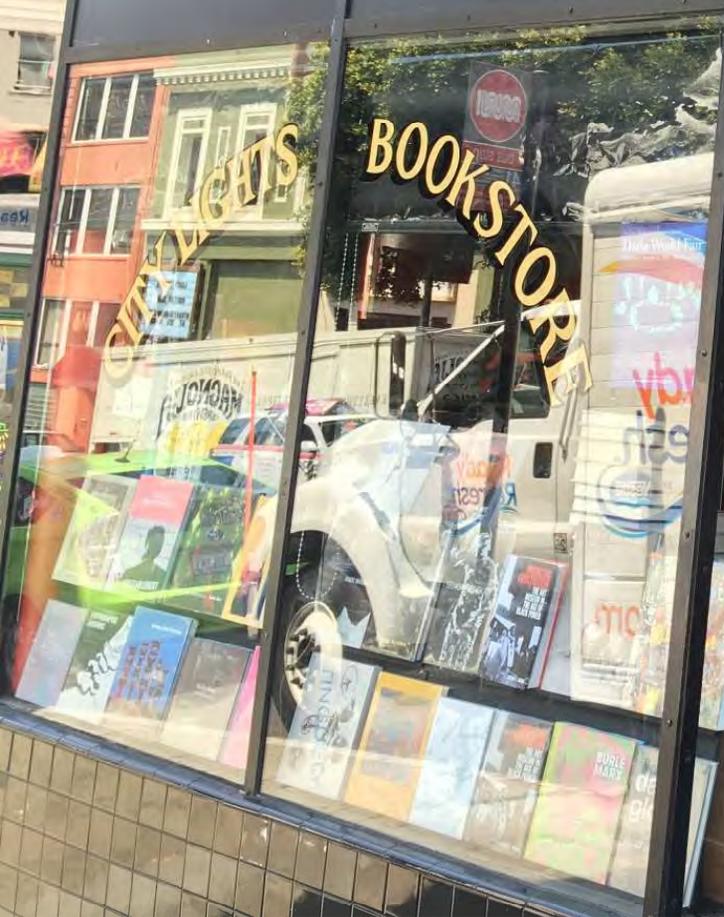
STASH
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JOIN US
AND
BE HERE NOW

ALL DESPAIR
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WHO ENTER
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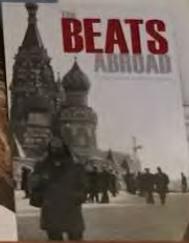
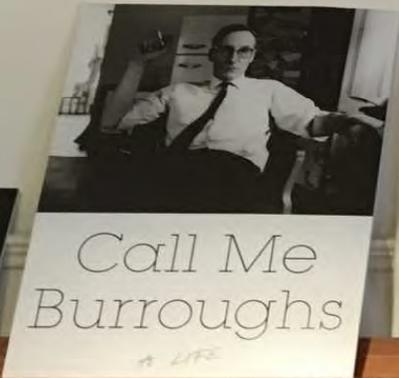
CITY LIGHTS BOOKS



POETRY ROOM

BEAT LITERATURE

THE POCKET POETS SERIES
PICTURES
The gene world
1922-1987



 **CITY LIGHTS**
POETRY PUBLICATIONS



DEMOCRACY
IS NOT
A SPECTATOR SPORT

CITY LIGHTS PUBLISHING





EVIDENCE

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THE DARK FOREST
ROBERT A. HEINLEIN
STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND
H.P. LOVECRAFT
ROBOT GHOSTS
AND WILD DREAMS
CHINA MIEVILLE
THREE MOMENTS
BEFORE THE EXPLOSION
MUSLEY
2312
KIM STANLEY ROBINSON
DEMONS

ACCESS
OF LOVE
IN CALIFORNIA





LIGHTS
AND PUBLISHERS
SAN FRANCISCO
SINCE 1923

THEY STOLEN
THE MOVEMENTS

POLITICS & CULTURE BY
CITY LIGHTS

THE FIVE PRINCIPLES
Experiments
in Art
and Music
TRAGEDY
LONG
DIVISION

SPYING ON
HEADCRACK
Ten
Years
in
San
Francisco
SCHOMSKY
NATIONAL
INSECURITY
America
at War
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Itself
In Search
MOVEMENT
CLARENCE
ISSUES
Lit Up
Inside
IN DANGER
THE EARTH
WANTS
BLIND



VITALINI
FOTOGRAFIA
ITALIANA

CITY LIGHTS BOOKSELLERS AND PUBLISHERS
"A LITERARY MEETINGPLACE SINCE 1953"
361 COLUMBUS AVENUE, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94133

Where the Streets
of the World
Meet the Avenues
of the Mind



MORE BOOKS
DOWNSTAIRS

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PRESS

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Advertisement

California and the West | CALIFORNIA ALBUM

Literary Landmark Gets S.F. Protection

Culture: The city is awarding official historic status to City Lights bookshop for its formative role in the Beat Generation explosion.

August 14, 2000 | JOHN M. GLIONNA | TIMES STAFF WRITER

SAN FRANCISCO — Like its rumpled poet-owner, the famed City Lights bookstore has always been a bit of an eccentric.

Wedged into a cramped corner of Columbus Avenue, the shop founded by renowned Beat Generation poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti has an oddball pie-slice shape, slanted checkered floors and triangular rooms, not to mention slipshod lighting with wiring running every which way.

"This is a wonderful old building," says Ferlinghetti, 81. "I love the place. It's meant so much to what we've tried to accomplish."

The North Beach bookshop, whose ramshackle shape might normally merit the notice of building inspectors, is instead about to be awarded the city's top aesthetic honor: historic landmark status.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Travel letters: A toast to San Francisco's City Lights...

March 30, 2014

City Lights Bookstore has the true beat of San Francisco

March 21, 2014

Lawrence Ferlinghetti declines Hungarian award over human...

October 11, 2012

The distinction isn't for memorable architecture but for the bookstore's counterculture history and role as the bohemian soul to a generation of avante garde San Francisco writers.

City Lights is the place where Ferlinghetti tested the 1st Amendment by selling Allen Ginsberg's angry X-rated poetry. For years it served as an artistic speak-easy where Beat writers such as crazy Jack Kerouac gave regular readings and where comics Lenny Bruce and Mort Sahl popped in to bone up on new material.

"This bookstore is a cultural icon--in its heyday it put San Francisco on the map as the center of the leading literary movement of the day," said Tim Kelley, vice president of the city's Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board.

"Its funkiness conveys something about the operation itself. We're not talking about a Barnes & Noble here. And that's what we're celebrating."

Long fearful of being overrun by the ubiquitous chain booksellers, Ferlinghetti and City Lights co-owner Nancy Peters hope that the landmark status will ensure the survival of their 47-year-old store.

"It gives us insurance," said the white-bearded Ferlinghetti, looking dapper on a recent morning in his tiny hoop earring and red-framed glasses. "They're not going to start knocking down the walls of a city landmark."

Ferlinghetti, named in recent years San Francisco's first Poet Laureate, sought to ensure some stability when he and Peters bought the building in 1999, after decades of successive three-year leases. They have begun sprucing up the place with recessed lighting and earthquake retrofitting.

MORE STORIES ABOUT

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San Francisco -- Landmarks

City Lights Bookstore

But some things will not change, such as the bookstore's reputation among its devotees as a hub for alternative writing and left-wing political thought.

"You walk in here and you feel the presence of all those wild young poets who were so full of themselves and their ideas," said Osha Neumann, a Berkeley resident. "This place is pure literary heaven."

The creative flame was lit in 1953 when the fledgling City Lights became an instant artistic happening. Open until midnight, the shop held readings by writers including Ferlinghetti, whose book, "A Coney Island of the Mind," remains one of America's best-selling volumes of poetry.

In 1957, Ferlinghetti and then-partner Shigeyoshi Muraro were arrested after City Lights published and sold Ginsberg's sexually graphic poem "Howl" to an undercover policeman. Both men were acquitted at a landmark trial that established new standards for judging literary obscenity.

Even as the Beat writers and their raucous readings faded into the past, the shop remained a beacon of dissent and nonconformity--what Peters calls "a pocket of deep literacy."

City Lights was the nation's first bookstore to sell only paperbacks and feature a section on green, or environmental, politics. It recently expanded its poetry section while other stores are shrinking theirs.

Today, there's a converted closet showcasing self-published books and sections devoted to muckraking, anarchism and "stolen continents," which features books on Western imperialism.

Ferlinghetti still receives letters from customers who say they got an informal education reading books in the City Lights basement, including some of those who were once down on their luck. "They admit to stealing books and say it had been in their conscience for all these years," Ferlinghetti said. "So they include a 10-dollar check."

For years, the shop admonished would-be thieves with a sign: "If you get caught stealing books, the police will not be called. You will be publicly shamed." Ferlinghetti said a manager once made good on the promise, pulling down the pants of a book burglar.

The poet continues the spirit with his own socially edged signs, such as "No shirt. No shoes. Full Service," "Printers ink is the greater explosive" and his favorite front door greeting: "Abandon all despair Ye who enter here."

Long known for its policy of accepting the homeless, who sometimes sleep in its aisles, the store is now resurrecting a policy of providing down-and-out writers and artists with a mailing address.

1 | 2 | Next

From the Web

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(Page 2 of 2)

California and the West | CALIFORNIA ALBUM

Literary Landmark Gets S.F. Protection

Culture: The city is awarding official historic status to City Lights bookshop for its formative role in the Beat Generation explosion.

August 14, 2000 | JOHN M. GLIONNA | TIMES STAFF WRITER

"This is what City Lights is all about," says Ferlinghetti, who was once investigated by the FBI as a "beatnik rabble-rouser." "Preserving the literary tradition of the outsider, defending the individual against the powers that be."

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Travel letters: A toast to San Francisco's City Lights...

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October 11, 2012

For now, San Francisco's most famous surviving man of letters continues to write poetry, publish books by upcoming writers, sponsoring poetry readings--reveling in the little bookstore that, like him, has endured generations of passing fashion and critical thought.

Shepherding a loyal staff of 17, he stays upbeat, joking with a visitor as he scouts a darkened shop corner: "How many poets does it take to change a lightbulb?"

Just one, and Ferlinghetti himself headed off to do the job.

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors is expected to approve the bookshop's landmark status next month, and the owners also have applied for broader recognition on the National Register of Historic Places.

Peters, a former librarian at the Library of Congress, met the poet in Paris in the 1960s and joined him at City Lights in 1974.

Nearly half a century after opening City Lights, Peters said, her partner still marvels over his literary labor of love.

"Sometimes we'll drive up to the store and he'll just be beaming," she said. "He'll say 'Wow, there it is! Isn't it beautiful!'"

MORE STORIES ABOUT

Historic Buildings

San Francisco -- Landmarks

City Lights Bookstore



Beat Mystique Endures at a San Francisco Landmark

By DEAN E. MURPHY
Published: September 25, 2003

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 23 — The shelves at the City Lights bookstore were pushed aside, and two chairs were arranged against a wall near the erotica section. It was standing room only as Lawrence Ferlinghetti, San Francisco's celebrity poet and a founder of the bookstore, took a seat with a friendly, twinkling smile.

Mr. Ferlinghetti was joined by a longtime friend, Eric Bauersfeld, a radio producer and dramatist, who ambled to a microphone and started the advertised event: an intimate evening of conversation in celebration of City Lights' 50th anniversary.

"This is the sort of thing we would do," Mr. Bauersfeld recalled, unfolding an advertisement for a cremation company. "Pick up a simple thing like this and talk about it." He then recited the ad with dramatic flourishes, as Mr. Ferlinghetti gazed in amusement.

And so it went one summer night: kidding about the dead and dying, discussions about the expanding universe, even an assessment of the unstable yellows in Turner's landscapes by a pair of octogenarians in a bookstore of strangers curious about City Lights' storied past.

"When I came to readings here in the 70's, I knew three-quarters of the people in the store, while tonight I saw one person I knew," said Gerald Nicosia, who wrote "Memory Babe," a biography of Jack Kerouac, the author of "On the Road" and another City Lights fixture.

"Even 20 years ago there was a community of artists and writers and photographers in this neighborhood, but that has all broken up," Mr. Nicosia continued. "Now people come from all over the world just hoping to find a glimpse of what used to be."

The staged evening at City Lights was typical of the type of 50th anniversary events that are continuing all year at the store. Last week it was the scholar and author Michael Parenti's turn to face the bookstore audience. Mr. Parenti has had several of his books published by City Lights.

For Mr. Ferlinghetti, these events are an uncommon concession to the market forces. He chafes at the mention of City Lights as a business and is a reluctant devotee of the Beat nostalgia that draws masses to his corner of Broadway and Columbus Avenue, a wedge of North Beach real estate with its back to Chinatown and "its front end facing the Western world," as he puts it.

When Mr. Ferlinghetti's conversation with Mr. Bauersfeld was over, the strangers, many wearing backpacks and chattering in foreign languages, lined up for him to sign "The Beat Generation in San Francisco," a literary tour guide by Bill Morgan, published by City Lights. The opening pages are dedicated to City Lights itself, the first all-paperback bookstore in the United States, which is described as the city's literary "head, heart and undersoul" and the embodiment of the "beatific 50-year history of the Beat generation."

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Mr. Ferlinghetti, who published Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" in 1956 and was arrested the next year on obscenity charges for selling it (he was acquitted), is one of the most notable figures from the Beat era. But now he insists far too much has been made of the Beat phenomenon that established City Lights as a literary mainstay of America's alternative left.

"It is really much more interesting today than in the 50's," Mr. Ferlinghetti, now 84, said in an interview. "There has been all of this mythologizing of the 50's and the Beat generation in San Francisco and so forth, but it has been wildly overdone, because it was a really depressing period, I thought, on account of the general repressive atmosphere and the political climate."

Mr. Ferlinghetti described the Beats in San Francisco as "New York carpetbaggers" who were fixated on an America that doesn't exist anymore. He gets much more excited these days browsing the offerings in his bookstore from places like Latin America, Asia and Africa than revisiting the writings of his 1950's contemporaries.

"The most interesting writing now is coming out of third world authors and women," he said. "It takes hunger and passion to create great books."

Yet in the era of George W. Bush and John Ashcroft, the dissident Beat voices are enjoying a renaissance of sorts in antiwar strongholds like San Francisco, and Mr. Ferlinghetti and City Lights are once again feeling good about being simultaneously marginalized and essential.

Mr. Ferlinghetti complains that the mass media all but ignore his antiwar poems, but he insists his work and that of his bookstore remain "the intellectual livelihood of civilization."

"Civilization progresses through intellectual ideas, through learning and literacy and anything that George II doesn't have," he said. "I care about the integrity more than the impact, publishing what you really think and not just saying something."

It sounds like a justification for a failed enterprise, but the store had its best summer of sales ever. Paul Yamazaki, a book buyer for the store, attributed the surge to the 50th anniversary and, as much as it might make Mr. Ferlinghetti bristle, to the store's association with the generation of Ginsberg, Kerouac, Neal Cassady, Gregory Corso and Gary Snyder.

Mr. Ferlinghetti says he understands the recurring Beat nostalgia, particularly in an America that he complains is agonizingly devoid of modern equivalents of that generation, which produced artists and intellectuals willing to speak up even when they were condemned.

"It is nostalgia, but also, the world, and especially America, needs the Beat message these days, this technocratic age, this pragmatic age, this materialist and militarist age," Mr. Ferlinghetti said. "Everything the Beats stood for is opposed to that."

City Lights has never made much money. Mr. Ferlinghetti says he has still not received a penny in royalties from the first book published by the bookstore, his own "Pictures of the Gone World" from 1955. Though he has long since delegated the store's daily operations, he created a nonprofit foundation several years ago to help keep City Lights financially afloat and the way he likes it: without a coffee shop or a New York Times best sellers rack or any misgivings about closing for a day to allow its 19 employees to join antiwar street protests.

The store's financial security is all the more essential because of the continuous changes to its neighborhood. North Beach is swamped with tourists, overpriced apartments and trendy restaurants. Before Mr. Ferlinghetti bought the City Lights building in the mid-1990's, Mr. Yamazaki said, "it was always a worry for us about what would happen to us, whether there would be a Starbucks on this corner."

Yet in some respects, old hands lament, the changes have already made City Lights an anachronism in the very place that made it possible. Most struggling artists and writers have left, moving to the lower-rent Mission district or places outside the city. The neighborhood has that once-removed sense of a museum, with streets bearing honorary names of famous writers (Mr. Ferlinghetti has one) and the California Historical Society offering walking tours.

"I am not sure there is a center of literary life in San Francisco anymore," said Mr. Nicosia, the Kerouac biographer. "Money and power have corrupted this city. Lawrence gets interviewed a lot because of his celebrity, but those who aren't celebrities nobody is paying attention to."

Mr. Snyder, who lived on nearby Telegraph Hill in the mid-50's when he worked the docks and wrote poetry, now lives on a dirt road about 25 miles from Nevada City, Calif., in the remote Sierra foothills. He no longer considers the store a "must" stop on his San Francisco itinerary. Still, he maintains, its role in history is secure. "It seems to me it is beside the point," Mr. Snyder said, "to worry about how long it will survive."

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SF Chronicle
7/30/07

LEAH

GARCHIK

After Thursday's lunch at Boulette's Larder, U.N. Secretary-General **Ban Ki-moon** was trundled on over to the War Memorial Veterans Building, where the U.N. Charter was signed 62 years ago, and where Mayor **Gavin Newsom** hosted a Herbst lobby wine-and-nibble fest for members of the consular corps and community leaders. The auditorium stage was decorated with 50 national flags used at the 1945 U.N. Charter signing, which had been stored in a basement vault since then.

Protocol Chief **Charlotte Shultz** led off the welcoming speeches, followed by Newsom, then the secretary-general and U.N. Association President **William Luers**. The following words were uttered in several speeches: honored, kind, humbled, environment, future, world, prosperity, democracy, committed, torch, peace. The secretary-general referred to the mayor as "youthful" and "dynamic," and the mayor shifted his feet.

Post-program, the reception continued, and I asked Ban something I thought might elicit a lighthearted answer: The world's such a tough place, what do you do to cheer yourself up? "There are so many problems and challenges in our world," he said, "the international community must work together to address these issues collectively." He continued, referring to education, target development goals and climate change, and I felt more lighthearted with every word.

Meanwhile, **Gale Bradley** e-mailed that she and her husband, **Alan Hugenot**, were in the Coffee Roastery, a Union Street Internet cafe, when a couple unable to speak or hear were attempting to retrieve their Israeli e-mail. Their only way of communicating to the staff was through notes, in Hebrew or broken English.

Laos-born barista **Thoy Singharath** tried to be helpful, but couldn't read English. So she telephoned her manager **Rolando Moreno**, who had just left for the

Public eavesdropping

"Stop telling everyone the world's ending in 2012. It makes me feel hurried."

Woman to man, overheard at a sushi bar in the Sunset by
TOSHA SILVER

day and was reached on a bus. Moreno remembered that Hugenot, a regular customer who is computer savvy, had been in the shop, so he suggested that Singharath ask him to help. When Hugenot asked if anyone in the shop read Hebrew, retired schoolteacher **Barbara Levine** volunteered to be the go-between. Hugenot got the couple online; Levine interpreted their computer needs, and everyone stayed around for a "conversation" with the couple that was made possible by her translation/transcription.

Bradley, delighted by all this multicultural pitching in, noted that San Francisco, after all, is the city that "gave us the United Nations."

In Kerouac Alley at Thursday's opening ceremonies of the San Francisco International Poetry Festival, **Lawrence Ferlinghetti** channeled **Allen Ginsberg**: "I have seen the best minds of my generation destroyed by boredom at poetry readings." The **Pete Yellin Quartet** played jazz; the city's poet laureate, **Jack Hirschman**, welcomed guests from China, Martinique, Italy, Serbia-Montenegro, Greece, France, Israel, the Palestinian territories, Nigeria and Syria; and savvy fans sitting in Vesuvio's, at the alley corner, leaned against the second-floor windows to listen. Vesuvio's man-

ager, **Janet Clyde** personally paid for food cooked by **Josie Ramos**, served free along with seviche, pizzas and pasta donated by **Cafe Zoetrope** across the street. All festival events were free.

And high above the cheering mob, bravely borne by the zephyrs of a San Francisco July, flapped at least four pairs of tighty-whities washed as gray as the evening mist. The person who hung his or her laundry from a third- or fourth-story window overlooking the event may not have intended to create an art installation, but there it was, as vibrant as the event banner strung across the alley. It was a good thing the fog hadn't come in on little cat feet, which would have left paw prints all over someone's underwear.

P.S.: **Christopher Felver's** new book, "Beat," will be celebrated by Last Gasp Press at 7:30 p.m. Monday at City Lights books. The book juxtaposes Felver's photos of the Beats with prose contributions from many, including **Ferlinghetti**, who wrote an introduction ("The 'Beat Message' is still spreading its word of dissident non-violent crazy wisdom") and had a very busy weekend.

P.S.: At one of several parties to mark the reopening of **Enrico's**, old owner **Enrico Banducci** was an honored guest. "I'm still kicking," he said, "and the place is still kicking, too."

A "Beach Blanket Babylon" version of **Marilyn Monroe** sang "Happy Birthday" to Gov. **Arnold Schwarzenegger** on Thursday at Carolands, **Charles** and **Ann Johnson's** Peninsula estate. The words to the song "Girl Talk" focused on the gov's going green, a reference to the environment and not the fact that the event was a fundraiser.

P.S.: A final word on a **Clinton** visit to the Bohemian Grove: nope. Whispers abounded, but he wasn't there. I got this directly from a tree.

Open for business at (415) 777-8426 or e-mail lgarchik@s Chronicle.com.

SFGATE <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/City-Lights-Study-beacon-of-literary-mischief-3229409.ph>

City Lights: Study beacon of literary mischief

By **John King** Published 4:00 am, Sunday, **May 31, 2009**



John King / The Chronicle

IMAGE 1 OF 2

City Lights Bookseller is a good little building as well as a cultural landmark

Everyone knows **City Lights**, a fermenter of intellectual mischief since 1953 so integr: to San Francisco's cultural landscape that in 2001 the **Board of Supervisors** proclaimed it Landmark No. 228 as a tribute to its "association with major developments i post World War II literature as publisher of Beat Generation writers." But the bookstore's post-1906 earthquake home also tells an architectural tale. A sturdy procession of arched masonry above wood and generous glass, it takes a stand without frills or affectation - dispensing with style in a shrug, ready to handle whatever the future might bring.

City Lights Bookstore

261 Columbus Ave. | Architect: Oliver Everett | Style: Barebones Classical | Size: 2 stories | Date built: 1907

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TRAVEL

A Book Lover's San Francisco

By GREGORY DICUM **DEC. 1, 2010**

ON a balmy fall evening in the Mission District of San Francisco, hundreds of people spilled onto Valencia Street, where they chatted happily for a few minutes before pouring back into bookstores, cafes and theaters. It was a giddy, animated crowd, but most of all bookish — a collection of fans and believers, here to listen to the written word.

The occasion was an event called Litquake, which, over the course of nine days, would draw some 13,000 residents and visitors to readings by scores of authors, many of them — like Maxine Hong Kingston and Daniel Handler (a.k.a. Lemony Snicket) — local celebrities. The “Lit Crawl” finale alone featured more than 400 readings at bars, laundromats and even the police station in a single evening.

Litquake is an annual event, but on almost any day or night in San Francisco, there is likely to be something for the literary-inclined — a poetry reading at a bar, a book swap in a cafe or a reading in the book-lined lobby of the Rex Hotel. This is a place, after all, where dozens of fiercely independent bookstores not only survive but thrive, thanks to a city of readers who seem to view books not only as a pleasure, but as a cause. For the out-of-towner, these one-and-only shops can be destinations in and of themselves.

Books, we are told, are a half-millennium-old technology on the cusp of being swept away forever. So a journey to San Francisco to immerse oneself in them might seem the cultural equivalent of going to visit the glaciers before they melt. But in San Francisco, the home of many of the very technologies that have drawn a bead on the

book, visitors will find a living, historically rooted literary scene that, though it has surely heard the news of its own demise, isn't buying it.

THE same quality that gave rise to the city's proliferation of small bookstores — compact, walkable neighborhoods with a militant objection to chain stores — makes it easy for visitors to explore the city's literary terrain. Though the center of gravity has moved around over the years — from the old Barbary Coast in the days of Mark Twain and Ambrose Bierce to North Beach during the Beat era to the Haight a decade later — today the scene is most visible in the Mission.

Valencia Street around 20th Street is an excellent place for a visitor to begin. A cluster of shops — 826 Valencia; Borderlands, a science fiction and fantasy bookstore and connected cafe; Modern Times, a bookstore collective; and the used-book store Dog Eared Books — is surrounded by cafes and bars that host regular literary events. It is a neighborhood in which one can see an author read one evening and spot him at the next table at a restaurant or cafe the following day.

One of those restaurants might be Osha Thai at 819 Valencia Street, a sleek neighborhood favorite, where, on a recent afternoon, I found myself perusing 826's "San Francisco Literary Map" over moroheiya noodles with yellow curry. More than a map, it includes historical timelines and a slightly out-of-date list of bookstores and readings. In it, I could see that the Valencia cluster is only the most obvious part of the Mission literary scene.

Not far away, above a dubious shop selling remaindered paint, in an all but unmarked building at 2141 Mission Street, is a bell jar for an eclectic collection of booksellers. To enter, visitors must be buzzed in and follow a series of unpromising signs taped to the walls in the drab stairwells. My first stop was Libros Latinos, a crypt-quiet space filled with books imported from Latin America. Like the other bookstores in the building (which also includes Meyer Boswell, a shop that specializes in antiquarian law books, and Valhalla, which features novels in their first printing), Libros Latinos mostly sells to collectors and institutions, but is also open to anyone who can find it.

I proceeded to Bolerium, the anchor of the group. It is a cavern jammed with books and disordered papers concerning 20th-century radical politics. Groaning

shelves of books produce the wonderful side effects of deadening all sound and scenting the air with the drowsy, musty perfume of old wood pulp — intangible features of the world we are losing.

John Durham, the owner, sat at a desk surrounded by piles of books. Bearded and a little shaggy, he seemed at one with his cluttered environment. An expert in his narrow field, Mr. Durham is the archetype of the bookstore obsessive. In response to a research need for a book I am working on, he drew my attention to “The Masses,” an early-20th-century radical monthly. He then pointed out a collection of lyric sheets, which featured songs with titles like “Albania, Our Beacon” and “Eternal Glory to JV Stalin.” “If you sing that one,” he said, “you have to make sure everyone knows you’re kidding.”

THE Mission may be San Francisco’s current book hub, but it isn’t the only neighborhood where you’ll find one-of-a-kind bookstores. If, for instance, you’re exploring Noe Valley, seek out Omnivore, a tiny, carefully curated shop that fulfills the food-mad city’s appetite for gastronomic literature. On Haight Street, Bound Together is a roughly 30-year-old anarchist collective, a closet of a shop crammed floor to ceiling with the heavy, serious literature of a parallel universe (among the shelves, near “Magic and Spirituality,” is one marked “Against Religion”). The Green Arcade, on Market Street at the edge of Hayes Valley, focuses on the more capitalism-friendly progressive genre of sustainability and eco-living.

Even the biggest used bookstore in the city, Green Apple, on Clement Street in the Richmond, maintains a distinctive feel thanks to staff members who know their way around the sprawling shop and around the world of books itself. “It’s not the kind of thing people could create from scratch these days,” said Pete Mulvilhill, one of the owners.

But if you don’t have weeks to investigate nooks and crannies, your next stop should probably be City Lights, in the heart of North Beach, the neighborhood associated with the Beat writers of the 1950s. City Lights is the grande dame of the city’s independent bookstores. Founded in 1953 by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the poet and artist, as the first all-paperback bookstore in the country, it made its name when it published Allen Ginsberg’s incendiary “Howl and Other Poems” in 1956. The

matchless publicity of an enduringly influential obscenity trial made “Howl” a best seller and — improbably — part of the American literary canon. In the process, it turned City Lights into a top destination for literary-minded visitors to the city.

I went down to City Lights one gloriously sunny Saturday, strolling past strip joints and seedy bars; the neighborhood that popularized topless dancing in America thankfully retains some of its midcentury flavor. The bookstore was comfortably bustling as I walked between the tall shelves of political philosophy and gender studies and made my way up a narrow staircase leading to the Poetry Room. There, next to a window open to the Pacific breeze, I found a chair with a hand-lettered sign tacked to the wall behind it: “Have a Seat + Read a Book.”

I made for the Ginsberg shelf and, bypassing the new 50th-anniversary annotated edition of “Howl,” selected the slim original, still published in the same disarmingly bland cover.

Rather than sit there, I bought the book and went across the lane (Jack Kerouac Lane, to be precise) to the Vesuvio Cafe, a bar that was once a Beat hangout. Vesuvio is a cozy space of dark wood, tiled floors and stained glass, with framed photos of the neighborhood greats — Kerouac, Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti — covering the walls. I ordered a shot and a beer, which seemed an apt Beat lunch, and went upstairs to the narrow mezzanine to read.

“Visions! omens! hallucinations! miracles! ecstasies! gone down the American river!”

I paused for a sip of whiskey and looked out the window, down onto Jack Kerouac Lane, where a steady stream of well-scrubbed tourists stopped to pose next to a mural and read some of the more innocuous Beat verse that had been inlaid in the sidewalk.

A couple at a table behind me were discussing Neal Cassady's role as connective tissue between the Beats and the Merry Pranksters. At a small table in the corner, light streaming in the open window next to him, a bearded, bespectacled man sat hunched over a book with the intensity of a monk, an empty glass and a stack of new books beside him.

Looking up, he announced that he was reading Henry Miller's "Tropic of Cancer" in a single sitting. "I'm reading my way out of a breakup," he explained. "I read books in cafes, then leave them behind when I'm done."

This is literature as sustenance. And it is commonplace in San Francisco, where the average annual per capita expenditure on books is perennially among the highest in the nation. Same goes for booze — according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, San Francisco is the only city that ranks in the top three for both (New York is ninth by both measures). Hence all the readings in bars.

Of course, many cities have vibrant literary atmospheres. New York, home to the likes of Gary Shteyngart and Richard Price, has a reputation as a professional's town, where the presence of a huge publishing industry can sometimes make the act of writing seem like a blood sport. San Francisco, with its unapologetic nostalgia for — and its ongoing celebration of — the written word, is more laid-back. With its highly educated, young population, it is a city loaded with dreamers who can easily lose themselves in a novel or a poem, a place where people can talk for hours about writing without anyone ever asking who their agent is.

"There isn't an enormous publishing and entertainment industry in San Francisco," said Jack Boulware, a journalist and author who is one of Litquake's founders. "If you're a writer here, you aren't bound by restrictions you might find in other cities; you can express yourself and innovate and experiment."

"And," he deadpanned, "everyone is stoned and sitting in cafes in the middle of the day."

Yet the recent flourishing of the literary scene in San Francisco is not accidental. Much of it stems from a decade of work by local authors who wanted to carry on a legacy that includes Jack London's smoking ruins, Dashiell Hammett's dark alleys, Jack Kerouac's dawn railroad yards, Amy Tan's Chinatown, and Michelle Tea's wild Valencia Street nights.

"Litquake came from a group of writers sitting in a bar realizing that we needed to do something," said Mr. Boulware, the organizer of the festival, which had its 10th run this year. The same era saw the genesis of other San Francisco literary

institutions, including the Grotto, a collective of mostly nonfiction writers including Po Bronson and Ethan Watters, and 826 Valencia, a free writing school for kids (and pirate supply store) co-founded by the novelist Dave Eggers that now has branches in six other cities. These ideas were anachronistic from the start.

“We launched at the height of dot-com fever in San Francisco,” Mr. Boulware said. “If we were less inclined to be attached to literature, we would have started Web sites.”

Ten years on, events are so numerous that Charles Kruger, who blogs at stormingbohemia.com, spent the summer attending 90 literary and artistic events in 90 days and blogging about it. Evan Karp, another newcomer to the scene, has quickly become a local literary gadfly. “I went to my first ever reading just a year ago,” he said. “On a whim, I started filming them and putting them on YouTube.” Since then he has recorded more than 1,800 author readings. “I realized there are all these little groups of really talented people,” Mr. Karp said, “but they didn’t really know each other.”

This social approach to literature makes locating the scene little more than a matter of finding the right Web sites. Though there is no single source, visitors starting with sfstation.com/literary-arts, sfheart.com or Mr. Karp’s litseen.com will find themselves in the thick of things before long.

Each reading series has a distinctive flavor. Some, like those hosted by the online magazine *The Rumpus*, regularly pack bars even on Monday nights. I attended one, the Literary Death Match at the Elbo Room, a grungy Mission standby (get the pint-size margarita) where a panel of judges put a group of readers through an Iron Chef-like competition.

Before long, Alia Volz, the hostess, in bright red lipstick and a satiny evening gown, was spouting fake blood from her mouth to catcalls from the audience.

Bookswap, an event hosted by Booksmith, a beloved neighborhood store in Haight-Ashbury, is more studiously literary. Everyone brings a favorite book — I brought my copy of “Howl” — and in small groups moderated by the staff and guests

(including, that evening, the novelist K. M. Soehnlein), participants talk books in a sort of literary show-and-tell.

It could have been dreadful (one young woman informed the group that “Ayn Rand has this awesome philosophy called Objectivism?”) but the enthusiasm of the participants and their well-read inclusiveness made the evening feel like speed dating meets book club.

“The longer you are in San Francisco, the more you realize it is just one big scene with a lot of different ways of making itself known,” said Mr. Soehnlein, whose own novels, like this year’s “Robin and Ruby,” live on the gay lit shelf. “In S.F. people ask more questions. In New York or L.A. it’s like crickets out there, even if they are very attentive. Do they think they’re too cool to ask questions?”

AT that point, crickets sounded appealing to me — I needed to find somewhere to put the finishing touches on the piece I was planning to read at Litquake. Though San Francisco is awash in cafes, not every cafe is suited to writing, or even reading. I found the Borderlands cafe in the Mission to be among the best — there’s no Wi-Fi and no music, and the place is furnished with couches and work-friendly tables.

But for hours of serious reading or writing, nothing beats the Mechanics Institute Library, on Post Street at the edge of the Financial District. The private library — founded in 1854, it’s the oldest library on the West Coast — is a little-known gem. The nine-story building houses a collection of 160,000 volumes in Gilded Age splendor. Marble, oak and cast iron lend a cozy feel to the reading rooms and a top-floor chess room. I bought a day pass and settled into a desk by a window, quickly falling into another world.

The Hotel Rex is not far from the Mechanics Institute Library, so I stopped in for a drink. There was no reading taking place, but a string quartet from the Golden Gate Philharmonic, a nonprofit youth orchestra, was playing in the spacious but cozy bar. Shelves along the walls held books signed by authors who had stayed there.

Later, after my reading, I was part of the Litquake throning lingering in the fresh night air. I wandered around the corner to the Fabric8 gallery, where I heard Matt Hart reading his poem “Minerva System.” It was a “sonnet of sonnets,” and Mr. Hart

read furiously, rocking back and forth, his face red. Members of the audience, sitting on the floor or leaning against the wall, nodded their heads to the iambic pentameter. Mr. Hart's dense imagery jumped around, a restless, slippery dream, an indictment of the now.

"She may be a monster," he half-mumbled and half-yelled, "but I love her!"

IF YOU GO

BOOKSTORES

City Lights, paperbacks and poetry. 261 Columbus Avenue; (415) 362-8193; citylights.com.

The Booksmith hosts Bookswap, among other events. 1644 Haight Street; (415) 863-8688; booksmith.com.

Omnivore Books, food-related books. 3885a César Chavez Street, (415) 282-4712; omnivorebooks.com.

Green Apple, used and new books. 506 Clement Street; (415) 387-2272; greenapplebooks.com.

Bound Together, anarchist books. 1369 Haight Street; (415) 431-8355; boundtogetherbookstore.com.

Borderlands, science fiction and fantasy. 866 Valencia Street; (415) 824-8203; borderlands-books.com.

Modern Times, progressive lit. 888 Valencia Street; (415) 282-9246; mtbs.com.

Dog Eared Books, used books. 900 Valencia Street; (415) 282-1901; dogearedbooks.com.

The Green Arcade, books about sustainability and green living. 1680 Market Street; (415) 431-6800; thegreenarcade.com.

Libros Latinos, Spanish language books. 2141 Mission Street, Suite 301; (800) 645-4276; libroslatinos.com.

Meyer Boswell, antiquarian law books. 2141 Mission Street; (415) 255-6400; meyerbos.com.

Bolerium, 20th-century radical thought. 2141 Mission Street; (415) 863-6353.

Valhalla, first printings and novels. 2141 Mission Street, Suite 202, (415) 863-9250.

OTHER

San Francisco Writers' Grotto, 490 Second Street; sfgrotto.org.

826 Valencia, 826 Valencia Street; (415) 642-5905; 826valencia.org.

Fabric8 Gallery, 3318 22nd Street; (415) 647-5888; fabric8.com.

Vesuvio Cafe, 255 Columbus Avenue; vesuvio.com.

READING SERIES

Litquake, annually in October, various locations throughout San Francisco. litquake.org.

Writers With Drinks, a decade-old, eclectic monthly at the Make-Out Room, 3225 22nd Street, (415) 647-2888; writerswithdrinks.com. \$5 to \$10 sliding scale.

The Monthly Rumpus, a very popular monthly at the Make-Out Room (it fills up even on Monday nights), 3225 22nd Street; (415) 647-2888; therumpus.net. \$10.

Edinburgh Castle Pub, a longstanding host for readings. 950 Geary Street; (415) 885-4074. castlenews.com.

Literary Death Match, various locations (and various cities), including the Elbo Room, 647 Valencia Street; (415) 552-7788; elbo.com and literarydeathmatch.com. \$8.

Quiet Lightning, a reading in which all the pieces at each night's event are submitted beforehand and printed in a bound magazine available only at the reading. Various locations; qlightning.wordpress.com.

Pop-Up Magazine, a literary variety show that is designed to be ephemeral — no recording devices are permitted. Various locations, (415) 294-1870; popupmagazine.com.

Radar, at the main branch of the San Francisco Public Library. 100 Larkin Street, (415) 557-4400; radarproductions.org.

PLACES TO WRITE

Mechanics Institute Library, 57 Post Street; (415) 393-0101; milibrary.org. \$12 for a day pass.

Borderlands Cafe, 870 Valencia Street; (415) 970-6998; borderlands-cafe.com.

AND A PLACE TO MAKE A BOOK

San Francisco Center for the Book, workshops and exhibitions on bookmaking. 300 De Haro Street; (415) 565-0545; sfcfb.org.

MUSEUMS

American Bookbinders Museum, a small, obsessive collection of machinery and ephemera focusing on the 19th-century transition from hand to machine bookbinding. Limited hours. 1962 Harrison Street; (415) 824-9754; bookbindersmuseum.com.

The **Beat Museum** hosts regular readings and other events, and houses a collection of objects and manuscripts related to the Beat saints. 540 Broadway; (800) 537-6822; thebeatmuseum.org.

PLACES TO STAY

The **Fairmont** has a penthouse suite that includes a two-story, wood-paneled library, complete with a secret passage hidden behind a bookshelf. 950 Mason Street, (866) 540-4491; fairmont.com/sanfrancisco.

The **Hotel Rex** is self-consciously styled after literary San Francisco in the 1920s. It includes reading rooms and a library. 562 Sutter Street, (800) 433-4434; jdvhotels.com.

Correction: December 12, 2010

A picture caption last Sunday with the cover article about the proliferation of small bookstores and literary readings in San Francisco misidentified the man shown seated by a desk at a Rumpus event at the Make-Out Room in the Mission. He is Walter Green, not Tom Walter.

Correction: December 19, 2010

The cover article on Dec. 5 about the proliferation of small bookstores and literary readings in San Francisco misstated the surname of an author who is part of a writer's collective called the Grotto. He is Po Bronson, not Brosnan.

GREGORY DICUM lives in San Francisco and is the author of "The Pisco Book," to be published next month.

A version of this article appears in print on December 5, 2010, on page TR1 of the New York edition with the headline: A Reader's San Francisco.

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SFGATE <http://www.sfgate.com/books/article/City-Lights-celebrates-Banned-Books-Week-3903374.php>

City Lights celebrates Banned Books Week

BOOKS

Nellie Bowles Updated 4:13 pm, Friday, September 28, 2012

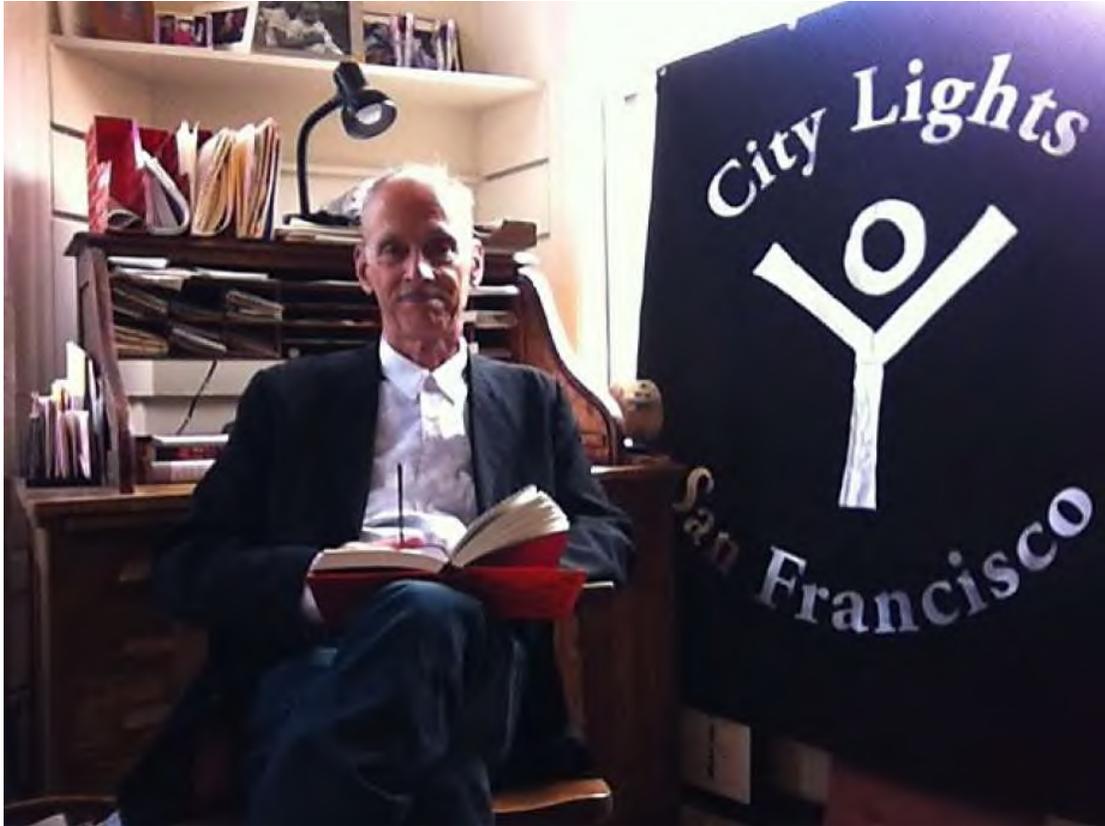


IMAGE 1 OF 2

John Waters reads from "Lady Chatterley's Lover" by D.H. Lawrence in the Banned Books Virtual Readout at City Lights.

It is 1963, and **Henry Miller's** raucous novel "Tropic of Cancer" is on trial in a Los Angeles courtroom. On the stand, UCLA English Professor **Jack Hirschman** has been asked to read aloud a passage about a whore and a pimp.

"Do you think f- is an obscene word?" the prosecutor asked, refusing to speak the word.

"Why are you spelling it out?" Hirschman responded. "I'm not a child."

That day, the judge threw out the case and finally allowed the book (banned since 1934) to be distributed.

Almost 50 years after the trial, Hirschman, now a white-haired man in a sweater vest, is reading another passage from the famous novel. Only this time he's at **Lawrence Ferlinghetti's** worn, wooden desk at **City Lights Books** - and the book is being celebrated.

In honor of the 30th anniversary of Banned Books Week, the venerated San Francisco bookstore throughout October will be posting videos of local authors reading their favorite illicit literary scenes onto blogcitylights.com. The series, Banned Books Virtual Readout, will showcase diverse celebrities such as poet-novelist devorah major, film director **John Waters**, Chronicle TV Critic **David Wiegand** and San Francisco Poet Laureate Alejandro Murguia.

The authors will read from controversial classics like **Gustave Flaubert's** "Madame Bovary" and **Radclyffe Hall's** "The Well of Loneliness," books now on many high school required-reading lists. **Joshua Mohr**, the buff and tattooed author of the Mission District-based novel "Damascus," chose to read from "Clockwork Orange" by **Anthony Burgess**.

"When I read it as a teenager, I had no idea that literature could be so exciting, so transgressive, could require so much activity from the reader," says Mohr, 36, who was given the book by his high school English teacher.

"In San Francisco, I'm not sure there's anything left that would be too taboo," says Mohr.

Local tolerance for the licentious was not quite so high in 1956 when City Lights founder Ferlinghetti published "Howl" by a young **Allen Ginsberg**. Ferlinghetti's victory against censors set a precedent for publishing freedom. Since 1983, more than 11,300 books, including but not limited to current best-seller "50 Shades of Grey," have been challenged and subsequently protected by Ferlinghetti's case.

Throbbing, piercing

John Waters, in a suit jacket and crisp button-down, reads a particularly raunchy passage from **D.H. Lawrence's** "Lady Chatterley's Lover." As he describes things throbbing and piercing, he laughs only once.

"I hope these videos spread. The Internet has changed governments' ability to censor," Mohr says. "Media freedom has become a global issue."

This month, **Salman Rushdie** has released his memoir of living with a death warrant issued by Iran's leadership. Though the official fatwa has been lifted, a religious group in Iran

raised the bounty on his head to \$3.3 million.

326 books

In America last year, concerned groups tried to remove 326 books from libraries. "The Hunger Games" was challenged for "satanic content." "My Mom's Having a Baby! A Kid's Month-by-Month Guide to Pregnancy" was challenged for "sex **education**."

The **Texas Board of Education** banned "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" in 2010 because the author's name was the same as an unrelated Marxist theorist.

In his video, Hirschman squints and holds "Tropic of Cancer" close to his face, as he shouts the last sentence of the passage - a call for creative freedom, even if the result will be something difficult to stomach.

"A man who is intent on creation always dives beneath, to the open wound, to the festering obscene horror ... if only blood and pus gush forth, it is something."

To view the videos of City Lights' Banned Books Virtual Readout, which will be updated throughout October, go to blogcitylights.com.

Nellie Bowles is a **San Francisco Chronicle** staff writer. E-mail: nbowles@sfgate.com

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March 21, 2014 | By Pico Iyer

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SAN FRANCISCO — To get to one of the spiritual centers of San Francisco — a perfect microcosm of the city of evergreen revolutions — turn left after the high-rising office buildings downtown, saunter past Francis Ford Coppola's emerald-shaded seven-story American Zoetrope mock pagoda and halt just past the spot where Columbus Avenue meets Jack Kerouac Alley.

Or perhaps approach the official historical landmark by way of Grant Avenue, at the heart of San Francisco's Chinatown, wander past a long line of slightly kitschy tourist shops displaying quotes from Lao Tse and Jimi Hendrix and try to ignore the eco-conscious green Hello Kittys in store windows.

Out now onto busy Broadway, a raffish drag with Italian cafes on one side and tatty, once state-of-the-art topless parlors on the other, you find yourself in North Beach, an area (true to San Franciscan logic) not close to any beach at all. There, commanding a whole (tiny and irregular) city block, is the place that has for decades embodied and transformed the very notion of that endangered species, the independent bookshop. When I walked into City Lights Bookstore not long ago, I would have been surprised if the woman behind the cash register *didn't* sport a shaved head, a leopard-skin pillbox hat (in tribute to Bob Dylan?) and two separate pairs of glasses climbing up her forehead.

If San Francisco's great tradition is the overturning of tradition, City Lights is one of its essential monuments, a literally triangular storefront that never begins to look square. The first volumes that greeted me were by André Breton and Antonin Artaud, celebrated mischief makers from more than half a century ago; every book displayed in the window, in fact, was at once highly serious and not to be found in any other shop window I could imagine. Very quickly you see that City Lights is a little like that ideal, book-loving friend — imagine James Wood filtered through the eclectic, all-American, hip omnivorousness of David Foster Wallace — who has impeccable taste but knows that the real classics are books you've never heard of.

Yes, the shop's contents are divided into sections, but they aren't the ones you'd expect to find in Barnes & Noble: One is titled Anarchy, another Muckraking. One is denominated Stolen Continents. An entire large bookshelf is devoted to banned books (and impishly contains "The Great Gatsby" and "Madame Bovary"). And one set of shelves, reaching from floor to ceiling, contains books put out by the bookshop's imprint. In an age when publishing is said to be dying, City Lights is busy bringing out short stories by Ry Cooder; fiction by the undying hero of small presses, Charles Bukowski; and works by such graying revolutionaries as Angela Davis and Noam Chomsky.

This hunger for revolt is especially impressive in a place that could very easily rest on its laurels. It was at City Lights, after all, that Allen Ginsberg, Kerouac and Kenneth Rexroth found ways of making their voices heard. There's a Beat Museum now across Broadway from the bookshop, complete with the 1949 Hudson featured in the recent film of "On the Road," driven into the store by the film's main actor. But

City Lights is the real Beat Museum, because it at once embodies the spirit that turned America on its head in the 1950s and invigoratingly carries it into a new generation. At the Beat Museum, you pay \$8 to enter an inner sanctum of manuscripts and artifacts; at City Lights, you can breathe the air of revolution for free.

Not many years ago, such bastions of independent spiritedness and uncertain profits could be found everywhere, from Hatchard's on Piccadilly in London to Shakespeare & Co. across from Notre Dame in Paris. But in recent times, though those two survive, some of the hoariest sanctuaries of good taste and writerly sympathies, such as the Gotham Book Mart in New York and the Village Voice in Paris, have fallen victim to the irresistible pull of e-books and online retailers.

In truth, even megastores have not been able to withstand such forces. The small miracle of City Lights is that it seems to survive — even to thrive — without stocking "Fifty Shades of Grey" and Dan Brown; its second floor is given over to that most unsellable form of literature — poetry — and to get to it you have to walk through a room devoted to fiction, much of it difficult and European, and then a room given over to works from Asia and Latin America.

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Seizure Led to FloJo's Death

The radical readers of San Francisco

By Andrew Whitehead
BBC World Service

30 March 2014 | Magazine



The city of San Francisco is home to some of the world's best bookshops, including one which specialises in obscure political tracts and another which has become synonymous with the Beat literary movement.

"City Lights is not just a bookstore, it's a church," one literary San Franciscan tells me.

Describing the spiritual headquarters of the Beat poets - more Godless than God-fearing - in religious terms is the sort of discordant note you might get in... well, Beat poetry perhaps.

But the comment was intended as praise, recognition of the store as a public space as well as a place of reverence.

City Lights has a fair claim to be the world's best-known independent bookshop.

It was set up more than 60 years ago close to San Francisco's lively, bohemian North Beach district by, among others, the poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

Back then it was tiny, a beacon of the counter-culture, and made its name publishing Allen Ginsberg's long poem Howl - for which it was prosecuted for obscenity and acquitted - and championing the Beat movement also associated with Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso and William Burroughs.

It has now taken over the entire block and is open until midnight every day of the week. It's the wonderful sort of bookshop that has easy chairs dotted around and signs inviting you to "sit and read".

Its stock is catholic, as befits a good bookshop. And if it's now a church, then the small room upstairs is the shrine - the shelves devoted to the Beats and to the poetry City Lights itself has published.

And the Beats?

Well, some would say that, alongside rock'n'roll, they were about the most inventive aspect of America in the 1950s and early 60s. Rebellious, distinctly, disconcertingly, masculine. Tinged with booze, jazz, pills and dope. Given to freewheeling prose, iconoclastic verse and road trips.

Kerouac's *On the Road* is the Beat generation's best-known work - a novel I read as a teenager, and which so captivated me I've never dared to revisit it in case I find the magic has faded.

So for me, browsing at City Lights is - oh dear, another religious term - a bit of a pilgrimage.

While the store and its rigorously organised shelves still fly the standard, it's a measured, late-middle-aged radicalism rather than the red-hot rage of youth. So that fits, too.

The Beats began as an East Coast phenomenon - Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti were both from New York - and it found an enduring home on the other side of the country.

San Francisco is America's "alternative" capital and it has been for decades.

Following in the Beats' footsteps came Haight-Ashbury and the hippy era. As the song says: "If you're going to San Francisco, be sure to wear flowers in your hair."

The hippy movement was more about music and performance than literature, more overtly political than the Beat movement, and left - as far as I can tell - a less pronounced cultural mark on the city.

That 1967 summer of love embraced gay love.

One consequence of the flower power influx was that San Francisco developed the liveliest gay scene in the country.

Refugees from censorious parents and disapproving communities, those in search of anonymity or a new start, congregated here.

The Castro, a former working class district, is a gay village which has become distinctly middle-aged.

This tolerant, laidback city has found its literary representation in Armistead Maupin's Tales of the City and its sequels - San Francisco not simply as venue but presiding genius.

So one of the world's most digitally minded cities - where so many of the movers and shakers of Silicon Valley have made their homes - is also among the most literate.

And it still offers sanctuary to the printed word. Printed not just in books, but on badges, leaflets, posters and pamphlets as well.

For collectors of old political pamphlets and ephemera - OK, so there aren't all that many of us, but this is a place for minorities of all sorts - San Francisco is paradise, in the shape of a cavernous upstairs second-hand bookshop in the almost-up-and-coming Mission district.

The shop, Bolerium, specialises in what it calls social movements - politics, civil rights, green issues, feminism, lifestyle.

There are 60,000 items in all. The best selling lines, I asked?

Gay pulp fiction, and American Trotskyism.

I assume there's not much overlap, but this being San Francisco you can't be sure.

There are tracts and leaflets from all over the world.

Regency radical squibs, high Tory manifestos, left-wing song sheets, right-wing election hand-outs.

It's amazing that such fragile items survive - amazing the prices the choicer items can now attract.

You might wonder who'd pay enough for a slap-up meal and a good bottle of wine to buy a Spanish Civil War-era anarchist handbill from the streets of Barcelona.

Well, here's the answer - some perfectly normal people... such as me.

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SFGATE <http://www.sfgate.com/books/article/Interview-with-Lawrence-Ferlinghetti-of-City-6363380.php>

Interview with Lawrence Ferlinghetti of City Lights

By Jonah Raskin Updated 1:05 pm, **Thursday, July 2, 2015**

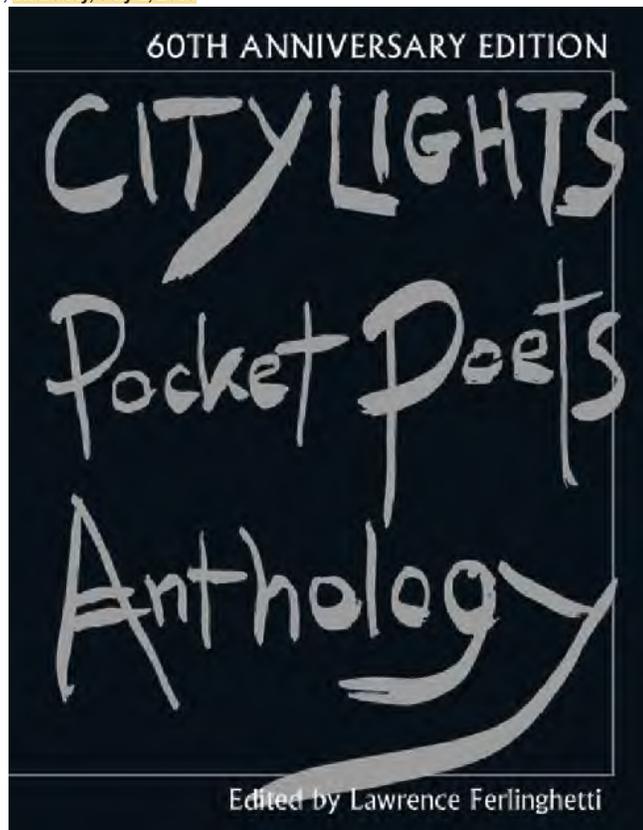


IMAGE 1 OF 4

The heart and the soul of bohemian San Francisco, Lawrence Ferlinghetti has altered the cultural landscape of readers and writers both locally and globally from his perch at City Lights, at 261 Columbus Ave. in North Beach. “I Greet You at the Beginning of a Great Career,” a new collection of letters between him and Allen Ginsberg, tracks their friendship and explores the fellowship of poets born at City Lights Bookstore and its publishing arm, City Lights Books.

Another new book, the 60th anniversary edition of City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology, brings together poets from each of the series 60 volumes, including Jack Kerouac and Pablo Neruda, as well as Ferlinghetti himself, who edited the volume and wrote the introduction. “As long as there is poetry, there will be an unknown,” he writes. “As long as there is an unknown there will be poetry.

Ninety-six years after his birth, there seems no stopping the author of “A Coney Island of the Mind,” which has sold more than a million copies since its publication in 1958 and which ventures as deeply into the unknown as any volume of American verse in the 20th century.

Q: Do you go to City Lights every day?

A: I stay at home and let others do the work.

Q: But you just selected the poetry for the 60th volume in the Pocket Poets Series.

A: I do editorial work at home.

Q: How do you feel about your correspondence with Ginsberg appearing in print?

A: I never expected the letters to be published. Elaine Katzenberger at City Lights wanted them in a book. Allen's letters are always interesting, mine less so.

Q: In one letter, you talk about the “romance of publishing.”

A: When you're young, everything seems like a romance. At 96, I can still feel romantic about publishing young unknown writers.

Q: Reading the book of letters, I was surprised to discover that Gregory Corso, whose work you publish, stole money from City Lights.

A: Corso was drinking at Vesuvio. People saw him break in, and they called the police. We went to the hole in the wall where he was living and told him he'd better leave town before the cops arrived. He went to Italy and didn't come back for ages. We took the amount of money he stole from us from his royalties. I think that was very Buddhist of us. We never called the police on any thief. But sometimes we humiliated thieves by pulling down their pants in the store.

Q: I was surprised by the playfulness of your letters to Ginsberg. You call him “Gins,” “Ginzap” and “Cher maître.”

A: I was his editor and publisher, but I was not a part of his inner circle. He never once said a word about my poetry.

Q: I think Ginsberg was the only person to call you “Larry.”

A: Anyone who shows up at City Lights and says, “I'm a friend of Larry” isn't a friend of mine. Lawrence is a family name. I'm fond of it.

Q: Is there anyone you would have liked to have published but didn't?

A: Kerouac. We published him, but not until late in his career. He was tied up with big New York publishers. We did his “Book of Dreams” in 1960.

Q: At times you seem to have been Ginsberg's therapist.

A: I didn't think of it that way. He was often overseas and very far out. By comparison with his work, mine is square. I was the guy home minding the store. He was on his trip. I was on mine. My poetry is heterosexual.

Q: Are you critical of San Francisco today?

A: The dot-commers came with money and no manners. Now we have the Silicon Valley invasion of the city. The techies have ruined much of the Mission. Now they're hitting North Beach. People with Mercedes-Benzes have moved into the North Beach neighborhood where I've lived for 36 years.

Q: Are you a curmudgeon?

A: Everyone is a curmudgeon past the age of 70. The city is rapidly changing. Come back in 20 years and you won't recognize it. The Manhattanization goes on and on.

Q: What's your favorite part of the city?

A: North Beach. I'm looking forward to a new book entitled “Sketches From a North Beach Journal” by Ernest Beryl, a local writer for the Marina Times.

Q: Looking back, how do you feel about the city?

A: Like I'm on an extended visit and can go back to New York at any time, though New York is for the young. People from San Francisco who go back there disappear forever. In San Francisco you can still be an individual. The city, what's left of it, is the last frontier.

Jonah Raskin is the author of "A Terrible Beauty: The Wilderness of American Literature." E-mail: books@sfgate.com

I Greet You at the Beginning of a Great Career

The Selected Correspondence

of Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Allen Ginsberg, 1955-1997

Edited by Bill Morgan

(City Lights Books; 284 pages; \$17.95 paperback)

City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology

Edited by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

(City Lights Books; 306 pages; \$21.95)

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San Francisco Chronicle

Our SF: The Beats help build city's progressive future

By Peter Hartlaub | December 4, 2015 | Updated: December 7, 2015 5:11pm



Photo: Joe Rosenthal / The Chronicle

Allen Ginsberg thumbs through a Jack Kerouac work at a San Francisco bookstore in June 1959.

Welcome to Our San Francisco, a yearlong project looking at 150 years of the city's history. Each week, a different chapter will be explored in the newspaper, on SFChronicle.com, in Peter Hartlaub's The Big Event blog on SFGate.com, and on social media at #OurSF.

This week's chapter: San Francisco's Beat Generation

One of the more cinematic moments in San Francisco history arrived on Oct. 3, 1957, when a judge handed down the verdict for perhaps the most important misdemeanor case in the city's history.

OUR S.F.



Our SF: Aviation takes off in flight-obsessed city

Our SF: City's hosted presidents, pope and a

queen over time

Judge Clayton W. Horn scolded the police in English and French before declaring that Allen Ginsberg's poetry tour de force "Howl" was not an obscenity.



"The judge's decision was hailed with applause and cheers from a packed audience that offered the most fantastic collection of beards, turtlenecked shirts and Italian hairdos ever to grace the grimy precincts of the Hall of Justice," wrote David Perlman, who remains a Chronicle reporter in 2015.



Our SF: Hospitals offer compassion through the generations

It was arguably the turning point for the Beat Generation, which would spawn a memorable poetry scene and cultural era for the city.



But the movement began earlier than the "Howl" verdict, and had a much bigger impact on future San Francisco than was predicted at the time. The Beatniks, as named by Chronicle columnist Herb Caen, had a positive influence on visual arts, performing arts and music. They challenged the values of a conservative city. And they built a foundation for a progressive future.

Historians list the "Howl" trial, and earlier Six Gallery readings, as the beginning of the Bay Area's Beat awakening. But it arguably began incubating a decade earlier, when Madeline Gleason started the Festival of Poetry at a small gallery on Gough Street in San Francisco.

It was credited at the time as the first poetry festival in the nation. Gleason had fiery red hair and passion for live performance — preaching the musical aspects of poetry. She said live readings made the poem "complete."

"Reading aloud provides the ear with the poem's music," Gleason told The Chronicle in 1949. "Articulation brings to the attention changes in tempo (and) nuance ... of a poem and in a poem are of equal importance, being completely interdependent on one another for the poem's special meaning."



Photo: Nat Farbman / The LIFE Picture Collection/Gett

IMAGE 1 OF 16

Poet Kenneth Rexroth (left), a well-respected figure in the San Francisco literary scene when many of the Beats moved in, participates in a poetry reading.

A regular at Gleason's readings was Kenneth Rexroth, an Indiana native who had been writing book reviews for *The Chronicle* since the 1930s. He was a fixture in the city when many of the Beats, who had lived in New York in the 1940s, came to San Francisco.

Rexroth was the master of ceremonies at the Six Gallery reading on Oct. 7, 1955, where Michael McClure, Gary Snyder, Ginsberg and others performed.

The *Chronicle* didn't write about the Six Gallery reading, any of the literary salons in Rexroth's apartment, or other very early Beat gatherings. There was no mention of characters such as Neal Cassady and Jack Kerouac, who was gathering material for his 1957 classic "On the Road" and 1958 book "The Dharma Bums."

But the newspaper covered the book scene, giving ink to bold new voices in a conservative postwar climate. "Howl and Other Poems," from Lawrence Ferlinghetti's new City Lights Pocket Poets series, was one of several poetry books mentioned in a Jan. 6, 1957, Chronicle column.



Photo: The Chronicle

The "Howl" trial opens with defendants Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Shigeoyoshi Murao (inside railing at left), plus defense attorneys Lawrence Speiser (left of table) and J.W. Ehrlich (in front of the bar at right).

There was no controversy until almost three months later, on March 26, 1957, when a five-paragraph article appeared on Page 2 of The Chronicle.

Customs official Chester McPhee, who had been campaigning to keep literature he found obscene from children for months, confiscated 520 copies of "Howl" that had been shipped from London to the City Lights bookstore. The police backed McPhee, with an alarmingly subjective method for determining what books should be banned.

“Somebody’s got to make a complaint against them,” San Francisco Police Capt. William Hanrahan told The Chronicle. “Then we look them over and try to decide whether they’re filthy, lewd or indecent.”

Ginsberg and his allies were organized, speaking sensibly to the press when the authorities seemed alarmist. Rexroth’s ties to The Chronicle probably helped their cause. While Chronicle readers who wrote letters to the editor seemed split on McPhee’s actions, the newspaper’s columnists and editorial staff were nearly unified in defense of “Howl.”

Chronicle editorial writer Abe Mellinkoff, who called MacPhee “ignorant” a few days after the confiscation, was typical of the support.

“If a literary Iron Curtain is to be erected along the Embarcadero,” he wrote, “let’s put some professors of literature there to patrol it.”



Photo: Chris Felver / Getty Images

William S. Burroughs (left) and Lawrence Ferlinghetti in San Francisco in 1981.

Later, The Chronicle's William Hogan turned his entire Between the Lines book column over to Ferlinghetti, where the poet and bookstore owner seemed to taunt authorities.

"The San Francisco Collector of Customs deserves a word of thanks for seizing Allen Ginsberg's 'Howl and Other Poems,' and thereby rendering it famous," Ferlinghetti said. "Perhaps we could have a medal made. It would have taken years for the critics to accomplish what the good collector did in a day, merely by calling the book obscene."

The case went to trial, and a verdict for the authors came down on Oct. 4, 1957. "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*. Evil on him who thinks evil," Judge Horn wrote. When the booksellers were declared innocent, the crowd cheered the verdict as if they were in a movie.

"The most succinct comment came from Ferlinghetti," Perlman wrote in his Chronicle coverage, "who, when he was done shaking congratulatory hands with all the North Beach bards in the courtroom, hurried back to his store without a word and stacked his windows with copies of the book — price 75 cents; in print, 10,000 copies."

During the long legal proceeding, a new spotlight was placed on Beat writings. Poets including Snyder, McClure, Jack Spicer and Philip Whalen were also reviewed. Before the "Howl" controversy, Beat books and poetry received brief mention at best. On Sept. 1, 1957, Jack Kerouac's "On the Road" was reviewed by Rexroth on nearly a full page.

"Whatever else it is, and whether it's good or bad, this is pretty sure to be the most 'remarkable' novel of 1957," Rexroth wrote. "It is about something everybody talks about and nobody does anything about — the delinquent younger generation. ... It is by a new author, the best prose representative of the San Francisco Renaissance which has created so much hullabaloo lately."

Whether this renaissance was happening was debated by the Beats themselves. But there was a very real shift going on in the conservative city; as the Beats were getting

attention, live theater, music and modern art were reaching new zeniths as well. Jazz and political comedy were thriving in North Beach, with innovators including Dave Brubeck, Mort Sahl and Lenny Bruce. The rise of the Beats coincided with some great years for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

George Christopher, the city's last Republican mayor, was in office in 1957 and would stay there until 1964. But the "Howl" verdict seemed to reveal a streak of social justice in the city, and the Beat culture became more of an object of curiosity, and less of an object of derision, from the population.

Herb Caen's famous invention of the word "Beatnik," on April 3, 1958, fell somewhere between patronizing and fascination toward the group that he would banter with for much of the next decade. Here's the item in its entirety:

"AND FURTHERMORE: Scotty

MacDuckston peered into The Place, Grant Ave. hangout for the bearded Beatnik Generation, and was taken aback to see an old friend of his in there — Harry Bloom, impeccable and dapper in a gray suit, white shirt, black tie, polished shoes. 'Harry Whaddya doing HERE?' gasped Scotty. "All of a sudden I got a desire to be nonconformist,' explained Bloom, 'and in here, I sure am!'"

While Caen joked, the police continue aggressive tactics in North Beach. The first half of 1958 was filled with petty raids of Beat establishments. During one police sting at Eric Nord's Party Pad, seven customers and employees were busted for dancing without a permit.

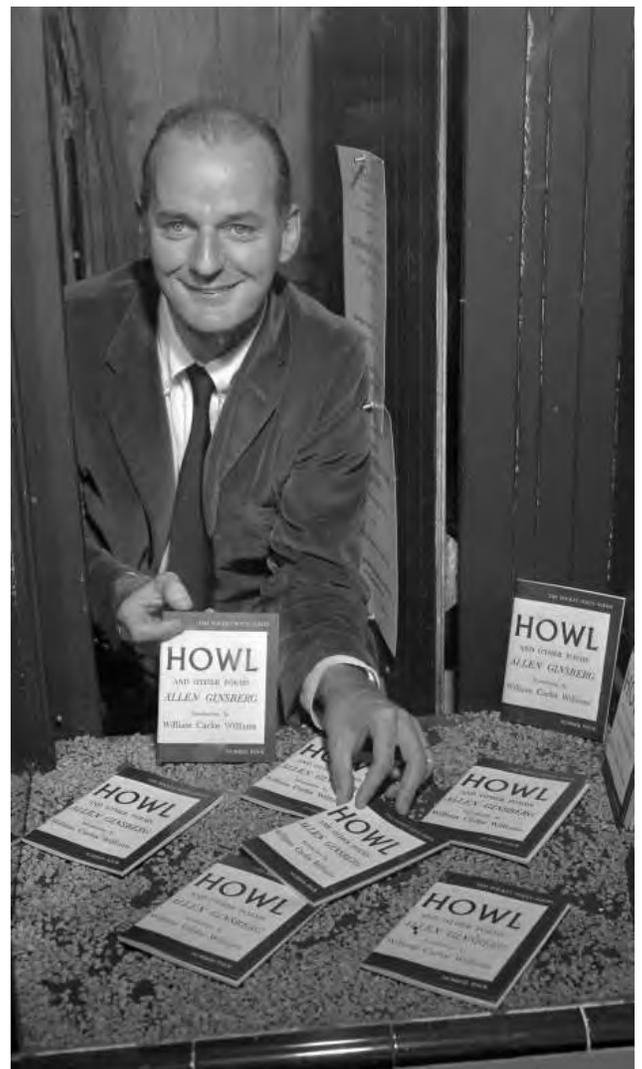


Photo: Bob Campbell / The Chronicle

Lawrence Ferlinghetti with Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" in September 1957.

“Police asserted undercover agents of the Special Services Bureau were charged \$1 each on Friday night and also a week ago to enter the Party Pad. Inside, they said, they saw people dancing to phonograph music,” The Chronicle reported. Police Lt. Norbert Currie “said police have no grounds for closing the Party Pad, ‘but we can prohibit dancing by keeping an eye on the place.’”

Early the next year, police who had grown beards infiltrated the Beat scene for months and busted 20 for mostly petty drug crimes, including a 21-year-old woman who had been married just hours earlier.

But this time, citizens in the neighborhoods seemed to side with the nonconformists in their midst. In the letters published in The Chronicle, at least, San Francisco readers seemed uncomfortable with the police state.

“Editor — I have just stumbled on to the solution of all the unsolved crimes in San Francisco: Just take all those police officers and plainclothesmen who are harassing the Beatniks and divert them to a more worthwhile use,” Florence Estrada wrote three days after the Party Pad bust. “Is it a crime to be a Beatnik?”



Photo: Bob Campbell / The Chronicle

Beatniks protest outside a “No Beatniks Allowed” sign at the Square’s Lair in September 1958.

As crowds came to North Beach, Beat Generation fascination seemed to grow. The Chronicle answered this curiosity with a two-part series in the Sunday paper, written by Allen Brown, titled “Life and Love Among the Beatniks.” The articles, while not condemning the culture, were sensational.

But they also offered a valuable physical description of the Beat stronghold in North Beach on Grant Avenue from Vallejo to Filbert streets — described by one inhabitant as “an open-air, come-and-go mental hospital three blocks long.”

“They are not beat in the sense that they are tired; they don’t work that hard. They are not beat in the musical sense; they are too cool, too indifferent, too pseudo intellectual to care about foot-tapping jazz,” Brown wrote. “They are beat because they feel battered by life. They have lost

faith in nearly everything, and they refuse to conform to the ideals in which they no longer believe.”

At the Co-Existence Bagel Shop, The Chronicle described, there was a huge poster of Henry Miller; the “Tropic of Cancer” author was a Beat ally who had attended the “Howl” trials. The Cellar, the Coffee Gallery and Tea Room and the Place (written on the wall: “Herb Caen Can Go Home”) were all thriving meeting spots for the generation’s artists.

The Beats responded to all this coverage by renting two buses and visiting the city’s more bourgeois climes, mimicking the tourists and well-heeled locals who had been descending on Grant Avenue to peer at the Beat Generation lives.



Photo: Bob Campbell / The Chronicle

Beatniks go on a tour of San Francisco, visiting the St, Francis Hotel, Union Square and I. Magnin's , August 11, 1958

By the early 1960s, the media had stopped covering the Beats like they were zoo exhibits, and experts were starting to analyze what it all meant.

Grover Sales Jr., a writer and talent agent, had this cynical take in 1961:

“These are the children of the H-bomb. Their mothers were spot-welding Lockheed by day and playing musical beds by night. They are poor, neglected, confused, rootless and very sick kiddies whose real significance resides not in their own selves, but in the national reaction to their doings and the attention that has been forced upon them.”

Chronicle jazz columnist Ralph J. Gleason was more kind:

“They are busy, working, creative artists and they have struck terror in the hearts of the Establishment of Letters, because like the jazz musicians they admire, they have shied away from orthodoxy and tried to break new ground.”



Photo: Peter Breinig / The Chronicle

Poets assemble at City Lights Bookstore in December 1965. Front row: unknown man (left), Shig Murao, Lew Welch and Peter Orlovsk. Middle row: Donald Schenker (left), Michael Grieg, unknown man, Mike Gibbons, David Miltger, Michael McClure, Allan Ginsberg, Dan Langton, Steve Brostan, Gary Goodrow and son Homer, and Richard Brautigan (in back of Goodrow). Back row: Stella Levy (left) and Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

As a phenomenon, the Beat Generation was short-lived. But the Beats themselves turned out to be positive ambassadors of their time and their movement. Ferlinghetti stayed at City Lights. Spicer (before he died in 1965) and Snyder and others joined nearby college faculties. Whalen became a monk. Ginsberg played the elder statesman well, at one point throwing out the first pitch at a Giants game. He died in 1997, just a few months after a Haight-Ashbury poetry reading.

For the most part, the greatest Beat poets remained true to their values, which included a resistance to being categorized. When the Summer of Love and the “hippies” generated more concern among city leaders, the Beat poets seemed sympathetic. “Let us remain in peace” and without labels, Ginsberg told a reporter in 1967, correctly predicting that the TV cameras and tourists that were gawking at the “hippie” phenomenon would ruin the Haight-Ashbury.

In 2015, the Beats are beloved, a symbol of what San Francisco has become. Tolerant, with a social conscience. Recognizing the potential of people who think different. Maybe not understanding every book or poem, but understanding the value of the poem-writer.

“In passing, may I say that I have read and dislike Mr. Ginsberg’s verse,” reader Elton M. Davis wrote, in one of those pro-Beatnik letters to the editor in 1957. “I am grateful for the opportunity to have reached my own conclusions on the subject.”

Chronicle librarian Bill Van Niekerken contributed to the research of this chapter.

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Peter Hartlaub

Pop Culture Critic

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FASHION & STYLE

A Literary Bromance, Now in Its Sixth Decade

By ALEXANDRA ALTER **JUNE 25, 2016**

SAN FRANCISCO — The poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti was sitting at his kitchen table in his North Beach apartment on a drizzly morning, telling a story about Allen Ginsberg, when he hopped up suddenly and bounded out of the room to retrieve his hearing aid.

“At my age, if it’s not one thing, it’s another,” he said cheerfully.

Tall and agile at 97, with a neatly trimmed gray beard and oval tortoise shell glasses that magnified his glassy blue eyes, Mr. Ferlinghetti could pass for a man in his 70s. He still writes almost every day — “When an idea springs airborne into my head.”

Mr. Ferlinghetti is one of the country’s most prominent poets, and arguably its most successful: His 1958 collection “A Coney Island of the Mind,” which was published by New Directions, has sold more than one million copies. Over the last 61 years, he’s published around 50 volumes of poetry.

His latest work is unlike anything he’s ever written. After retrieving his hearing aide, Mr. Ferlinghetti got up again and returned to the kitchen with a cardboard box stuffed with reporter’s notebooks, numbered up to 78. He set it on the table, next to a bowl of fruit and a half-empty bottle of merlot.

The box holds the first draft of a novel he’s been working on, in fits and starts, for the last 20 years. “I think it’s a new genre,” he said.

The book, titled, “To the Light House,” blends autobiography, fiction and surrealist riffs on mortality, nature and consciousness. It’s the closest thing to a memoir that he’ll ever write, he said.

Mr. Ferlinghetti’s project came as a happy surprise to his longtime literary agent, Sterling Lord, who has been badgering his client to write his autobiography for nearly two decades. Mr. Ferlinghetti has repeatedly spurned the idea. “I’ve stopped asking him,” Mr. Lord said.

Now Mr. Lord — Mr. Ferlinghetti’s friend and occasional sparring partner — has finally prevailed, in a way.

“This new manuscript is his most personal,” Mr. Lord said. “It’s certainly different than anything I’ve ever read. I’ve never seen an autobiography that was constructed like this.”

The partnership between Mr. Ferlinghetti and Mr. Lord, two towering legends in the publishing world, traces back to the heady, early days of the Beat movement, when a literary and cultural revolution was ignited by a band of iconoclastic writers.

Though neither of them can recall precisely when they first met, their long association dates from the 1950s, when they became acquainted through Jack Kerouac, one of Mr. Lord’s first clients. Over the years, as many of the writers they knew have died, they’ve formed even more of a kinship.

“Sterling really is my generation,” said Mr. Ferlinghetti, who was born in Bronxville, N.Y., in 1919. “We’re in the same boat, heading for the falls.”

Mr. Lord, who was born in Burlington, Iowa, in 1920, likes to point out their age difference.

“Lawrence is the only client I have who is older than I am,” said Mr. Lord, who will turn 96 in September.

Now, they stand as two of the last living links to the Beat Generation. From opposite coasts, they fueled a literary movement that defined the era and ushered in a new populist, countercultural strain of poetry and fiction.

At his New York agency, Sterling Lord Literistic, Mr. Lord helped initiate the careers of writers like Kerouac, John Clellon Holmes and Ken Kesey, who along with his band of Merry Pranksters elevated LSD use to something resembling performance art. When Kerouac, frustrated after a string of rejections, was ready to give up on publishing his groundbreaking, experimental “On the Road,” Mr. Lord remained resolute. It took him more than four years, but he finally sold it to Viking, for \$1,000.

Through his small San Francisco publishing house, City Lights, Mr. Ferlinghetti championed the work of Beat Generation writers like Gregory Corso, Michael McClure, Gary Snyder and Ginsberg, renegade poets who were too provocative for most mainstream publishers.

“It was a revolution in contemporary poetry,” Mr. Ferlinghetti said. “My way of judging a manuscript was, if I had never read anything like it before, if it articulated a whole new view of reality, then I knew it was important.”

His subversive taste sometimes got him in trouble. He occupied the front lines of a free-speech battle when he published Ginsberg’s poem “Howl” in 1956, and faced obscenity charges as a result. His legal victory paved the way for the United States publication of boundary-pushing novels by D. H. Lawrence and Henry Miller.

“Without Lawrence Ferlinghetti, there wouldn’t have been a Beat Generation at all,” said Bill Morgan, a literary scholar and an expert on the Beats. “He published all of these people who would never have been heard of.”

In some ways, Mr. Ferlinghetti and Mr. Lord make unlikely partners. Apart from their shared connection to the Beats, they never really ran in overlapping cultural circles.

Mr. Lord, who favors tweed jackets, sweater vests and sharp ties, is a tenacious salesman whose star-studded client list included the former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and the newspaper columnist Jimmy Breslin. He became famous for wringing fat advances from publishers, with an extremely diplomatic touch. (He titled his 2013 memoir “Lord of Publishing.”)

Mr. Ferlinghetti, a bohemian rebel who has a jeweled stud in his ear, has long occupied a place on the cultural and political fringes, even as he became one of the country's most popular and influential poets. His fervent fan base includes Bob Dylan, Patti Smith, Francis Ford Coppola and the poet Billy Collins.

“Sterling is an old-fashioned gentleman, and Lawrence is really an anarchist,” Mr. Morgan said. “You could say that one of them is working within the establishment, and one is working against it.”

Sometimes, Mr. Ferlinghetti and Mr. Lord clashed when they found themselves on opposite ends of the negotiating table as publisher and agent. In a letter to Ginsberg in 1970, Mr. Ferlinghetti complained that Mr. Lord often snubbed him in favor of bigger publishers: “I’ve written Sterling Lord since Jack’s death, asking of ‘Visions of Neal’ and ‘Some of the Dharma’ but I never get the time of night from him – like we’re not worth his trouble for the big money, etc. Maybe you could tell him we complained and push him.”

At other times, Mr. Ferlinghetti had the upper hand. He once turned down a manuscript that Mr. Lord sent him because it was too disjointed. (It was a messy early draft of William S. Burroughs’s “Naked Lunch.”) “I am extremely doubtful, from what I’ve read so far, that any bookseller would dare sell it in his store,” Mr. Ferlinghetti wrote to Ginsberg.

For roughly three decades, Mr. Ferlinghetti managed his own career without help from a literary agent, which suited his rebellious streak. He did fine on his own. “Most agents can’t be bothered with poets because they never bring in any money,” he said.

But in the 1980s, he struggled to find a publisher for his debut novel, “Love in the Days of Rage,” after it was rejected by New Directions. He called Mr. Lord, who quickly sold the book to Dutton. They’ve worked together ever since.

“He admired what he knew about me, and I admired what I knew about him,” Mr. Lord said. “He’s absolutely unique in the world of publishing.”

Any perceived slights or old rivalries from decades ago seem to be forgotten. (Mr. Lord seemed full of affection even when he noted casually that one of his ex-wives was “kind of in love” with Mr. Ferlinghetti, adding, “I can understand any intelligent woman having a crush on Lawrence.”)

Both men attribute the longevity of their lives and careers partly to the fact that they weren’t as wild as the Beat writers they championed. Mr. Lord, who cycled through four marriages, hung around with many of the rebellious, semi-feral writers he represented, but he was always the straight man. He never even smoked cigarettes, at least not in the last half-century. “I did smoke a little, in my 30s,” he said. “But I didn’t inhale.”

Mr. Lord often found himself in the role of babysitter. Once, when he visited Kerouac in St. Petersburg, Fla., he gamely joined him on a bar crawl, but only drank a few beers, while Kerouac downed rounds of double scotches and chased them with beers.

During a visit to Kesey’s farm in Eugene, Ore., Mr. Lord rode in Further, the infamous bus that ferried Kesey and his band of tripping Merry Pranksters back and forth across the country. But Mr. Lord’s joy ride was a relatively uneventful, acid-free trip: Kesey just drove him to the airport.

Mr. Ferlinghetti was also pretty tame, by the hedonistic standards of the era. He smoked the occasional joint and experimented with LSD, but never got too crazy. He remembers peeling Kerouac off the ground in front of his cabin in Big Sur early one morning, after Kerouac went on one of his benders while visiting him there. (The visit wasn’t entirely fruitless: Kerouac wrote his novel, “Big Sur,” which features a character based on Mr. Ferlinghetti, at the cabin).

While his vagabond Beat cohorts were taking mescaline and Benzedrine-fueled road trips across the country, Mr. Ferlinghetti was married and running two businesses: his bookstore, which he co-founded in 1953, and his publishing house, which he created in 1955. On top of that, he had his own creative pursuits.

“I had too much to do,” Mr. Ferlinghetti said. “I was more interested in developing my own painting and writing.”

And though he's often lumped with the Beats, Mr. Ferlinghetti rejected the label. "I got associated with the Beats by publishing them, but my own poetry has never been Beat," he said.

As they approach 100, neither of them has slowed down all that much. Most days, Mr. Lord, who gets around nimbly with a walker, still works at Sterling Lord Literistic, the literary agency he founded in 1952 after being fired from his job as a Cosmopolitan editor. He often works six or seven days a week. He reads submissions and drafts with the help of a magnifying machine, and conducts most of his business face to face or by phone.

"It's a little bit like having Maxwell Perkins call you," Barbara Epler, president of New Directions, said, comparing Mr. Lord to the legendary editor of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway.

Mr. Ferlinghetti, who suffers from glaucoma, still paints in his art studio at Hunters Point once or twice a week, though because of his deteriorating eyesight he's limited himself to black-and-white abstracts. In July, his paintings will be featured in a solo exhibition at the Rena Bransten gallery in San Francisco.

He stopped riding his bicycle around North Beach after taking a spill a few years ago, but remains an intrepid traveler. He spent two weeks in Paris last year, and visited the Pacific Coast of Mexico this January, where he spent a week on the beach, writing in his notebooks by day and drinking margaritas at night.

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“He’s still very much engaged with the world,” said Elaine Katzenberger, the executive director of City Lights Booksellers & Publishers. “It’s just who he is.”

Mr. Ferlinghetti’s presence is still palpable at City Lights, one of the last countercultural outposts in a rapidly gentrifying city. His deep, raspy voice is on the bookstore’s answering machine. His handpainted signs adorn the store’s walls and windows, with slogans he coined like, “Stash Your Sell Phone and Be Here Now!” and “Books Are Trees Made Immortal.”

Upstairs, in the small three-room headquarters of the publishing house, Mr. Ferlinghetti keeps a small, tidy office with an old roll-top wooden desk.

Though he retired from running the press many years ago, he still makes suggestions about potential acquisitions and poetry translation projects.

Last year, Mr. Ferlinghetti released a flurry of books. He published a compilation of his travel journals titled “Writing Across the Landscape,” a collection of his correspondence with Ginsberg, a 60th anniversary edition of the City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology, with a new introduction he wrote.

And in a sly prank that no one seems to have been up on, he also published a new volume of his poetry, titled “Shards,” with New Directions, which he passed off as a translation of verses by a 14th-century Roman poet named Lorenzo Chiera (English translation: Who Was Lawrence).

Most days, he works in his home office, a ramshackle room teeming with books and notebooks full of his sketches and writing, in a second floor rent-controlled apartment where he’s lived for more than 30 years.

He has a computer that he mostly uses to send emails, and a magnifying machine that helps him read the newspaper. His desk is surrounded by dictionaries in English, Spanish, French and Italian, and bookshelves with volumes of poetry by E. E. Cummings, Milton, Ezra Pound, Ted Hughes, T. S. Eliot and Frank O’Hara. A

wicker chair held a thick stack of unpublished poems, typed up with hand-scrawled edits.

“At my age, I might not publish another book of poetry,” he said. “But there’s lots to be published.”

For now, Mr. Ferlinghetti is focused on his new novel, which Mr. Lord is shopping around to publishers. Part of the narrative draws on his coming-of-age as a young man in Europe and his tumultuous childhood: His father died before he was born, and he lived in an orphanage for a while after his mother was institutionalized.

Mr. Ferlinghetti and Mr. Lord have been talking on the phone over the past few months, discussing ways to shape the story. Mr. Ferlinghetti has pushed back on some of his agent’s suggestions. But Mr. Lord is, as ever, optimistic.

“The book is not a conventional autobiography in any sense of the word, but you get to know Lawrence quite a bit by reading this material,” Mr. Lord said. “We’re describing it as ‘scenes from his autobiography.’”

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A version of this article appears in print on June 26, 2016, on page ST1 of the New York edition with the headline: A Beat Generation Bromance.

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NL	Night Letter
LT	Letter Telegram
MT	Money Telegram

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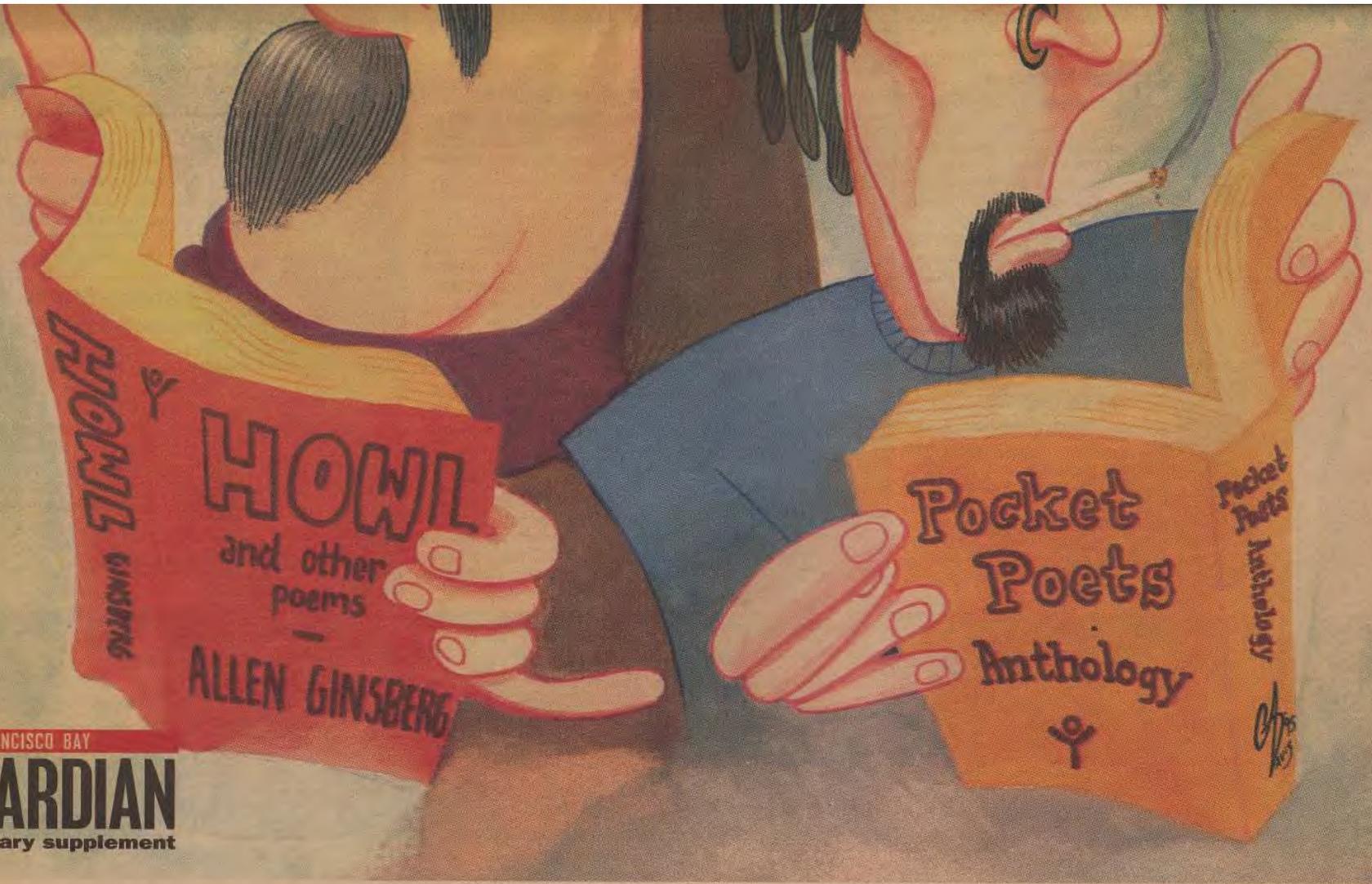


City Lights turns 40

*A history of the
North Beach institution*

P.5





GUARDIAN ILLUSTRATION BY GRANGER DAVIS

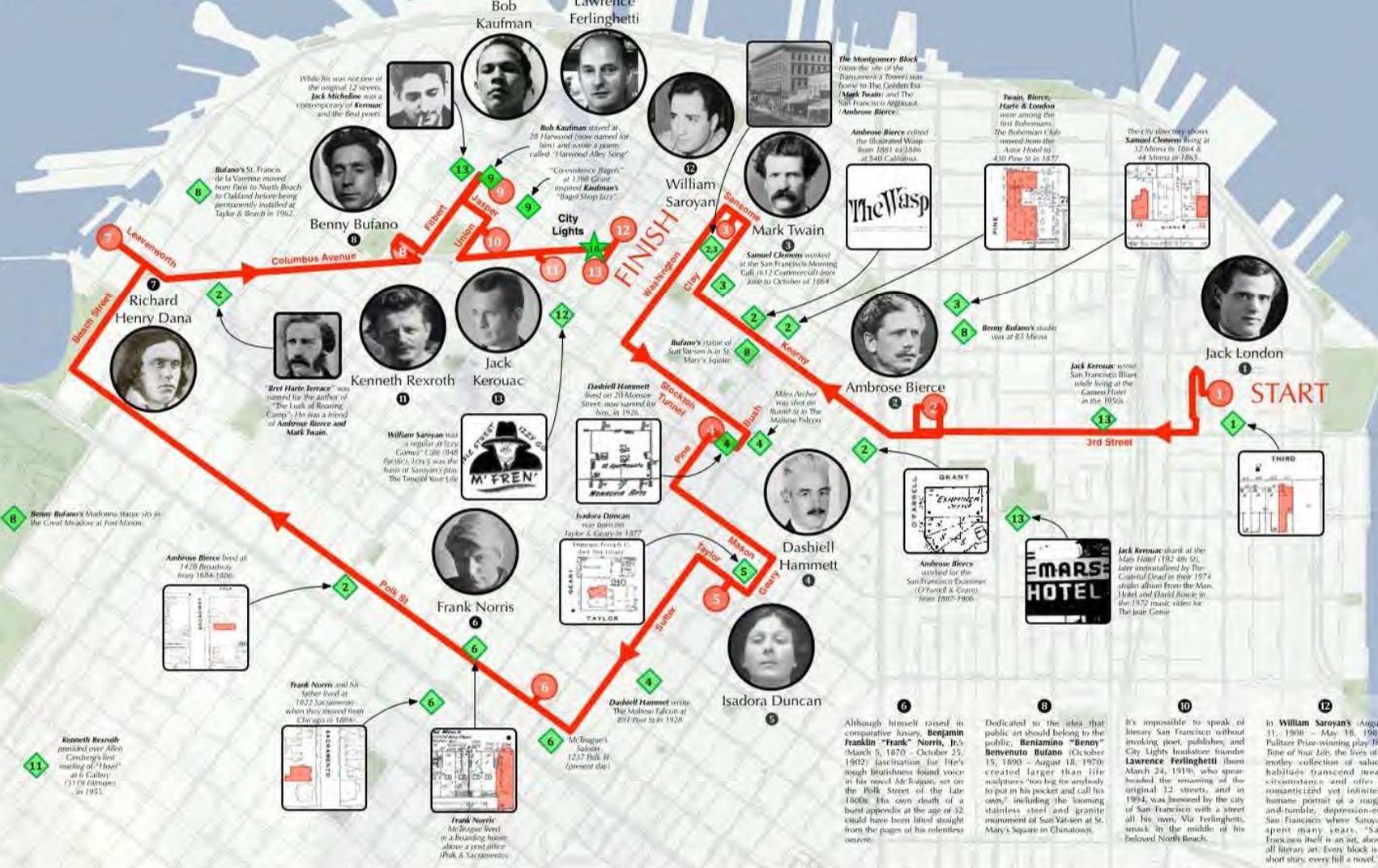
SAN FRANCISCO BAY

GUARDIAN

A literary supplement

Bikes to Books

A literary cycling tour of San Francisco



Bike Route

START at South Park &
1 Jack London Street
 Curve around South Park
 Right on Third
 Right on Jesse
 Left on Annie
2 Ambrose Bierce Street is to the left

South on Annie
 Right on Mission
 Right on Third
 Cross Market, continue North on Kearney
 Right on Clay
 Left on Sansome
3 Mark Twain Plaza is to the left

North on Sansome
 Left on Washington
 Left on Stockton
 South through Stockton Tunnel
 Dismount at stairway to Bush
 Walk up stairs and half a block west
4 Dashiell Hammett Street is on the left

Back down steps to Stockton Tunnel OR
 West on Pine to Mason
 Right on Sutter (from Stockton)
 Left on Mason
 Right on Geary
 Right on Taylor
5 Isadora Duncan Lane is to the left

North on Taylor
 Left on Sutter
 Right on Polk
6 Frank Norris Street is on right

North on Polk
 Right on Beach
 Left on Leavenworth
 Cross Jefferson
7 Richard Henry Dana Place is the waterfront end of Leavenworth

South on Leavenworth
 Left on Columbus
 Cross Columbus at Filbert
8 Via Buferano is to the Left

North on Buferano
 Right on Greenwich
 Right on Powell
 Left on Filbert
9 Bob Kaufman Street is to the right

West on Filbert
 Right on Jasper
 Jasper to Union
 Left on Union
10 Via Ferlinghetti is to the left

West on Union
 Left on Columbus
 Columbus to Vallejo
11 Kenneth Rexroth Place is to the right

Southeast on Columbus to Broadway
 Cross Broadway
12 William Saroyan Place is to the left,
13 Jack Kerouac Street is to the right
FINISH

Map files by Stamen Design, under CC BY 3.0. Data by OpenStreetMap under CC BY SA.

It's impossible to speak of literary San Francisco without invoking poet, publisher, and City Lights bookstore founder **Lawrence Ferlinghetti** (born March 24, 1919), who spearheaded the renaissance of the original 32 streets, and in 1994, was honored by the city of San Francisco with a street named in his honor. Saroyan spent many years, "San Francisco itself is an act, above all literary art: Every block in the 1920s must vibrate for the Jack Kerouac."

From lean-louis Kerouac, Beat legend **Jack Kerouac** (March 12, 1922 – October 21, 1969) left an indelible mark on the mythology of San Francisco. Much like Jack London before him, he died young and broken, but not before expressing a similar zest for the alive: "the only people for me are the mad ones...the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars."

Although himself raised in comparative luxury, **Benjamin Franklin "Frank" Norris** (May 27, 1870 – October 25, 1902) found voice in his need for empathy to put in his pocket and call his own, including the looming stainless steel and granite monument of San Valentin at St. Mary's Square in Chinatown.

Dedicated to the idea that public art should belong to the people, **Benjamin "Benny" Benvenuto Bufano** (October 15, 1890 – August 18, 1970) created larger than life sculptures "too big for anybody to put in his pocket and call his own," including the looming stainless steel and granite monument of San Valentin at St. Mary's Square in Chinatown.

Of the 12, Massachusetts-born lawyer **Richard Henry Dana**, Jr. (August 1, 1815 – January 6, 1882) probably spent the least amount of time in San Francisco, but his terminal awaiting account Two Years Before the Mast became an important guidebook to the California coast during the gold-rush years, including its prescient analysis of the San Francisco Bay: "if California ever becomes a prosperous country, this bay will be the center of its prosperity."

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Filing Date: September 19, 2016
Case No.: 2016-012224LBR
Business Name: City Lights Booksellers and Publishers
Business Address: 261 Columbus Avenue
Zoning: NCD – Broadway Neighborhood Commercial/
65-A-1 Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0162/018
Applicant: Elaine Katzenberger, Executive Director
261 Columbus Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94133
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

City Lights Booksellers and Publishers is a world-renowned independent bookstore and publisher that played an important role in the development of North Beach’s literary community and which continues to influence the field of literature on an international scale. Peter D. Martin and Beat-era poet, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, opened City Lights Bookstore in 1953 at 261 Columbus Avenue. The two-story over basement commercial building was constructed in 1907 and is located on a triangular lot on the south side of Columbus Avenue between Broadway and Jack Kerouac Aly. Prior to its opening in 1953, San Francisco lacked a public space for writers and poets to come together and share their work. City Lights Bookstore was created with the intention of providing such a space and over the years blossomed into one of the nation’s great literary centers and publishers, nurturing writers of the Beat Generation and counterculture movement. The first paperback bookstore in the country, City Lights continues to offer a large selection of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and literary and political journals. City Lights Publishers, established in 1955, nurtures local authors and promotes innovative writing in the areas in poetry, politics, and history. It published works of many of the authors of the Beat Generation and is known historically for its promotion of free speech and the avant guard. The property was designated as a City Landmark (#228) in 2001 for its association with City Lights Bookstore & Publishers, which was found to be significant for its “seminal role in the literary and cultural development of San Francisco and the nation...for championing First Amendment protections, and for publishing and giving voice to writers and artists everywhere.” City Lights Bookstore and Publishers continues to be relevant today, playing a critical role in San Francisco’s intellectual life through its bookselling and publishing, as well as its free literary programming and community collaborations to further cultural literacy throughout the city.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

1953

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

Yes, City Lights Booksellers and Publishers qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- i. City Lights Booksellers and Publishers has operated for 63 years.
 - ii. City Lights Booksellers and Publishers has contributed to the North Beach community's history and identity by supporting the development of post-World War II literature as a publisher of Beat Generation writers. It continues to function as a literary hub, nurturing local authors, launching careers, and furthering cultural literacy throughout the city.
 - iii. City Lights Booksellers and Publishers is committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define its art of bookselling and publishing, as well as its tradition of offering high quality literary programming.
3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

Yes. City Lights Booksellers and Publishers is associated with the literary arts, operating as a bookstore, publisher, community gathering space, and promotor of cultural literacy. Historically, City Lights Booksellers and Publishers helped nurture the Beat Generation of writers and continues to support innovative and politically progressive literature and poetry.

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

Yes. City Lights Booksellers and Publishers and its location, 261 Columbus Avenue, are associated with significant events, persons, and architecture. The site is designated as City Landmark #228 for its significant contributions to major developments in post-World War II literature as a gathering place for intellectuals and literati and as a publisher of Beat Generation writers. The business is also significant for its association with the defense of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems* in a landmark test of First Amendment protections. Ferlinghetti and his business partner, Shigeyoshi Murao, were tried on charges of obscenity for publishing and selling "Howl." Their eventual acquittal, which determined that "Howl" was not obscene, established an important legal precedent. The site is also significant for its association with important persons, including Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who was a co-founder of City Lights, an internationally renowned poet, the first Poet Laureate of San Francisco, and an influential publisher of literature associated with the Beat Generation. Additional important literary figures associated with City Lights include Allen Ginsberg, Diane di Prima, Jack Kerouac, among others. The building at 261 Columbus Avenue is also found to be significant for its architecture. Built in 1907, the property embodies distinctive characteristics typical of small commercial buildings constructed after the 1906 earthquake and fire, and is a fairly rare survivor of a once common building type of its period.

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

Yes, it designated City Landmark #228 per Article 10 of the San Francisco Planning Code.

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

Yes. It is mentioned on page 50 of the *Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco* (2015).

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

Yes. New York Times, June 2016, "A Literary Bromance Now in its Sixth Decade," by Alexandra Alter; The Guardian, March 2016, "Interview with a Bookstore: San Francisco's historic City Lights," by Literary Hub; San Francisco Chronicle, December 2015, "Our SF: The Beats help build city's progressive future," by Peter Hartlaub; San Francisco Chronicle, July 2015, "Interview with Lawrence Ferlinghetti of City Lights," by Jonah Raskin; BBC Magazine, March 2014, "The radical readers of San Francisco," by Andrew Whitehead; Los Angeles Times, March 2014, "City Lights Bookstore has the true beat of San Francisco," by Pico Iyer; San Francisco Chronicle, October 2013, "The Literary City"; The Guardian, May 2013, "San Francisco's City Lights: the bookshop that brought us the Beats," by Evan Karp; San Francisco Chronicle, September 2012, "City Lights celebrates Banned Books Week," by Nellie Bowles; Vanity Fair, July 2012, "Suddenly that Summer," by Sheila Weller; New York Times, December 1, 2010, "A Book Lover's San Francisco," by Gregory Dicum; San Francisco Chronicle, May 2009, "City Lights: Study beacon of literary mischief," by John King; New York Times, September 2003, "Beat Mystique Endures at a San Francisco Landmark," by Dean E. Murphy; SF Gate, June 9, 2003, "SF Gate: City Lights Stories," by Hamlin Endicott; Los Angeles Times, August 14 2000, "Literary Landmark Gets S.F. Protection," by John M. Glionna; featured on the Exploratorium's website for their series, "Driven: True Stories of Inspiration," January 2014; featured on the A.V. Club's website for the series, "Pop Pilgrims," May 2011

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

- 261 Columbus Avenue

Recommended by Applicant

- Offering of paperback and hardback literature and poetry
- Publishing function, particularly in the genres of poetry, fiction, cultural studies, politics, and history
- Free literary events and programs
- Nonprofit cultural literacy programs and collaborations

Additional Recommended by Staff

No additional recommendations



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No. 798 HEARING DATE OCTOBER 19, 2016

Case No.: 2016-012224LBR
Business Name: City Lights Booksellers and Publishers
Business Address: 261 Columbus Avenue
Zoning: NCD – Broadway Neighborhood Commercial/
65-A-1 Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0162/018
Applicant: Elaine Katzenberger, Executive Director
261 Columbus Avenue
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Nominated By: Supervisor Aaron Peskin, District 3
Staff Contact: Desiree Smith – (415) 575-9093
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Reviewed By: Tim Frye – (415) 575-6822
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Information:
415.558.6377

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR CITY LIGHTS BOOKSELLERS AND PUBLISHERS, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 261 COLUMBUS AVENUE (BLOCK/LOT 0162/018).

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 North Beach 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 October 19, 2016, 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 City Lights Booksellers and Publishers qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated in the same location 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 City Lights Booksellers and Publishers

Location (if applicable)

- 261 Columbus Avenue

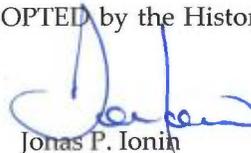
Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

- Offering of paperback and hardback literature and poetry
- Publishing function, particularly in the genres of poetry, fiction, cultural studies, politics, and history
- Free literary events and programs
- Nonprofit cultural literacy programs and collaborations

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 2016-012224LBR to the Office of Small Business.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Historic Preservation Commission on October 19, 2016.



Jonas P. Ionia

Commission Secretary

AYES: Hasz, Johnck, Johns, Pearlman

NOES: None

ABSENT: Hyland, Matsuda, Wolfram

ADOPTED: October 19, 2016