

ROARSHOCK PAGE

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July 14 - Bastille Day, in France the National Day (La fête nationale), commemorating the Storming of the Bastille in 1789 at the start of the French Revolution, and the Fête de la Fédération which celebrated the unity of the French people on July 14, 1790. This in the wake of the American Declaration and U.S. War of Independence. All the rest: war, peace, history, bungled chances and unintended consequences. Yet the Great Work moves slowly forward, sort of. With a bit of Real Estate in mythological San Francisco — *The Paris of the West* — ROARSHOCK PAGE knows something about predicting history and reporting from the future.

CALIFORNIA STREET SKETCHES DOWNTOWN

California always combined myth and reality. Misconceived as an island terrestrial paradise, separate from mainland North America—due to 16th century cartographical error—this Golden Land forever blurred the territories between mystical ideal and actual physical reality. The Island of California first appeared fictionally in *Las sergas de Esplandián* by Garcí Rodríguez de Montalvo (the first known edition published July 1510, a prior edition possibly published in Seville, 1496), a sequel to the chivalric tales of Amadís de Gaula (Idol of the Ingenious Gentleman don Quijote de la Mancha in Miguel de Cervantes' comedic masterpiece). The island of California was depicted being "... on the right hand of the Indies... very close to the Terrestrial Paradise... peopled by black women, without any men among them, for they live in the manner of Amazons." Possibly the oldest fantastic California legend, but certainly not the only one, far from it — There be more California Myths and Realities than all the grains of sand on the coast of the Pacific Ocean.

Gold was discovered literally in California igniting myriad fever dreams in men's imaginations the world over. In a twinkle of time the little bayside village was transformed into a chaotic teeming city of young men from many lands, and most all with the mad lust for gold glimmering in their eyes. Tall ships were abandoned at the waterfront. Some deliberately sunk to secure "water lots." Yerba Buena Cove was quickly filled and within a decade became downtown San Francisco, the 20th century's Financial District, including the lower portion of

California Street. The City always attracted those with Gold Fever, for hundreds of years, and from before 1849 it also attracted sober clear-eyed people, and many of them made a lot of money. Most of the Gold Seekers, not so much.

There were many grand majestic buildings erected along California and surrounding streets when downtown was rebuilt after the April 1906 earthquake and fire. Including the 1908 Greco-Roman style Bank of California Building — known as "*The Grand Old Lady of California Street*" — It was fenced with huge classical columns and facing California Street a massive double two-story door framed in stone. More than a century later it retained its magnificence. A.. A... considered it a great shame that no one seemed to want, or more likely could afford, to build buildings like that anymore. The many buildings frantically erected in the early decades of the 21st century all mostly displayed steel and glass. No one was building in stone and adding new rows of Roman columns. The original Merchants Exchange had been established in 1851 on Battery Street as an association of city businessmen with watchmen on the third story roof to alert the merchants when ships arrived in harbor, and the men of enterprise would rush to meet the ships at the docks and make deals. A successor structure (three stories) was on California Street, and finally the 15-story skyscraper Merchants Exchange Building, a 1904 construction in Beaux-Arts style by architects Daniel Burnham and Willis Polk. It was one of the few buildings downtown which survived the 1906 destruction. After the fire was out, the City encouraged quick repair to the heavily damaged building as a morale booster for San Francisco survivors. The rebuilding effort was accomplished by Polk assisted by Julia Morgan, who commissioned artist William Coulter to paint five murals in the great hall. Morgan had her office on the 13th floor from 1907 to the end of her career. The Commercial Club on the 15th floor (since 1995 called the Julia Morgan Ballroom) was a nexus of the City's economic and political power — even into the 21st century hosting such luminaries as U.S. President Barack Obama. Hundreds of police lined the streets that day and A.. A... saw President Obama go by in his car, alone, and looking extraordinarily alert and intently interested in his surroundings.

The original cove shoreline before the Gold Rush was at what became Montgomery Street. So 555 California

Street, the former Bank of America Center and second tallest building in SF into the 21st century (after the Transamerica Pyramid), was the first skyscraper on the old solid land (or beach anyway). A.. A... attended some function in the building's Bankers Club on one of the top floors. The dark wood paneled walls, rich antique furnishings and classical French paintings impressed, especially contrasted with panoramic views out the windows. San Francisco displayed all around and below, the Bay and surrounding hills and mountains north, south and east, and the Pacific Ocean glittering in the west, with Japan and China away over the horizon. A.. A... was glad to discover that due to its location on the west side of Nob Hill, his own home was not visible from the Bankers Club windows. As previously reported, in the plaza down below was displayed a huge rock of black glass known humorously and derisively as "the bankers heart," and fools danced around it every April 1 to hurl a few hard-fought-for pennies at it in futile disdain. Across the street at Kearny, 580 California Street was externally remarkable for the three 12-foot tall statues along the top of each side of the 23-story tower, below the roof line — Wrapped in hooded robes and only blank spaces for faces. They could be seen from countless different vantage points downtown. Notably for A.. A... from the window of the Poetry Room in City Light's Bookstore. These strange statues seemed to him more than vaguely sinister, and he was not alone in that feeling. Once there was an accident along Kearny, when a scaffolding collapsed and workers were killed. A young woman A.. A... was dating at the time (and she had a marvelously peculiar, dark and morbid imagination), said that in the wake of the accident she could imagine the statues brooding like the Fates down upon the tragic scene. The statues recalled to A.. A... enforcers of the Hierarchy in Fritz Leiber's dystopian novel *Gather, Darkness!* And in later decades, following the success of J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter books, they also looked to him like dementors of doom. They could be like a multiplication of the Grim Reaper, as traditionally depicted, and as brilliantly shown in film by Terry Gilliam in *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, and most chillingly as related in the near death vision of a dear friend, who in the clammy grip of her delirium tremens encountered the archetype ("*It did not turn and look at me. I knew that if it did, I would die.*") There they waited, 23 stories up, ever brooding on the solid ground at Kearny Street, which marked the traditional boundary of the Financial District in downtown San Francisco. Get beyond them. Continue west and California Street rose up past Chinatown — with its more ancient lions and dragons — to the top of Nob Hill, over and down to further California crossroads and other environs up-town. The remarkable facts and history of San Francisco are, and might as well be, endless... even as they endlessly encouraged imagination, tall tales and other fantastic stories.

— D. A. Wilson

JULY ALMANAC

- 07/01 1858 Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace had a joint reading of papers on evolution at the Linnean Society of London.
- 07/02 1698 In England, Thomas Savery patented the first steam engine.
- 07/04 2016 NEW MOON
1776-2016 U.S. INDEPENDENCE DAY
- 07/05 1841 Thomas Cook's first package excursion, from Leicester to Loughborough.
2016 Alton Sterling was shot and killed by the police in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
- 07/06 2016 Philando Castile was shot and killed by a policeman in Falcon Heights, Minnesota.
- 07/07 1846 United States troops occupied Monterey and Yerba Buena, California.
2016 A sniper shot and killed five police officers, injuring nine others, in Dallas, Texas.
- 07/12 1962 The Rolling Stones performed their first concert at the Marquee Club in London.
- 07/14 1789-2016 FRANCE—QUATORZE JULLIET
BASTILLE DAY
- 07/18 1968 Intel was founded in Mountain View, CA.
- 07/19 2016 FULL MOON
- 07/20 2015 The United States and Cuba resumed full diplomatic relations after five decades.
- 07/23 1973 Robert Anton Wilson in an altered state.
- 07/28 1794 Both Maximilien Robespierre and Louis Antoine de Saint-Just were executed by guillotine in Paris, France.
- 07/30 1733 First Masonic Grand Lodge in the future U.S. was constituted in Massachusetts.

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Calling for Contributions! ROARSHOCK PAGE invites submissions of art, photographs, poetry, and micro-prose, to be considered for inclusion in future issues.

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