

Signals from Telegraph Hill

April 2025

Volume 20

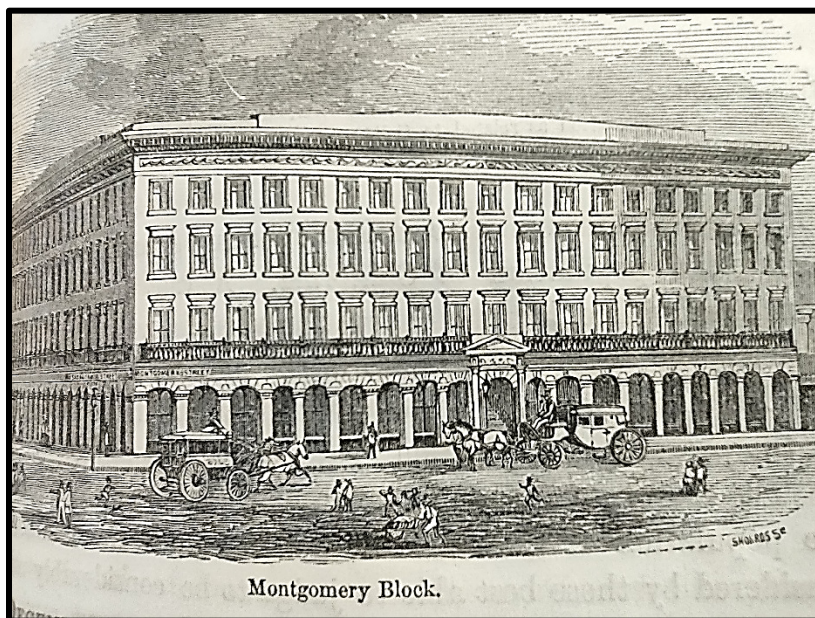
Number 4



San Francisco Corral – Westerners International

EMAIL: westernerssf@gmail.com

Please join us on Tuesday, **April 15** at 5:30 p.m. for Lorri Ungaretti on the Amazing Story of San Francisco's Montgomery Block!



The Montgomery Block (affectionately called the “Monkey Block”) was the largest building in the West when it opened in 1853. At first, it was populated with prestigious law offices, publishing companies, and financial institutions. Later, when rents went down, it became famous for its many “bohemian” residents—writers, painters, sculptors, and other artists, including Bret Harte, Jack London, George Sterling, and Gertrude Atherton. Before long, the prestigious tenants worked alongside the artists. In 1906, because of its unusual construction, it was one of the few downtown buildings that survived the earthquake and fire. Unfortunately, the Montgomery Block was demolished in 1959.

Lorri Ungaretti is a native San Franciscan who has written six books and various articles on San Francisco history, mostly about the Sunset and Richmond Districts. Lorri's most recent presentation to the Westerners was on her latest book, *Vanished San Francisco*.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

Meeting Location: Fior d'Italia, 2237 Mason Street, San Francisco

*Please note that our meeting date has changed to the **third Tuesday** of the month!*

The restaurant provides us with a private room. We gather at 5:30 and dinner seating begins at 6:15 p.m. A three-course selection is available and costs \$45.00.

RSVP: Send checks and dinner reservations by **April 11** to Judy Van Austen, KOC, 1789 Northwood Court, Oakland, CA 94611; **or contact** westernerssf@gmail.com **so that we can make reservations.**

The Montgomery Block

Lorri Ungaretti's presentation to the Westerners will focus on the Montgomery Block, one of the most important buildings in San Francisco's history. One year after its completion, the authors of *The Annals of San Francisco* (1854) described the Montgomery Block as "the largest, most elegant, and imposing edifice in California, and would attract especial attention in any city, though it occupies a site that was partially covered by the waters of the bay as late as 1849." The Montgomery Block housed a venerable tavern called the Bank Exchange, where Pisco punch was first invented by bartender Duncan Nicol. He would serve no more than two to a customer, because he believed that two were as many as any proper gentleman could handle.



The Bank Exchange Saloon, site of the invention of the famed Pisco punch. Image courtesy of alcademics.com.



Coppa's restaurant. Courtesy of restaurant-ingthroughhistory.com.

The Montgomery Block also housed Coppa's Italian restaurant, which catered to San Francisco's writers and artists. The latter adorned nearly every inch of the restaurant's walls with baffling nonsensical murals. The artists and writers had their own special table in the center of the room, which pre-dated New York's Algonquin Round Table of the 1920s. Regular folk would come just to witness the shenanigans of San Francisco's bohemian denizens. As photographer Arnold Genthe said in his autobiography, "If one had no money one could eat at Coppa's anyway. He was generous with credit, knowing that when better days came the debt would be paid. And there was space on the walls which a painter could decorate in payment for food and drink.... Song and laughter and good talk ran on at Coppa's, and a visitor ceased to be a stranger once he had entered the door."

Many writers had offices and/or residences in the Montgomery Block, and Adolph Sutro even housed part of his extensive library there at one time. Don't miss Lorri Ungaretti's fascinating talk on the Montgomery Block!



Noteworthy Events and Exhibits



The San Francisco History Association: Kathryn Ayres on Relics Dug from the Ruins. Mr. and Mrs. Wong Sun Yue Clemens opened a shop in San Francisco's Chinatown just one year after the devastating 1906 earthquake and fire. They saved all sorts of debris that everyone else was trying to sweep away in order to rebuild—pieces of crockery that had broken in the earthquake and then become fused together in the flames, melted bottles, melted coins, dolls' heads, portions of business signs—and sold these items as souvenirs to curious tourists. In defiance of anti-miscegenation laws and intense racial discrimination against the Chinese,

they openly proclaimed themselves as man and wife in their advertisements. **Tuesday, April 29, at 7:00 p.m., Congregation Sherith Israel, 2266 California Street, San Francisco. SFHA members may attend free in-person or via Zoom. There is a \$10.00 fee for non-members, which may be used toward membership. More information at www.sanfranciscohistory.org.**



The Legion of Honor at 100. The Legion of Honor is celebrating its centennial, having opened on November 11, 1924. A special exhibition features some of the first additions to the museum's collection, including sculptures by Auguste Rodin donated by museum cofounder Alma de Bretteville Spreckels, and highlights the museum's early exhibitions. **Through November 2, 2025. Tuesday through Sunday, 9:30 a.m. through 5:15 p.m. Legion of Honor, Lincoln Park, 100 34th Avenue (at Clement Street), San Francisco. More info at <https://www.famsf.org/visit/legion-of-honor>.**



The Oakland Museum of California. Born of the Bear Dance: Dugan Aguilar's Photographs of Native California. This exhibit focuses on the diverse voices of California's indigenous peoples. Aguilar's work, spanning from 1982 to 2018, defies colonial narratives. His powerful images document a rich array of indigenous experiences, including gatherings, ceremonies, and the artistry of basket weaving. The exhibition brings these images to life through video, audio, and narratives from indigenous artists, activists, elders, and community members. **Through June 22, 2025. Wednesday through Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. 1000 Oak Street, Oakland. More information at www.museumca.org.**

April 18, 1906

The 119th commemoration of San Francisco's Great Earthquake and Fire. Meet at 5:12 a.m. at Lotta's fountain, at the intersection of Market, Geary, and Kearny Streets on April 18, 2025. The mayor of San Francisco will be present, as will firefighters, and costumed characters dressed in period attire. **FREE.**



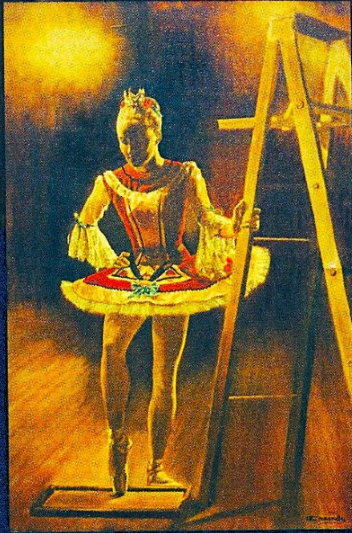
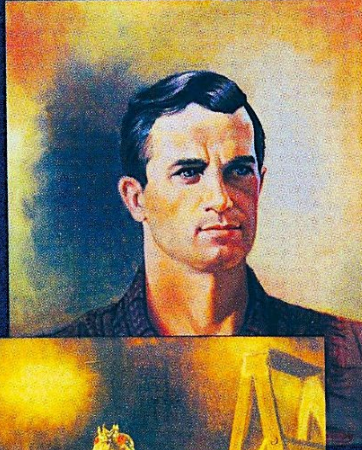
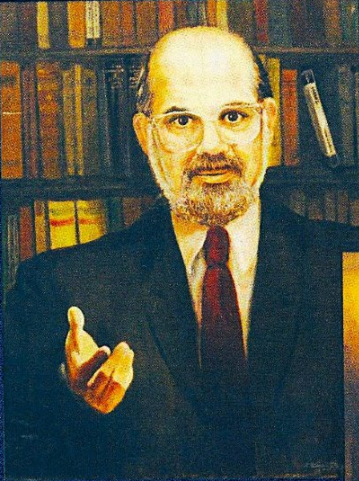
The 57th Annual Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival. Japantown, April 12-13 and 19-20, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Japantown is bordered by Fillmore and Laguna Streets and Geary and Pine Streets. **Grand Parade** on April 20th from the Civic Center to Post Street in Japantown, 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. **FREE.** For further information, see sfcherryblossom.org.

THE GRAND GALLERY

Presents the Art of:

Carolyn Cassady

From the Beat
Generation



April 1-30, 2025
Reception: April 5
from 2-5 p.m.

560 2nd street
Jack London
Square,
Oakland CA

The Grand Gallery presents the art of Carolyn Cassady from the Beat Generation. Jack Kerouac immortalized Neal Cassady as Dean Moriarty in his 1957 novel, *On the Road*. In the early 1950s, Kerouac lived with Neal and his wife Carolyn at 29 Russell Street on San Francisco's Russian Hill. Kerouac fictionalized Carolyn in five of his novels, and Carolyn wrote two books about her experiences. *Heart Beat: My Life with Jack and Neal* was published in 1976. This slim volume was expanded in 1990 and published as *Off the Road: Twenty Years with Neal Cassady, Jack Kerouac, and Allen Ginsberg*.

Carolyn was portrayed by Sissy Spacek in the 1980 film, *Heart Beat*, and by Kirsten Dunst in the 2012 film, *On the Road*.

Carolyn had met Neal Cassady when she was studying for a master's in fine arts and theater arts in Denver. Although she had to fulfill the duties of a wife and mother, she continued to draw and paint.

Carolyn Cassady's paintings will be exhibited at the Grand Gallery at 560 2nd Street in Jack London Square, Oakland, from April 1 through April 30. There is a reception on Saturday, April 5th from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Museum hours are from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, and from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday through Sunday.



Jack Kerouac, Carolyn Cassady and Neal Cassady in a detail from the cover of Carolyn's first book, *Heart Beat*.

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