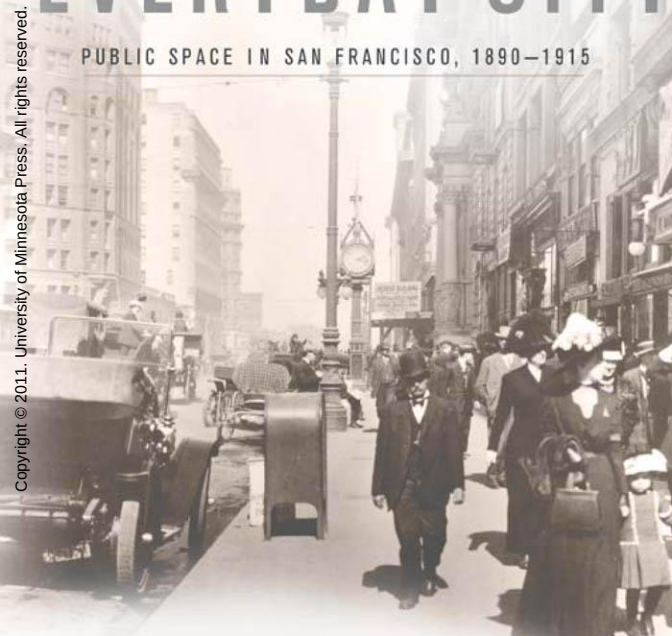


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# WOMEN AND THE EVERYDAY CITY

PUBLIC SPACE IN SAN FRANCISCO, 1890–1915



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## WOMEN AND THE EVERYDAY CITY

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# WOMEN AND THE EVERYDAY CITY

## PUBLIC SPACE IN SAN FRANCISCO, 1890–1915

Jessica Ellen Sewell

Architecture, Landscape, and American Culture Series



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# INTRODUCTION

## WOMEN IN PUBLIC

IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY, San Francisco boasted a thoroughly modern downtown, a specialized district of tall, densely packed commercial buildings. After the earthquake and fire of 1906, Market Street, San Francisco's spine and the center of its downtown, was quickly and substantially rebuilt with stylish buildings that made up an increasingly dedicated landscape of shopping and offices, displacing other prequake institutions, including museums and religious buildings. At the intersection of Market Street and Powell Street (Figure I.1), substantial stone-clad buildings created a relatively uniform street frontage along Market, lining the sidewalk with plate-glass show windows that created a landscape tailor-made for window shopping. Above this tall first story, regular rows of windows hinted at the warren of cellular offices necessary in the heart of any modern city. This landscape was punctuated by signature early skyscrapers, including the Flood Building (at center in Figure I.1) and the Call Building, visible down Market Street.

This image also suggests the lively mixture of uses and people that made up San Francisco's downtown. Businessmen in suits and coats; middle-class women shoppers in long dresses and large hats; suited women who might have worked in offices; children (including some boys who might have been hawking newspapers);





Figure I.1. View north on Powell (on the left) and east on Market Street, c. 1910, showing the men, women, and children who made up the crowds on the sidewalks of Market Street. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

and policemen, whose presence helped to maintain order—all share this intersection. Early-twentieth-century descriptions of Market Street emphasize this sort of bustling modernity and the cosmopolitan mixture of its crowds:

Before noon Market Street is a bustle of business men. At noon the bright-eyed blooming youth of the office forces debouche for luncheon and a “how d’ye do.” Then come the down-town cars to discharge shopping matrons, and forth come the butterflies of leisure and of pleasure. Towards the half light the bees buzz out again and turn drones for the hour before dinner (the five-o’clock promenade). Playtime has commenced. Actor, soubrette and ingenue, both professional and amateur, soldier and sailor, clerk and boulevardier, workingman and workingwoman, a dozen tongues, a dozen grades of color, a dozen national costumes—miner from the desert, cowboy from the range, chekako or sourdough from Alaska; upper, lower and half world; full of the joy of being, of forming one of the lively throng, exchange greetings more or less conventional, gaze in the brilliant store windows, buy—or hope to—and go to dinner, clubward, homeward, to restaurant and boarding-place.<sup>1</sup>

Writers at the turn of the nineteenth century presented Market Street as a space for all classes, ethnicities, and races—and for both sexes. This was “the thoroughfare alike of the strolling shopper and the hurrying businessman.”<sup>2</sup>

While women were one component of this heterogeneous crowd, their presence in public was still problematic in the public imagination. As late-nineteenth-century etiquette books made clear, the heterogeneity of urban space offered serious challenges to female respectability. To retain their propriety, women were advised to avoid interaction with strangers, a job accomplished by making themselves

inconspicuous, dressing modestly, never walking rapidly or talking loudly, and quickly entering the more sanitized space of department stores.<sup>3</sup>

In this book I explore how women in varying class positions experienced this urban environment, negotiating the gaps between the urban landscape as it was built and as it was imagined to be, concentrating on the case of San Francisco. Focusing on women's use of modern public spaces and how those spaces were built and managed in relation to women's presence within them, I explore the complicated relationship between gender structures and the built environment.<sup>4</sup> I concentrate on the everyday use of ordinary public spaces—streets, streetcars, shops, restaurants, and theaters—examining how women used them, which women used them, and how they were changed and expanded in response to women's presence within them, while also considering the larger social and political consequences of women's everyday occupation of these spaces. In doing so, I build on the work of a number of historians, including Christine Stansell, Mary Ryan, and Sarah Deutsch, who have explored the history of women in urban public spaces, illuminating the relationship between gendered ideology and experience and noting how women's relationship to public spaces has been inflected by class. Stansell explores the Bowery as a setting for working-class women's construction of a new culture of sociability not possible within the confines of their tenement homes, Ryan focuses on the gendered perils attached to the street and other public spaces and how middle-class women negotiated them, and Deutsch looks at both female reformers' and working-class women's struggles over the meanings and uses of public space.<sup>5</sup> These authors have looked carefully at the built environment of public urban space as a setting for women's experience and actions, but they do not, for the most part, use the built environment as historical evidence in its own right. In this book my focus on the built environment expands on their insights, but I move in new directions by considering the built environment as an active force in the construction of gender.

By looking at space and movement through it, we get a much fuller picture of women's everyday lives. This picture goes beyond what texts tell us about the ideal separation of spheres—a cultural ideal in which women were associated with the private space of the home and men with the public realm and the city—to understand how the public and private realms actually interacted. Similarly, a focus on space tells us a great deal about the experiences of women of different social positions. It shows how and where these experiences converge and differ and how women's spatial experiences help to construct varied women's relationships to the city. Even more important, looking at space and gender together reveals the ways that gender systems and the built environment are mutually constitutive. It demonstrates that changes in women's everyday lives shape the built environment of the city, and that built environment in turn shapes women's everyday experiences and the possible paths social transformations in gender can take.

## Imagined, Experienced, and Built Landscapes

The relationship between the built environment and social structures is complex. For example, the contradiction between the ideology of separate spheres and the reality of women in public is not a simple contradiction between the ideological and the real, but instead is a multifaceted interaction among ideology, experience, and the built environment. In order to think explicitly about the spatial dimension of each of these elements, I refer to them as the imagined, experienced, and built landscapes.<sup>6</sup> Separating out the built landscape, how it is experienced and how it is thought about, allows us to see the contradictions among the three landscapes more clearly. It is these contradictions that become the ground for women's everyday actions, as they negotiate the differences between the experiences made possible by a built landscape and the social norms for classed and gendered behavior. Imagined, experienced, and built landscapes not only provide a useful model for understanding women in space but also revise our understanding of the relationships among individual actors, ideology, and the built environment. We can better understand the nature of these three landscapes and how they interact by examining them in the specific case of downtown San Francisco.

### The Imagined Landscape

The imagined landscape is the landscape as conceived of and understood by individuals within a group. While each individual may have a slightly different understanding of the landscape, I focus here on the shared aspects of these imaginings, particularly on the culturally dominant imaginings, those that have the most currency and the most influence on shaping built space. As described in turn-of-the-century travel books, the imagined landscape of downtown San Francisco contained two distinctly gendered and classed realms: a business district peopled by "bustling businessmen" and characterized by masculine efficiency, power, and modernity, and a shopping district frequented by "shopping matrons" and "the butterflies of leisure and of pleasure," a realm of feminine upper-class consumption, irrationality, and display. Both of these landscapes were served by a specialized and centralized network of public transportation converging on Market Street. Not only were these landscapes imagined as separate, specialized spaces, but also the built landscape largely reflected the imagined ones: shops along major streets, fronted with show windows; cellular offices on upstairs floors, served by a sober but magnificent entrance quite separate from the shops; and streetcars on specialized tracks in the center of the street.

Although women worked in offices and men in stores, these landscapes were imagined as gender-segregated spaces, with the gender served in each space predominating: the businessman in the office landscape and the female shopper in

the stores. San Francisco guidebooks reinforced these gender assignments in a culturally co-ed language based on the ideology of separate spheres. Descriptions emphasized display, leisure, and whim for the feminized shopping landscape and production, hurry, and purposefulness for the masculine office landscape; the female “strolling shopper” was contrasted to the “hurrying businessman.”<sup>7</sup> San Francisco’s office landscape was usually described in primarily architectural and numerical terms, with enumerations of such facts as the number of offices and floors in each building and dollars in annual trade. The 1917 *Trips around San Francisco*, for example, extolled the modernity of San Francisco’s “neat and clean” skyscrapers and listed prominent office buildings, including the height in feet for each, but said nothing of the people and activity within these impressive structures.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, accounts of San Francisco’s shopping landscape, with detailed descriptions of “kaleidoscopic changes from one show window to the next,” emphasized people and atmosphere over buildings and facts.<sup>9</sup> The feminine shopping downtown was imagined as a space of pure consumption, driven by sensual experience and emotion, the opposite of the productive, logical space of the masculine business downtown.

## The Experienced Landscape

The experienced landscape is the built landscape as actual people used it in daily practice. Thus, the nature of this landscape is highly dependent on the social position of the person experiencing it. For example, Market Street, as described in the quotation above, provided divergent experiences for businessmen, for whom it was a space to move through; for “shopping matrons,” for whom it was a space of consumption, leisure, and pleasure; and for the mixed, mostly working-class throng, for whom it was a space of vicarious consumption through window shopping. For middle-class shoppers, the experienced landscape of San Francisco’s shopping district did not fit its imagined gender segregation. Women walked or took streetcars, which they shared with men, to get to the downtown shopping district. Once downtown, they walked from store to store along the sidewalks of that district, window-lined worlds of vicarious consumption that were frequented not only by women shoppers but also by men and women for whom the sidewalk was part of a landscape of office work. This experience of mixture on the street is a consequence of the built landscape of downtown San Francisco.

## The Built Landscape

The built landscape is the built environment and its spaces; in the example of Market Street, it includes the pavement, sidewalks, streetcars, buildings, and store windows as well as the interior and exterior spaces they define. The built landscape

is shaped by the imagined landscape and reflects the beliefs, practices, and social structure of the culture that produced it. In the case of downtown San Francisco, the standard building type maximized the landlord's profits by combining shops, which required street frontage, on the ground floor with several stories of offices above. Nonetheless, the female-gendered shopping space and the male-gendered office space were well segregated within these buildings, which generally had separate entrances for shops and offices and no communication between these two sections of the building. One of many examples of this separation is the Flood Building (Figure I.2), on the corner of Market and Powell Streets downtown. Each shop had its own entrance directly on the street, while the offices were accessed through a separate entrance on Market Street. This same separation between shop entrances and a single office entrance, often marked by an arch, can be seen in all the buildings along Market Street in the area of greatest overlap between the downtown shopping and business landscapes (Figure I.3). Even the Emporium department store had offices lining its facade, with selling spaces behind the offices. Thus, the built landscape of the downtown reflected the ideology of separation, at least at the level of spaces within a building.

While space was strictly gender-segregated within each building, the effect of this building type was to encourage an active mix of sexes. The sidewalk in front of these buildings, traveled both by men en route to offices and by women walking from store to store, functioned simultaneously as part of the primarily male-gendered imagined landscape of white-collar work and the primarily female-gendered imagined landscape of shopping and was experienced as a mixed-gender space. When the downtown shopping district and the downtown office district in 1911 are mapped (Figure I.4), we can see clearly that although they were concentrated in different areas—a triangular area roughly defined by Powell, Sutter, and Market Streets for the shopping district and by Sacramento, Battery, and Market Streets for the office district—a large area of overlap occurred, especially along Market Street. As Martyn Bowden's work on the historical geography of San Francisco's Central Business District shows, this mixing of shops and offices was also common earlier in the city's history.<sup>10</sup> Because downtown shops and offices share many of the same requirements, such as high accessibility by public transportation, a dense concentration of people and businesses, and proximity to banks, this overlapping of business and retail functions is in fact common in cities throughout the United States.<sup>11</sup> Photographs of the streets of San Francisco's downtown shopping district reveal a mixed crowd, with business-suited men and groups of women sharing the sidewalks (Figure I.5). Throughout the city, women and men negotiated the same public spaces of streets and public transportation, shopping districts, and places of amusement, although this sharing often conflicted with the imagined ideal gendering of these spaces.



Figure I.2. Flood Building, 1909. The ground-floor shops opened directly onto the street. The entrance to the upstairs offices is through the archway at the far right end of the facade. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.



Figure I.3. South side of Market Street west from Phelan Building, 1909. From the left, the Pacific Building, the Commercial Building, and the Emporium. The pre-1906 mixture of smaller buildings between the Emporium and Fifth Street is being replaced by a single building. The Emporium department store had an imposing entrance at the middle of its facade, while the more modest office entries were at either side of the facade. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

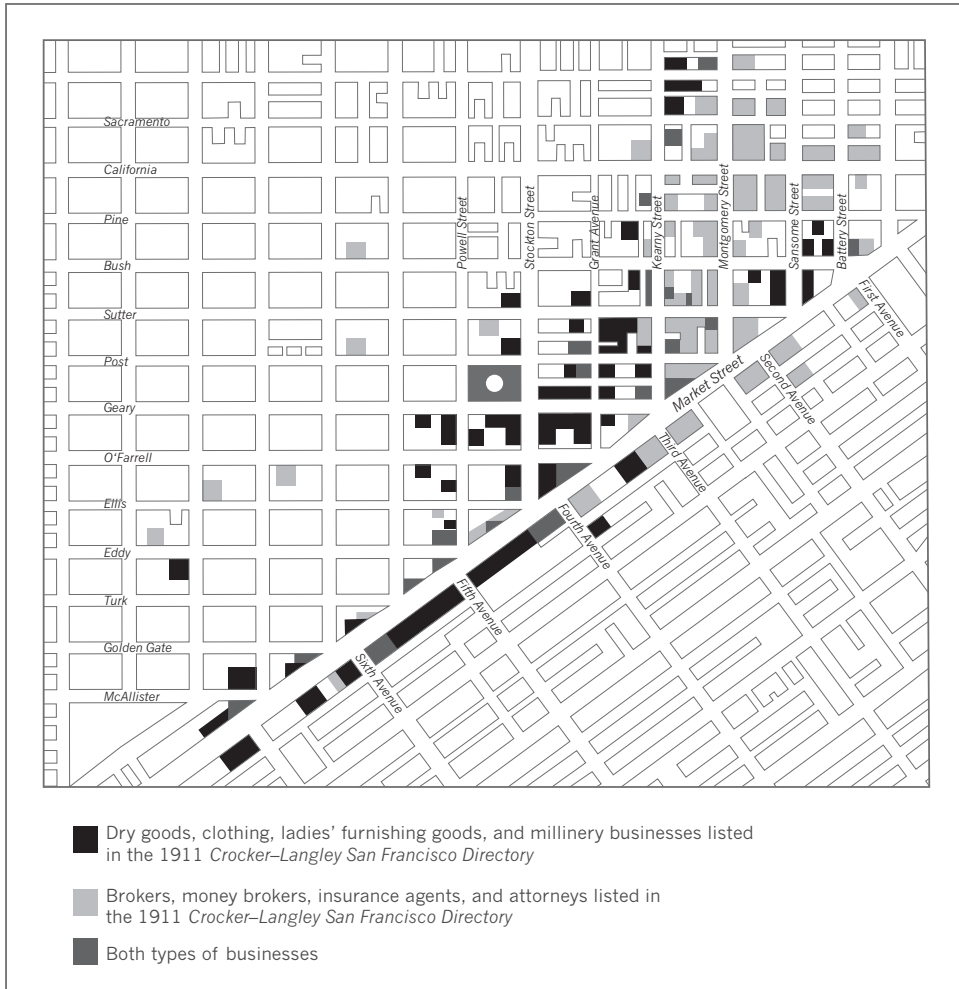


Figure I.4. San Francisco's downtown shopping district and downtown office district, 1911. Union Square is designated with a white circle between Powell and Stockton Streets. The downtown shopping district centered around Union Square, Grant Avenue, and Market Street, while the office district was most concentrated along Montgomery and California Streets. Note the areas of overlap along Market, Grant, and Kearny Streets.

Buildings such as the hybrid shop-office buildings of San Francisco's downtown were created to try to bridge the conflict between the sorting of people by gender, race, and class and the practical requirements of modern commerce. In the built landscape, they are a trace of a clash between the imagined landscape of separation and the experienced landscape of mixture as well as an attempt to reconcile the imagined and the experienced. They both reflect imagined gender separation and shape an experience of mixture.





Figure I.5. Market Street, early 1900s. Men, women, and children shared the downtown sidewalks.  
Courtesy of San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

## Imagined, Experienced, and Built Gendered Landscapes

As the example of downtown San Francisco shows, the imagined and the experienced landscapes are particularly important to understanding gendered landscapes. How a built landscape is gendered is difficult to tell merely from looking at it. Gendered landscapes are often imagined landscapes, socially understood to be the space of one gender without necessarily being physically marked as such. This imagining can even supersede experience. For example, at the turn of the century department stores were imagined as entirely female-gendered spaces, to the extent that one department store owner referred to his store as an “Adamless Eden.”<sup>12</sup> However, photographs of department store interiors show a number of male employees, including clerks and managers (Figure I.6). The strength of the imagination of this landscape as female makes the male workers culturally invisible.



Figure I.6. Interior of the City of Paris department store, 1910s. Department stores were imagined as female, but this photograph shows a male shopper and several male clerks. Courtesy of San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Gendered landscapes are also experienced landscapes. The presence or absence of women or of men can instantly gender a space. Thus, the same public hall when used for the Women's Congress is a radically different gendered landscape when used for a meeting of the Native Sons of the Golden West, although the built landscape stays largely unchanged. Similarly, the landscape of Market Street shifted gender through the course of the day. The quotation near the start of the Introduction suggests that Market Street was male before noon, female from noon to five, and mixed-gender from five on.

In the interactions among imagined, experienced, and built landscapes, there is space for understanding not only dominant practices but also practices that resist or subvert the dominant practices. This subversion resides not within just one of these three categories but rather within all three; change often takes place in the interactions among them. Because of the close ties among the three aspects of landscape, the imaginings, experiences, and spaces that do not fit in with hegemonic practices and conceptualizations resonate with one another. When any one of these aspects changes sufficiently that the contradictions between it and the others become severe, the others often are changed in response. As this book details, women negotiated the contradictions among imagined, built, and experienced landscapes in their everyday lives, making choices about what spaces to frequent and what to do there in reaction to imagined gendered landscapes. In addition, shopkeepers and others reacted to changes in imagined and experienced gendered landscapes, creating new business and architectural types to respond to women's desires and changes in the imagined landscape. The interaction of imagined, experienced, and built landscapes and the ways that each shapes the others are important to understanding how landscape genderings change and how gendered landscapes participate in social change.

## Women in Public

In this book I use the lenses of imagined, experienced, and built landscapes to focus on the contradictions between a set of ideologies that privileged gender and class separation and the modern consumerist city, whose spaces and uses promoted gender, class, and ethnic mixture. The fissures between these imagined and experienced genderings of public space in the city played out in the everyday use of space by men and women. I concentrate primarily on the years between 1890 and 1915, because they constitute an eventful period in the transition from gender-segregated to mixed-gender public spaces in the downtown, as well as a period in which women's public roles expanded significantly. In addition, only beginning in about 1890 did downtown shopping become dominant in American cities,

around the same time that downtown office, retail, and wholesale activities became specialized and separated.<sup>13</sup>

In 1890, at the beginning of this period, women were commonly in public, particularly in shopping landscapes, such as the “ladies’ mile” in New York and lower Kearny Street in San Francisco. At this time the contradiction between women’s presence in public and the ideology of separation was accommodated, although not entirely smoothly, by a wide range of women-only public spaces, including separate women’s lounges and restaurants in hotels and department stores and women’s windows at post offices and banks. In 1890, department stores of some variety were common in all American cities, women often attended matinees, and ladies’ tearooms were a feature of both department stores and better hotels. All of these spaces served middle-class and elite women, shielding them from interactions with the lower classes as well as unknown men. By 1915, women also frequented cafeterias and movie theaters that served people of all classes, both women and men, and they walked the streets alone with greater freedom. Their experience of the city was much more mixed-gender and mixed-class, as well as much more extensive in its scope, than that of women a generation older. The expansion of commercial amusements in the turn-of-the-century city and their increasingly heterosocial nature corresponded with shifts in gender ideology, accommodating women in public.<sup>14</sup> There is, however, no unidirectional causation between women’s changing everyday habits and the creation of new feminine and gender-neutral urban institutions such as the nickelodeon and the cafeteria; instead, women’s public presence as workers and shoppers helped to shape these new spaces, and these new spaces in turn created new possibilities for women’s everyday use of public space.

An important aspect of public space is that within it, in the words of Hannah Arendt, “everything that appears . . . can be seen and heard by everybody.”<sup>15</sup> This made women’s appearance within public space problematic, as men’s gaze was felt to be both controlling and sexualized, threatening to women’s self-possession and reputation.<sup>16</sup> For nineteenth-century middle-class women, to be seen in public carried the danger of being understood as conspicuous and therefore a “public woman,” a term that tellingly denoted a prostitute. Women in public were a source of cultural anxiety because of their discordance with the dominant linkage of women and domesticity. This was particularly the case in the late nineteenth century, but women in public are, to an extent, still a source of collective anxiety today.<sup>17</sup>

This anxiety is a symptom of the tensions between the imagined landscape of gender and class separation and people’s experiences of the built landscape, in which this separation was necessarily incomplete. Everyday experiences unearth these contradictions. Everyday life is where abstract cultural and ideological principles are enacted but also where they have to be reconciled with each other and

with the requirements of ordinary life, often through built spaces and objects. But more important, everyday experiences can also contradict the imagined landscape. Henri Lefebvre writes of everyday life that it functions as “feedback” between “understanding and ideologies” and that it is “the battlefield where wars are waged between the sexes, generations, communities, ideologies . . . where antagonisms are bred that break out in the ‘higher’ spheres (institutions, superstructures).”<sup>18</sup> In short, the relationship between the practices of everyday life and the spaces in which they take place make visible the antagonisms inherent in any complex society and thus is crucial to understanding the engine of social change.

## Diaries and Everyday Life in San Francisco

The everyday life of the past is surprisingly difficult to access, and the lives of the most ordinary people can sometimes be the most difficult to study. Upper-class women tended to write extensively, often kept copies of their letters and other papers, and sometimes made them available in archives. At the turn of the century, working-class women were carefully watched, and their actions were noted by journalists, sociologists, settlement workers, and other reformers. In comparison, middle-class lives were less readily recorded. Therefore, ordinary middle-class lives can be more difficult to access and have been less attended to by historians exploring the history of women in the city. In order to get at the everyday lives of middle-class women, I use a variety of sources, notably diaries, and especially the remarkable diary of Annie Haskell. Unlike memoirs, novels, and many other sources, diaries are not inherently narrative. Rather than telling a story that unfolds, diaries record the events of each day singly. For the conscientious diarist, every day requires an entry, no matter how dull, so daily rhythms of life are made evident in diaries as they are in no other source. Ordinary tasks are noted each day, creating a record of the repetition of quotidian activities such as shopping, ironing, and catching streetcars. Because diaries are not narrative, using them requires techniques that go beyond those we use for memoirs and other more narrative sources. To interpret diaries chronicling everyday San Francisco at the turn of the century, I not only read the diaries sequentially but also coded each entry for what it told of various everyday activities that engaged the public realm. The occasional descriptions of activities supply richness, providing a glimpse at emotions and the nature of experiences. The more typical lists of activities speak to us instead in the aggregate, for example, in what they can tell of the geography and frequency of encounters with particular public landscapes. Diaries are unique in what they can tell us about the real movement of people through the city. They tell us what places and experiences are linked within a day or a week; how women moved

from one place to another; whether they traveled by foot, carriage, auto, or street-car; and even sometimes the routes they took. They are only one source and are joined in this study by a number of others, including newspapers, maps, photographs, existing buildings, trade journals, and guidebooks. Existing buildings from the period add significant insight into the nature of the built environment these women experienced.<sup>19</sup> Yet diaries alone can tell us about the repetitions of everyday life.

For this study, I have made use of three diaries of white, middle-class San Franciscans who wrote of their everyday experiences.<sup>20</sup> Two of the women whose diaries are important to this work were upper-middle-class, middle-aged, white women. The first of these, who detailed her social and business activities for 1905 and 1906 in her diary, is Ella Lees Leigh, the only surviving child of the former San Francisco chief of police Isaac Lees. Leigh was in her midforties at the time of her diary.<sup>21</sup> She was married to Ernest Leigh, a real estate and insurance agent, and had no children. Leigh was a wealthy woman and wrote in her diary both of her own large house in Alamo Square, which she owned, and of an apartment building she was having constructed next door.<sup>22</sup> She was active in society and was a founding member of the exclusive organization Daughters of California Pioneers.

The other upper-middle-class diarist, Mary Eugenia Pierce, was also in her midforties when she kept her 1915–17 diary, which described regular outings to San Francisco, particularly to the theater.<sup>23</sup> Pierce was single and lived with her parents in Berkeley, where they ran a residential hotel, Cloyne Court, described in a local paper as “the permanent home of many outstanding faculty members and retired professional men and women, and the local residence of world famous savants here on their sabbatical leaves or on lecture tours.”<sup>24</sup> She assisted her parents in running the hotel and managed it from their deaths until it was turned into a dormitory in 1946. Pierce’s mother was a well-known singer and the one-time musical director of Berkeley’s Unitarian Church, and her sister Virginia was an opera singer. Concerts were held regularly at Cloyne Court, and all the family members attended concerts and other performances in San Francisco, Berkeley, and Oakland several times a week. Pierce’s sister Lucy, who also never married, was an artist, and her brother, Elliott, was an industrialist. Like Ella Leigh, Mary Pierce was comfortably well off and had the leisure to spend time shopping and going to shows without being concerned about spending money.

In contrast, Annie Fader Haskell (Figure I.7) was often short of money and had little free time. Haskell, born in 1858 in Trinity Center, California, was a socialist, a suffragist, and the wife of a utopian socialist lawyer, Burnette Haskell, whom she married in 1882 and left in 1897 (although she remained married to him until his death in 1907). She was the mother of one son, Astaroth, known as Roth, born in 1886. Haskell kept a diary from 1876 until 1942, although for this study I have



Figure I.7. Annie Fader Haskell, 1880s. Astaroth Haskell Scrapbook, Haskell Family Papers. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

concentrated on the years from 1890 to 1915 and on the periods in her life when she resided in San Francisco.<sup>25</sup> Haskell was thirty-two in 1890, a mother of a young child, living in a rented house in which she kept boarders. She left her husband after the failure of the socialist utopian settlement Kaweah, of which he was a founder. At that time Burnette Haskell was broke, drank heavily, and was openly carrying on an affair with another woman, who was at times a boarder in their house. After leaving her husband, Haskell never had a home of her own, living instead in the Mission District of San Francisco with her sister Helen or later with her son, Roth, after he grew up and married. She was unable to find employment in San Francisco as a teacher or librarian because of her age and marital status and thus worked on and off as a teacher in small remote towns in far Northern California to support herself. Although she was well educated and her husband was a lawyer, Haskell was never well-to-do and at times complained because she could not afford to take a streetcar and had to walk instead.

Annie Haskell's diary is an unusually rich source. She wrote a page every day of her adult life, from 1876 until her death in 1942, and filled each page no matter how little of importance had happened that day. The extraordinary volume and detail of her entries provide an extensive picture of the activities and rhythms of everyday life, spanning the changes that occurred during her long lifetime. Haskell was also a good writer who carefully, if sardonically, described her life and experiences in detail. Her diary is also of particular interest because, although she was unusual in many ways, her economic position was relatively typical of ordinary middle-class women, and thus she provides important insight into nonelite experiences. Because most diaries that make it into archives are those of the elite or those chronicling unusual experiences, Annie Haskell's diary of ordinary life is comparatively rare, and its length and detail make it extraordinary.

These women had different access to financial, social, and cultural resources, but they all fit broadly within the category of the middle class and were all native-born white women.<sup>26</sup> Neither Ella Leigh nor Mary Pierce had discernible concerns about money; also, both enjoyed significant access to resources other than strictly monetary ones. Leigh had considerable social capital as a founding member of the Daughters of California Pioneers, and Pierce had social and cultural capital through her connections to the worlds of music and academia.<sup>27</sup> Leigh's and Pierce's access to financial resources put them in the upper middle class. In contrast, Annie Haskell, although highly educated, with a mother who was a published poet, a lawyer husband, and a sister who owned two houses, experienced significant financial constraints throughout her life and had only minimal social connections, largely in the world of socialist and suffragist politics. Her comparative lack of access to resources put her functionally in the lower middle class, although her education and interests did not solidly fit into that class culture. The contrasting



positions of these women were also reflected in their access to spatial resources, as will be described in detail throughout the book. For example, although Pierce lived in Berkeley, she visited downtown San Francisco more often than Haskell did. Pierce moved easily throughout the Bay Area, with a sense of comfort wherever she went. In contrast, Haskell's life was lived primarily in her own neighborhood, and trips beyond it were often marked with discomfort and difficulty.

## San Francisco and Its Downtown

This book looks at San Francisco not only because of its particularities but also because in many ways San Francisco was a typical large American city of the turn of the century. Like many cities, particularly in the West, it was largely created after 1850, used grid planning, and was significantly shaped by public transportation. San Francisco began as a small Mexican settlement and grew quickly after the discovery of gold in 1848. While early on San Francisco was disproportionately male and had a reputation as a lawless town, by the 1890s its white population was nearly 50 percent female, and it had a big city's sophistication, with museums, private clubs, and high-end theatrical entertainments.<sup>28</sup> In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries San Francisco was a thriving and expanding mercantile and manufacturing metropolis.<sup>29</sup> By the early 1890s, with a population of 298,997, it was the eighth largest city in the United States and the only city west of St. Louis to rank among the fifty largest U.S. cities.<sup>30</sup> In 1910, in the wake of the massive destruction of the 1906 earthquake and fire, San Francisco was still the eleventh largest city in the United States.<sup>31</sup> Until the 1920s, it was the most important city in the American West.

The city of San Francisco grew outward from a settlement clustered near San Francisco Bay in an area that became, by the turn of the century, its downtown (Figure I.8). This originally settled area is bisected by Market Street, leading from the Ferry Building (which connected San Francisco to the East Bay and the rest of the United States) southwest into the rest of city (Figure I.9). Two different grids extend from Market north and south. North of Market lie the financial and shopping districts, Chinatown, and, farther from Market, Nob Hill and North Beach. The area south of Market was mixed at the turn of the century, including warehouses and manufacturing, as well as a densely packed, largely working-class residential population.<sup>32</sup> As in other cities, neighborhoods had local main streets, typically transportation spines, which served their neighborhoods with a range of goods and services, including shops, banks, dentists, barbers, and meeting halls for local organizations (Figure I.10). In addition, in San Francisco two of these local main streets, Mission and Fillmore, grew to become district main streets,

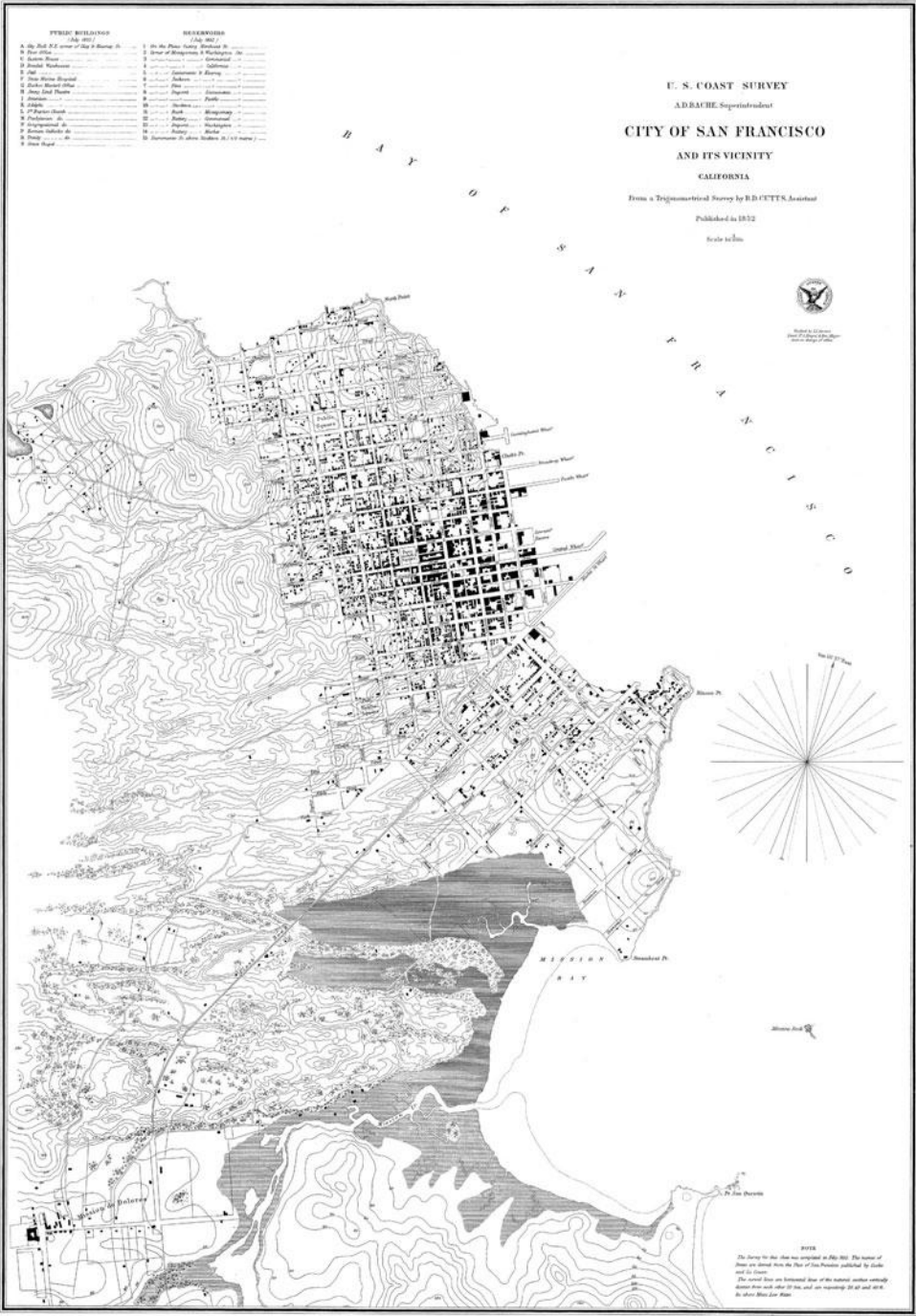


Figure I.8. San Francisco, 1852, showing buildings. In 1852, San Francisco's buildings were concentrated in the area near the port, north of Market Street. The early city set up two main street grids: a smaller north-south grid north of Market Street and a larger northeast-southwest grid, parallel to Market Street, to its south. *U.S. Coast Guard Survey, City of San Francisco and Its Vicinity, 1852.* Courtesy of Historic Urban Plans, Inc., Ithaca, New York.

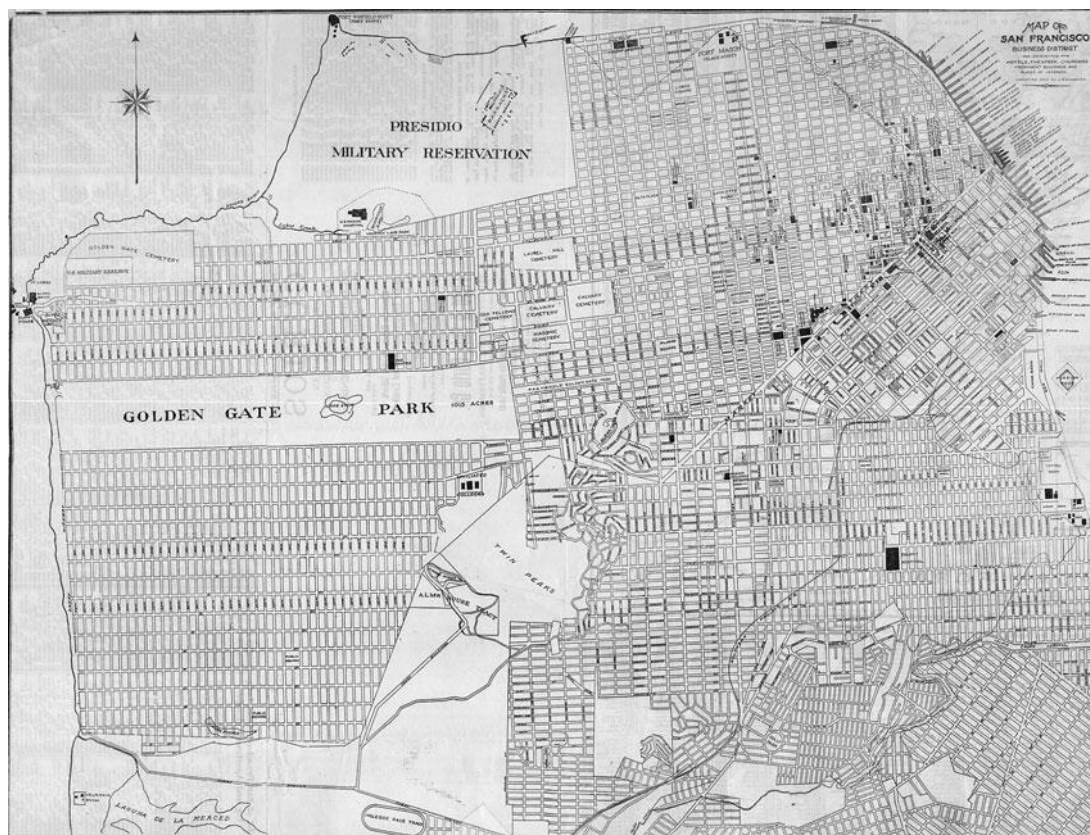


Figure I.9. San Francisco, 1904. By the early twentieth century, San Francisco had expanded significantly to the west and south of the original settlement near the port. J. B. Chadwick, *Map of San Francisco Business District*, 1904. Courtesy of the Earth Sciences and Map Library, University of California, Berkeley.

providing a wider range of goods and services in a more specialized space and serving as substitutes for Market Street immediately after the 1906 earthquake and fire.

Turn-of-the-century downtown San Francisco, like other modern downtowns, was a specialized space of shopping and commerce, with only hotel residences along Market Street. This is in marked contrast to American cities a century earlier, when both offices and shops were typically combined with the living quarters of those who worked in them. In San Francisco, the fire following the 1906 earthquake made this specialization more acute, because institutions such as museums, churches, and synagogues, as well as the owners of destroyed buildings that had included living spaces, found it easy to sell off their now-empty lots at a profit and move to new locations, accelerating the changes already underway in the downtown. This new specialized space was supported by a network of streetcars, cable

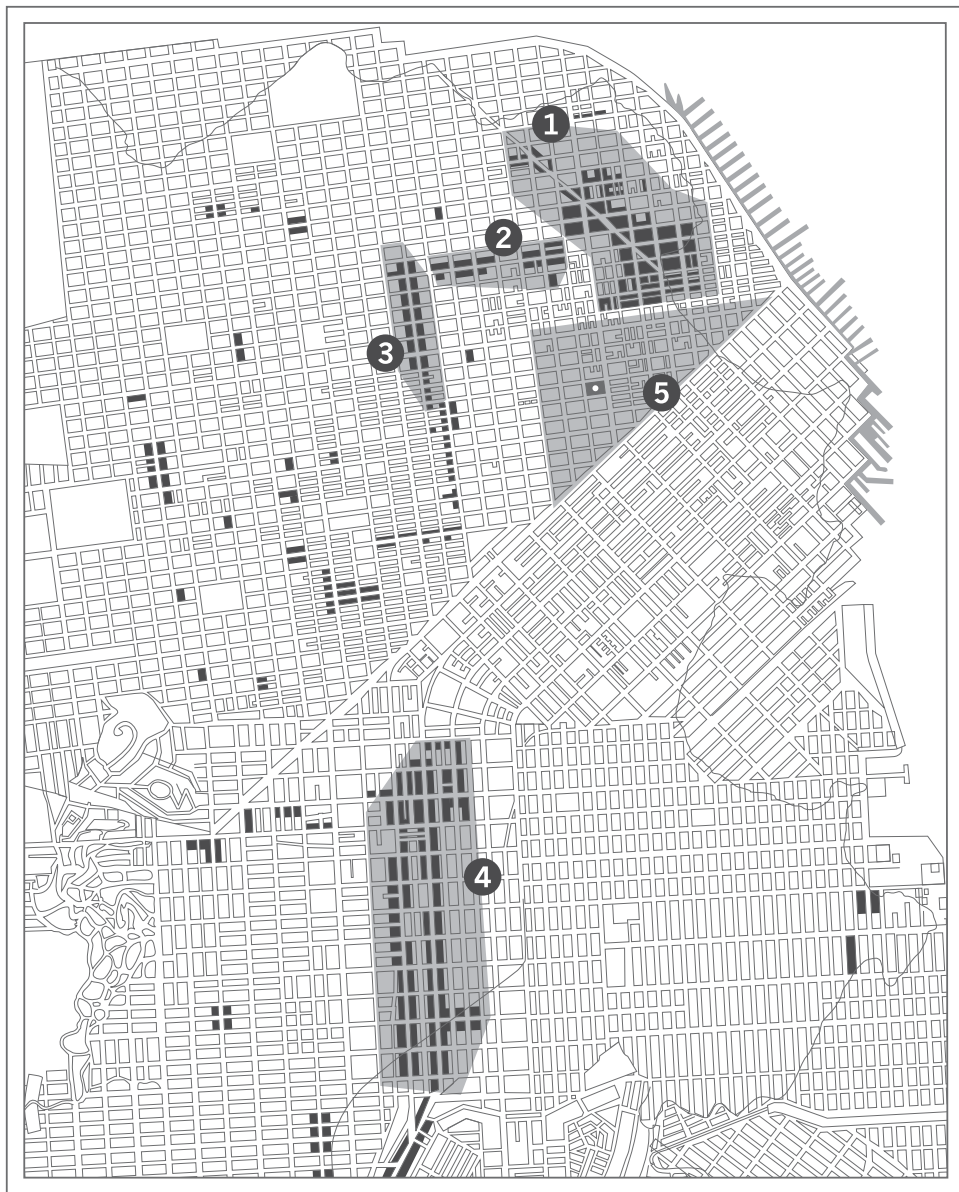


Figure I.10. Local and district main streets in retail districts, San Francisco, 1899. Small local main streets were spread throughout the city, while larger and more complex district main streets, particularly in the Mission District, served larger portions of the city. The retail districts are (1) Montgomery Avenue; (2) Broadway; (3) Polk Street; (4) Mission and Valencia Streets; and (5) the downtown.

cars, and ferries that made it possible for workers and shoppers who lived in primarily residential districts to move easily between their homes and downtown. This network was focused on Market Street, the spine of the streetcar network, with the ferry terminal at its base. The importance of Market Street and its focus on the ferry terminal also had consequences for the particular shape of San Francisco's downtown. While retail and commercial activity expanded southwest, from lower Kearny Street to Union Square, it has never migrated far from Market Street or the ferry terminal, unlike shopping districts in cities such as Chicago and New York, which have moved much farther from their original center because of changes in population and other forces.

## Women in San Francisco's Urban Public Landscape

In this book I explore several overlapping urban landscapes and how they were imagined, experienced, and built. In each of the first four chapters I focus on the network of spaces that made up one type of gendered public landscape, noting where they were in the city, tracing how those spaces changed over time, exploring the ways material culture marked these sites as classed and gendered, and investigating how women negotiated them in their everyday lives. By looking both at the larger scale of the entire network of spaces that make up a landscape and at the smaller scale of individual buildings and their design details, I examine how gender was practiced and patterned in the city and how certain gendered practices were represented and reinforced through material culture. In the final chapter I revisit the gendered landscapes discussed in the previous chapters, showing how women's presence and power within public space had implications for their battle for political rights and for their place in the public sphere.

The most public space of all, and that most regularly encountered, is the street, which I discuss in chapter 1. In order to go out, whether to visit any other public place, to work, or to meet friends and relatives, women took to the streets. The streets and streetcars between their homes and their destinations were an important public landscape, the one in which women most frequently appeared. Streets and streetcars were a space of gender-based tension, as evidenced in the debates over appropriate street and streetcar behavior in turn-of-the-century etiquette books.

As the consumers for their households, women went out regularly on errands. The spaces of everyday shopping and appointments are explored in chapter 2. Analyzing shopping trips in diaries, I describe three main landscapes of shopping: local daily grocery shopping, short trips to neighborhood and district main streets, and expeditions to the department stores and specialty shops of downtown Market Street. Women's varied access to and use of these three shopping

landscapes helped to construct their social positions and affected how they engaged with the city as a whole.

As women went out in public more often, they also ate in public more often. In chapter 3 I explore the expanding number and variety of institutions serving hungry women at the turn of the century. In the late nineteenth century most restaurants were male spaces, which women would visit only when escorted by men. Middle-class women could eat at all-female department store or hotel tearooms, and working-class women might have eaten at a lunchroom with ladies' tables or in the ladies' lounge of a saloon. In the early twentieth century, women increasingly ate out, patronizing a wider range of lunchrooms, tearooms, ice cream parlors, and cafeterias. I trace this change in the context of San Francisco, focusing on how the landscape of eating out connected with other gendered landscapes; which eating places women frequented when and with whom; and how the design of restaurants reflected their appropriateness as space for women.

The public spaces of the city also provided experiences of amusement and spectacle for women, the spaces explored in chapter 4. Unlike shopping, which was sometimes pursued with female companions but often pursued alone, going to amusements was usually done with others, typically with a man or as part of a mixed-sex group. However, over time women increasingly went to places of amusement without men, especially after the introduction of movie theaters. The spectacle of the theater was mirrored by the spectacle of the streets of the downtown, both on ordinary days, when men and women walked the streets at dusk to look at window displays, and on holidays, when the entire street became a space of spectacle for parades. I also explore how women participated in these parades, both as spectators and as actors, and how parades and celebrations recast the gendering of the spaces in which they took place.

The consequences of women's use of public space went beyond simply an increasing comfort and familiarity with that sphere, particularly the downtown. Women's everyday use of public space had consequences for their position in the public sphere and in politics. In chapter 5, in which I discuss the California woman suffrage campaigns of 1896 and 1911, I revisit the landscapes discussed in previous chapters in the context of the political use of public space. To demand a place in the public sphere, women reworked the uses and meanings of commercial public space, which they redefined as a site of political activity. In 1896, such public spaces were used cautiously by suffragists, but by 1911, suffragists aggressively redefined lunchrooms, stores, streets, streetcars, and theaters as political space. The political use of gendered public space shows the importance of gendered public landscapes to women's power to act, and the changes between the two campaigns highlight the enormous changes in the gendered public landscape—imagined, built, and experienced—from 1896 to 1911.

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## FOUR

# SPECTACLES AND AMUSEMENTS

*Well, I have just got back from down town where I went to the Orpheum with Kate and Henry. I enjoyed it, though there is a great deal of silly business, but some other things are interesting and amusing. After, I went down to the clothing store where I met Roth and got him a blue serge suit. . . . Then I went back to the Golden West Hotel where we had dinner. After, we walked around the streets and looked in the windows for a while.*

—Annie Haskell, August 15, 1903

AMUSEMENT WAS A COMMON REASON for women to go out in public at the turn of the twentieth century. During this period, working hours shortened and leisure time became more common, in large part because of the efforts of unions, which were particularly strong in San Francisco.<sup>1</sup> Just as the production of goods had largely moved from the home to commercial establishments, so leisure also increasingly moved from the home and the neighborhood into commercial establishments, often serving the city as a whole.<sup>2</sup> As the range of spectacles available expanded, theater owners concentrated their marketing on women, and as an increasing number of working women had some disposable income, more and more women went out to theaters and shows.<sup>3</sup> In addition, women were spectators of the many parades and public celebrations of the turn-of-the-century city.

In San Francisco as in other cities, amusement and spectacle brought women downtown and made them part of the observing and celebrating public, not only during the daytime hours, but increasingly in the evening as well. In this chapter



I discuss women's expanding participation in public spectacle as both spectators and participants and the consequences of their participation for their relationship to the city. Spectacle and amusement could take many forms: the theatrical spectacle of shows, the commercial spectacle of shops and store windows, and the civic spectacle of parades. Going to a show, window shopping, and watching a parade were all sources of amusement that took women to the downtown and other prominent public spaces of San Francisco. Although shows, windows, and parades were produced for different purposes, they were all consumed primarily as sources of amusement, and they all used the modern technologies of spectacle to draw spectators. Women's experience of these public spectacles increased their claim to the city, especially to the nighttime city, but also reinforced the class and ethnic differences and the unequal statuses among women.

### Imagining Theatrical Entertainments

Going out to see a show was a regular form of amusement for women who could afford it. During the period from 1890 to 1917, the nature of shows changed as vaudeville expanded and movies were introduced into the landscape of San Francisco theater. With changes in the nature of theatrical entertainment came a broadening of the female audience for shows and changes in how all women experienced going to shows. One significant aspect of these changes in theatrical entertainment, particularly movies, was the creation of new types of spaces that did not carry the gendered history of theaters and, thus, could be gendered in new ways.

In the nineteenth century, women did not frequent theaters at night unescorted. Until the mid-nineteenth century, theaters were imagined as an overwhelmingly male space, with men sitting on the benches in the "pit" in front of the stage; poor men, blacks, and prostitutes in the gallery seats; high-class prostitutes in the "third tier," the top row of boxes; and wealthier patrons, including "women who wished to be regarded as ladies," seated only in the lower rows of boxes, the most expensive seats.<sup>4</sup> Around 1850, theaters began to be sanitized; a combination of higher prices, design changes, subdued performances, and rules barring unescorted women chased out both prostitutes and lower-class men.<sup>5</sup> By the 1890s women of a range of class positions sat in all the sections of theaters, which were newly defined only by class and not by respectability.

During the day, theaters were imagined as a largely female space, which women could patronize with other women and with children without fear of compromising their reputations; matinee performances were patronized almost exclusively by women. By night, in contrast, theaters were mixed-gender spaces in which women needed to be protected from strange men by the familiar men who escorted

them. By the 1910s new ideas about the nature of the theater, shaped in part by the new theatrical forms of vaudeville and movies, expanded women's ease with the space of the theater. This was reflected in their growing willingness to go to the theater in the evening without a male escort.

In the 1890s, theaters in San Francisco fell into four main categories: establishments showing plays, operas, and other forms of "legitimate theater"; less expensive theaters that specialized in vaudeville; foreign-language theaters serving immigrant populations; and disreputable variety houses and concert saloons that provided a male audience with titillating fare and, often, liquor and access to prostitutes. This sorting into different types of theaters was a result of the process of cleaning up theater, making it more specialized and polite, which had begun in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Each of these categories was differently imagined. The "legitimate theater" was seen as safe for women (although women were still to be escorted at night), largely because of its upper- and middle-class clientele and its high-class, artistic, uplifting plays. This refined form of theater, a quite new invention in the early twentieth century, helped to create a space for respectable women. Vaudeville was very much imagined as a popular theater, serving the working class as well as children. In vaudeville theaters, audiences could shout, stamp, and walk in and out, as they had in the mid-nineteenth century, but were no longer allowed to do in newly sacralized high-end theaters. For escorted working-class women, going to a vaudeville theater would not sully their reputations, but this category of theater was not seen as appropriate fare for a more elite female audience. Variety houses and concert saloons were imagined as the place to which all the disreputable males and disreputable acts of earlier theater were banished. They functioned as the "other" of vaudeville, marking the boundary between clean and salacious popular entertainment. Foreign-language theaters, for their part, were associated exclusively with the working-class immigrant groups they served, in San Francisco most notably Italians. These theaters combined high-class fare, such as grand operas and Shakespearean plays, with popular songs and low farce, melding the legitimate theater with vaudeville in a setting and at a price reminiscent of vaudeville. The appropriateness of foreign-language theaters for women and families varied somewhat with the attractions of the particular night, but they were generally patronized by mixed crowds.

The most significant change in theater types for women was the growth of vaudeville, which was in part a response to the squeezing out of poorer customers by the rising prices of high-class theater. Vaudeville theater offered short performances of all sorts for an inexpensive price, typically 10¢ to 50¢ (\$2.64 to \$13.20 in 2010 dollars), while prices for legitimate theaters more often started at 25¢ or 50¢ and went up to \$2 (\$52.70 in 2009 dollars).<sup>7</sup> Vaudeville promoters worked hard to keep the image of their theaters as clean, safe places for women and children in

spite of being more raucous than high-class theaters. However, because many vaudeville theaters served beer and their theatrical fare consisted of variety shows rather than plays, they remained clearly working-class and were seen as an amusement rather than as a venue for art, as high-end theaters were. In San Francisco, vaudeville came into its own with the opening of the enormous Orpheum Theater, built specifically for vaudeville, in 1887 (Figure 4.1).<sup>8</sup> This theater seated over 1,680 people, and the highest price, for a box seat, was 50¢.<sup>9</sup> In the 1899 novel *McTeague*, Frank Norris describes an outing in which McTeague takes his girl, Trina, and her mother and brother to the Orpheum for a variety show. He describes the varied program, including acrobats, blackface minstrels, various comic acts, a caricaturist, yodelers, a kinetoscope, and “the Society Contralto,’ in evening dress, who sang the sentimental songs,” captivating Trina, who “split her new gloves in her enthusiasm when it was finished.”<sup>10</sup> Norris describes the space of the auditorium



Figure 4.1. Prequake Orpheum Theater, built 1887. The Orpheum was the first San Francisco theater built specifically for vaudeville. Courtesy of the Museum of Performance and Design, San Francisco.

as hot and smoky from cigars and “full of varied smells—the smell of stale cigars, of flat beer, of orange peel, of gas, of sachet powders, and of cheap perfumery.”<sup>11</sup> Before the performance and during the intermission, “waiters hurried up and down the aisles, their trays laden with beer glasses,” and a little boy walked the aisles, chanting, “Candies, French mixed candies, popcorn, peanuts and candy.”<sup>12</sup> Norris describes the Orpheum, and vaudeville by implication, as a space of cheap and unending spectacle, from the painted curtain to the varied acts, filled with smoking, drinking, uncouth lower-class people trying hard to be proper.

Vaudeville producers marketed their shows to women in particular, in order to mark vaudeville theaters as respectable, even though inexpensive. Vaudeville theater managers actively courted women by providing free gifts, admitting them free of admission on ladies’ nights, banning prostitutes, often banning smoking, controlling drinking, keeping the performances clean, and presenting acts such as sentimental singers calculated to appeal to women.<sup>13</sup> Women, especially working-class women, did attend vaudeville. Kathy Peiss notes that women made up one-third of the audience for vaudeville in 1910, but the price of tickets kept them from going often, unless they were being treated by a man, as Trina and her mother were treated by McTeague. Thus, vaudeville theaters expanded the theater attendance of many women, especially American-born women of limited means.<sup>14</sup> By creating a new form of theatrical amusement and working hard to gender it as female-appropriate, vaudeville impresarios were able to shift the gender and class mix of the audience for theater, expand their profits, and extend the runs of their shows.

With the addition of movie theaters to the landscape of theatrical amusements, the number and variety of women patrons increased significantly, in part because, unlike vaudeville, movies were eventually shown in a completely new kind of space. Motion pictures were introduced to many cities as part of vaudeville shows. Their role was as a novelty act, a specialty among the other shows. The first commercial projection of films was in 1896, with the invention of the Vitascope, which quickly made its way to San Francisco.<sup>15</sup> In June 1896, the Orpheum proudly advertised:

A Grand New Bill of Novelties!

THE VITASCOPE

The Sensation of the Nineteenth Century!

Which We Are the First to Introduce in San Francisco<sup>16</sup>

The Vitascope shared the spotlight with “twenty-four high-grade artists,” including the four Marimba Virtuosi and a Wagnerian soprano. The novelty quickly wore off, however, and the Orpheum did not include films as a regular part of the bill until the Spanish–American War provided interesting footage. A “Biograph” of September 1898, for instance, was advertised as “New War Scenes, Including

the Parade of the Victorious Battleships of the American Navy Passing in Review of New York Harbor,” and was listed at the bottom of the bill, after acrobats, one-act comedies, opera singers, soubrettes, Great Danes, musical character comedy sketches, and juggling comedians.<sup>17</sup> Early films were typically short and unplot-ted, showing views of exotic parts of the world or topical material, such as the war scenes shown at the Orpheum. The novelty of projected film was itself the main attraction. The interest in this kind of footage waned relatively quickly, and after 1901 the Orpheum no longer included the Biograph among its features.<sup>18</sup>

The first real venue for moving pictures as a separate form of amusement, rather than as a part of vaudeville, was in nickelodeons in working-class neighborhoods of American cities. The nickelodeons and their affordable nickel shows, which began appearing throughout the United States in 1905–6, opened up a new space of amusement for working-class women.<sup>19</sup> A knowledge of English was not necessary to understand silent pictures, which mimed most action broadly, and the pictures were available to a working-class audience within their neighborhoods. Nickelodeons were frequented by an audience of mostly women and children. Even Italian immigrant girls, whose social activities were often curtailed by the strict rules of their families, went to the movies often.<sup>20</sup> Women’s and children’s attendance at nickelodeons was encouraged by theater managers, who typically advertised their theaters as catering “especially to the ladies and children” and showed slides between reels to make such welcoming announcements as “We are aiming to please the ladies,” “Bring the children,” “Ladies without escorts cordially invited,” and “Ladies and children are cordially invited to this theater. No offensive pictures are ever shown here.”<sup>21</sup>

### The Built Landscape of Theatrical Amusements

The architecture and location of each type of theater that women patronized helped to reinforce their distinctions. For example, nickelodeons were small theaters, often simply storefronts filled with chairs, with a screen at one end and a projector at the other. The shows were brief, often as short as fifteen minutes, and were shown continuously, so that patrons could enter and exit whenever they wished. In addition to being located often in working-class neighborhoods, nickelodeons were integrated into local shopping streets as architecturally indistinguishable from other shops. All it took to transform a storefront into a nickelodeon was a projector, folding chairs, and paper over the windows. For example, the storefront on Fillmore shown in Figure 4.2, one of three identical buildings with a storefront below and flats above, was the location of a nickelodeon in 1911, the only year nickelodeons were used as a category for listings in the *Crocker–Langley San Francisco Directory*. Their ordinariness helped to signal their inexpensive and welcoming



Figure 4.2. In 1911, a nickelodeon was located in the current site of Extreme Pizza on Fillmore Street. Along this block, small storefronts are tucked below prominent flats.

nature. No one needed to feel discouraged from entering a nickelodeon because their clothes or schooling was not good enough. Additionally, nickelodeons' integration into the landscape of everyday shopping made them easily accessible to a wide range of women. Nickelodeons were located on a number of local and district main streets, as well as downtown, as can be seen in Figure 4.3, which shows the locations of nickelodeons listed in the 1911 directory. Clusters of nickelodeons were located along Mission, particularly between Twenty-first and Twenty-fourth Streets and Valencia and Thirtieth Streets, along Fillmore between O'Farrell and Bush, near the intersections of Castro, Noe, and Church with Market, and near Columbus in North Beach. The largest concentration of nickelodeons was on the south side of Market Street, the side opposite the majority of high-class theaters and department stores. Seven nickelodeons were located along Market west of Fifth, the area populated by the less expensive department stores that Annie Haskell most often patronized.

Movie theaters and many vaudeville theaters clustered on local and district main streets and on the south side of Market, particularly west of the central upper-class shopping district, in the area populated by discount stores (compare Figure 4.3

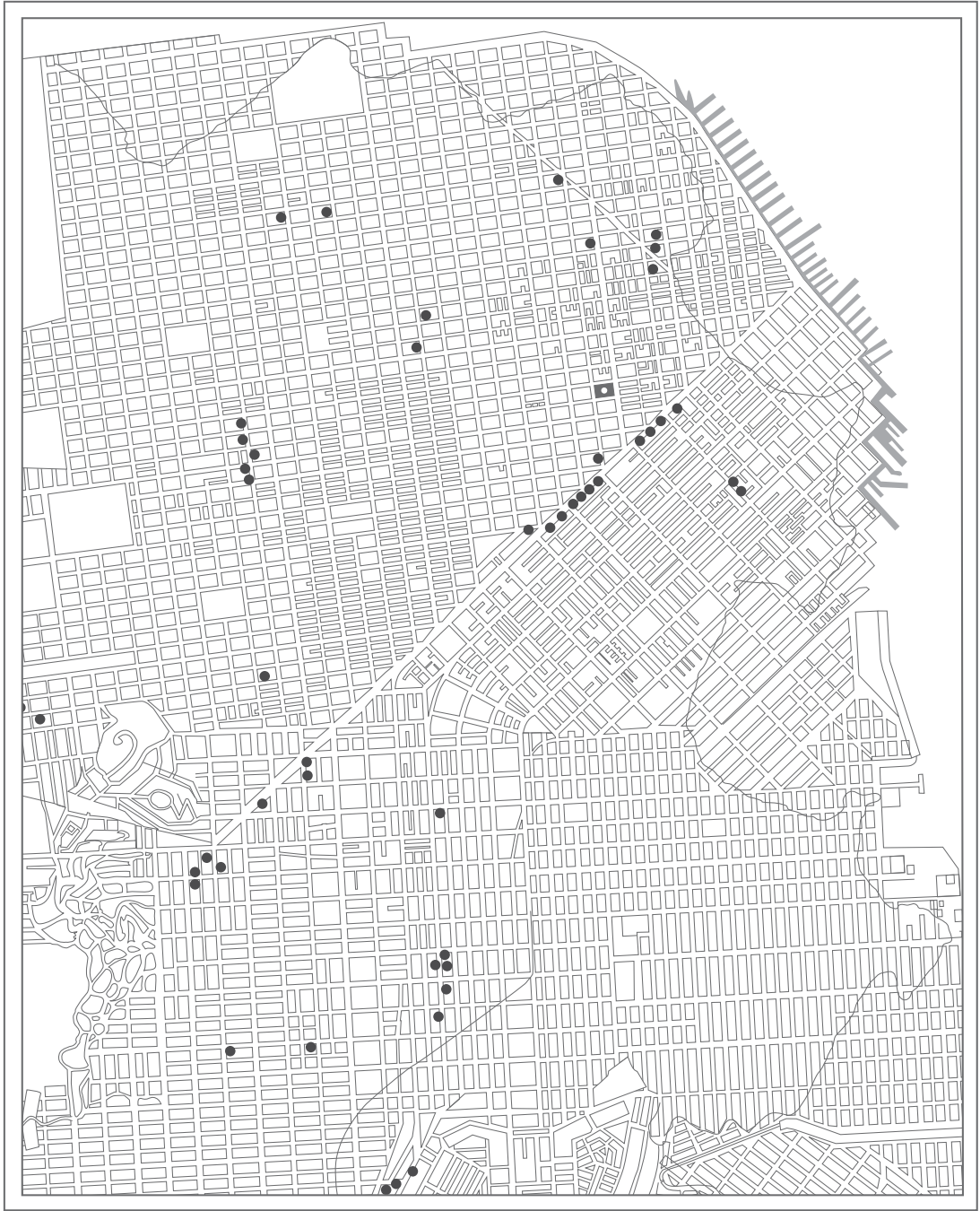


Figure 4.3. Nickelodeons, 1911. The largest concentration of nickelodeons was on the south side of Market Street between Second and Seventh Streets. Other clusters were on Mission Street near Twenty-second Street; on Fillmore Street between Bush and O'Farrell Streets; on Kearny near Columbus Avenue; and on Castro Street near Market Street. Locations from *Crocker-Langley San Francisco Directory, 1911*.

with Figures 2.3 and 2.8). In contrast to nickelodeons, however, vaudeville theaters and movie theaters were typically purpose-built buildings, architecturally distinct from the shops around them. Large, prominent vaudeville houses and movie theaters such as the Orpheum were imposing buildings that used essentially the same architectural language on their facades as high-class theaters. Stylistically they stood out from the storefronts that typically surrounded them. Similarly, smaller vaudeville and movie theaters often made use of a large entryway, often arched, to break the rhythm of shop fronts (Figure 4.4). However, these more popular theaters often made concessions to their location within a shopping district. For example, the facade of the Wigwam Theater (Figure 4.5), on Mission Street, revealed a store and a saloon within the same building, mixing its identity with that of the street it inhabited. The common placement of these theaters midblock (see Figure 2.13) further united theater and shops into one entity. Although more impressive than a storefront nickelodeon, the Wigwam and many other theaters shared the nickelodeon's intimate relationship to the shopping district.



Figure 4.4. Like other smaller theaters, the Grand View Motion Picture Theatre is the same scale as the residential and commercial buildings surrounding it, but its large arched doorway distinguishes it from other businesses. Courtesy of San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.





Figure 4.5. Wigwam Theatre, c. 1910, a major vaudeville house on Mission Street. Courtesy of San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Downtown “legitimate” theaters, in contrast to more popular theaters, were located near, but not strictly within, the downtown shopping district. In post-1906 San Francisco a distinct theater district was located directly to the west of Union Square and the downtown shopping district (Figure 4.6). Here theaters were sometimes built right next to one another and were surrounded primarily by hotels. These theaters were architecturally distinct, clearly separate buildings, and gave their entire street frontage to their lobbies, making the distinction between shopping and theatergoing clear-cut (Figure 4.7). As I will describe in more detail later in this chapter, the interiors of high-end theaters were also more specialized than the interiors of most vaudeville theaters. While most vaudeville theaters were open, flat halls with a stage, relatively indistinguishable from dance or meeting halls in their layout, high-end theaters were designed to create a clear sight line between each individual theatergoer and the stage, while also sorting those theatergoers into classes through their placement within the theater.

### Experiencing the Landscape of Theatrical Amusements

The geography and typology of theatergoing were broader for women like Annie Haskell than for upper-class women like Mary Pierce and Ella Lees Leigh. The upper-class women went to plays, operas, and concerts in high-class downtown theaters, including the California, Alcazar, Majestic, Cort, and Columbia theaters, as well as feature films in downtown palace movie theaters. On occasion, Pierce also visited the Orpheum vaudeville theater downtown, on O’Farrell Street. Haskell, while she also visited several downtown theaters, mainly went to nickelodeons and theaters on Fillmore and especially in the Mission District, where she lived. Haskell went to vaudeville shows at the Orpheum, the Wigwam, and other theaters; visited nickelodeons; attended concerts in theaters, shops, and public parks; went to both grand and light operas at the Tivoli and other venues; and went to varied theaters to see plays ranging from what she called “wild melodrama” to Shakespeare. As an educated woman with an interest in culture and politics, Haskell was interested in many of the same plays, concerts, and films that attracted Pierce and Leigh. However, because she had little money, her outings often depended on friends and family members, and therefore she mostly frequented the less expensive vaudeville and melodrama shows that her family members went to regularly.<sup>22</sup>

Annie Haskell was very concerned with following the rules of propriety, which required that, while a woman might attend the theater alone or with other women when seeing a matinee, she needed a male escort at night. For example, in her 1890 diary, all eight of Haskell’s references to attending a play, opera, or vaudeville show referred to evening shows to which she went escorted by her husband



Figure 4.6. Theaters, 1915. By 1915, theaters were once again concentrated downtown, adjacent to the downtown shopping district. In addition, the Republic and the Princess both showed films and were located on Fillmore; the Wigwam served the Mission District; and the Valencia was a single outpost between downtown and the Mission. (1) Republic; (2) Princess; (3) Columbia; (4) Alcazar; (5) Hippodrome; (6) Orpheum; (7) Cort; (8) Tivoli; (9) Savoy; (10) Empress; (11) Pantages; (12) Valencia; (13) Wigwam. Locations from *Crocker-Langley San Francisco Directory*, 1915.

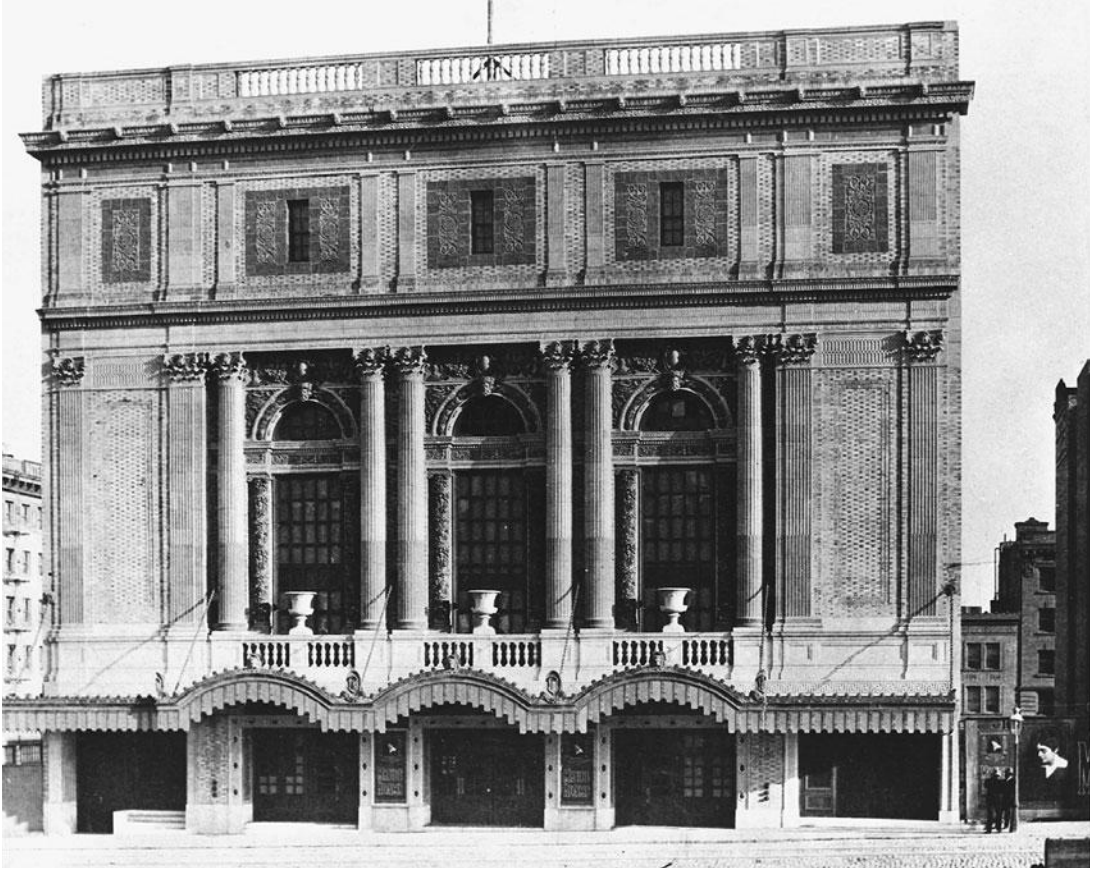


Figure 4.7. Columbia Theater, c. 1910. Like other downtown “legitimate” theaters, the postquake Columbia Theater was an imposing, distinctive building, using classical details that emphasized its high-culture status. Courtesy of San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

or another male relative.<sup>23</sup> The importance of being escorted by a male is clear in her entries. For example, she wrote on February 20, 1890, that because her husband was sick, her brother-in-law “undertook to escort” her, her mother-in-law, and a female friend to the opera. In 1890 Haskell also put up with the “horrid” and “impossible” behavior of her husband, Burnette, who typically took along a book to read during the play, so that she could be properly escorted.<sup>24</sup> The first reference that any of the diarists made to going to a play in the evening unescorted is not until 1910, and the circumstance, which made Haskell quite uncomfortable, occurred only because her male escort was ill.<sup>25</sup> By the 1910s, the necessity of a male escort for the evening was fading, at least for upper-class women such as Pierce, who felt perfectly comfortable going to see a play in the evening with female friends and relatives in 1915.

Annie Haskell's experience of theaters was quite different from Ella Lees Leigh's and Mary Pierce's experience of the same theaters. On June 5, 1915, Pierce and Haskell described going to see the same show, Pavlova at the Cort, but while Pierce sat in orchestra seats for the "truly inspired performance," Haskell described hurrying "up the long stairs that head to the Cort gallery."<sup>26</sup> Pierce and Leigh were able to take in the spectacle of a play, concert, or opera without interference, but after attending *Twelfth Night* on May 26, 1911, Haskell found it necessary to comment, "Though our seats were high, we could both see and hear." She was not as lucky at the Wigwam on February 3, 1910, about which she wrote, "I finally got a miserable seat in the back where I could hardly see or hear and amongst a lot of babes."<sup>27</sup> Although Haskell frequented some of the same theaters that richer women attended, she sat at the margins, just as many of the nickelodeons she visited were at the margins of the high-class area of the downtown.<sup>28</sup>

Mary Pierce and Ella Lees Leigh went to only those theaters that were designed to maximize a clear view from the audience to the stage, with a raked floor and seats angled to face the stage squarely (Figures 4.8 and 4.9). Although Haskell went to these theaters, where she perched high in the balcony, she also went to popular-price theaters, particularly the Tivoli, Orpheum, and Wigwam. These theaters were designed to maximize the number of people they could seat, with the prequake Tivoli and Orpheum seating sixteen hundred each, nearly a thousand more than most downtown legitimate theaters. To fit in the large crowd, seats in these theaters were arranged in gridlike rows, often on a level floor (Figure 4.10). The interior was more like a generic hall than a specialized theater. At the Tivoli, service for food and drinks, originally provided at tables but after 1880 offered at seats with racks to hold glasses, further interrupted patrons' ability to watch the drama onstage without impediment and distraction.

Beginning in 1907, Annie Haskell mentioned visiting nickelodeons and going to "motion picture shows." Her visits to nickelodeons were often quite casual, as when she and two other women "walked over to Fillmore St. had some lunch and visited a nickelodeon to relieve nervous tension" that had been created by taking the teacher's exam in 1911.<sup>29</sup> On another occasion, she and her sister Kate visited a nickelodeon as a break between viewing Sirius and Saturn through her brother-in-law's telescope, which he had set up on the sidewalk.<sup>30</sup> Haskell's nickelodeon visits, as well as her visits to other moving picture shows, were rarely planned in advance and were often combined with other activities, such as a shopping trip, a library visit, a meal out, or a trip downtown to see a concert at the music store. At times moving picture shows served purely as a place to rest or, on one occasion, a way to amuse herself while waiting for a streetcar.<sup>31</sup> This integration of nickelodeon visits into everyday activity was made easy by the relatively low price of admission, the short length of programs, and the continuous projection of the show.

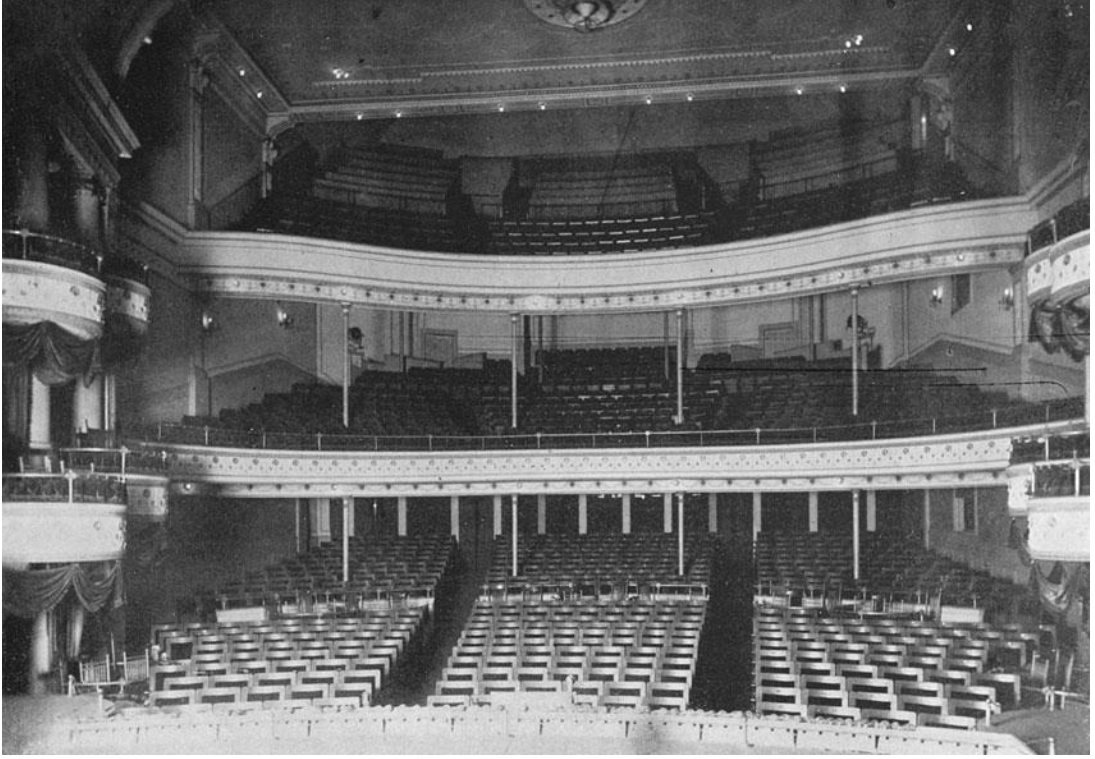


Figure 4.8. Interior of Columbia Theater, 1895. The Columbia Theater was a major legitimate theater that served a high-class clientele. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

In contrast, when Mary Pierce went to see movies in 1915–16, they functioned more like plays. She never visited nickelodeons, and she nearly always referred to the subject of the film in her diary. While Annie Haskell simply mentioned going to a moving picture show, Pierce described her movie outings much as she did the plays she went to, writing on September 19, 1916, for example, “In evening Lucy and I see Theda Bara in ‘Under Two Flags,’” without mentioning that this was a film and not a play. She was also more likely to visit films at night, for two-thirds of her film visits were in the evening, while fewer than half of Haskell’s were in the evening.<sup>32</sup> Moviegoing also made up a much smaller proportion of outings for amusement for Pierce, who mentioned going to forty-five plays and operas in 1915–16 and to nine movies. In contrast, in 1915–16 Haskell mentioned going to eight plays and operas and six movies, while earlier, in 1910, she went to the movies eight times and only twice to plays or operas.

Mary Pierce did not see movies in nickelodeons but rather in theaters that had either been converted from live shows, such as the Savoy and the Tivoli, or built as movie theaters, such as the Portola and Grauman’s Imperial. In the mid-1910s,



# The UNION PACIFIC,

The UNION PACIFIC is the shortest  
line to Eastern Points from  
the Pacific Coast.



# The OVERLAND ROUTE,

The scenery on the line of the UNION  
PACIFIC RAILWAY is abso-  
lutely unsurpassed.

## DRESS CIRCLE AND ORCHESTRA.

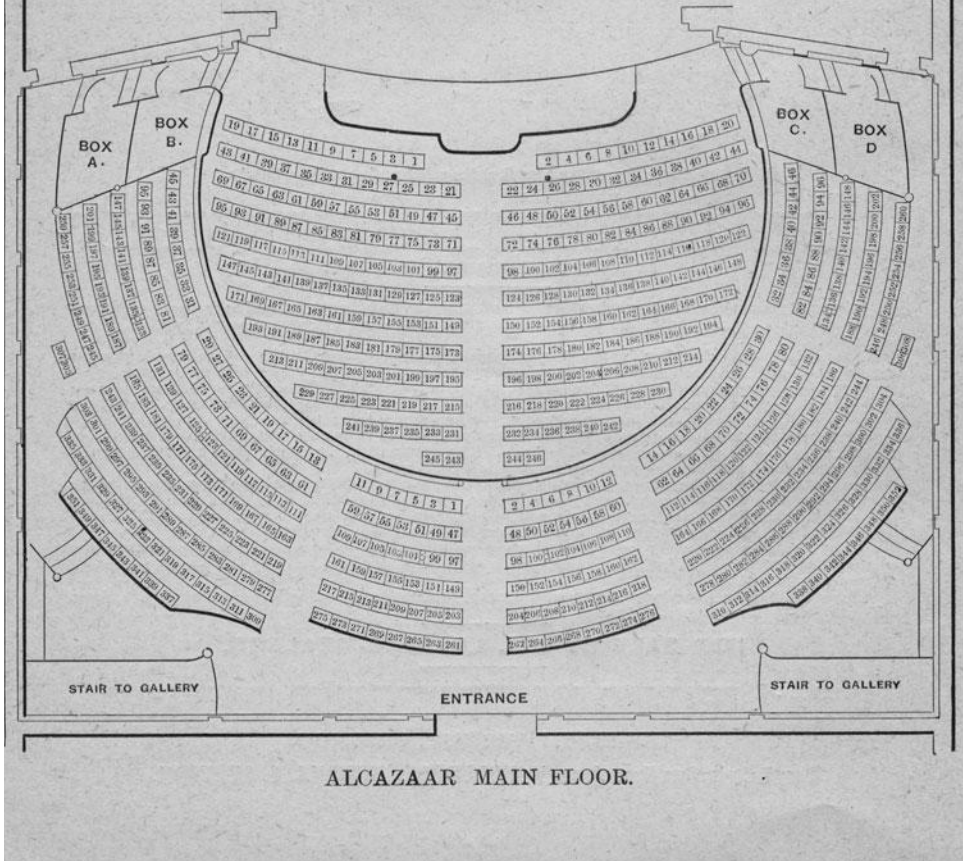


Figure 4.9. Plan of Alcazar, 1888. A high-class theater, the Alcazar had seats organized in a semicircle focused on the stage. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

# The UNION PACIFIC,

The UNION PACIFIC is the only road running to the celebrated Clear Creek Canyon in Colorado.



# The OVERLAND ROUTE,

Free Excursion Sleeping Cars, via UNION PACIFIC RAILWAY, between Los Angeles and Council Bluffs are run daily.

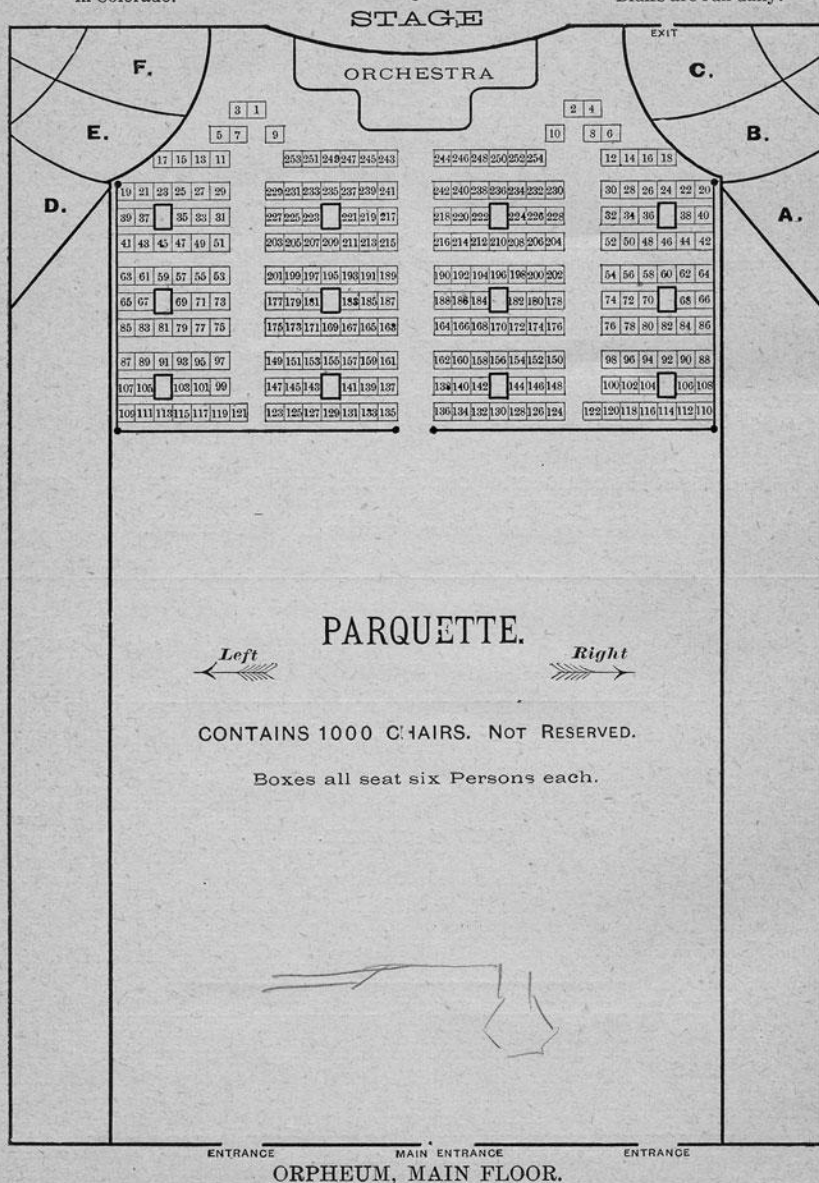
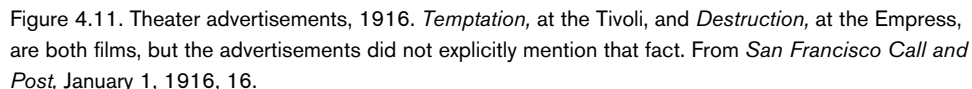


Figure 4.10. Plan of Orpheum Theater, 1888. The Orpheum Theater was organized in a strictly orthogonal fashion, maximizing the number of viewers with little consideration for sightlines. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.



These newer films were usually shown in new, purpose-built movie theaters, often referred to as “palaces.” These movie palaces featured more elaborate architecture and decoration, pipe organs and even orchestras to play accompaniment



to the silent films, ushers to control behavior, and prices up to \$1.50, a common high-end price for theater tickets.<sup>35</sup> In San Francisco, prices at palace theaters began at ten cents, twice the cost of nickelodeons. In addition, unlike nickelodeons but like theaters featuring vaudeville acts, plays, and operas, the movie palaces charged a range of prices depending on the seat and whether one was attending a matinee or an evening show.<sup>36</sup> The higher prices helped to ensure that the audience at these theaters was not primarily working-class and that those poorer patrons who did attend were likely to remain segregated in the cheaper balcony seats.

Thus, upper- and middle-class women saw movies in a very different sort of space from the nickelodeons frequented by poorer women. Richer women saw films much as they did plays, in the more expensive seats of proper theaters, or else they saw them as part of illustrated lectures in theaters or halls. Poorer women usually saw films in storefront nickelodeons, which had no reserved seats and no price differentiation among different seats. When they did see films in the larger theaters, they would typically sit in the inexpensive balcony seats, much as they did when they went to the live theater. For film, as for live theater, upper-class women experienced their amusements as a place and time apart from the everyday, in which ordinary annoyances did not intrude. Poorer women were less pampered. When they went to a nickelodeon or a vaudeville hall, their experience was more integrated with the everyday, including noise and the hustle and bustle of patrons entering and leaving or ordering refreshments. When they went to a more high-class theater, their experience was diminished by poor sightlines, and they were reminded with every step of the stairs to the balcony that this space did not exist to serve them.

### Theaters and the Geography of Spectacle

In San Francisco the geography of theaters, whether high-class legitimate stages or nickelodeons, closely followed the geography of shopping. Just as the fancier department stores clustered around Union Square north of Market Street, so did the majority of theaters, although the downtown theaters were in an area adjacent to, rather than within, the downtown shopping district. The district main streets of Fillmore and Mission also boasted a few theaters showing live entertainment, generally vaudeville acts (see Figure 4.6).

Just as midday was prime time for women shoppers, it was also prime time for women theatergoers, who could comfortably go to low-price feminized matinees. Later in the evening, the downtown became a space more purely devoted to spectacle, inhabited by window-shoppers and mixed-gender theatergoing groups, availing themselves of the spectacle of the lit downtown as well as the spectacle within

the theaters. Some performances were even held in shops rather than in theaters, further blurring the line between shopping district and theater district. In 1909 and 1910, Annie Haskell and her relations regularly attended free Saturday afternoon concerts at Sherman, Clay & Co. and Kohler and Chase, downtown music stores. These concert outings were always combined with shopping and other errands and sometimes also with visits to art galleries. Department stores also regularly provided free concerts; the Emporium, which Haskell mentioned visiting just to hear the music, offered concerts every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday night in 1902.<sup>37</sup> These downtown stores were the most popular-priced entertainment venues of all, and women of restricted means, such as Haskell and her sisters, took full advantage of their free shows, in some years attending free concerts more often than any form of paid entertainment. Performances were also a draw in many downtown San Francisco restaurants, especially the area's cafés, such as the Portola-Louvre and the Tait-Zinkand, which catered especially to after-theater patrons. Less expensive restaurants also provided entertainment. For example, Haskell and her sister Kate visited the Pompeian Court at Hale's department store for lunch "and heard the Hawaiians sing and play their guitars as if they were born with them in their hands."<sup>38</sup>

The location of theaters, in combination with concerts in large stores, reinscribed the centrality of the downtown and, to a lesser extent, local main streets in imagined maps of San Francisco. Market Street and the area to its north were by day the center of town, because they housed the shopping district and the business district, located to the east of the shopping district and most theaters. By day, theaters brought more women downtown to attend matinees and expanded the number of hours in a day a woman might spend downtown, as a play and shopping could easily be combined. By night, theaters brought both men and women to the brightly lit streets of the downtown, keeping Market Street and the shopping district peopled and active well after the shops and offices closed. For women, they provided an opportunity to claim the night, which, to this day, is seen as much more the province of men.

This combination of shopping and theater also reinforced the spectacular aspects of the downtown shopping landscape. Display windows and theaters shared the spotlight for evening strollers, who, going to and from the theater, would look in the elaborately arranged windows much as they would look on the stage within the theater. At night, with the shops closed, these windows served purely as theater and spectacle, to be looked at but not accessible for sale. Shop windows, lit in the same way the stage was lit, provided a spectacle mirroring the shows people were going to, prompting Wolfgang Schivelbusch to write, "The illuminated window as stage, the street as theatre and the passers-by as audience—this is the scene of big-city night life."<sup>39</sup> Concerts within stores blurred the line between stage and

shop most fully, inviting patrons to think of the store as a theater and using the spectacular attractions of theatrical entertainment to draw in potential shoppers. In a weekday evening concert at the Emporium, the store embodied the downtown experience of theatergoing entirely within its walls, providing spectacles both theatrical and consumptive. The merchandise within the store, like the merchandise visible in the windows of the downtown, was not available for sale in the evening; thus, visitors combined their theatergoing with an enjoyment of the spectacular aspects of consumption, without the attendant pressures of purchasing.

### Parades and Public Celebrations

Just as theater and the experience of downtown theatergoing engaged the downtown shopping district, the majority of public celebrations in San Francisco also focused on Market Street and the downtown, inspiring the writer of *Trips around San Francisco* to write, “Because of its festal characteristics by day and night, Market Street is excellently adapted to all those parades and pageants so popular with San Franciscans.”<sup>40</sup> Parades and celebrations reinscribed Market Street as the center of the city, reinventing it from a space for movement and transportation to purely a space of spectacle (Figure 4.12). The street itself took on the central role usually taken by the storefronts and theaters that lined it. In preparation for parades, Market Street was decorated, often with electrical lights, which themselves became a separate spectacle to be visited the night before a parade (Figure 4.13).

Parades and public celebrations were another source of spectacle and amusement accessible to men and women of all classes. However, public celebrations were unlike theatrical entertainments in several ways. While plays, films, and most concerts were presented in specialized interior spaces, impinging on the streets only through signs, marquees, and barkers, parades and other public celebrations temporarily remade the ordinary space of the street into a space of spectacle.<sup>41</sup> The size of the audience in the darkened seats of a theater made little difference to a performance there, but the audience at a parade was an integral part of the spectacle. For informal public celebrations such as the annual celebration of New Year’s Eve, the audience was the spectacle, and the crowd itself was what the revelers came to see. Women were often part of such spectacle, whether as participants in parades, spectators lining the street, or revelers in informal celebrations. While women were commonly spectators throughout the period I cover here, their participation both in parades and as revelers increased from the late nineteenth century into the twentieth.

The distinction between the formality of parades and the informality of public celebrations is significant. Parades made the civic order of the city visible in quite



Figure 4.12. Parade of soldiers home from the Philippines, 1898. Both men and women were spectators and, thus, part of the spectacle. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

explicit and self-conscious ways, and women's participation in them served as a highly conscious insertion of women into that civic order. As women claimed a role for themselves as civic representatives in parades, they reinforced the existing civic structure, even as they demanded a place for women within it. In public celebrations, in contrast, the lack of formality meant that women's participation held less explicit meaning. By participating in New Year's Eve and Christmas Eve celebrations downtown, women presented themselves as citizens of the city, but in a carnivalesque context in which breaking rules did not challenge, but rather reinforced, existing class and gender structures.

## Public Celebrations

In San Francisco, two regular public celebrations, the New Year's Eve celebration on Market Street and the Christmas Eve concert at Lotta's Fountain (Market at



Figure 4.13. Market Street lit for celebration. The decoration of Market Street for parades and celebrations was often as much of a spectacle as the parade itself. Courtesy of San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Geary, Kearny, and Third), provided opportunities for women to be full participants in mass spectacles. In these informal public celebrations, to be a spectator was to be a participant. The annual New Year's Eve celebration on Market Street and other main streets was a mass celebration, typically made up purely of spectators, although occasionally including a parade early in the evening. This public celebration began in earnest in the late nineteenth century and grew in size and importance in the early twentieth. Beginning in the late 1890s, women were important and remarked-upon participants in this annual celebration.<sup>42</sup> The Christmas Eve concert, which began in 1910, similarly filled Market Street with a mixed throng (estimated between 90,000 and 250,000 in 1910).<sup>43</sup> While the Fourth of July parade celebrated the nation and the Labor Day parade celebrated the workers, both New Year's Eve and Christmas Eve celebrated the city of San Francisco in its entirety, crossing boundaries of gender, ethnicity, and class. The public New

Year's Eve celebration was a true carnival, fitting the description of the carnival-esque in Bakhtin's seminal discussion in *Rabelais and His World*. New Year's Eve celebrated death and rebirth in the end of one year and the start of the next; encompassed costumes, noise, bells, brooms, and mock battles with confetti; and was celebrated by "the people as a whole, . . . organized in their own way, the way of the people . . . outside and contrary to all existing forms of the coercive socio-economic and political organization."<sup>44</sup> The Christmas Eve celebration, less carnival-esque than New Year's Eve, celebrated the rebirth of the city after the earthquake and fire and was focused on a single woman performer, initially the opera diva Mme Luisa Tetrzzini.

When in San Francisco, Annie Haskell went downtown for New Year's Eve and joined the crowds. In 1906 she wrote, "I was on Market Street last night. The blowing of the horns, the jangling of the bells, the pushing of the crowds, with the confetti, and the feather dusters made a pandemonium indescribable."<sup>45</sup> The one exception was in 1907, when she did not go to the celebration, because the downtown was still destroyed from the earthquake and fire. She wrote, "I did not want to go down to Fillmore Street and hail the new year in. I will wait till it goes back to Market Street."<sup>46</sup> The noise of New Year's is notable in Annie Haskell's diary entries, as in 1913, when she wrote, "I hadn't made a single good resolution anyway. Too much noise to think."<sup>47</sup> Noise was even more central to newspaper descriptions, which used headlines such as "Vast Throngs Noisily Usher in the New Year" and "Tumult Greets the New Year."<sup>48</sup> The New Year's coverage typically described the wide range of horns, from "the deepest of bassos to the shrillest of tenors," and other noisemakers, including cowbells, pots and pans, crickets (an "infernal machine that needs but to be twirled about its axis to furnish din unspeakable"), and resined cords connected to tin cans, and it emphasized the centrality of noise, as in the following: "Noise! More noise! Still more noise! All kinds of noise. Tinhorn noise. Noise of bells. Noise of rattles. Any old kind of noise, just so it was noise. San Francisco noise. Noise!"<sup>49</sup> The noise of people downtown was added to by whistles from all the factories, which joined the racket at midnight.

This "utter pandemonium" served to help remake Market Street from an everyday space of transportation, work, and shopping into a spectacular space of carnival, full of confetti, adults acting like children, and costumed people breaking the rules of public behavior.<sup>50</sup> "Gray-haired women played the pranks of their grandchildren," and "men and women were boys and girls."<sup>51</sup> In 1899, the *San Francisco Call* (hereafter the *Call*) wrote:

On ordinary occasions boisterousness is supposed to be the especial prerogative of the male sex, but by long accepted custom the hilarity of New Year's eve in San Francisco has been about evenly divided between the entire human family and last night was no

exception to the rule. Thousands of women and girls made up for the other 364 days when they have to keep silent and gave full vent to their lungs through tin.<sup>52</sup>

The New Year's Eve celebration temporarily broke the gender rules, with women making up "for many days of domestic quiet" by blowing on tin horns and making a spectacle of themselves.<sup>53</sup> Women "entered into the frolic with the wildest enthusiasm" and "threw off conventionality for the time being and let their folly have its full fling."<sup>54</sup> Women's presence was regularly remarked upon in the papers, as was that of all ages of celebrants, from small children to grandparents.

The images used to illustrate newspaper accounts at the turn of the century emphasized both of these circumstances: women's presence and the centrality of noise to the celebration. All three major newspapers, the *Chronicle*, the *Examiner*, and the *Call*, illustrated their coverage each year with images showing a crowd of revelers, with a woman holding or blowing a horn front and center (Figures 4.14 and 4.15). The centrality of imagery of women in public, on the streets, at night,



Figure 4.14. New Year's illustration, *Examiner*, 1908. Like other San Francisco papers, the *Examiner* used women and horns in its coverage of New Year's during the first two decades of the twentieth century. From *San Francisco Examiner*, January 1, 1908, 1.





Figure 4.15. New Year's illustration, *Call*, 1910. Women, horns, and costumes are the central themes of this image. From *San Francisco Call*, January 1, 1910.

making noise, emphasized the temporary breakdown of rules of propriety in the carnival of New Year's. On this one occasion, the *Call* wrote, "San Francisco had forgotten classes and castes, and in one homogeneous whole was taking the night off."<sup>55</sup> "Street sweepers rubbed shoulders with men of millions. All social barriers were leveled along Market Street."<sup>56</sup> Even African Americans were included in the revelry. The *Chronicle* in 1912 told of a black woman whose mouth became filled with confetti when she opened it to sneeze, and who commented, "These here folks is treating me with as much disrespect as if I was white folks. . . . Most towns they wouldn't throw nothin' at me."<sup>57</sup> This temporary breakdown of class and gender roles was encapsulated by the friendly exchange between "Miss Pacific Heights" and a newsboy who attacked her with confetti or a feather duster, described in both 1905 and 1906.<sup>58</sup> In this encounter a male, working-class child mock-attacks an upper-class woman and is answered purely by laughter. Annie Haskell also remarked about the temporary breakdown of ordinary rules of conduct, especially of men toward women, writing in her diary in 1904: "Boys and men brushed the confetti from our shoulders with whisk brooms, or their hands as we passed, often chucking us under the chin, while myriad others behind blew mighty blasts in our ears, but as it was all part of the growing Mardi gras spirit, no offense was intended or taken."<sup>59</sup>

Unlike the noisy crowds of New Year's Eve, the Christmas Eve crowds were noted for their quiet politeness. As the *Call* announced, Market Street was turned into a "vast opera house," in which the population behaved like a proper opera crowd, cheering the diva but never interrupting her song. In fact, on this religious occasion, the crowd was even more polite than typical operagoers and was described in the papers as the equivalent of worshippers: "They stood with bared heads as people might stand in some vast Cathedral. This homage to the great artist who

is loved by the town, and who loves the town, was to them something sacred.”<sup>60</sup> This celebration remade Market Street into a temple in which was held a religious festival that celebrated the city of San Francisco and the opera singer the city claimed as its own. The participants in this festival came from both sexes and all classes, but the object of worship was a woman, the city’s spirit embodied in the opera star.

As women’s presence downtown (often making noise, as when women spoke on street corners on behalf of suffrage) became more common, the meanings of women’s participation in public celebrations changed. Women remained part of the crowd, but rather than being remarked upon as breaking ordinary rules, they were described by newspapers simply as an attractive part of the crowd. By the 1910s, women were regular participants in the New Year’s Eve and Christmas Eve celebrations and an ordinary presence downtown, no longer remarkable as they had been at the close of the nineteenth century.

## Parades

In contrast to these public celebrations, in which San Francisco made itself visible through its crowds, parades have served as symbolic representations of a civic community, defined through different categories depending on the occasion.<sup>61</sup> The categories in each parade define the groups making up the public. Military parades, such as those associated with the Spanish–American War and World War I, and, to a lesser extent, Fourth of July parades, embodied the nation through its fighting forces. Fourth of July parades, while typically focused on the military in this period, also included the local police (a sort of local military), representatives of local government, ethnic fraternal organizations, and often schoolchildren. Admission Day parades, which were rotated among California cities and therefore only occasionally held in San Francisco, embodied the state through the members of the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West and other voluntary organizations. Labor Day parades embodied the city through its working people, organized according to the type of work they did.

In the 1890s, women participated in these parades primarily as spectators, cheering their working men or soldiers from the sidelines. A few women participated as allegories, such as the Goddess of Liberty in the 1890, 1894, 1895, and 1896 Fourth of July parades and Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty in the Grand Army of the Republic float in the 1896 Fourth of July parade.<sup>62</sup> This continued a trend that had begun in the late 1860s in which, according to Mary Ryan, “woman had become spectacle” in parades when “the female body itself, with a minimum of iconographic trappings . . . became a focus of public ceremonial attention.”<sup>63</sup> Women did sometimes read a poem or sing at the addresses after the Fourth of July parade, although they did not speak formally after the Labor Day parade, except in 1912,

and they were participants in the picnics and dances that typically followed in local parks and halls. Although these activities were also usually public, they did not occupy Market Street, and they did not have the symbolic weight of the parade. Furthermore, these picnics and dances were conceptualized as family activities, so women participated largely as wives and daughters rather than as workers.

In the San Francisco Labor Day parade, women first marched as participants in their own right in 1902. Women of the Steam Laundry Workers' Union, the French Laundry Workers' Union, the Garment Workers' Union, and the Salesladies' Union dressed in white, rode in the parade, and were "loudly cheered during the counter-march by the various unions."<sup>64</sup> Their participation was highlighted in the *San Francisco Examiner* (hereafter the *Examiner*), which published a prominent photo of "the pretty girls on the Laundry Workers' Float" to accompany the detailed description of the parade.<sup>65</sup> The next year they were joined by a "goodly number" of saleswomen, and in 1906 women from the Bookbinders' Union also participated. By 1910, the *Call* wrote, "Unions there were of every conceivable kind, workers of every description—young and old, men and women, hale and weak."<sup>66</sup> Laundry workers, seamstresses, saleswomen, and waitresses all joined the march, not as embodiments of abstract virtues, but as workers themselves. According to the official order of the march, they participated under the category "miscellaneous," which marked their marginal position in the imaginary organization of the community through labor, but they were popular participants in the parade.

The Fourth of July parade was more exclusively male, in part because of its military nature and in part because it was largely discontinued after 1905, when women began to take part more regularly in such public spectacles.<sup>67</sup> With a few exceptions, women participated only as allegorical figures, such as Liberty and California, as they had in the preceding decade, or as the wife or daughter of a politician. Adult women were greatly outnumbered by schoolchildren, and Liberty was usually accompanied by schoolgirls representing the states. Unlike the Labor Day parade, which was organized by type of work, the Fourth of July parade was organized into military and civilian sections, with organizations representing different national groups, such as Italians, Germans, and Austrians, making up the bulk of the civilian section. While labor as an organizing feature made space for women to participate, especially because certain categories of labor, such as sewing and laundry, were largely female, the military and ethnic makeup of the Fourth of July parade did not create the same openings for women. As members of ethnic groups or as native-born women, they were considered to be represented by their men.

The exception to women's allegorical participation in the Fourth of July parade was their participation in debates around suffrage, although women also participated as members of sororal organizations in 1896 and 1898.<sup>68</sup> In 1895, Susan B.

Anthony and Anna Shaw, in town for the Women's Congress, joined the parade in a carriage following the mayor's. They "were recognized and cheered as they passed and were kept busy nodding all the way."<sup>69</sup> The following year, when suffragists were campaigning to pass a woman suffrage amendment in California, the Anti-Woman's Suffrage Association rode in private carriages at the end of the fifth division.<sup>70</sup> Women were not mentioned again as participants in their own right until 1912, the year after women had won the vote in California. In 1912 the *Call* announced, "For the first time in the history of San Francisco, a woman authoritatively addressed an Independence Day audience." Frances Potter's speech was described in the same paper with the headline "Eagle Dons Skirts, Woman Orator Thrills."<sup>71</sup> Except for these few exceptions surrounding the moments when suffragists were arguing for women's rightful position as full members of the body public, women participated in Fourth of July celebrations as spectators, cheering on the men.

While the Fourth of July celebration embodied the nation, Admission Day, September 9, celebrated the state. This celebration was tied to the fraternal organization the Native Sons of the Golden West (NSGW) and was celebrated in different California cities each year in conjunction with the organization's annual meeting. San Francisco hosted Admission Day celebrations in 1890, 1900, 1910, and 1915. The majority of participants in the parade were members of the NSGW or the Native Daughters of the Golden West (NDGW), but other fraternal organizations, including the Ancient Order of Foresters, the Improved Order of Red Men, and German, Austrian, French, and Italian clubs, participated as well, as did members of military, police, and firefighting units. The gendering of this celebration changed drastically over the years as the NDGW took on an increasingly large role.

In the 1890 parade, the grand officers of the NDGW rode in carriages with the grand officers of the NSGW, according to the announcement of the procession, but interestingly their participation was not noted in the lengthy newspaper coverage of the parade in the *Call*. A few other Native Daughters also joined the parade on floats, including one representing the San Francisco parlor of this organization, which featured "a Native Daughter, looking gorgeously beautiful," a Native Son, and a cinnamon bear, who acted as if "the young lady was a toothsome morsel for a lunch." Two female survivors of the Donner party rode in a carriage with one of their rescuers, a member of the Bear Flag party, and a man who accompanied Fremont on his expeditions. The remaining female participants embodied allegorical figures, including Agriculture, Columbia and her daughters, and the Goddess of Liberty. Women also participated from behind the scenes, making banners for the parade.<sup>72</sup>

By 1900, when the Admission Day parade was next held in San Francisco, the role of women within the parade was quite different. Many parlors of Native

Daughters from around the state rode in the parade on floats and carriages. Their presence was felt throughout the parade, because the organization was geographical, so that the NDGW marched with the NSGW from the same area of California, rather than in a separate section of the parade. In the tail end of the parade, peopled by other fraternal organizations, women served primarily as allegorical figures, such as the provinces of Sweden; Agriculture (in the Italian division); and the Goddess of Liberty and California (in the German division).<sup>73</sup> In the 1910 and 1915 parades, women no longer embodied allegories but were full participants, treated equally with their male counterparts in the coverage in the *Call*.<sup>74</sup> In 1915, all of the photos accompanying the coverage in the *Call* were of women, marching just as men did, rather than riding, as they had exclusively in the 1890 and 1900 parades. Annie Haskell and her sisters were among the Native Daughters “on foot and on horse and on carriages and on float” in the 1910 parade, while in 1890 they had been part of the admiring throng.<sup>75</sup> It was a great thrill for Annie Haskell, who wrote that it was “gorgeous and beautiful” and that she, her sister Rose, and the other riders in her tally-ho received many comments, even though they “were mostly old women. ‘Oh, you Buena Vistas,’ ‘Oh, you fluffy ruffles,’ ‘California queens,’ ‘candy kids’ and cheers, and all that sort of thing.”<sup>76</sup>

By the 1910s women commonly participated in parades in large numbers, in contrast to the limited number of women in the nineteenth-century parades. Rather than embodying an abstract ideal or a civic symbol such as Liberty, Erin, or California, most of these twentieth-century parading women marched much as their male counterparts did, as female workers in Labor Day parades and as female club members in Admission Day parades and other parades of sororal and fraternal organizations. Within parades, women took their place as part of the body politic, representing themselves, rather than being represented by men.

## The Geography of Spectacle in San Francisco

The Christmas Eve celebration, the New Year’s Eve celebration, and the vast majority of parades all took place downtown on Market Street and surrounding business streets. Parades typically marched most of the length of Market Street, from Van Ness to the Ferry Building or vice versa, sometimes going one direction and doubling back. Parades also often left Market briefly to march up other major streets, such as Van Ness, Kearny, and Montgomery. The crowd on New Year’s Eve typically converged on Market and Kearny Streets before the earthquake and fire and on Market, Fillmore, and Mission after.

Annual celebrations and parades celebrated Market Street and the downtown as the heart of the city and as the space of spectacle. On these occasions the everyday

spectacle of window displays and downtown throngs was augmented by the dressed-up crowds watching parades, listening to the Christmas Eve concert, and participating in the New Year's Eve celebration; the floats and costumes of the paraders and New Year's Eve participants; the sounds of bands, opera singers, and tin horns; confetti; and banners and other decorations, including myriad lights.

Theaters, parades, and celebrations reinscribed the centrality of Market Street and the downtown, and to a lesser extent district main streets like Fillmore and Mission, to the life and identity of San Francisco. In their separate ways, theaters, parades, and other commemorations celebrated the downtown and both made use of and heightened its spectacle. Theaters created a routine nighttime population for the downtown shopping district by drawing people to the area after the shops had closed. The elaborate decorations in the show windows of downtown shops provided a free spectacle to theatergoers on their way to and from theaters, as well as for those who could not afford to go to the theater regularly. On Christmas Eve, the downtown was literally turned into a theater with the erection of a stage by Lotta's Fountain, where opera singers sang to vast crowds filling Market Street. Parades, organized in an orderly fashion and made up of people divided into logical categories, marched through the downtown, filling the sidewalks and windows with spectators. During these parades, the street was no longer a space of vehicular movement or even a space of commerce, but simply a space of spectacle. Bands and cheers filled the air, and banners, lights, floats, and other decorative elements remade both the marchers and the buildings along the parade route into objects to behold. The New Year's Eve celebration filled the streets of the downtown with people, noise, and confetti. In this carnivalesque celebration, all class and gender lines were transgressed, and the rules of proper behavior were broken, with adults behaving like children and women behaving like naughty boys. Similarly, the rules regarding the space of the street were broken too. Crowds made it necessary for streetcar lines to stop, because the growing number of people made it impossible for them to penetrate the space of the street. Rather than being a space of business and shopping and the center of transportation, the downtown became for this night purely a space of celebration.

As they reinforced the importance of the downtown, theaters, parades, and celebrations also increasingly inscribed women into the downtown and into the body politic. Female theatergoers and especially female filmgoers, drawn to the downtown by the new theater types that expanded women's participation in spectatorship, were an essential part of the evening theatergoing promenade. Female participants in the twentieth-century Labor Day and Admission Day parades marked the city as their own when they paraded as workers and as Native Daughters, members in their own right of the body politic of the city and the state. In their participation on New Year's Eve, women proclaimed themselves to be equal

partners in merrymaking as well. Through their participation in all of these activities, women made a claim both on the territory of Market Street and the downtown and on full membership in the public.

Individual women's decisions to participate in the landscapes of spectacle and amusement and to make themselves visible downtown, as well as the decisions of theater owners to market their establishments to women, laid the groundwork for women's claims to full citizenship. This is not to say that by participating in informal public celebrations and downtown theaters women were explicitly making claims to space and citizenship. Parades, however, made the civic order of the city visible in a self-conscious way, so women's decisions to participate in parades on their own behalf were a conscious challenge to a status quo that did not recognize women as full participants in the civic life of the city. The fact that women first participated in San Francisco parades in the context of the suffrage movement underlines the political meaning of women's participation in these rituals of the public sphere. In contrast, while theaters were equally expressive of a social structure that separated San Franciscans by class, ethnicity, race, and gender, this social structure was implicit and therefore both harder to see and harder to challenge, because it seemed so natural.

# FIVE

## SPACES OF SUFFRAGE

IN 1896 AND 1911, California woman suffragists fought to win the vote in California, using a wide range of private and public spaces. In 1896, suffragists were very concerned with maintaining their propriety and femininity, often acting almost as visitors in public. In contrast, in 1911 suffragists acted as full participants in public space, secure in their rights to these spaces and willing to speak and sell publicly without fear of censure. In this chapter I examine the spatial tactics of suffragists in the California woman suffrage campaigns of 1896 and 1911 and argue that women's use of public spaces, and especially their sense of ownership of these spaces, had consequences beyond their felt relationship to the city. The increased range of nonpolitical public spaces in which women could and did move and act was an important aspect of their claim to political rights as members of the public and their ability to make that claim.

As the previous chapters have shown, from 1890 to the 1910s, women made increasing use of a range of public spaces, both as workers and as consumers. Downtown, upper- and middle-class women walked the streets as shoppers, and working women created their own relationships to the public spaces of the downtown as workers in its stores and also as shoppers there. Working-class and middle-class



women also made local main streets their own as consumers. In their everyday movements through the city, whether visiting, shopping, or going to work, women of all classes made use of public transportation and peopled the streets. Eating out, going to the theater, and participating in public spectacles, women made the public spaces of the city their own. Their experience of the public spaces of the city as consumers of goods and services helped to construct women's relationships to the city and its neighborhoods, creating a sense of ownership over those places they frequented most often and in which they were served and accepted.

The California woman suffrage campaigns show that many different kinds of public spaces, including commercial spaces, were important both as spaces of discourse and as spaces that constructed participants' legitimacy to act as members of the public. The spaces of buying and selling, as well as other ordinary public spaces, are the ground on which the public sphere, a space of discourse in which people debate the public good, is built.<sup>1</sup> The importance of ordinary public spaces in constructing an argument for participation in the formalized political public sphere is demonstrated by the differences between the woman suffrage campaign in San Francisco in 1896 and the one in 1911. As the Berkeley suffragist and school-teacher Fannie McLean argued in her speech to women's clubs,

The woman of today takes a larger and more gracious place in the world. We are now co-thinkers and co-workers with man, in the same world, living in the same houses, using the same public conveyances, attending the same colleges, buying our food and clothing at the same shops; and why not be co-voters as to the management of this common environment and as to the basic principles of the democracy which produces this environment?<sup>2</sup>

McLean argued that women's everyday use of public space should carry with it full rights in the public sphere, in the form of the right to vote. Women's ordinary use of public space also denoted a physical space within which they could make their arguments, and California suffragists made full use of all the public spaces at their disposal in order to convince men to give them the right to vote. In making use of these spaces for political speech, they reimagined them not only as spaces of work and consumption but also as spaces of politics. This shift in how these landscapes were imagined sometimes led to suffragists' making physical changes in them and altered how they and others experienced them and women's roles within them.

### Using Space in the California Woman Suffrage Campaigns

The contrasts between the spaces used in the California woman suffrage campaign of 1896 and the campaign of 1911, only fifteen years apart, demonstrate the

significant transformations in women's relationships to public space during the 1890s and into the early twentieth century, which the previous chapters of this book have documented. The unsuccessful 1896 campaign used a much smaller range of spaces than the successful 1911 campaign, and private spaces constituted a larger portion of them. The sites used in 1896 were also more controlled and enclosed than those used in 1911. Women's expanding use of public space in their everyday lives gave them a wider base from which to argue for their rights. As discussed in earlier chapters, women's expanding use of public spaces was uneven by class and ethnicity, and the actions of the woman suffragists in both 1896 and 1911 reflect the variations among women in terms of which spaces they engaged and in what manner.

At the turn of the century, suffragists were working to pass amendments to state constitutions to get the vote on a state-by-state basis, rather than focusing on a federal amendment. Although a federal amendment had been proposed in 1878, by Senator A. A. Sargent, of California, whose wife was a prominent San Francisco suffragist, it was rejected numerous times and was not even considered by U.S. Senate or House committees between the years of 1896 and 1913.<sup>3</sup> In this hostile federal atmosphere, suffragists turned to the states, hoping to build up women's rights and influence piecemeal in order to win suffrage eventually in all the states. Only five states gave women the vote prior to the California victory in 1911. Wyoming granted the vote to women from its beginnings as a territory in 1869 and was admitted to the union as a woman suffrage state in 1890. Colorado amended its constitution to allow women the vote in 1893. These were the only states in which women had the vote at the time of the 1896 California campaign. In 1896, two additional western states, Utah and Idaho, joined Wyoming and Colorado. Fourteen years later, in 1910, the people of Washington amended its state constitution to give women the vote. The California campaign helped to turn the tide, and California's 1911 victory was followed by Oregon, Kansas, and Arizona in 1912, Illinois in 1913, Montana and Nevada in 1914, and several other states soon afterward. These state victories helped lead to the passage of the federal amendment in 1920.

In both the 1896 and the 1911 California campaigns, suffragists fought first to get a referendum on suffrage on the ballot, and once they had achieved this, they worked to convince the men of the state to vote for it. Although suffragists used a variety of spaces and tactics in an attempt to reach a large number of men in both campaigns, the unsuccessful campaign of 1896 was waged primarily in the traditional public political spaces of commercial halls and in the private spaces of suffragists' parlors and voters' homes. The campaign was organized by one central suffrage organization, which was closely tied to the East Coast woman suffrage movement and had a membership that consisted mainly of upper-middle-class,

white, nonimmigrant women, although it did include less elite women such as Annie Haskell.

Fifteen years later, in 1911, suffragists made use of these same spaces but also moved into retail and commercial spaces, commercial places of entertainment, and the streets, using techniques of persuasion borrowed from these realms. The 1911 California woman suffrage campaign was the largest and broadest waged in the United States to that date and borrowed some strategies from the radical suffragettes in England. This campaign was actually several interlocking campaigns, waged by organizations as diverse as the College Equal Suffrage League, largely made up of middle- and upper-class educated women, many of whom were active in other sorts of reform activities; the Club Women's Franchise League, a largely elite group; the Wage Earners' Suffrage League, closely tied to the Waitresses' Union; and a coalition organization, the State Central Committee, that coordinated efforts.<sup>4</sup> Each of these groups made use of different sets of spaces, with the least overlap in the polite space of hotels, used mostly by the club women, and the streets, which were never used by the Club Women's Franchise League and were used most actively by the middle-class reformers.

The 1911 campaign also targeted voters beyond the middle and upper classes. Focusing on working-class voters, the Wage Earners' Suffrage League addressed all 185 unions in the city.<sup>5</sup> Newspaper coverage in the *Call* emphasized the support of the union members for suffrage, reporting, for example, "The postal clerks gave their indorsement by a rising vote in which every man in the hall rose to his feet Saturday night. The pattern makers pledged themselves to a man."<sup>6</sup> Members of the Wage Earners' Suffrage League did not confine their speeches to union meetings but also spoke to workers "at political meetings in the districts where the workingmen live" and "in the factories and foundries where they toil."<sup>7</sup> For example, on October 2, 1911, they held noonday meetings in the city's lumberyards and the Union Iron Works, and on October 6, 1911, suffragists spoke at various places along the waterfront and again at the Union Iron Works.<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, the Union Iron Works was also the only workplace where a suffrage address was reported in 1896.<sup>9</sup> Other suffrage organizations also spoke to workers at their workplaces, targeting different classes of workers. Members of the Club Women's Franchise League visited commission and wholesale houses and railway offices to speak to employees there about suffrage, and the College Equal Suffrage League spoke to schoolteachers in the public schools and addressed merchants' employees during their noon hour.<sup>10</sup>

Middle-class reformist suffragists self-consciously addressed voters of racial and ethnic backgrounds different from their own. Churches were used as a space to speak to African American voters in both the 1896 and the 1911 campaigns. At least three addresses were made in 1896 in African American churches, by Naomi Anderson at the African American Baptist church on Powell Street on July 31 and

at the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, on Stockton Street, on July 30, where Susan B. Anthony also spoke on May 3.<sup>11</sup> In 1911, a large meeting was held at the Third Baptist Church, at Hyde and Clay Streets, presided over by Julia Sanborn, “well known in almost every state of the union as a missionary among the colored people.”<sup>12</sup> This use of a missionary as a speaker is expressive of the relationship between less powerful groups and suffragists, who were often middle-class reformers doing settlement and other reform work with immigrants and the poor. In the 1911 campaign, suffragists, particularly those active in the College Equal Suffrage League, also courted immigrants. Suffrage flyers were printed in Italian, French, German, Portuguese, and Chinese (Figure 5.1), and advertisements were run in all the foreign papers in San Francisco and Oakland during the last week of the campaign.<sup>13</sup> Because suffragists “found that it was impossible to get foreigners . . . to come out to . . . public meetings,” they also used other means to target immigrant populations. For example, a committee of the College Equal Suffrage League arranged to give a talk on woman suffrage to every gathering of every German association in San Francisco.<sup>14</sup> Suffragists similarly spoke to meetings of French and Italian groups. In addition, mass meetings were held in Swedish, French, and Italian to target those populations. These meetings were held in prominent locations within the immigrant neighborhoods; for example, a mass meeting addressing the Italian population was held at the Italian theater in North Beach. At these meetings most speeches were given in the native language of the immigrant population, by prominent members of their community as well as by native-born suffragists. In addition, at the Italian meetings “a vocalist gave several operatic selections” in order to please the audience’s presumed love of music. These meetings were actively announced by street speakers and through advertisements in foreign-language and neighborhood papers, on window cards in shop windows, and on flyers distributed throughout the neighborhoods.<sup>15</sup>

In both the 1896 and the 1911 campaigns, suffragists made use of both domestic spaces and public spaces, engaging each of these realms with different sets of tactics. Any targeted group, whether workers, immigrants, or the elite, was addressed both within the private spaces of their homes and the homes of their acquaintances and within the public spaces of churches, public halls, workplaces, streets, shops, and commercial amusements, although, as we’ve seen, the public realm was much more heavily engaged in 1911.

### Politics in Private Space: Engaging the Domestic

Women employed domestic space as political space for practical and ideological reasons. In addition to being inexpensive, domestic space evoked the home as the

## LISEZ — RÉFLÉCHISSEZ

Les Femmes ont le droit de  
Voter

à toutes les élections

—en—

Australie	Norvège	Ile de Man
Nouvelle Zelande	Finlande	Tasmanie

Elles votent aux élections municipales

—en—

Angleterre	Islande	Danemark
Ecosse	Canada	Suède
Pays de Galles	Natal (Afrique)	

### AUX ETATS UNIS

Les femmes votent aux élections municipales et  
scolaires dans

#### 28 ETATS

Elles ont le même droit de voter que les hommes  
dans les états suivants:

Wyoming	depuis	1870
Colorado	depuis	1893
Idaho	depuis	1896
Utah	depuis	1896
Washington	depuis	1910

## ET EN CALIFORNIE ??

En France, un projet de loi a été déposé, il y  
a deux ans environ, à la Chambre tendant à donner  
à la femme le droit de voter, comme à l'homme.  
Nous laisserons nous dépasser ici?

## Le Donne Hanno Completo Suffragio

—IN—

Australia	Norvegia	Isle of Man
Nuova Zelandia	Filanda	Tasmania

### Le Donne Hanno Suffragio Municipale

—IN—

Inghilterra	Iceland	Danimarca
Scotzia	Canada	Sweden
Wales	Natal (Sud Africa)	

NEGLI STATI UNITI  
LE DONNE VOTANO  
IN VENTOTTO STATI  
In Affari Municipali E Scolastici

Le Donne Hanno Ugual Suffragio Degli  
Uomini Negli Stati

Wyoming		
Utah		
	Colorado	
	Idaho	
	Washington	

Perché Non In California?

## Frauen Haben Eine Allgemeine Wahlstimme

—IN—

Australien	Norwegen	Insel Man
New Seeland	Finnland	Tasmania

### Frauen Haben Die Municipale Wahl

—IN—

England	Island	Dänemark
Schottland	Canada	Schweden
Wales	Natal (Süd Africa)	

IN DEN VEREINIGTEN STAATEN  
WÄHLEN FRAUEN  
IN ACHT UND ZWANZIG STAATEN  
In Municipalen und Schul Angelegenheiten

Frauen Wählen Unter Gleichen Bedingungen  
Wie Die Männer In

Wyoming		
Utah		
	Colorado	
	Idaho	
	Washington	

Varum Nicht In California ?

## As Mulheres Teem Suffragio Completo

—EM—

Australia	Noruega	Isle de Man
Nova Zelandia	Finnlandia	Tasmania

### As Mulheres Teem Suffragio Municipal

—EM—

Inglaterra	Islandia	Dinamarca
Escocia	Canada'	Suecia
Paiz de Galles	Natal	( Africa do Sul )

NOS ESTADOS UNIDOS  
AS MULHERES VOTAM  
EM VINTE E OITO ESTADOS  
Nos Negocios Municipaes e Escolares

As Mulheres Votam em Termos  
Eguaes aos Homens em

Wyoming		
Utah		
	Colorado	
	Idaho	
	Washington	

POR QUE NÃO NA CALIFORNIA?

Figure 5.1. Multilingual suffrage flyers, 1911. California suffragists targeted a number of immigrant groups, including French, Germans, Italians, and Portuguese. Courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

woman's sphere. This gave suffragists a certain latitude in how they employed domestic space, as well as making it a proper space for women to use. By engaging the home as a political space and by using the social conventions of tea parties and visits as the bases for their political activism, suffragists underlined their femininity and made their political activity seem nonthreatening.

### Domestic Space: Using Private Space for Public Purposes

Because women were associated with and had the most access to domestic space, suffragists often used this space for meetings. *Parlor meetings* is a term encountered early in the California suffrage fight. In April 1896, before the official push to organize precinct clubs, the *Call* wrote that suffrage leaders had “decided to adopt the plan of parlor suffrage meetings conducted with such success in the east. Already clubs are organized in each district.”<sup>16</sup> These parlor meetings were similar, if not identical, to precinct club meetings, and the article implied that they were organized, or at least conceived of, in relation to the political space of the district. However, the term *parlor meeting* emphasizes their hominess rather than their organization based on political maps. This term expressed a desire to conceive of these meetings as part of a private landscape of domesticity. In a parlor meeting, politics was domesticated, and suffrage meetings were imagined primarily not as part of a political network but rather as part of a social network of like-minded women.

Neighborhood suffrage-club meetings in 1896 were probably held at the houses of leading local suffragists who had enough space to accommodate a meeting. Annie Haskell referred to several of the meetings she went to in 1896 as “parlor meetings,” although she only once mentioned in whose parlor a meeting was held. That meeting was at the house of Mrs. Sargent, the prominent suffragist and wife of Senator A. A. Sargent, who had proposed a federal suffrage amendment in 1878.<sup>17</sup> Across the bay in Berkeley and Oakland, meetings were held in the private homes of precinct presidents and other activists, such as Mary (Mrs. William) Keith, the secretary of the Alameda County suffrage organization.<sup>18</sup> These parlor meetings had an important practical advantage: they did not require significant financial outlay. In contrast, men's organizations more often had access to rooms in clubs, union halls, and the offices in which members worked. This world of nondomestic, semiprivate spaces was less accessible to women, although not entirely so.<sup>19</sup> Public halls could also be rented for meetings and often were for other organizations. Because 1896 was a presidential election year, many political organizations had precinct- and district-level clubs with regular meetings. The precinct club meetings announced or reported in the three major San Francisco daily papers, the *Chronicle*, the *Call*, and the *Examiner*, were those of Republican and Democratic

clubs. When a meeting place was mentioned, it was most often “at their headquarters,” which implies that these organizations had offices of some sort at the district level, unlike the Woman Suffrage Association, which had an office only at the state or city level, and then only well after the campaign had begun. Local meetings of political parties were also held in other public halls and spaces but were never listed as meeting in private homes. Renting space in a hall for a small-scale meeting was an expense, but the decision to hold meetings in suffragists’ home parlors rather than public halls was likely a cultural and strategic choice more than a financial one.

Because a major purpose of precinct meetings was outreach to the neighborhood, holding meetings in the parlors of private homes was symbolically useful, because it marked them as occasions of friendship and sociability, as much as of political action. A meeting in a home could almost masquerade as a tea party or sociable visiting; the space of the parlor put these gatherings into the imagined realm of the domestic, even as the substance of and access to the meeting were public. Suffrage leaders recognized the importance of sociability as a way of pulling in potential converts to the suffrage cause; one of the important points of their action plan after the defeat of the amendment in 1896 was to “interest the young people in a series of entertainments, dances, contests, socials, teas, campaign songs.”<sup>20</sup> Holding smaller meetings in parlors rather than public halls also associated the suffrage movement with the home, the “proper” place for women. Anti-suffragists often based their arguments against suffrage on the idea that giving women the vote would threaten the centrality of the home for women and destroy its sanctity. Suffragists countered by describing the vote as an extension of women’s duties in the home, a way for women to protect the health and morality of their children.<sup>21</sup> The argument that motherhood provided a logical basis for public power was not limited to the suffrage movement; arguments for reform politics of all sorts, from city beautification to welfare, often displayed the image of woman as a maternal figure, housekeeper of the city, protecting her children and all children by exerting her moral power to keep the city clean, safe, and good.<sup>22</sup>

However, the term *parlor meeting* was also not without its problems in 1896, because the emphasis on domesticity embodied in the term could undermine the political seriousness of the suffragists’ endeavor. Therefore, the suffrage organization eventually downplayed that term in favor of a more gender-neutral term. After the *Call* first mentioned the formation of small clubs and referred to their meetings as “parlor meetings,”<sup>23</sup> emphasizing the feminine nature of the space where the meetings took place, later articles replaced *parlor meeting* with *precinct meeting*, emphasizing the tie between suffrage-club organization and the formal landscape of male electoral politics. This shift made 1896 suffrage-club meetings potentially part of two imagined landscapes: the landscape of domesticity and the

landscape of politics. This ambiguous imagining was highly expressive of the difficult tightrope suffragists were trying to walk. They were simultaneously demanding a formal role in the public sphere and reassuring voters that they did not desire to change women's social roles, arguing, for example, that it was precisely because they were mothers that women needed the vote.

Just as domestic spaces were used in 1896 to emphasize the femininity and propriety of suffragists, the imagery of domestic spaces was also transposed onto public spaces in order to feminize them. For example, the 1896 suffrage headquarters, in a rented downtown office directly behind the facade of the Emporium department store building, functioned similarly to a parlor. An August 18, 1896, article in the *Call*, "Suffragist 'At Homes,' New Social Feature to Be Inaugurated during the Present Week," described fortnightly evening receptions to be held in the Woman Suffrage Bureau offices for women "whose occupations at home or at work prevent[ed] their visiting the bureau during office hours." These receptions were referred to as evenings "at home," with Mary E. Hay as the "hostess par excellence." The evening receptions, and perhaps the reception of visitors during regular office hours, functioned much as visiting hours and days did for a refined lady in her parlor, and the language of polite visiting was used to refer to the Suffrage Association in much the same way as it was for a lady in the society pages. Similarly, in 1911 the Oakland Suffrage Amendment League announced weekly at-homes in their headquarters in the Albany Block, on Broadway in Oakland. The *Examiner* announced that this office would be opened with a "suffrage housewarming," elaborating, "All their friends have been cordially invited . . . and true hospitality in the shape of equality tea, will be dispensed by the receiving party."<sup>24</sup>

The 1896 suffrage headquarters was also feminized and domesticated through its decoration, which made use of the style and accoutrements of a domestic parlor, including draperies, parlor tables, throw rugs, flowers, and plants (Figure 5.2). A short note at the end of an article about the Woman Suffrage Bureau headquarters stated, "The lady managers of the bureau desire to return special thanks to the kind friends who keep the rooms fragrant and lovely by means of their generous donations of flowers."<sup>25</sup> This emphasized the "lovely" feminine quality of the office and downplayed any relation it may have borne to typical "rational" masculine office decor and function.<sup>26</sup> Flowers were similarly used to feminize meeting halls and other public spaces and were even used to decorate polling places the first time San Francisco women voted.<sup>27</sup> Not only did flowers add color and otherwise visually feminize a space; their scent similarly marked the space as feminine, masking and counterbalancing the scent of cigar smoke of traditional male politics.

In the 1911 campaign also, individual suffragists' houses were used as sites for sociable meetings, but suffragists worked to associate these meeting with the imagined spaces of politics rather than those of domesticity. They dropped the term





Figure 5.2. Woman Suffrage Bureau headquarters, 1896. The headquarters were located in an office space in the facade of the Emporium. They were feminized through the use of plants, draperies, rugs, and parlor tables, all items that furnished domestic parlors. Courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

*parlor meeting*, which emphasized the private space of the parlor, in favor of terms such as *suffrage tea* and *suffrage reception*, which described activities that sometimes took place in hotels and other nondomestic spaces. Teas and receptions remained part of a feminine realm of sociability, but a realm familiar from semi-public club and charity work and thus not necessarily tied to the domestic realm. This renaming also emphasized the political purpose of the meeting by using *suffrage* in the term, while the 1896 term *parlor meeting* was more coy about the reason for the meeting. Regular “pink teas” were also held every Wednesday and Thursday from mid-August through the October 1911 election by the Club Women’s Franchise League to win over anti-suffragists. These teas masqueraded as purely sociable occasions, to which anti-suffrage women were invited. After the guests had been “made perfectly comfortable with tea, wafers, and conversation about their babies and their cooks . . . a little suffrage [was] adroitly applied.” According to the *Chronicle*, “That the achievement [support for the suffrage cause] is finally

reached . . . is inevitable, because no woman is permitted to go until her name is enrolled as a member of the league. . . . Mrs. Johnson [a member of the Club Women's Franchise League] not only enrolls her new members, but provides against any backsliding by immediately putting them to work on their anti-neighbors by suggesting that they themselves set other dates for more pink teas."<sup>28</sup>

Some suffrage teas were described in the newspaper in purely social terms, much like the items of social news that shared the *In Woman's World* page with suffrage events in the *Call* or the "What Society Is Doing" column that ran next to the "Doings of the Women's Clubs" column, which detailed suffrage activities in the *Chronicle*.<sup>29</sup> For example, an item in the *Call* on August 22, 1911, read, "Mrs. George Wale of the Votes for Women Club, assisted by Mrs. Oscar Eckman and Miss Ruth McDonald, kept open house at her residence in the Sunset district yesterday from 1 to 4 P.M. in the interest of the suffrage movement, and received many guests."<sup>30</sup> Other teas were described in more detail, the listings of speakers and entertainments making it clear that the teas followed the format of meetings and were not merely social affairs.<sup>31</sup> However, the domestic social language of the "tea," which was more feminine and less political than a "meeting," was sufficiently dominant that it was even carried over to describe suffrage meetings outside the home, such as the weekly equality tea held in the assembly room of the Richmond branch of the Carnegie Library.<sup>32</sup> Thus, most suffrage meetings remained part of an imagined landscape of female sociability, while masculine party precinct meetings were imagined as part of a political landscape, however, one that was based in part in spaces of masculine sociability, such as the coffeehouse and the saloon.

Suffrage teas and parlor meetings were also gendered through their timing. All of the teas and meetings held in suffragists' homes in 1911 were held in the daytime, usually in the afternoon. This made them primarily accessible to women of leisure and marked them as following the class and gender norms of middle- and upper-class women's sociability. Similarly, the more public teas of the Club Women's Franchise League were held in the afternoon at the St. Francis Hotel, and those of the Women's Suffrage Party were held at ten in the morning in the party's offices.<sup>33</sup> The regular meetings of both of these groups were also held during the daytime,<sup>34</sup> making use of the domestic space and circuits of female domesticity, in contrast to the party precinct meetings and other public meetings that aimed at a mass audience, thus were usually held in the evening.

Private spaces were also mobilized in force on October 10, 1911, election day, with more than a hundred women holding open houses for the over four thousand suffrage picketers and poll watchers, serving light luncheon and tea, and providing resting rooms with "couches and easy chairs where the weary workers [could] snatch a few moments rest during their long vigil."<sup>35</sup> These accommodations in private homes were supplemented by equivalent services provided by the California

Club in its clubhouse and by the Club Women's Franchise League in rooms at the St. Francis Hotel, spaces typically open only to elite women. Here private spaces were used less as truly public spaces, equivalent to rented halls or headquarters where one might hold a meeting, and more as highly controlled semipublic spaces, equivalent to private clubs that, in both their men's and women's incarnations, used a design language of domesticity.

Domestic spaces mattered to both the 1896 and 1911 campaigns, but they were imagined in distinctly different ways in the two campaigns and were much more central in 1896. In 1896, domestic spaces were used as primary meeting places, and they were imagined as simultaneously part of a private landscape of female domesticity and part of a more public landscape of politics, with the domesticity often dominant. Although suffrage teas remained an important recruitment tool in 1911, in this later campaign domestic spaces more often functioned as auxiliary spaces; they were used as sites for meetings much less often than clubs, hotels, halls, and headquarters in downtown office buildings. When the 1911 suffragists made use of domestic spaces, they reimagined them as the equivalent of hotels and clubs, sites of elite women's sociability but tied to the organized world of women's clubs rather than the domestic world of family. In 1911, suffragists no longer felt it necessary to meet in homes in order to emphasize their propriety, in part because middle- and upper-middle-class women could inhabit many more types of public space without compromising themselves.

### Visiting for Suffrage: Door-to-Door Canvassing

Door-to-door canvassing similarly used domestic space for political speech, although with this tactic potential voters were engaged in their own homes rather than invited into the homes of suffragists. In early July 1896, the leaders of the California State Suffrage Association began a campaign to establish suffrage clubs at the precinct level throughout San Francisco and the state. By August 7, over fifty clubs had officially been established in the city.<sup>36</sup> These clubs were the first and most important step of a strategy of spatial expansion and saturation, through which suffragists hoped to reach every voter, often by means of the voters' female relations. The clubs were to function as a home base for canvassing, outreach to neighborhood women and sympathetic men, and "a system of calls, loaning and distributing literature, [and] extending invitations and meetings."<sup>37</sup>

One precinct chairwoman was Annie Haskell, who had recently moved to the Mission District from South Park. She wrote in her diary on July 23, 1896, "This p.m. I went down to the Head Quarters of the Suffragists as I agreed. They want me to represent the precinct. I didn't want to but I could hardly refuse as I am the only one they know in this precinct." As precinct chairwoman, she took on the

responsibility of single-handedly canvassing door to door throughout her district, going out for several exhausting hours every day for over three months.<sup>38</sup> When Haskell described her “suffraging,” the canvassing she did in the Mission District, she sometimes used the language of visiting. She usually referred to her suffrage work briefly, saying simply that she “went out” and “got a number of names.” However, she also wrote about suffrage canvassing as a social activity, a form of visiting, as in this diary entry from August 4, 1896: “Well, I went out again this afternoon. I only got four names, but I did not visit many hours, and I met some nice women and we talked too long I guess.” She was also frustrated by the pressure to solicit money as she canvassed, writing, “It makes me sick to think of asking for money.”<sup>39</sup> Asking for money did not harmonize with the idea of canvassing as visiting; besides that, she wrote of the Mission District, “There is no money—everyone pleads poverty.”<sup>40</sup>

Door-to-door canvassing, organized through local suffrage clubs, was also an important tool in the suffrage campaign of 1911 and was announced in an August 19 article in the *Call* titled “Campaign Carried to Voters’ Homes.” It declared, “Every man who votes in this city may expect to receive a call. If on their first call the suffragists find the man is not at home, they will ascertain the best time to catch him in and will return as often as necessary to make a personal plea for his vote.”<sup>41</sup> In this article the terminology of polite visiting, “receive a call,” was used to describe this political activity, marking it as continuous with women’s ordinary sociable visiting. Also important was the “personal” relationship between a suffragist and a voter in canvassing, which occurred in the voter’s home, making it quite different from the public address used in speeches in halls, publications, and other forms of education. Persuading voters, primarily through canvassing them in their homes, was the first and primary task of local suffrage organizations in 1911 as well as in 1896. Thus, the private space of the home, or its threshold, was used as a part of the public realm when suffragists engaged individual voters in rational discourse on the political subject of women’s rights. Women made use of their conventional association with the home and the feminine social activities of teas and visiting to activate the home as a political space, but the language they used to describe these political encounters marks them as part of an imagined landscape of domestic sociability, not a public, political realm.

### Suffrage Politics in Public Space

As women became associated with a wider range of spaces through their everyday activities, they engaged them more broadly as political spaces. While in 1896 suffragists used public space relatively cautiously, the 1911 suffragists engaged the

wider range of public spaces that they had begun to encounter more commonly in their everyday lives. In 1896, the public spaces employed by suffragists were those associated with department stores and downtown shopping, because the downtown shopping district was the first nondomestic part of the city to be feminized and was a district in which the upper-middle-class women who made up the bulk of suffragists were most at home. In 1911, suffragists employed hotels, lunchrooms and tearooms, theaters, streetcars, the streets themselves, and the parades that filled them—the spaces and activities they had made their own through everyday use. Because the 1911 suffragists were more diverse than those engaged in the 1896 campaign, not all of them engaged all of these spaces equally. Educated middle-class suffragists most aggressively used commercial public space, in keeping with their status as the primary group of consumers served by that space.

### Selling Suffrage in the Downtown Shopping District

The landscapes and districts defined by the everyday activity of errands were central to the campaigns of both 1896 and 1911. In keeping with the largely upper-middle-class leadership of the 1896 campaign, the only errand landscape actively engaged in 1896 was the downtown shopping landscape. Again in 1911, the downtown shopping landscape was a central space of political activity, engaged largely by middle- and upper-middle-class suffragists, both to speak to men and women of their own class and to address women who worked downtown, through a suffragist-run lunchroom as well as advertisements on streetcars. The suffragists of 1911, however, also used local main streets and grocery stores, which were often targeted by reformist middle-class women hoping to reach immigrant and working-class women and their voting kin.

At the beginning of the 1896 campaign, the headquarters of the California State Suffrage Association was the home of its president, Ellen Clark Sargent, at 1630 Folsom Street.<sup>42</sup> In late June it moved to the brand-new Emporium building, on Market Street (on the same block as the Society of California Pioneers, the Academy of Science, and the Metropolitan Temple), where the association held most of its large public meetings. There the association took three rooms, two to be used as offices and the third as a reception room, where members received visitors and held committee meetings.<sup>43</sup> Thus, just as the language shifted from the private “parlor meeting” to the more public “suffrage tea” in references to the meetings, the headquarters also moved from a private space to a more public space, albeit a thoroughly feminized commercial space. The choice of the Emporium building was important. The site was on a prominent block on the main street of San Francisco, in keeping with the respectability of the association, and within a building named after its major tenant, a brand-new department store,

which was the epitome of female-dominated commercial public space. With the offices located in a space dominated by a department store, these suffragists walked the line between the masculine-coded space of the office and the feminine-coded space of the store. Although these offices shared the ambience of the Emporium's feminized retail space, the only direct engagement of that retail space in 1896 consisted of "a number of artistic hand-painted placards" placed by the Emporium management "in every prominent portion of the interior of the building," inviting shoppers to visit the Woman Suffrage Bureau offices.<sup>44</sup> The suffragists stayed within the more private zone of their offices, decorated, as we have seen, to be reminiscent of a parlor, and did not venture into the store itself to win over recruits. While they made use of their proximity to feminized retail space, their headquarters was not thought of as part of the landscape of shopping. Instead, it was imagined as simultaneously part of the landscape of public politics, as a headquarters office, and of the landscape of female sociability, as a parlorlike space that held at-homes.

In 1911, in contrast, middle-class suffragists regularly engaged retail spaces, including the rebuilt Emporium, to sell suffrage tea and postcards, hand out literature, and advertise the suffrage cause. In 1911 suffragists used retail space in general in two main ways: selling, combined always with campaigning, and advertising. Throughout the 1911 campaign, suffragists served and sold "Equality Tea" in their offices, booths at fairs, and, as we've seen, even inside department stores. This tea was "prepared at their [the suffragists'] expense, packed in boxes of their design and sold at their prices at the interest of the case," and it was "talked of, sold, and drunk wherever suffragists [were] gathered together."<sup>45</sup> The Women's Suffrage Party set up a booth in the Emporium to sell and serve tea and to proselytize for the suffrage cause.<sup>46</sup> From this booth they also distributed two hundred *Votes for Women* buttons to Emporium employees.<sup>47</sup> The booth was kept running for a month, and then the sales were expanded to other San Francisco stores and throughout the state. This represents a very different relationship to the space of the department store from that of the 1896 suffragists, who perched next to it. In 1896, suffragists behaved like polite shoppers, while in 1911 suffragists acted more like salesgirls.

Tea selling and serving by the Women's Suffrage Party were expanded beyond stores and suffrage headquarters to booths at fairs throughout the state, including the Pure Food Exhibition in San Jose, the California State Fair in Sacramento, the Cherry Festival in San Leandro, and the annual Industrial Fair of the Retailers Protective Association in San Francisco.<sup>48</sup> The suffragists' sales, however, were not limited to Equality Tea. They also made money from the sale of a novel titled *An American Suffragette*, which they apparently did not sell themselves but was sold by bookstores and newsstands on behalf of the Club Women's Franchise League.<sup>49</sup> Some retailers also sold Equality Tea on behalf of the suffragists.

A more public spectacle of selling was “postal day,” held October 5, 1911, five days before the vote. On this well-advertised day suffragists, described by Selina Solomons in *How We Won the Vote in California* as “prettily costumed young saleswomen, with golden bannerettes, offering their wares,” sold postcards downtown.<sup>50</sup> A *Call* article, illustrated with a charmingly flirtatious picture, *Miss Florence Dunnuck, A Militant Suffragist* (Figure 5.3), described the activity this way: “At every street corner where traffic is busiest, at the entrance to all the big office buildings and the most patronized stores, stands will be maintained by members of the various clubs, and cards and literature will be sold to further the campaign for equal franchise in California.”<sup>51</sup> The suffragists enlisted the help of “many



Figure 5.3. *Miss Florence Dunnuck, a Militant Suffragist*. This illustration announced the selling of postcards on downtown streets. The incongruity between the label “militant suffragist” and the picture of a sweet, pretty young woman with flowers plays on the contrast between old stereotypes of suffragists and the new image of young, stylish suffragists. From *San Francisco Call*, October 5, 1911, 7.

prominent business houses,” which supported them in many ways, including providing rest stations in their stores for the “pretty girls” selling postcards. These supportive stores included Paul Elder, the White House, the Emporium, Roos Bros., and Sherman, Clay & Co.<sup>52</sup>

Suffragists also set up shop in a storefront just a few doors down from the Emporium, decorating their window with yellow placards and posters, yellow chrysanthemums, and *Votes for Women* banners. They pulled sympathizers in with the “constant distribution of leaflets on the sidewalk in front of the store, day and evening, until 9 P.M.”<sup>53</sup> With this storefront headquarters, suffragists made themselves visible and easily accessible to a wide range of the populace, including workmen and workingwomen who came in during their lunch hour and on their way home from work. The storefront headquarters functioned as a suffrage store as well as a political office, as is clear in this description of a typical headquarters visitor: “. . . the pretty High School student who gushingly asks for a button. ‘I saw a girl with one,’ she says, ‘and I thought it was a fraternity pin. It is so cute. Only five cents? Ain’t they sweet? She told me I could get them in this building. . . . I think they’re awful cute. Oh no, I don’t want to join. I just want a pin.’”<sup>54</sup>

Most dramatically, suffragists also used the windows of stores as a space for advertising, not just in San Francisco’s downtown, but also on local and district main streets throughout the San Francisco Bay area. In San Francisco, they focused particularly on the downtown, Fillmore Street, and the Mission District.<sup>55</sup> In this campaign the College Equal Suffrage League asked merchants to give a suffrage window exhibit from August 21 to 28. For that week more than fifty stores, including the City of Paris, Shreve & Co., and I. Magnin and Company, displayed yellow goods in their windows, as yellow was the color used for the suffrage campaign in the United States.<sup>56</sup> A member of the College Equal Suffrage League described the scene this way:

Shopwindows, from one end of the city to the other, blossomed in every known shade of yellow, and to point the reason for the color, copies of the prize poster, in dull olives and tan, lightened with yellow and flame, gave the campaign cry “Votes for Women.” . . . One large furniture store gave two great front windows to a beautiful autumn color scheme in browns and yellows, and one book shop put up several dozen copies of the prize poster and filled his window-shelf with copies of such books as Olive Schreiner’s “Woman and Labor,” and Miss Addams’ “Newer Ideals of Peace.” . . . The city wore the color that was soon to be the color of success.<sup>57</sup>

The decoration of windows in suffrage colors was continued periodically throughout the campaign, and on the eve of the vote, many shops hung suffrage flags in their windows.<sup>58</sup>

Contemporary advertising practices were explicitly used by California suffragists



to promote their political position. In a speech on tactics for the 1911 campaign, the Berkeley schoolteacher and suffragist Fannie McLean wrote, “The chief feature of all our campaign will have to be dignified advertising. The visible sign—Votes for Women—must appeal to the eye everywhere.”<sup>59</sup> According to the suffrage historian Ellen DuBois, California pioneered the “modern methods” of advertising within the suffrage movement.<sup>60</sup> One important advertising technique used in this campaign was the repetition of the official *Votes for Women* poster. This poster (Figure 5.4) was the result of a well-publicized competition, and the winning design was an image of an elegant woman “clad in Indian draperies, standing against the Golden Gate as a background with the setting sun forming a halo around her head.”<sup>61</sup> The youth and elegance of the female figure on this poster, described by one speaker as “the official ‘Votes for Women’ posters with the pretty girl upon them,” were important aspects of the image suffragists tried to project in the 1911 campaign.<sup>62</sup> As was reported in an article saved by McLean,

The “shrieking sisterhood” of suffragists is a thing of the past. No more shall man be compelled to defend himself against the short haired, vituperative enthusiasts of the last century. In contrast with the “old order that passeth” is the suffragette of the present day, who must be a dainty feminine creature with the prettiest of manners and clothes and a vast store of logical argument on the tip of her tongue.<sup>63</sup>

Articles and authors often remarked on the beauty and modernity of the young suffragists, who “put to ridicule that statement by some ‘anti’ that ‘the difference between a suffragette and a debutante is 20 years.’”<sup>64</sup> For example, in a *Chronicle* article, the ushers at the mass suffrage meeting at Dreamland Rink on October 5 were described as “fifty members of local suffrage organizations who . . . will refute the popular impression that the cause is only espoused by the advanced and the unbeautiful.”<sup>65</sup> Similarly, the *Examiner* wrote that the ushers at a meeting in the Scottish Rite Temple on September 29 were “a brilliant throng of beautiful women gowned in a style benefiting a gala occasion, and made a very pretty picture in itself an argument for equal suffrage it would take a mile of logic to overcome.”<sup>66</sup> This image of modernity was strengthened by the use of automobiles, movies, billboards, electric signs, and other modern inventions by the suffragists.

The repetition of the official *Votes for Women* poster, which was not only posted throughout the state but also reproduced on stickers and postcards (fifteen thousand of each) (Figure 5.5), was explicitly patterned on contemporary retail practices, as was the use of a single color. The official report of the committee on design wrote, “The psychology of advertising teaches us to repeat, with slight variations, a familiar design until the public eye is caught by the manifold repetitions of the same arresting idea.”<sup>67</sup> The prize poster, the slogan “Votes for Women,” and the color yellow were all repeated to such an extent that some suffragists eventually

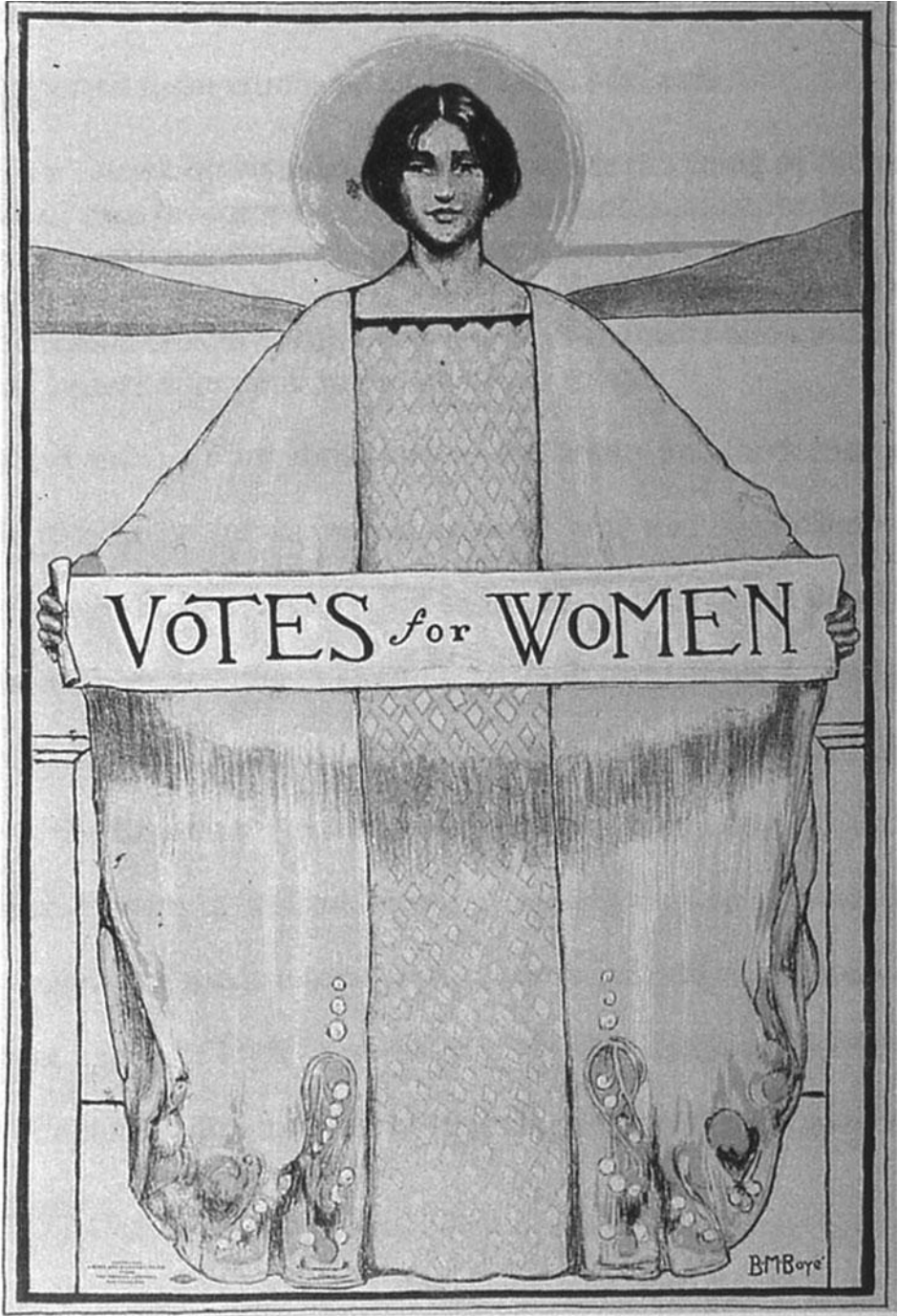


Figure 5.4. *Votes for Women*, poster by B. M. Boye. This was the winner of a poster competition sponsored by a coalition of San Francisco woman suffrage organizations and was the main image used in the campaign. It was designed in a range of shades of yellow, the suffrage color. Courtesy of The Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

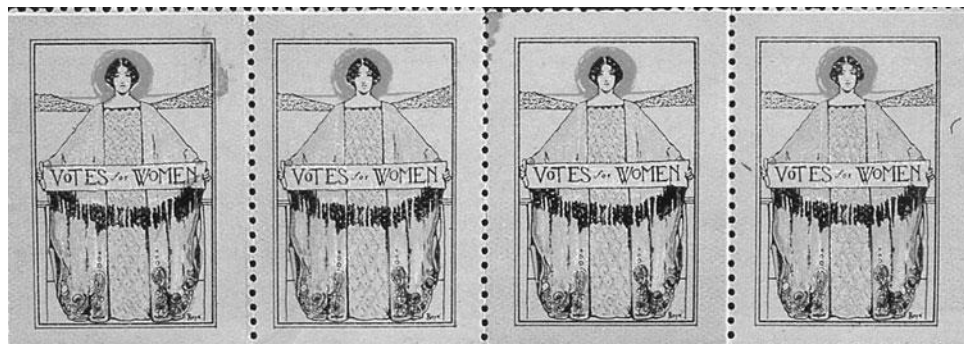


Figure 5.5. *Votes for Women* stickers. The poster was reproduced on postcards and stickers. Courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

found the color “violent and pestilential” and wished that they might have chosen “a new and prettier color.”<sup>68</sup>

Window displays as well as other forms of advertising used repetition heavily. Indeed, the major display strategy for windows of this era was patterned repetition. Model window after model window was organized entirely out of handkerchiefs, shoes, canned goods, or other commodities, arranged to create a striking visual effect (Figure 5.6). Repetition was also created through the use of a single color. Windows, interior displays, and sometimes even entire stores were often decorated in shades of a single color, creating an image that simultaneously expressed unity and harmony through color and abundance through the variety of objects and shades. The repeated use of a single color was a marketing technique particularly associated with department stores. The historian William Leach described this 1907 use of the color green at the New York store Greenhut’s: “Carpets, side walls, stool seats, and desk blotters wore different shades of green; window backgrounds were green velvet, and the store attendants dressed in green; there were green stationery, green stock boxes and wrapping paper, green string, even green ink and green ribbon for the green store typewriters.”<sup>69</sup> California suffragists adopted this single-color marketing ploy when they decided on the color yellow as a unifying motif for all material related to the state’s suffrage campaign. Other political organizations had also employed the repetition of color; the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, for instance, used a white ribbon, and British suffragists had used purple, white, and green. However, California suffragists were the first to combine a politically coded color with window displays, suggesting that they were specifically adopting the tactics of modern department store marketing.<sup>70</sup>

The use of the color yellow was questioned, however, both by people who simply did not like it and by those opposed to woman’s suffrage: “Miss Martin of the

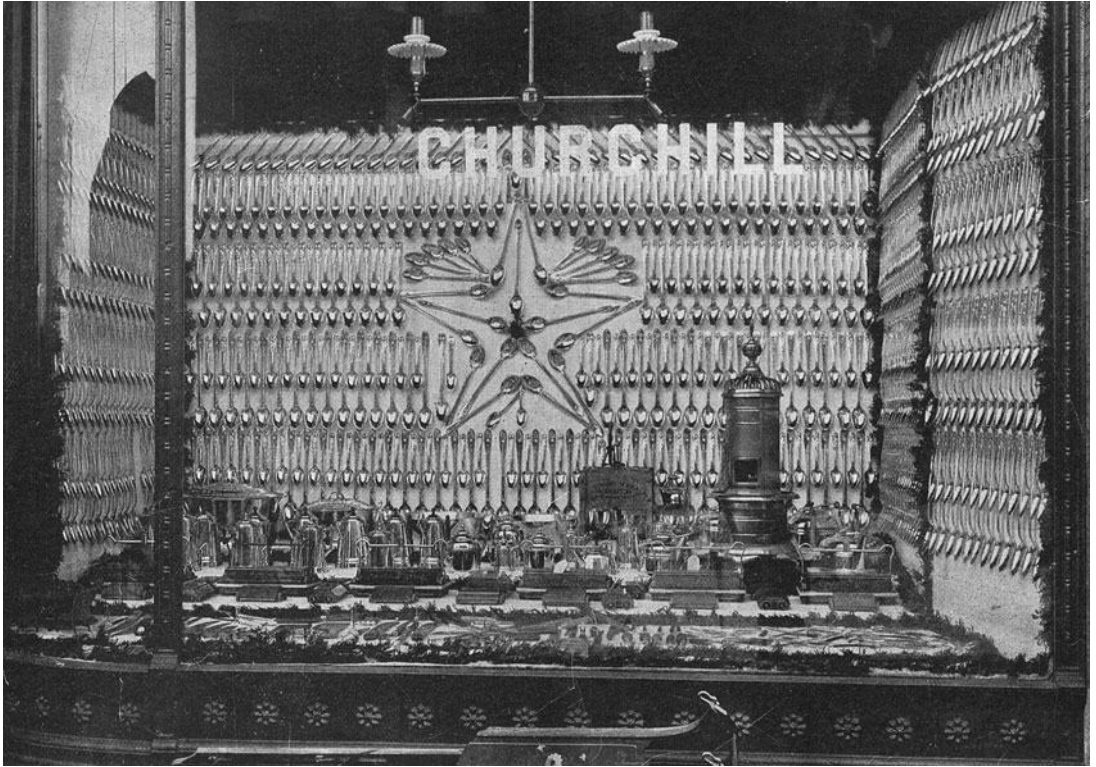


Figure 5.6. Model window displays in the early twentieth century showed effects created through the repetition of a single object. From *The Art of Decorating: Show Windows and Interiors*, 341.

anti-suffragist cause of California declared that the yellow emblems of the suffragettes indicated that they came from ‘pest houses,’ and the color indicated cowardice on the part of men who wear the yellow buttons.”<sup>71</sup> In answer, suffragists gave many arguments in its favor. Alice Park, the Palo Alto booster of yellow as a suffrage color (all her correspondence was on yellow paper, stamped “Votes for Women”), wrote about why they had chosen that color:

We knew the suffragettes in England tried to catch the eye with colors, and our yellow was easier to use than their purple, white, and green. . . . We said it was the most beautiful color in the world, and especially in the golden state; that California owed its life to the gold in the hills; that the golden poppy is the state flower; that the golden orange grows here, and golden grain.<sup>72</sup>

Yellow had also been used as a suffrage color elsewhere in the United States, first in the Kansas campaign of 1887 and, since then, in Washington State, where suffrage was won in 1910.<sup>73</sup> In California, yellow was repeated in suffrage posters, pins, sashes, banners, stickers, displays, postcards, flower packets (of yellow flowers),

and other paraphernalia. The color yellow and the official suffrage poster were the unifying symbols of suffrage in the show window campaign and throughout the entire suffrage battle. In the window campaign individual merchants chose which yellow goods to display, but the color and the poster marked the display of goods as part of a political display as well as a commercial one.

For the most part, suffragists were not themselves shop owners or managers, so they gained access to the store windows through their social connections and purchasing power. According to the official committee report on the window display campaign, the committee chairman “was a member of a family long known in the city. She started a list with the signatures of some of the most important firms in San Francisco, and each consent, of course, made the next easier to win.”<sup>74</sup> Suffragists not only encouraged the participation of store owners through personal contacts but also used the mass media. They published the names of prominent stores that participated in the campaign in the daily newspapers in advance of the display week to pressure nonparticipants to sign on. In the window display campaign and throughout the entire 1911 suffrage campaign, women used their influence as shoppers to pressure stores to support them, whether by decorating their windows in yellow, supporting the postal day by providing rest areas for suffragists, or not displaying anti-suffrage signs, for fear of a threatened boycott.<sup>75</sup> California suffragists also made use of their power as consumers to gain access to store employees. Visiting large stores and if possible speaking to young managers, whom they considered “a better risk than old ones,” suffragists convinced owners and managers to include suffrage arguments in their pay envelopes, place suffrage pamphlets on the time clock, and allow suffragists to address workers personally and distribute literature.<sup>76</sup>

In the window display campaign, suffragists took advantage of the conventional department store practice of providing space to women’s clubs and church groups for charity activities. For example, the July 4, 1903, the *Dry Goods Reporter* described a church apron sale held in a Minnesota department store. The store built and decorated a booth for the sale in a corner of the store, served coffee and lunch to the women working at the sale, and advertised the sale heavily.<sup>77</sup> This sale and similar in-store charity activities were reported in the *Dry Goods Reporter* and the *Modern Grocer* and touted for creating goodwill, extra trade, and advertising for stores. Women’s clubs’ public, though nonpolitical, use of store space set a precedent for suffrage clubs’ political use of store space. For store owners, promoting suffrage in their window displays simply continued a policy of accommodating female consumers, treating the store as the women’s club it was often described as being. It also was a way of attracting the middle-class women who were major suffrage boosters and competing with stores that did not sign on to the campaign.

The show window campaign engaged not only the downtown shopping district

but also local and district main streets, such as Mission and Fillmore Streets. Main-street shop windows were also essential in advertising meetings targeted at a local population, such as the mass meetings conducted in Italian in North Beach, advertised in part by “window cards in the local shops.”<sup>78</sup> Shop windows throughout the city were essential spaces for suffrage propaganda aimed at the specific audiences who frequented each neighborhood. Working-class women grocery shoppers were also targeted by suffragists, who stamped a suffrage message on thousands of paper bags in grocery stores.<sup>79</sup> In 1910, Brooklyn suffragists similarly printed thirty thousand paper bags with suffrage information and gave them away to grocers as a way of getting the message to “the faithful mothers, sisters and aunts who are to be found working in the kitchens.”<sup>80</sup> The Brooklyn suffragists argued that these bags were inexpensive to print, elaborating, “The class the bags will reach is exactly the class of women who have always been the despair of our workers, because they are so hard to get at; and yet they are of the bone and sinew of our land, and constitute a splendid future electorate.”<sup>81</sup> California suffragists, following the New York suffragists’ example, expanded beyond their main focus on the downtown shopping landscape and reached the women least likely to shop there by placing suffrage messages in grocery stores. Suffragists reached further consumers by “tucking pamphlets in the pockets of clothes about to be delivered by tailors.”<sup>82</sup>

### Serving Up Suffrage: Tea, Lunch, and Women’s Rights

The suffragists in 1896 may well have served tea in their offices for their evenings “at home,” but if they did, they used the model of the tea party, a private ritual of sociability, mapped onto the more public space of an office. In 1911, two suffrage organizations, the Club Women’s Franchise League and the Women’s Suffrage Party, regularly served tea in their offices. When suffragists in 1911 served tea in non-domestic spaces, rather than arranging them to mimic domestic parlors, they used the model of the commercial tearoom, a female-friendly space of consumption most often found in the polite middle-class spaces of the hotel and the department store.

The Club Women’s Franchise League had their headquarters in the St. Francis Hotel, an expensive and nationally prominent hotel located on Union Square. They served Equality Tea in their rooms on Saturday afternoons. The newspapers never described the space in which tea was served but did regularly announce the league’s “tea time.” The language used in newspapers to describe the league’s tea time walked a fine line between the domestic and the commercial. Although the rooms were never referred to as tearooms, the newspapers also never used the terms *tea party* or *a tea* (as in a social affair) to describe the serving of tea.<sup>83</sup> Thus, the club

women's serving of tea rhetorically engaged both the civilized, commercial tea taken in the polite space of a hotel tearoom and the more exclusive club social, which similarly used the spaces of the hotel for more private purposes. Not far away, the less elite Women's Suffrage Party served tea at ten every day in "a model tearoom in the club headquarters, room 125 of the Lick building."<sup>84</sup> This room was organized on the model of a commercial tearoom, and much was made of its design. One article described the interior as a typical suffrage space, elaborating, "The room will be tastefully decorated with yellow bunting, suffrage posters and bowls of flowers, which seem to have bloomed in yellow and purple for the express purpose of furthering the cause."<sup>85</sup> A later article declared that the tearoom would be decorated "in true Chinese style, with oriental decorations on the wall and far eastern tea sets on the tables."<sup>86</sup>

This design emphasized the tea over suffrage and more closely approximated commercial tearoom design. Whatever the final decorative scheme, the Women's Suffrage Party tearoom was not described as an ersatz parlor in which ladies gave teas; rather, as one newspaper attested, "The object is not so much to have a suffrage room as a tearoom that will attract visitors to taste some of the delights the suffrage party has in store for its adherents."<sup>87</sup> The commercial, as opposed to the domestic, model of the tearoom was further heightened by the presence of a table where suffragists sold different varieties of Equality Tea in half-pound, whole-pound, and five-pound boxes.<sup>88</sup> Selling tea was in keeping with a commercial tearoom space but would have been out of place in a parlor. The Club Women's Franchise League's teas most likely attracted primarily other elite club women, who would have felt comfortable partaking of the league's hospitality. In contrast, the commercial space of the Women's Suffrage Party tearoom could have attracted a larger range of respectable middle-class female patrons, including any woman who might have frequented downtown tearooms. As discussed in chapter 3, this audience could potentially extend into the lower middle class.

The more reform-minded middle-class suffragists of the Votes for Women Club used the model of another commercial space of refreshment, the cafeteria lunchroom. In order to reach out to the population of working women and make some money, they ran a lunchroom for "business women" (that is, shopgirls and office workers), serving five-cent dishes in an upstairs room at 315 Sutter Street, near the intersection with Grant Avenue and in the immediate vicinity of high-end department stores. Understood as a wholesome space, the lunchroom was furnished with unpainted yellow pine tables, naturally showing the suffrage color. According to a newspaper description of its decoration, "All sorts of enthusiastic votes for women banners make their appeal from the walls and yellow paper flowers grow on the chandeliers."<sup>89</sup> The restaurant was "not run for the girls alone, but on a sound business basis," so it served as a potential source of income for the

suffrage cause and at least paid for itself. More important, however, it served as a way to expose young working women who might never go to a suffrage meeting to suffrage ideas. Although it was run as a business, a newspaper article emphasized its hominess with its descriptions of the cook (“mothering from the gray-haired woman who prepares your lunch”), the food (“just plain home cooking”), and the cashier’s language (“‘Come again, dear,’ just as if you were visiting and did not have to hurry back to an office or store”).<sup>90</sup>

In running an eating place for working women, the suffragists of the Votes for Women Club followed a reformist example set by women in several other cities, women who opened lunchrooms to serve working girls good food in moral and healthy surroundings. Articles in the *Woman’s Journal* in the early years of the twentieth century described several women-run lunchrooms for working women in New York, Boston, and Chicago.<sup>91</sup> In these lunchrooms, which served women exclusively, meals were provided hot from a steam table at an affordable price, as in New York’s Woman’s Home Club, where “no dish is over five cents and bread, butter, and some sauces and relishes are but a penny apiece.”<sup>92</sup> The suffrage lunchroom thus followed a tradition of women’s activism and business, serving a real need and making money while also spreading the word about suffrage to a working-class population.

In public eating establishments that suffragists did not run themselves, they used other methods to make their mark. In a letter to Alice Park describing her suffrage activities, M. J. Bearby wrote, “I stamp the paper napkins in all the Ice Cream Parlors and all the Restaurants I come in contact where they will permit with no refusals.”<sup>93</sup> In this way suffrage messages were spread in restaurants and other eating places even when the suffragists were not there. Although suffragists confined their presence to tearooms and lunchrooms serving a primarily, if not exclusively, female clientele, napkins could travel more broadly, reaching men as well as women, particularly the less elite men eating in restaurants that used paper napkins. With the use of slogan-bearing paper napkins in lunchrooms that focused on working women, tearooms that served middle-class women, and restaurants that served working- and middle-class men, suffragists kept their cause visible, furthering their goal of making their slogan ubiquitous and simultaneously reinforcing their image as respectable, businesslike hostesses.

### Converting the Commuters

In 1896, the streets were not explicitly activated as a space of suffrage activity, although canvassers walking house to house must inevitably have engaged some people in debate and conversation on the street as they went on their rounds. This use of the street was incidental to the task of going to private houses and occurred



primarily within residential neighborhoods, ordinarily the neighborhood in which the canvasser resided. In 1911, in contrast, suffragists actively engaged the street as a forum for speeches. The window displays in shops and the posters in the windows of offices also marked the space of the street with the signs of suffrage. The campaign of advertising, like the selling of suffrage paraphernalia, moved beyond the space of shop windows and into the street itself. Speakers such as Mrs. Orlow Black encouraged suffragists to put up posters throughout the city (Figure 5.7): “There are a lot of fences in this city that are not working. Now, whenever you see a fence that is not working paste some of these on it . . . these official ‘Votes for Women’ posters with the pretty girl upon them.”<sup>94</sup> Larger advertisements, including billboards and a “large, permanent, electric sign” at Market Street near Fourth, “the largest business center of the city,” also addressed people on the streets.<sup>95</sup> Suffragists used four different billboards (Figure 5.8), each focusing on different sorts of women who needed the ballot. One posted at Sutter Street near Powell read, “Vote Yes on Amendment No. 8. Justice for California women. The women pay taxes. Give some say to those who pay.”<sup>96</sup> Two hundred fifty seven-by-ten-foot “great, stern, black-and-white billboards—undecorative and uncompromising,” were placed throughout the city in September and were joined by fifty twelve-by-twenty-foot billboards later in the campaign.<sup>97</sup> As Selina Solomons pointed out, the street was also full of suffrage symbols draped from cars and “carried ‘accidentally’ through the streets from one headquarters to another.” On the day of a big mass meeting, she reported, “Mrs. Mary T. Gamage carried an enormous and very beautiful silk pennant through the entire length of Fillmore Street.”<sup>98</sup>

Suffrage advertising also addressed commuters and others riding streetcars and ferries. Six hundred eleven-by-fourteen-inch placards with crisp copy, such as “Give your girl the same chance as your boy,”<sup>99</sup> were placed in streetcars for five weeks. Two to four placards were placed in each of the streetcars that ran into Market Street because of Market Street’s centrality to the city and the streetcar system. Suffragists believed that “more people who might be influenced by street-car advertising rode on these lines than on any other.”<sup>100</sup> The Market Street lines carried a high volume of riders, which made them an efficient location to place advertising. In addition, suffragists may have believed that the middle-class riders on these lines, commuting to white-collar jobs and going downtown to shop, were particularly open to being influenced by the suffrage message. Six three-by-ten-foot signs were used to catch the eye of ferry commuters, who were likely to include many middle- and upper-class residents of Berkeley and Oakland traveling to work at downtown offices. The method of placing these signs, however, was less professional than the paid advertising on streetcars. After ascertaining that it was not strictly illegal to plant signs in the bay, intrepid suffragists “made their way, in a heavy wind, to the crazy structures in the bay called ‘duck-blinds,’” and “made



Figure 5.7. Women pasting up suffrage posters. Suffrage posters were put up wherever space was available, as well as on rented billboards. From *Western Woman Voter* 1, no. 9 (September 1911): 1.

four . . . quaking signs fast.” Though they had a problem with boys who cut “the better half . . . from women” and changed one sign to read “Votes for \_\_men,” these suffragists succeeded in addressing ferry commuters traveling both to and from San Francisco.<sup>101</sup>

If ferry commuters could have ignored the signs, they would have found it harder to ignore the members of the Club Women’s Franchise League, who “applied influence, literature, and discreet conversation to the commuter as he was in the act of commuting at the ferry” on October 6 and October 9, 1911. In addressing commuters, they were careful not to speak too long, because anything that interfered with the boat schedule “might mitigate against the cause.”<sup>102</sup> With the signs, they had prepared ferry commuters for their message, although through impersonal appeals. In person, the club women could potentially be more persuasive, presenting commuting men with specific arguments for woman suffrage. More

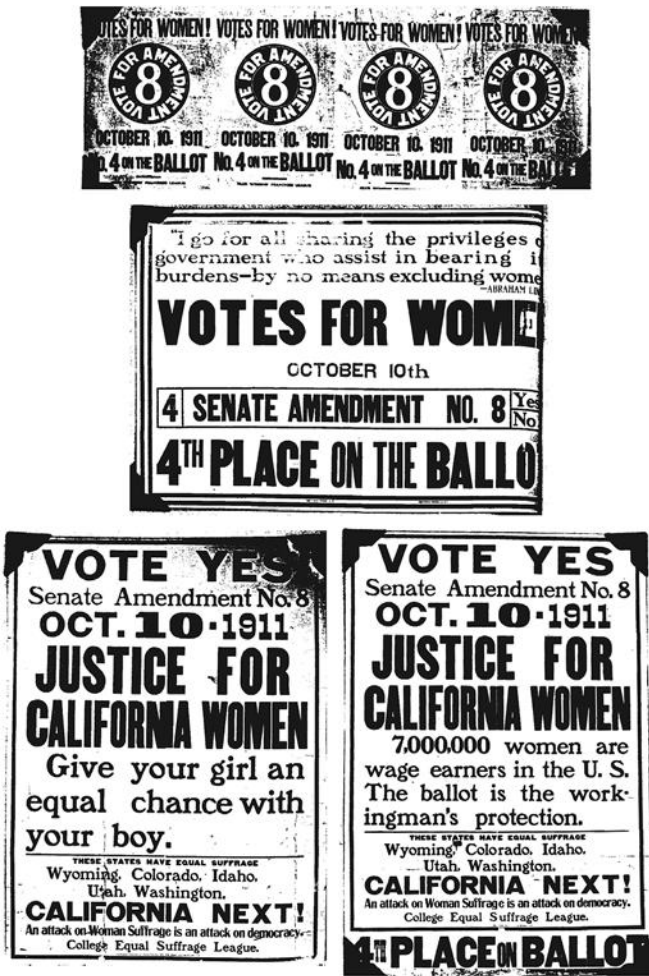


Figure 5.8. Posters on billboards, 1911. During the 1911 woman suffrage campaign, 250 large billboards were posted throughout San Francisco. Courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

significantly, they themselves acted as an argument for suffrage, showing the men commuting from suburban communities to jobs in the downtown that refined club women, much like their own wives, were supporters of woman suffrage.

### Speaking in the Streets

While in 1896 suffragists may have used smaller neighborhood streets in the course of door-to-door canvassing, the streets used in 1911 were the most prominent in town, major thoroughfares, especially Market and Mission Streets. These were the streets of shops, the natural place to advertise. They were also sites with large numbers of passersby, thus ideal for making speeches. Suffrage speeches were usually made from automobiles, which provided a physical platform from which to speak. Automobiles also allowed speakers to move from site to site in the city,

getting the word out to as many people as possible, particularly throughout the downtown and the Mission District. The most common sites for street speeches were on Mission at the corners with Twenty-third, Twentieth, and Seventeenth Streets; at Post and Fillmore; and along Market Street on the corners with Grant, Stockton, Seventh, and Fifth Streets (Figure 5.9).<sup>103</sup> These locations were also common sites of other political speech and civic displays. The activity on Grant and Market (Figure 5.10), a corner frequented by suffrage speakers, is described by Mary Austin in her 1917 novel, *The Ford*:

Close to where he stood, a bearded anarchist brandished his red banner. . . . Farther up, somebody raucously advertised the Secret of Vitality, as disclosed in the tag ends of some obsolete philosophy; and highest of all, under the flare of the street lamp, half a hundred people surrounded a soap box from which a woman's tossed head and gesticulating arms gave her the appearance of swimming in their midst. Young Brent mistook them at first sight for suffragists, until his idle glance was corrected by the betraying lack of yellow pennants.<sup>104</sup>

On this corner, suffragists were just one type among many political and religious speakers, distinguishable only through their trademark, the color yellow.

Suffragists took over the downtown public space of Union Square in the week preceding the October 10 election. On the afternoon of October 5, 1911, campaigners went into Union Square Park, “absolutely virgin soil, so far as suffrage is concerned,” and, after a disagreement with a gardener and an encounter with a policeman, who declined to be “decorated by suffragists,” “hastily procured the soap box, so popular in the suffrage campaign, and the services of Professor Edward Dupuy, and with the assistance of the crowd a meeting was evolved.”<sup>105</sup> A second takeover of Union Square, held on the eve of the October 10 election, was more impressive, involving five thousand people, at least four automobiles, multiple speakers, and the famous singer Mme Lillian Nordica. The meeting began on Stockton Street, at the east side of the park, where the audience heard Mme Nordica give a pro-suffrage speech and sing “America,” changing some of the lyrics to reflect her pro-suffrage stance, and “The Star Spangled Banner,” with the crowds singing along.<sup>106</sup> This was followed by a speech by Dr. Charles E. Aked, a prominent pro-suffrage debater, which Mme Nordica publicly approved of “by nodding her head and crying ‘Hear, hear’ when the speaker clinched the points of his argument.”<sup>107</sup> Then Mme Nordica went back to her hotel, and automobiles filled with suffrage speakers took up posts at the four corners of the square and carried on four separate open-air meetings.

The *Chronicle* announced that suffrage organizations concentrated on the street meeting: “Every evening suffrage arguments and suffrage principles may be heard without other expenditure than that of strength sufficient to stand in a crowd.”<sup>108</sup>



Figure 5.9. Suffrage street speeches. Street speeches were concentrated along Market and Mission Streets, and each dot represents a street speech mentioned in the San Francisco newspapers. The line along Mission Street denotes mention of speeches "on Mission Street" for which no intersection was named.



Figure 5.10. Intersection of Market, Grant, and O'Farrell Streets, c. 1915. This was a popular site for street speeches, including those made by suffragists in 1911. Market Street is to the right, and Grant is toward the center of this photograph. Courtesy of San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Because there was always a crowd where the street speakers located themselves, this method was successful for reaching a range of people, especially voting men, who might not have come to formal meetings. Street meetings were usually held at night, so they were accessible to working men and women. Members of the College Equal Suffrage League, who focused on reaching immigrant and working-class voters but were themselves middle- and upper-class native-born women, were the most active street speakers. In order to entertain the crowd as well as educate it, their speeches were usually interspersed with songs (many popular songs had new suffrage lyrics written to them for this purpose), and sometimes a bugle was used to draw a crowd.<sup>109</sup> Jokes were also used, as when Rose French commented when standing on a soapbox at Grant and Market that “although it was her first appearance on a soap box, it was not her maiden appearance, as she was then a grandmother.”<sup>110</sup>

Suffrage speakers usually used automobiles instead of soapboxes for outdoor suffrage speeches. They were so common that the *Call* referred to street speeches as part of the “automobile campaign,” and the photograph accompanying one article was mostly filled by a banner-draped car.<sup>111</sup> A car known as the Blue Liner, driven all over the state carrying the suffrage message, was often featured in photographs and articles, and the city automobiles may be seen as little sisters to that icon of the California suffrage campaign.<sup>112</sup> Ida Finney Mackrille, of the College Equal Suffrage League, wrote that initially conservative suffragists had opposed speaking from automobiles, saying, “It will never do. Such sensational methods will lose us votes.” She argued that, in contrast, automobile speaking was “one of the best ways of reaching the voter. The man who was not interested in suffrage,

who could not be inveigled into a hall or to an indoor meeting of any kind, would yet stop on the street corner to ‘hear what the women have to say.’” She wrote, “We had to get the attention of men, and as they would not come to us, we went to them.”<sup>113</sup> In the context of San Francisco, automobiles were used as easily portable and tall soapboxes. In contrast, in New York City, although street speaking was regularly used to attract listeners who would not attend a conventional meeting, suffragists did not use automobiles, because they were seen as “suggest[ing] class distinction” that would wound the pride of the sensitive New York street audience.<sup>114</sup> Apparently the class implications of automobiles were not seen as a problem by San Francisco suffragists, although downtown street speeches were often described as being made from soapboxes rather than cars.<sup>115</sup>

San Francisco suffragists took over the streets to the greatest extent on October 5, for postal day, discussed earlier, and on October 10, election day. On election day, between two thousand and four thousand women from across the spectrum of suffrage activists took to the streets for picket duty, handing out reminder cards to voters. Several other suffragists watched the polling itself and the counting of votes, as they had done in 1896.<sup>116</sup> This takeover of the streets was reported at length in the *Call*, which featured three pictures of very respectable looking suffragists in the street on the front page of the October 11 paper and wrote at length on women’s experience on the pickets. Similarly, the *Examiner* featured a two-page spread on suffragists active in the campaign, centered around images of them campaigning on election day. Alice Park described election day as a pageant of yellow: “Women overseers rode in automobiles with golden banners and as they neared the polls, there was always a spot of gold in sight, where a large ‘votes for women’ sign was displayed, one or more women with yellow ribbon badges, and holding yellow cards in their hands.”<sup>117</sup> On this day women were present throughout the streets, not marching or speaking from cars or soapboxes as spectacular performers, but instead handing out literature and talking logically as rational and political persons in an attempt to persuade voters (Figure 5.11). Women’s presence was described as a civilizing influence, such that “that dreadful thing called politics, raised as a phantom bugbear by the opponents of equal suffrage, subsided under the feminine touch . . . and became just a quiet, orderly election.”<sup>118</sup>

## Performing for Suffrage

The 1896 campaign used theaters and similar spaces of amusement to present fund-raising entertainments consisting of performances, usually combining a number of musical numbers and skits, which were put on purely for the purpose of making money to pay for the campaign. These entertainments were quite different from the mass meetings held in 1911, which were free and were dominated by



Figure 5.11. Suffragists stopping voters at the polls, 1911. Suffragists took to the streets in force on Election Day to convince voters to support them. From Selina Solomons Papers. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

speeches, although musical interludes were common. These suffrage entertainments were part of a general type of fund-raising entertainment regularly organized by club women for charities such as hospitals and orphanages. One 1896 suffrage entertainment was a “society concert,” held on October 6 at Metropolitan Hall, which, for the occasion, sported new decorations “which were probably the most diversified and artistic that the big hall ever saw. The stage itself had been transformed into a regular arbor of flowers, potted plants and evergreens.”<sup>119</sup> This



concert consisted primarily of classical musical numbers by a variety of performers. The other 1896 suffrage entertainment reported in the newspapers was a “professional theatrical matinee” at the Tivoli on October 22, which involved “professional talent from every theater in the city.”<sup>120</sup> This performance was at a much larger scale and was aimed at a broader audience.

Suffrage entertainments were also used as fund-raisers in 1911. Two well-publicized fund-raising entertainments were held not in a theater but in the colonial ballroom of the St. Francis Hotel. These performances, a classical concert by Nellie Widman-Blow, mezzo-soprano, on September 5, and a dramatic reading by Marion Craig-Wentworth, on September 12, were notably different from many other entertainments and suffrage meetings incorporating entertainment, because they were not organized along the lines of vaudeville, as multiple short, unrelated performances, but were instead carefully considered wholes, with a unity of type, style, and performers, similar to the Metropolitan Hall concert in 1896, although with further refinements.<sup>121</sup> The numbers in the Widman-Blow concert, for example, were not only all classical but were also “so arranged as to deal consecutively with sorrow, sentiment, love and happiness.”<sup>122</sup> This unification of style is one of the important aspects of what Lawrence Levine characterizes as “the sacralization of culture,” the tendency in the late nineteenth century to “call into question the traditional practice of mixing musical genres and presenting audiences with an eclectic feast.”<sup>123</sup> By their unity of genre and style, these suffrage performances were marked for the sophisticated, cultured elite, in keeping with their location in the St. Francis Hotel. The scheduling of the dramatic reading, on 2:30 P.M. on a Tuesday, further reinforced the message that this performance was intended for an audience of the leisure class, primarily upper- and upper-middle-class women.

A more popular event was the benefit concert by the “Australian boys” at the Valencia Theater, at Valencia and Thirteenth Streets, on the evening of Thursday, September 28, 1911. Australia had granted non-Aboriginal women the vote in 1902, so the Australian entertainers were in a position to speak of the positive effects of woman suffrage there. This concert was organized by the College Equal Suffrage League, whose efforts focused primarily on immigrant and working-class voters. The Valencia, like other theaters in the Mission District, primarily hosted vaudeville shows, attracting a lower-middle- and working-class audience. In keeping with its vaudeville setting, the night’s entertainment included a band program, athletic stunts, and several suffrage numbers, including “a quaint dance in costume,” “several novel features in which yellow balloons and flags (were) used,” and “a new suffrage song to the tune of ‘Yankee Doodle,’” with an accompaniment “hummed in chorus by the members of the Boys’ band.”<sup>124</sup> There was only one suffrage address, a ten-minute talk, with the rest of the night reserved for performances. As this was a nighttime concert and included acts to amuse everyone, the concert probably

attracted a fair share of men, unlike the entertainments in the St. Francis. The space of the theater was decorated as befits a suffrage space, “decked with flags and bunting bearing significant suffrage phrases. Yellow and purple [were] used as indicative of the movement for woman’s political rights.”<sup>125</sup> In contrast, the St. Francis was not bedecked with banners for the highbrow suffrage entertainments, although the suffrage colors were present at the Widman-Blow concert in the attire of the young girls who distributed programs there and were dressed “in white lingerie frocks and wearing aprons and ribbon bows in pretty shades of yellow and lavender.”<sup>126</sup> The Valencia Theater was one of the main venues for mass meetings as well as entertainments, although the decoration of the space was not discussed in the news coverage of meetings there. It was a large space used both as a hall for various group meetings and rallies (including those of anti-suffragists) and as a theater for theatrical performances.<sup>127</sup> Other mixed-use spaces used by the suffragists in 1911 included the Cort Theater and Dreamland Rink (also used for a big rally for the mayoral candidate James Rolph).

Suffragists in 1911 not only held rallies and sponsored entertainments in theaters but also expanded their purview, producing suffrage plays and presenting suffrage information in movie theaters. They moved beyond the conventional amateur sponsorship role of club women in relation to entertainment and became full-fledged producers of amusements. Just as suffragists expanded from merely being patrons of tearooms and lunchrooms when they decided to run eating places as businesses, woman suffragists took on a somewhat professional role in theater production. In 1911, suffragists produced several short suffrage plays in the San Francisco Bay area, including Mary Lambert’s *The Winning of Senator Jones*, performed by members of the California Writers’ Club at Golden Gate Hall in Oakland on September 22, at the First Unitarian Church in Oakland on October 3, and on at least one other occasion; Beatrice Harraden’s *Lady Geraldine’s Speech*, performed nearby in Piedmont under the direction of the College Equal Suffrage League; Selina Solomons’s *The Girl from Colorado, or The Conversion of Aunty Suffridge*, which was read publicly in the St. Francis Hotel and performed in San Francisco on October 7; and a suffrage play by Henry Kirk, produced by the Club Women’s Franchise League in San Rafael.<sup>128</sup> Although these performances are evidence of women taking on the format of popular entertainment as a way of communicating a political argument, these plays were not performed in the spaces typically used for theatrical productions. Instead, they were more similar to club theatricals.

Suffragists also made use of the ordinary genre of movies and landscape of movie theaters in their 1911 campaign. In her “campaign of education” speech, Fannie McLean emphasized movie theaters as a site for suffrage action:

The most popular educator of today is the Moving Picture. I have never seen any suffrage pictures excepting ridiculous ones that did more harm than good, but there must be some good ones—representing the parade in London, or Child Welfare slides showing what could be done for children; or the polls in Colorado, or slides with arguments for suffrage upon it.<sup>129</sup>

Also, suffrage films and slides were shown in a number of theaters throughout the San Francisco Bay area on a regular basis. In Mill Valley, “regular suffrage films . . . with all the pictures of what women [were] doing in all lines of work” were shown by members of the Club Women’s Franchise League as part of a show that also included singing and dancing.<sup>130</sup> In San Francisco, suffrage films focusing on the history and condition of women in the Americas since their discovery by Europeans were shown to a meeting of the Retailers Protective Association, and plans were made to show these same films in North Beach nickelodeons.<sup>131</sup> A film of California pictures by Marie Alice Perrin was also used as the basis for a suffrage program (including a “humorous monologue” and “five minute speeches”) in the Princess Theater on Ellis Street. This program, like ordinary film showings and unlike suffrage entertainments and meetings, was repeated more than once in the day, without any increase in the price of admission.<sup>132</sup> All of these programs were aimed at the working- and lower-middle-class audiences who frequented vaudeville theaters such as the Princess, where programs typically combined films with live performances in a variety format.

Other suffrage programs made use of the space of movie theaters and nickelodeons but did not include the showing of suffrage films. The most common suffrage activity in movie theaters was the showing of suffrage slides, often stereopticon slides. The California Equal Suffrage Association created a collection of slides and made several sets, which were distributed throughout California. Ida Finney Mackrille, who presented slides with talks in a variety of locations, including nickelodeons, a big theater, and an industrial fair, described the process of getting the slides shown:

We would go to the proprietor of a nickelodeon and make a business proposition, something like this: “If you will show our suffrage slides, in addition to your regular run, allowing an accompanying explanation by one of our speakers—in all to occupy fifteen minutes—we will advertise your show for that night through the newspapers, posters and handbills.” We were not once refused the privilege. As a matter of fact it was a favorable arrangement for the showman, for we always secured a good audience.<sup>133</sup>

Just as suffragists gained access to shopwindows in part because suffrage displays would encourage suffragists to shop at those stores, they appealed to nickelodeon owners on a purely business basis. In gaining access to nickelodeons, they were not

asking for charity but rather making a deal; their model was not club women but entrepreneurs.

In Oakland, woman suffrage slides were shown in the Orpheum, the Broadway, and the Bell theaters.<sup>134</sup> Similar slides, showing “the various pursuits, many of them manual labor, followed by women in this state,” “views of women in other countries,” “episodes in various suffrage campaigns,” and “actual pictures of many of the lower type of men who are allowed to vote,” were displayed to audiences in small towns throughout California.<sup>135</sup> Stereopticon slides were also used by the College Equal Suffrage League to entertain and inform audiences. In San Francisco, the *Call* reported that special suffrage slides designed for the California campaign, with accompanying explanation, were shown at the Sixteenth Street Theater at Mission and Howard.<sup>136</sup> At the nickelodeon at Nineteenth Avenue and H Street, weekly suffrage addresses were made by members of the California Equal Suffrage Association, and every night a suffrage number was included in the musical selections.<sup>137</sup>

Another popular theatrical form, vaudeville, was also used by woman suffragists. A vaudeville troupe traveled the state in a touring car that held themselves, their sets, and suffrage flyers, persuading voters “not only by the usual song and speech, but by song and dance as well.” The *Chronicle* deprecatingly wrote of the process as “taking the message to those voters who prefer it sugar-coated with vaudeville.”<sup>138</sup> In San Francisco, at the Princess Theater, a suffrage monologue by Marie Alice Perrin was made part of the vaudeville program on September 2, 1911. “It has been particularly emphasized that Miss Perrin’s contribution to the entertainment will not be a lecture, but a monologue, and will have all of the characteristics of the vaudeville stage.” Not only would the monologue be properly entertaining, but it was also expected to draw a large audience.<sup>139</sup> This extensive use of the space of movie and vaudeville theaters demonstrated a desire to reach a broad range of the populace. In particular, it showed an intent to engage working- and lower-middle-class voters, especially those who were not interested in politics and might not otherwise encounter suffrage arguments. Movie theaters also quickly became a feminized space, in which both young single women and married women could enjoy themselves and to which a large number of women could afford to go without being treated by a man.<sup>140</sup> Suffragists in 1911 made use of this female-appropriate space by producing and showing slides and films and presenting accompanying talks. They were not spectators but producers and performers.

### Joining in the Parade

While there were no suffrage parades in San Francisco (although one was held in Oakland in 1908), the Wage Earners’ Suffrage League and the College Equal Suffrage Association, with the assistance of other suffrage associations, entered a

float in the Labor Day parade, on September 4, 1911, engaging Market Street in yet another way (Figure 5.12). The float, which was featured in a large photograph in the *Call*, included many examples of California womanhood.

In the front sat Miss Maud Younger, a prominent exponent of the equal suffrage cause, beneath a banner with the words “Justice for Women.” The figure of Justice was shown in the act of handing the ballot to California. On one side stood a trained nurse, on the other a college woman in cap and gown, while the working women were represented by a stenographer at her typewriter, a saleswoman at the ribbon counter, a factory girl at a sewing machine and another in the act of pasting labels on fruit cans.<sup>141</sup>



Figure 5.12. Suffrage float in Labor Day parade, 1911. The float featured the figures of Justice and California, as well as women workers from representative professions and trades. From *San Francisco Call*, September 5, 1911, 2.

The float was cheered by the crowd and received an honorable mention from the judges. At the end of the parade, in response to a crowd “cheering and clamoring for flowers and bits of ribbon, calling ‘Speech! Speech!’” several suffragists spoke in front of the Ferry Building on the importance of suffrage to working women.<sup>142</sup>

The decision to participate in the Labor Day parade in San Francisco was highly symbolic. Not only were laborers an important targeted segment of the voting populace, but in addition a major argument in this campaign was that women workers needed the vote in order to have better control over their work and the use of their taxes. Rather than participating as a few honored guests or members of a women’s auxiliary, women workers were, in the Labor Day parade, claiming their status as full-fledged workers. In other towns and cities, suffragists also participated in parades, but these parades were purely celebratory and did not have the political significance of the Labor Day parade. In San Francisco, a highly unionized city, the Labor Day parade was an event of great importance, taking over the symbolic heart of the city with an extensive display of the presence of unionized workers.

## Gendered Landscapes and the Public Sphere

In the California woman suffrage campaign of 1911, suffragists reshaped the public spaces of their everyday lives into spaces of political speech. They expanded their activities well beyond the private spaces that were so central to the 1896 campaign, following the changes in their daily use of space and in their association with the public realm as well as the private sphere. In this campaign, women took on new roles, often employing spaces that they had access to because of their everyday activities. Employing their power as consumers and adopting the advertising methods targeted at them, they advertised and sold suffrage through the stores and windows of the downtown shopping district, local and district main streets, and grocery stores. In selling suffrage, they engaged familiar spaces of consumption but radically shifted their roles within those spaces. They marked the streets and streetcars of the city with their message through posters and billboards, becoming advertisers rather than remaining the objects of advertising. They employed their authority as reformist middle-class women to give speeches on the main streets of the city, going where the voters were rather than waiting for the voters to come to them. To gain more sympathizers among women, including those of the working class, as well as to make money for the cause, they sold tea to middle-class shoppers and hot lunches to working girls. They produced suffrage plays and showed slides in nickelodeons, reaching a broad sweep of the populace by once again going where the voters were, including immigrant and working-class

women and men in general. They paraded with other workers in the Labor Day parade, taking part in a shared spectacle while marking their inclusion in the public spheres of work and politics.

In many of these political activities, suffragists utilized spaces they had made their own through everyday use, as consumers and workers. Only because these spaces had first become part of women's everyday lives, and people were used to seeing them there, were suffragists successful in their efforts to refashion them as political spaces. In using these spaces for political purposes, however, women radically reshaped their relationship to them. Rather than being shoppers, middle-class suffragists sold suffrage; rather than watching movies, they acted as theatrical producers. Women's increased everyday use of public space from 1890 to 1911 paved the way for the dramatic expansion of tactics in the 1911 suffrage campaign. The landscape of downtown shopping, the first public zone to be feminized, was engaged by both the 1896 and the 1911 suffragists, although more cautiously in 1896. Cafeterias, theaters, public transportation, and the streets of the downtown were engaged in 1911, a point at which these spaces had become an unquestioned part of women's everyday lives.

Just as the public commercial realm opened to a wide range of women—those served by restaurants and high-end theaters as well as those who frequented cafeterias and nickelodeons—the suffrage campaign also embraced women from a range of classes and ethnicities, both as activists and as recruits. However, the roles of different women within the campaign were not equal. Ethnic and working women spoke to men and women like themselves and, thus, remained largely in the neighborhoods and workspaces of their everyday lives, although significantly changing the kinds of activities they engaged in there. While middle-class women used their status as consumers to expand their roles (as when they produced advertising and theatrical performances), working women used their status as workers to give them the right to speak to working men and women throughout the city. Middle-class women also used their class position and the norms of charitable and reform activity to enter spaces outside their daily circuits and speak to people unlike themselves. While both the daily lives and the political activities of working-class and ethnic women were constrained by neighborhood affiliation, middle-class suffragists claimed the whole city and everyone within it as their political domain.

Suffragists in 1911 learned the techniques of selling and other aspects of business both as consumers and as workers, and they employed these techniques in selling their political opinions to others, much as shop owners and manufacturers had sold hats and baking soda to them. Women's everyday use of public space enabled them to employ space for their own ends. Without having encountered public spaces in the multiple everyday ways that have been chronicled in this book,

women would not have had the access to space and control over it that were central aspects of the suffrage campaign. Equally essential, women's everyday use of public space helped them imagine themselves as part of the public sphere, for they, like men, had a sense of ownership in the city and its symbolic center. Women's presence in public also made it easier for male voters to imagine them as a constituent part of the public. Thus, built space and women's actions within it were central to their full participation in the public sphere.



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# EPILOGUE

## EVERYDAY LANDSCAPES

THIS BOOK ARGUES FOR A COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP between gender ideology and the built environment, a relationship that positions the modern downtown created in American cities like San Francisco at the turn of the century as central to changing attitudes about the lives of women. The built environment of San Francisco's downtown neither directly reflected changing gender ideologies nor created them. Instead, the built and imagined landscapes of the downtown interacted with each other, often harmonizing and at other times conflicting, creating gaps that women negotiated in their everyday use of the downtown. In the 1880s, at the beginning of the story told in this book, only a few discrete public spaces within the city were imagined as female-dominated or female-appropriate: dry goods stores; other shops catering to women; ladies' dining rooms in hotels; respectable theaters but during matinees only; and streetcars at very particular times of day. In only one generation, the gendered nature of the downtown landscape transformed radically. By the 1910s the larger downtown landscape surrounding the old islands of femininity, as well as many new businesses, were seen as female-appropriate. This was a dramatic change in how the gendered landscape of the city was imagined, a change created through the actions of many individuals, including women who made use of downtown spaces and business owners

who tried out new architectural and business forms to accommodate women without compromising their virtue. Change happened incrementally, as a result of the constant feedback among imagined, experienced, and built landscapes, powered by women's everyday experiences.

Downtown shopping was arguably the vanguard of this change, as middle- and upper-class women ventured into the just-emerging downtown to shop at elaborate dry goods shops and department stores in mid- to late-nineteenth-century cities. These stores created a foothold for women in the new specialized American downtown, initiating the process through which women made large elements of the downtown theirs, whether as elite shoppers or as shop clerks. Most directly, the presence of women in downtown shops necessitated their presence on the streets and on public transportation, turning streetcars into a mixed-gender as well as a mixed-class realm. By the early twentieth century, the presence of women on the streetcars was so normalized as to obviate the need for men to pay them special courtesy. Their presence downtown in shops also led to their presence other places downtown, in tearooms and eventually cafeterias and restaurants for refreshment, and in stage theaters and movie theaters for amusement. As the streets of the downtown became increasingly feminine territory, women could also use them as participants in public celebrations and as suffragists arguing for women's right to vote. Women also increasingly became part of the downtown when they were not shopping, such as when working in the shops, restaurants, and other businesses that served women, as well as working in clerical jobs in male-dominated offices. Beyond the downtown, similar transformations were taking place in other public spaces as women, including poorer and non-Anglo women, shopped, ate, and went to amusements on local and district main streets.

While the activities of shopping, eating out, and entertainment took women of all sorts out of their homes and into public space, the spaces they made their own and the nature of their interactions there were quite different depending on their class and ethnicity. Elite women's money and status allowed them to negotiate the built landscape more easily, so their experiences more closely matched the imagined gendered ideal. For example, upper-class, American-born, white women's shopping, eating, and entertainment activities all converged on areas of the downtown off Market Street, areas they visited frequently and with a great sense of ownership. Many of the spaces they frequented were single-gender, and others, such as theaters and downtown cafés, were sorted by class. When they ventured into mixed-gender and mixed-class spaces, in visits to bohemian restaurants, for example, their class position allowed them to remain unsullied. The task of making experience match up with the ideal was more difficult for less elite women, such as Annie Haskell. The stores she could afford to shop in downtown were on heterogeneous Market Street, mixed in with stores serving men; the restaurants

she patronized served a mixed clientele, so she had to be vigilant if she wished to be perceived as respectable; and her experience of public transportation required her to loiter on the streets.

In each of the landscapes described in this book, women of different class and ethnic positions constructed their imagined relationships to the city as a whole. Elite women's experiences continually reinforced their sense that the city, and particularly its downtown, was theirs. Their money bought them service and access; downtown shops, theaters, and restaurants existed to serve them. While other women also used the downtown, their experiences in the same spaces were radically different, often placing them at the margins of institutions that focused on the well-to-do, such as the basement sales in department stores and the upper balconies of downtown theaters. For Annie Haskell, who was often short on money in spite of her middle-class education and marriage, negotiating the city was a process of constant friction. When shopping sales and discount stores, she was frustrated with the quality of goods and with the nature of her interactions with shop clerks. Sitting in the balcony of theaters, she found it hard to see and hear properly. Although she disliked cafeterias, she ate in them because they were the only respectable downtown restaurants she could afford. Taking the streetcars to navigate the city, she was frustrated by long waits and the lack of seats. While she certainly knew her way around the downtown as well as she did her local neighborhood, any interaction with the city was one of negotiation; she was of the city but never comfortable with it. Working-class and ethnic women may have been more comfortable in their immediate neighborhoods than Annie Haskell ever seemed anywhere, because their daily grocery shopping and occasional visits to local restaurants could be transacted with people who were much like themselves and spoke their native languages. However, the downtown, as well as the sense of being a citizen of San Francisco as a whole, was largely closed to them; they might sometimes window-shop and go to an occasional basement sale, but ethnic women were unwelcome downtown, not only as shoppers, but also as workers because of their accented English.

All women's use of public space expanded from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. All the streets and public spaces of the city became increasingly feminized, and the downtown particularly so. This change in the gendered meaning of the downtown was especially important, as Market Street was the symbolic heart of the city. Parades and other public celebrations, in which women were increasingly visible participants, continually reinscribed Market Street as the center of San Francisco. Women's regular daily presence in the downtown and their visible presence in these rituals of communal identity helped to place them symbolically into the body politic. As chapter 5 shows, woman suffragists took advantage of the shifting gender meanings of the downtown and other public spaces of the city in their 1911 campaign. They capitalized on women's increased presence in and cultural

ownership of the symbolic center of the city by making the downtown the locus of much of their campaigning. They also employed all the public spaces women had claimed through everyday use, from department stores to cafeterias and nickelodeons and especially the street, as political space where they could legitimately argue for their rights. Because of the dramatic change in women's everyday use of this wide range of public spaces, these spaces were newly imagined as feminine or at least as places where women had a legitimate reason to be seen and heard.

This story of the change in women's public landscapes in one American city has significance well beyond its particular geographical and historical context. The social processes and urban patterns that characterize the story of San Francisco, as told here, are typical of cities throughout the United States in this time period. Other cities similarly experienced an expansion of businesses catering to women within their increasingly specialized downtowns and women's expanded use of public space both downtown and on local and district main streets. Tea-rooms, lunchrooms, cafeterias, nickelodeons and movie theaters, and the other institutions described here were built in cities throughout the United States at approximately the same time to serve their female populations. Thus, this study of San Francisco can help us understand American women's uses of cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and particularly the consequences of these experiences for American cities as a whole.

This study also casts light on the important interrelationship between everyday use and the shape of our social landscape and built environment. It proposes a spatially focused mode of social inquiry that can help us better understand the cities we live in, not just historically, but in the present as well. By exploring the relationship between how spaces are produced and experienced and by positing that both of these processes are expressive of as well as constitutive of their culture and society, we can gain new insight and ask new questions. For example, given what I have argued here about the relationship between downtown shopping and women's public lives, how can we make sense of the changes that have happened in the shopping landscape since? How might this mode of inquiry help us explore the larger cultural motives for and consequences of the move to car-oriented shopping malls in the 1950s and beyond? How might we understand the more recent expansion of shopping malls within the downtown? Beyond the realm of shopping, how might exploring the distinctions among the populations of different classes, races, ethnicities, and genders in their everyday experiences of urban space help us understand the form of our cities, both now and in the past? What are the potential consequences of these experiences for how people imagine themselves as urban citizens? Paying attention to the patterns of urban life as manifested in and shaped by the form of cities will enrich our understanding of how cities work and what meanings they hold for all of their inhabitants.