

Tour #10, Civic Center, the *Other* Edge of the Tenderloin, and Polk Street



This may not be a tour to take after dark. There are a lot of street people around the Civic Center and you will be skirting the edge of the Tenderloin.

Although a lot of ground is covered in this tour, MUNI busses can shorten the walking distance and travel time.

The introduction to Tour #9, SOMA (South of Market) shared a bit about the LGTB history connected with SOMA. It mentioned that eventually the LGBT community spread to other sections of the City including Polk Street (also known as Polk Gulch). Follow this link to a brief article that appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle regarding the roles the Tenderloin and Polk played in that history: [LGBT – Tenderloin/Polk](#).

In 2005, an article appeared in the Chronicle about the gentrification of Polk Street and the controversy the process is still generating: [Polk Gulch Cleanup Angers Some](#).

Drew Bourn, a San Franciscan historian, has provided additional links about the history of the Tenderloin and Polk Street. The first is Joey Plaster's oral history project: [Polk Street: Lives in Transition](#). The following is from an email Drew sent me regarding the Tenderloin and Polk Street: "In terms of the Tenderloin, there are a number of projects that address its history (though not necessarily with a queer focus); these include: Mark Ellinger's photo-documentary project, [Up From the Deep](#), Peter Fields' [walking tour](#) of Tenderloin history, and Mona Caron's mural, [Windows Into the Tenderloin](#). Susan Stryker's documentary [Screaming Queens](#) portrays the 1966 riot at a Tenderloin diner at which drag queens and transgendered women responded to police aggression." For more on San Francisco's history, follow Drew's blog: [Using San Francisco History](#).

Although the length of this tour is almost 2 ½ miles, this is a fairly short tour in terms of time needed to complete it for two reasons. First, there aren't many locations

mentioned in the books located in this part of the City. Second, at least more than a half mile of walking distance is eliminated by taking a MUNI bus.

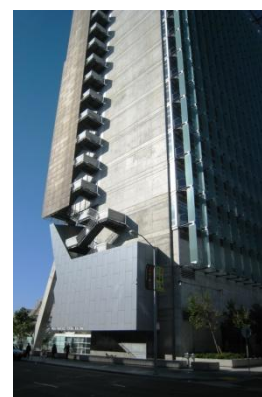
Link to the Google map for this tour: [Tour #10 – Civic Center, the Other Edge of the Tenderloin, and Polk Street](#).

The start of this tour is the Civic Center MUNI/BART station. Use the Market and 7th Street exit when emerging from the station. This places you on Market near 7th. Walk the short distance to 7th Street (toward the Ferry building in the distance). Turn right (south) on the 7th.

San Francisco Federal Building, 70 7th Street (between Stevenson and Mission)

This was the location of the Greyhound bus depot in 1977 at the time of *More Tales of the City*.

After driving Mary Ann and Michael to SFO to start their cruise vacation, Mona slipped into a “cosmic funk”. She needed a change of scenery. She purchased a bus ticket to Reno at the Greyhound station and then went to Union Square until it was time for her to return the bus terminal.



In the “More Tales of the City” mini-series, Mona dropped off Mary Ann and Michael at Pier 29 for the start of their cruise (see Tour #4, *Telegraph Hill and Back for Fisherman’s Wharf*). She then went directly to Union Square. She started to light up a doobie when she was approached by Connie Bradshaw, who by that time had become a Scientologist. Connie started her Scientology spiel when she suddenly realized she had met Mona the previous Christmas Eve at a home on Russian Hill. Mona then left Union Square and headed to the bus terminal. In the book, *More Tales of the City*, Mona did *not* bump into Connie at Union Square.

Back to the book version: upon her return to the Greyhound Depot...

...Mona was eating a cheese sandwich, when a garishly painted crone - eighty if a day - tried to make conversation with her in the snack bar.

“Where you headin’, dolly?”

“Reno.” She said quietly.

“One stop after me. You takin’ the midnight bus?”

Mona nodded, wondering if the angel dust had made this woman more grotesque than she really was.

“How ‘bout sitting with me, then? I get real nervous on the bus, what with the perverts and all?”

“Well, I’m not sure I’d be much -”

“I won’t bother you none. I won’t say nothin’ unless you want me to.”

Something about that touched Mona. “Sure,” she said finally. “It’s a deal.”

The old woman grinned. “What’s your name, dolly?”

“Mo..Judy.”

“Mine’s Mother Mucca.”

(Tales of the City/28 Barbary Lane, pp. 284-5)

The next time you watch this scene in “More Tales of the City”, look closely as Mother Mucca (Jackie Burroughs) drops her lit cigarette beneath her bench and then proceeds to extinguish the burning cigarette by smashing it with her foot...and her foot never once coming in contact with and extinguishing the smoldering cigarette. Here is a clip of the scene from [YouTube/More Tales of the City](#); the scene begins about 02:30.

The San Francisco Federal Building won a Design Award from the San Francisco Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 2008 because of the building’s open spaces and environmentally friendly design. The Federal employees who work in the building occasionally need to be reminded of the appropriateness of the award. They complain about its design. They are reportedly forced to open windows to relieve the heat inside the building which sends papers flying out the windows.

Your Federal tax dollars at work.

Retrace your steps back to Market and then cross over Market to the UN Plaza. Walk southwest (away from the Ferry Building) along Market to where Hyde and Grove intersect with Market. Cross over the intersection and you will be in an open area that contains an entrance to the Civic Center MUNI/BART Station in front of a Burger King.

After meeting a homeless woman named Leia, Shawna Hawkins felt she had a connection with her and sought out Leia for several days (Mary Ann in Autumn). This intersection is close to where Shawna eventually caught up to Leia.

Burger King, 1200 Market (at Hyde and Grove)



Earlier the same day that Shawna and her (sort of) boyfriend Otto found Leia, Otto had worked the crowd at a matinee performance at the Opera Hall (below in this tour). Afterward, he came here for a bite to eat. Otto had seen Leia that day sleeping in a box in the neighborhood.

The San Francisco Public Library, 100 Larkin St

Shawna and Otto walked past the Library toward the Tenderloin as they searched for Leia.

I spent many hours in the Library doing research for the Tours – particularly on the 5th floor – consulting old phone books, Polk Directories, and so on.



The San Francisco Public Library selected *Tales of the City* for the 2014 One City, One Book. There were citywide activities related to Tales of the City during the months of September and October 2014.

The Orpheum Theater, 1192 Market (at Hyde)

The theater is on the edge of the general area where Shawna and Otto eventually found Leia (*Mary Ann in Autumn*). In the book, Armistead Maupin partially traced the route they took from the Civic Center into the heart of the Tenderloin.



Shawna and Otto parked on Grove but further east, not far from City Hall. They passed the organic garden that then Mayor Galvin Newsom had installed in front of City Hall. They walked down Grove past the Library and entered the Tenderloin where they found the box in which Leia was living. They were just down the street from the Orpheum Theater which was “reassuringly armored in neon...” (*Mary Ann in Autumn*).

They found Leia in an alley named Cossack just off of Hyde Street. There is no alley just off of Hyde named Cossack (or any other name that sounds like Cossack).

Continue walking southwest (away from the Ferry Building) on Market toward Van Ness. Cross Larkin and Hayes. The complex of buildings on this block is Fox Plaza.

Fox Plaza, 1390 Market (the block along Market between Hayes/Larkin and Polk/Fell)

This was the location of the Associated Press' San Francisco Bureau in the 1970's during the time of *More Tales of the City*. The AP's office was located on the 3rd floor. Burke Andrew worked there for three or four months when he first arrived in San Francisco three years before meeting Mary Ann on the cruise ship to Mexico. Once Mary Ann learned that Burke had worked at the AP office, she went there to try to learn more about his mysterious past. She met with Jack Lederer, who knew and had worked with Burke during Burke's brief employment at the AP.



Mary Ann didn't learn much about Burke's past. But she did learn the meaning of the word *transubstantiation*.

Armistead Maupin worked at the AP's San Francisco Bureau office when he moved to San Francisco in 1971. The AP's San Francisco Bureau is now located on 2nd Street, south of Market.

San Francisco's historic Fox Theater was once located on this spot. It was demolished in 1963 and the current 29-story building was erected in 1966.

The theater had been demolished about five years before Mary Ann's arrival in San Francisco, but Michael had told her of its loveliness, its rococo majesty which conformed so gracefully to the needs of human beings.

(More Tales of the City/28 Barbary Lane, p. 449)

Continue down Market to Polk. Turn right on Polk and walk two blocks to Grove.

It is around here on Grove (near City Hall) that Otto and Shawna parked their car the night they searched for and found Leia.

Turn left on Grove and walk one block west to Van Ness. Cross Van Ness to the southwest corner of the intersection. (Unless you have good hospitalization insurance, cross with the lights and stay in the crosswalks.)

San Francisco Symphony/Davies Hall, 201 Van Ness Ave



One afternoon, Anna told her roommate, Jake Greenleaf, that she and their upstairs neighbors, Selina and Marguerite, had plans to see Michael Tilson Thomas conduct the San Francisco Symphony. After minor chores around the apartment, Jake sat and watched two hours of soccer on TV when the doorbell rang. It was Jonah Flake, the Mormon missionary that Jake recently ditched in disgust at Forbes Island (see Tour #4, *Telegraph Hill and Back to Fisherman's Wharf*). The day ended with Jake giving Jonah "touch therapy" to reduce Jonah's unclean urges. *Touch Therapy*??? For those of you with inquiring minds: *Mary Ann in Autumn*, pp. 150 – 158.

Now cross Grove to the northwest corner of the intersection.

San Francisco War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness (northwest corner of Van Ness and Grove)

Jon had season tickets to the San Francisco Opera (*Tales of the City*). One night Michael showed up at Mary Ann's door dressed as the "Great God Pan" for a party at a plant store on the corner of Hyde and Green (see, Tour #1, *In the Beginning: Aquatic Park and Russian Hill*). Jon couldn't accompany Michael to the party because it was opening night at the opera.



The Halcyons and Days not only had season tickets for the Opera, they also had a box (*Tales of the City*). In fact, Peter Cipriani remarked the DeDe had a nice box...*at the Opera*. One night at the Opera during intermission, Peter suggested to Beauchamp that the two of them split and go to the Club Baths (see Tour #9, *SOMA*).

In *Tales of the City*, the Halcyon-Days attended the Opera for the *Marriage of Figaro*. They also watched the *Marriage of Figaro* in the "Tales of the City" mini-series as well.

In the film, the role of the Countess Rosina Almaviva is played by Vicki Preston Brown who sang the aria "Dove Sono I Bei Momenti". The Countess is singing to her husband, the Count Almaviva, who is a scheming, unfaithful bully.

Dove sono i bei momenti	Where are the lovely moments
Di dolcezza e di piacer?	Of sweetness and pleasure?
Dove andaro i giuramenti	Where have the promises gone
Di quel labbro menzogner?	That came from those lying lips?

As the Countess sang the last two lines, she looked up at the Halcyon's box. It was if she was singing to Beauchamp and Edgar. The scene from [Tales of the City, Episode 1](#); the scene starts at about 00:30:15).

In 1975, Armistead Maupin went to work at the Opera. This was after "The Serial" ended in "The Pacific Sun" (see Tour #11, Union/cow hollow for more detail). He hated opera. Still does. He wrote a column for the Opera called "The Prompter's Box" for a local magazine. He mined his experience there for the development of the A Gay characters in his stories.

Cross Van Ness to the northeast corner of the intersection. Turn left and walk north along the west side of City Hall a few steps. Turn right and enter the west entrance of City Hall.

San Francisco City Hall

While you're here, take a few moments to walk through this beautiful building. City Hall offers free group tours conducted periodically during the day Monday through Friday.

The construction of City Hall was completed in 1915. It replaced the City Hall that was completely destroyed in the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire. The building is situated on two square city blocks – about 5 ½ acres. Its dome is higher than the United States Capitol. It is the 5th largest dome in the world.



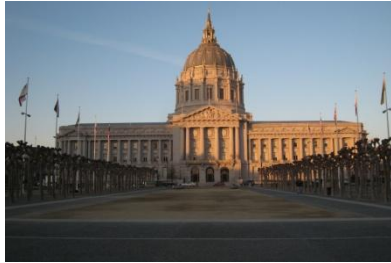
This is where Mayor Moscone and Harvey Milk were assassinated by Dan White in 1978.

In February 2004, newly elected Mayor Gavin Newsom defied state law by permitting same-sex marriages in the San Francisco. He even presided over some of the weddings that took place at City Hall. Some 4,000 same-sex couples were married in the display of civil disobedience. Michael and Ben were one of those couples married at City Hall (*Michael Tolliver Lives*). In August of 2004, the California Supreme Court annulled the marriages.

Finally, a bit more about City Hall: Arthur Brown, the principal architect for City Hall, also designed other well known edifices in San Francisco including the San Francisco War Memorial Opera House (which you just visited), the War Memorial Veteran's Building which is immediately south and across Grove Street from the Opera, and Coit Tower. [Official City Hall website](#).

Walk through City Hall and exit the East Entrance. Look directly across Polk Street at the Joseph L. Alioto Performing Arts Plaza.

Joseph L. Alioto Performing Arts Plaza, the long, tree lined plaza facing the east entrance to City Hall contained within the larger Civic Center Plaza



In 2008, then San Francisco Mayor, Gavin Newsom, gave Slow Food, a non-profit group, permission to grow a “victory garden” to show the City’s support to sustainable agriculture.

After parking their car on Grove Street not far from City Hall, Shawna and Otto passed the victory garden as they walked east through the Civic Center area toward the Tenderloin in their search for Leia (*Mary Ann in Autumn*).

After you reach the bottom of the east steps of City Hall, turn right on Polk Street. Walk about 2 blocks to Golden Gate Avenue. Turn left and walk west a short distance down Golden Gate Ave.

Empire Room, 555 Golden Gate

This was the former location of Stars – one of the places to be and be seen in San Francisco during the 80s and 90s. It was a favorite haunt for celebrities and socialites. It closed in 1999.

In Sure of You, Burke returned to San Francisco to woo Mary Ann into moving to New York to host a nationally syndicated talk show. After dinner at Mary Ann’s and Brian’s apartment in the Summit (see Tour #1, *In the Beginning: Aquatic Park and Russian Hill*), Mary Ann, Brian, Burke, Michael, and Thack drove to Stars to meet up and have drinks with (majorly closeted) fashion designer Russell Rand and his wife Chloe. The Rands were already seated on the platform at the end of the room when Mary Ann, et al. arrived.



After the San Francisco Trader Vic’s closed at its original location at Cosmo and Trader Vic’s Alley (see Tour #6, *Chinatown, Nob Hill, and the Edge of the Tenderloin*), it reopened at this location in November 2004. However, that reincarnation of the San Francisco Trader Vic’s eventually closed its doors in December 2007.

Continue walking west on Golden Gate to the corner of Van Ness.

Opera Plaza, 601 Van Ness (southeast corner of Van Ness and Golden Gate)

This was the former location of one of San Francisco's well known chains of fast food restaurants: the Doggie Diner. And it was at this Doggie Diner that Beauchamp and Bruno Koski met to plan Bruno's physical assault on DeDe.

Under the fluorescent lights of the Doggie Diner, the crags and craters of Bruno Koski's face assumed lunar proportions. The corners of his mouth, Beauchamp noticed, were hydrophobic with mayonnaise.

(More Tales of the City/28 Barbary Lane, p. 331)

They worked out the deal for the physical assault on DeDe that Beauchamp hoped would result in her losing the child she was carrying. After the deal was struck, Beauchamp's final remark to Bruno: *"Wipe your mouth, will you?"*



The Doggie Diners (about 30 of them) were scattered across the San Francisco Bay area. The chain was started in 1949 by Al Ross. Unable to compete with big national fast food chains, The Doggie Diner went out of business in 1986. A notable feature of the chain was the Doggie Diner heads of a dachshund wearing a bow tie and chef's hat. After the chain went out of business, the heads were sold off. One still remains to be seen in the median of Sloat Boulevard at 45th Avenue out in the Sunset District across from the San Francisco Zoo. The head originally stood a short distance away at the northwest corner of Sloat and 46th Avenue where one of the Doggie Diners was located. The Doggie Diner head on Sloat is now designated as a San Francisco City Landmark.

Look carefully at this scene next time you watch the "More Tales of the City". There is a Doggie Diner sign with the iconic Doggie Diner dachshund head over the diner where Beauchamp meets Bruno. Watch the scene: [You Tube/More Tales of the City](#) (scene starts at about 3:50).

The Doggie Diner was razed and the new multi-use Opera Plaza replaced it in 1982

You'll hop on a MUNI bus to travel to the next set of locations.

Cross to the northeast corner of Van Ness and Golden Gate Ave (where McDonald's is located). Walk north on Van Ness (along side McDonald's) one block to Turk. Cross Turk and you'll be at the MUNI bus stop where you can catch either a northbound #47-Van Ness or # 49-Van Ness/Mission bus to the next part of the tour. Take either bus 10 blocks to California Street.

When you exit the bus, turn right and after crossing California, walk one block south to the corner of Van Ness and Pine.

Holiday Inn San Francisco – Golden Gate, 1500 Van Ness (northeast corner of Van Ness and Pine)

When Michael’s parents came to visit him during Halloween in 1976 (*Tales of the City*), they booked their room here at the Holiday Inn. They rented a Dodge Aspen so Michael was able to keep them busy with Lombard Street, Fisherman’s Wharf, Sausalito, and Muir Woods...



But now it was Sunday. The Witches’ Sabbath was upon them.

If he was careful, very careful, he could ease them through it, protect their fragile, Reader’s Digest sensibilities from the horror of The Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name.

Maybe.

In this town, he thought, The Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name almost never shuts up.

(Tales of the City/28 Barbary Lane, p. 185)

Turn left on Pine and walk one block east to Polk. Cross Polk to the northeast corner of the intersection. Turn left and walk north on Polk.

Fashion Exchange, 1446 Polk (east side of road, just south of California)



This is the former location of Buzzby’s – the bar mentioned by Mona when she asked Michael if she was a fag hag while they sun bathed one day at Devil’s Slide:

“You are not a fag hag, Mona.”

“Let’s look at the symptoms. I hang out with you, don’t I? We go boogying at Buzzby’s and the End Up...”

(Tales of the City/28 Barbary Lane, p. 77)

Mona proved her point later that same day. She and Michael ate dinner at Pier 45 then they boogied at Buzzby’s.

Continue north on Polk to California. Cross to the northeast corner of the intersection (Chase Bank) and turn right. Walk a short distance on California.

Marine Layer Workshop, 1572 California Street

This is the former location of the Lumiere Theater, which closed in September 2012.



In *Tales of the City*, Mona was obsessed with learning why D’Or was secretive about her past – particularly after Mona found a bottle of unidentifiable pills in their night stand. After Mona learned that D’or’s father worked at the Twinkie factory on Bryant Street (see Tour #9, *SOMA*), she hatched a plan to meet D’or’s father at his place of employment and invite him and D’or’s mother for Christmas Eve dinner.

To get out of the house without arousing D’or suspicions, Mona told D’or that she and Michael were going to a late night show at the Lumiere Theater. Instead, she slipped over to the Twinkie factory on Bryant.

Backtrack to the corner of California and Polk (Chase Bank). Turn right and face north on Polk.

The next location on this tour is four blocks ahead of you on the northeast corner of Polk and Jackson. You can either walk the four blocks or catch the northbound #19-Polk MUNI bus. If you take the bus, get off at the corner of Polk and Washington, turn left, then walk one block north to Jackson.

Consider walking the four blocks; it is a pleasant stroll down Polk Street.

Bell Tower Restaurant, 1900 Polk (northeast corner of Polk and Jackson)



This is the former location of The Noble Frankfurter. In *Tales of the City*, Mona and Mouse shared two cheese dogs and an order of fries while discussing the disparate state of their financial situation. Michael sprung on Mona his plan to get instant cash: compete in the jockey shorts dance contest at the End Up (see *Tour #9, SOMA*). In the “Tales of the City” mini-series, this scene was shot at the intersection of 24th Street and Sanchez in the Noe Valley (see *Tour #8, The Castro and Noe Valley*).

Now, walk one block west on Jackson to Van Ness. On the northwest corner of Van Ness and Jackson is:

2001 Van Ness (northwest corner of Van Ness and Jackson)

This building which houses a bank and several medical practices was the former location of the Samadhi Center which was located on the 3rd floor.



After starting to provide “public relations services” for Frannie Halcyon (*Further Tales of the City*), Mary Ann began treating herself and Brian to luxuries such the flotation tanks at the Samadhi Center.

They were assigned to separate rooms each containing a flotation tank. After a few moments of floating in warm, viscous water in total darkness and silence, Brian crawled out of his tank and crossed the hall to Mary Ann’s. She opened the lid of her tank after Brian knocked on it. He asked if he could join her in her tank.

“It’s supposed to be a *womb*, Brian.”

“And I should go back to mine, huh?”

Finally, she smiled at him. “You’re just the worst.”

“Anyway,” said Brian, “we can tell them we’re twins.”

Further Tales of the City/28 Barbary Lane, p. 581

In the “Further Tales of the City” mini-series, Mary Ann and Brian bump into Connie Bradshaw when they arrive for their appointment was working at that time for the Center. She is not mentioned in the book. Here is the scene: [YouTube](#) (starts at 00:25 and continues again 3:24)

At the time of *Further Tales of the City*, there was a Hippo Hamburgers located next door at 2025 Van Ness – currently occupied by a CVS Pharmacy. And across the street, where a Jiffy Lube is now located, there was a Midas Muffler shop. Both businesses were mentioned in passing in *Further Tales of the City*.

At this point you have a couple of options to reach the next and final location on this tour:

- *Return to the northeast corner Van Ness and Jackson to catch either of the following MUNI busses: #47-Van Ness or #49-Van Ness/Mission. Take the bus 5 blocks north to Union. Walk one block east – that’s uphill – on Union to Polk.*

- *If you want to continue exploring the shops and restaurants along Polk, retrace your step to Jackson and Polk, then continue walking north on Polk five block until you reach Union.*

Leopold's, 2400 Polk (northeast corner of Polk and Union)



This is the former location of the Pavilion.

After Edgar Halcyon visited Ruby Miller, a faith healer, for treatment, he returned home to find clear indications of Fannie's drinking that day. Frannie began to grill him about his activities that evening. Edgar redirected Frannie's attention away from his doings that day by asking about her day. She reported joining her friends Helen and Gladys for lunch at the Pavilion. Afterwards, she purchased a duck-shaped ceramic soup tureen. (*Tales of the City*)

This is the end of the tour.

To give you an idea of where you are, two blocks up the hill on Union is Hyde – Ground Zero for the Tales (see Tour #1, In the Beginning: Aquatic Park and Russian Hill). The Searchlight Market, Swensen's Ice Cream, and Zarzuela's Tapas Restaurant (the former location of Marcel et Henri) are at the intersection. Armistead Maupin lived a half block further up the hill on Union.

From this point, you can catch either the #41-Union or the #45-Union/Stockton MUNI busses to go to the starting point of the next tour. Tour#11 (Union Street/Cow Hollow, the Marina District, and Back to the Beginning). Cross to the northwest corner of Polk and Union to catch either of the outbound busses.

If, instead, you want to return to Downtown, you have a couple of options: Stand at the southwest corner of the intersection (diagonally across the street from where you are now) and catch either of the busses. The #41-Union will take you to Market Street at Davis where you can catch the California Cable Car, or the MUNI Metro or BART at the Embarcadero MUNI/BART station. The #45-Union/ Stockton bus will take you to Union Square and to the Powell MUNI/BART station.

Updated: 9 August 2015