



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard  
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500  
blr@raremaps.com

## Bird's Eye View of the City & County of San Francisco, 1868.

**Stock#:** 84044  
**Map Maker:** Gifford  
**Date:** 1868  
**Place:** San Francisco  
**Color:** Hand Colored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 27.5 x 19.5 inches (including text)  
**Price:** \$ 24,500.00



### Description:

#### *The Most Iconic 19th-century View of San Francisco*

Rare first edition of this remarkable early view of San Francisco, lithographed by W. Vallance Gray & C.B. Gifford, 645 Market Street, in 1868.

This spectacular view of San Francisco shows the city as the commercial hub of Pacific America. Applying a perspective that overlooks the urban promontory from an imaginary vantage point to its northeast, the scope of the view is quite comprehensive. The view illustrates the expanse of land from the peninsular hills and lakes south of the city to encompass the entire urban sprawl down to the city's new waterfront. The Golden Gate appears in the upper right of the view, whereas Telegraph Hill dominates the bottom center.

In the foreground, we have the bustling life of San Francisco's iconic harbor front. This area was the heart of the city in the late 1860s. Following a massive influx of people during the Gold Rush (1849-52), San Francisco had grown at an incredible pace in the ensuing years, and by the late 1860s, the city had developed into the largest and most important commercial port on the Pacific seaboard.

By the time Charles Braddock Gifford compiled this view, San Francisco had begun to feature the hallmarks of both high society and urban industrial production. More importantly, the city had become America's gateway to the Pacific, opening lucrative trade routes to South America and the Far East. Consequently, it is no surprise that the harbor front is teeming with ships of all kinds, including enormous three- and four-masters waiting for entry, docked merchantmen, modern steam-driven oceanliners, and local paddle-wheel vessels transporting goods and people.

Moving inland from the clamor of the harbor, many elements of the city remain recognizable even today,



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### **Bird's Eye View of the City & County of San Francisco, 1868.**

including the city's main structuring thoroughfare, Market Street, cutting diagonally through downtown. Individual buildings are easy to identify throughout, underscoring the printmaker's intimate knowledge of the city and his keen mastery of detail. Despite San Francisco's rapid growth, the urban sprawl still does not extend much beyond Van Ness, and it is striking how much of the topography is comprised of rolling sand dunes, especially on the west side. With features like Mountain Lake, Washerwoman's Lagoon, and the extensive wetlands in the area of today's Crissy Field, the view constitutes a vital historical record of a disappearing natural landscape.

In sum, Gifford and Gray's iconic view is not only a manifestation of San Francisco's history as a commercial hub but speaks to the development of a modern and competitive America in the late 19th century. A country abounding in self-confidence and a population with their eyes set firmly on the future. It is a one-of-a-kind snapshot of the city and its setting in a dynamic era.

#### **Publication History and Census**

The view is based on an original painting by Charles B. Gifford and subsequently converted to a chromolithograph for commercial purposes. It was initially copyrighted and published in 1868.

The states of the view can be identified as follows:

- State 1 (1868): Gray & Gifford publisher
- State 2 (1868): A.L Bancroft & Company, publisher
- State 3 (1869): Date changed / Gray & Gifford publisher
- State 4 (1872): Date changed / A.L Bancroft & Company, publisher
- State 5 (1873): Date changed / A.L Bancroft & Company, publisher

Despite the five states, only a few copies of the view have survived. While a few may still exist in private ownership, there are only thirteen examples (in various editions) in institutional collections. These include the Library of Congress, Yale, Cornell, University of Chicago, and the California Historical Society.

We note only 1 other example of on the market in published auction or dealer catalogs in the past 100+ years (O'Shaughnessy Catalog, 1915 and 1918)

**Provenance:** Leslie Hindman, 2021

#### **Detailed Condition:**

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