

## Title Information

# San Francisco's Playland at the Beach

The Golden Years

by James R. Smith

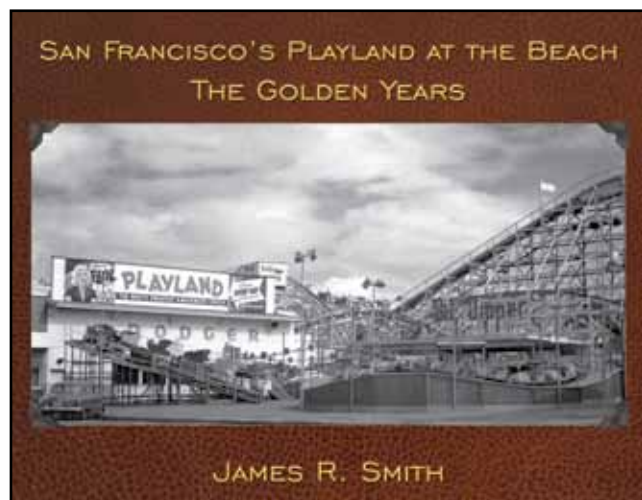
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History / California • BISAC HIS036140

Over 300 Rare Vintage Photographs • Index



Long before Disneyland, there was San Francisco's Playland at the Beach, a magical and glamorous amusement park that is still revered by San Franciscans more than 40 years after it closed. A beloved part of old San Francisco, Playland incorporated rides, dining, sightseeing, and socializing, and its pioneering rides and attractions inspired the designers of the amusement parks that followed.

San Francisco historian **James R. Smith** completes his magisterial history of Playland in *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years*, the sequel to his stunning 2010 book *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Early Years*.

While *The Early Years* told the story of the beginnings of Playland, *The Golden Years* covers the years 1940 to 1972, showcasing both the dazzling height of Playland's postwar popularity and its decline, closure, and destruction during its final years. Together, the two volumes make a complete history of Playland and San Francisco recreation and leisure, as well as an amazing collection of beautiful and historic photographs — a wonderful companion set for any lover of old San Francisco.

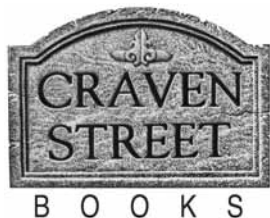
*San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years* presents Playland as it is best remembered today — a playground where families experienced endless days of fun in San Francisco's glorious postwar boom.

Illustrated by a huge collection of rare black-and-white and color photographs, *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years* transports the reader back in time to experience the rides, attractions, restaurants, and behind-the-scenes operations of the great amusement park at the height of its glory.

Comprehensively documented and illustrated, *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years* is the definitive and authoritative history of one of America's landmark amusement parks.

**Audience:** San Francisco history readers, amusement park history enthusiasts, 1940s–1970s nostalgia readers and anyone who likes fun.

**About the Author:** California historian **James R. Smith** is an authority on the history of San Francisco and the Gold Country. His previous books include *San Francisco's Lost Landmarks*, *The California Snatch Racket* and *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Early Years*.



### Craven Street Books

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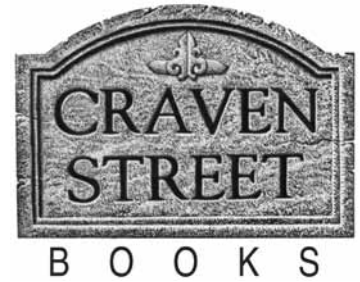
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Contact: Jaguar Bennett, Marketing Director  
[Publicity@QuillDriverBooks.com](mailto:Publicity@QuillDriverBooks.com)

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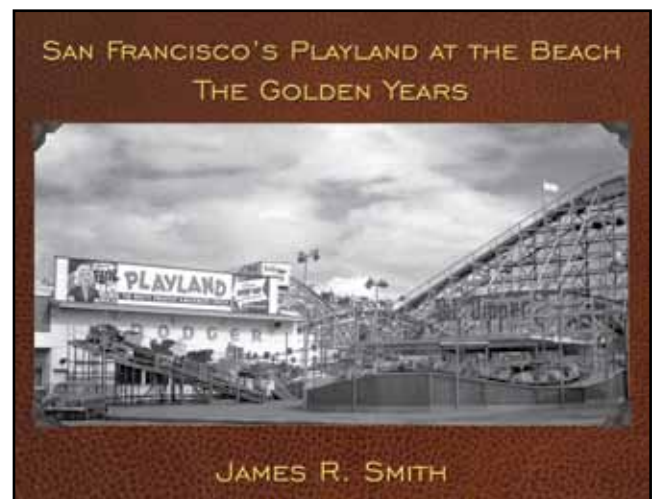
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## **With over 300 vintage photographs, *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years* completes a magisterial history of America's greatest amusement park**

Long before Disneyland, San Francisco was the home of one of the greatest amusement parks of all time — Playland at the Beach. Still revered by San Franciscans more than 40 years after it closed, Playland enthralled generations from the 1920s to the 1970s. More than just an amusement park, Playland included dining, sightseeing, strolling and socializing, and its pioneering rides and attractions inspired the designers of every amusement park that followed it.



San Francisco historian **James R. Smith** completes his magisterial history of Playland in *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years* (Craven Street Books, October 2013) — the sequel to his stunning 2010 book *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Early Years*.

While *The Early Years* told the story of the beginnings of Playland, *The Golden Years* covers the years 1940 to 1972, depicting both the dazzling height of Playland's postwar popularity and its decline, closure and destruction during its final years.

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Illustrated by over 300 rare black-and-white and color photographs — including many images never before published — *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years* takes the reader back in time to experience the rides, attractions, restaurants and behind-the-scenes operations of the great amusement park at the height of its glory.

Together, *The Early Years* and *The Golden Years* make a complete history of Playland and San Francisco recreation and leisure, as well as an amazing collection of beautiful and historic photographs. The two volumes are a wonderful companion set or gift for any lover of old San Francisco.

Playland at the Beach assaulted the senses. Activity and lights were everywhere. It sparked with scenic vistas of every sort: rides flashing by, colorfully lighted exhibits, couples walking arm-in arm and flocks of girls and guys stealing glances at each other. Machine vibrations rumbled up through your soles and thrummed against your chest, and the rides put your guts in your throat.

*Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years* transports the reader directly to Playland's lost heyday. Thoroughly researched from original sources, *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years* documents every major ride and attraction of the park with authentic contemporary photographs.

The extensive contemporary photographs in *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years* also provide a unique historical glimpse of the fabric of everyday life and leisure in San Francisco at midcentury. The clothes, the cars and the smiling, happy faces of the everyday people who enjoyed Playland convey an authentic picture of the amusements, popular culture, lifestyles and ephemera of a long-lost time.

*San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years* also provides an authoritative account of the sad final years of Playland — its decline and decay, the legal wrangling surrounding the development of the Playland site, and a full photographic record of Playland's demolition.

Comprehensively documented and illustrated, San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years is the definitive and authoritative history of one of America's landmark amusement parks.

**About the Author:** California historian **James R. Smith** is an authority on the history of San Francisco and the Gold Country. His previous books include *San Francisco's Lost Landmarks*, *The California Snatch Racket* and *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Early Years*, available from Craven Street Books.

**Book Details:**

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# About James R. Smith

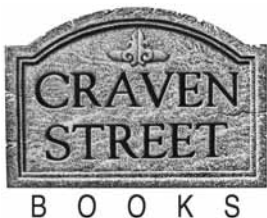
**Author of *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years***



California historian James R. Smith is the author of *San Francisco's Lost Landmarks* (2005), *The California Snatch Racket* (2010) and *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Early Years* (2010), all available from Craven Street Books, as well as numerous historical articles. A well-respected authority in California history, he has spent years chronicling the stories of San Francisco and the California Gold Country. Smith is a frequent lecturer and discussion leader at universities, historical societies, libraries and bookstores.

A member of the California Historical Society, the San Francisco History Association, the San Francisco Historical Society, and the Library Fund at the University of California, Berkeley, Smith is active in the preservation and promotion of history and historical lore.

Smith is a fourth-generation native of San Francisco and a sixth-generation Californian. He is often found haunting the libraries and archives of his native city and enjoying its social life with his wife Liberty.



For more information on *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years* (Craven Street Books, November 2013) or to arrange an interview with author **James R. Smith**, please contact Jaguar Bennett at Craven Street Books, (800) 345-4447, [Publicity@QuillDriverBooks.com](mailto:Publicity@QuillDriverBooks.com).

***“An essential document”; “Never been a book like this before”;  
“Makes history come alive!”***

## **Praise for *San Francisco’s Playland at the Beach: The Early Years***

### **The first volume of James R. Smith’s history of Playland**

“What a tremendous gift this volume provides to all who cherish the memory of Playland. James R. Smith has given us a wonderful glimpse of the early years of Playland at the Beach. The photographic essay and the superb text make history come alive. I loved every turn of the page! Three cheers for this wonderful book and James R Smith. Let the wonderful memories of Playland live forever!”

—**John Rothmann**, KGO Radio San Francisco

“Everyone who went to Whitney’s Playland at the Beach in San Francisco will delight in this amazing new book which tells and shows how the West Coast’s best amusement park came about. The early photographs showing the construction of all the attractions are unrivaled in any other amusement park history. Jim Smith has done a meticulous job of researching Playland block-by-block as it evolved from the early 1920s as Chutes at the Beach through the evolution of the park under the Whitney Brothers. This is the perfect gift for anyone who loves roller coasters, amusement parks, San Francisciana and Northern California cultural history. There has never been a book like this before.”

—**Richard Tuck**, Master of Fun, Playland-Not-At-The-Beach Museum of Fun

“James Smith’s book is an essential document in restoring and preserving the memory of this once vital institution, which is sadly on the precipice of being forgotten.”

—**Bill Yenne**, author of *San Francisco Then and Now* and *San Francisco’s Noe Valley*

“Fascinating ... a real primer of amusement history on the West Coast!”

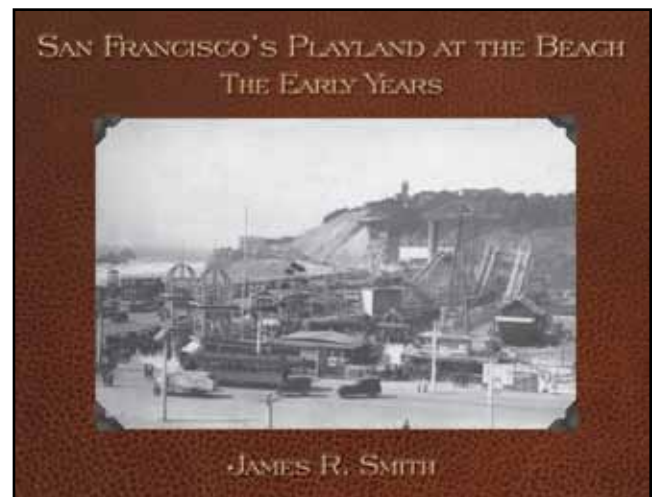
—**Bette Largent**, president, National Carousel Association,

“A vivid portrait of Playland ... a treasured book for anyone who loves San Francisco and anybody who loves roller coasters. Smith brings history alive in this wonderful book.”

—*San Francisco Book Review*

“I opened this book and was instantly mesmerized .... The mass of photographs offers a glimpse into the amusement industry that is seldom seen. A great addition to anyone’s collection.”

—*Merry-Go-Roundup*



According to James R. Smith in "San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years," Reports to the Richmond Station of the San Francisco Police Department began to accumulate in late 1949. Someone skulked around Playland, the Cliff House and Sutro Baths. Restaurants reported break-ins in more than 50 complaints. Trivia time. The previous trivia question: What year did Los Angeles pass San Francisco in population? Answer: 1920. This week's trivia question: How many San Franciscans died in the 1918 flu pandemic? A companion piece to San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Early Years, this keepsake covers the years 1945 to 1972, showcasing both the height of Playland's postwar popularity and its decline, closure, and destruction during its final years. Illustrated by a huge collection of rare black-and-white and color photographs, it lets the reader experience the rides, attractions, restaurants, and behind-the-scenes operations of the great amusement park during its best-remembered period. ...more. In 2010, we published San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Early Years, a unique photographic history of one of San Francisco's most beloved San Francisco City San Francisco Travel. San Francisco California. Big bucks for yuks / Defunct Playland's Laughing Sal could bring pretty penny. [...] 32 years after the amusement park closed and sprouted into oceanside condominiums, Places In California. California City.