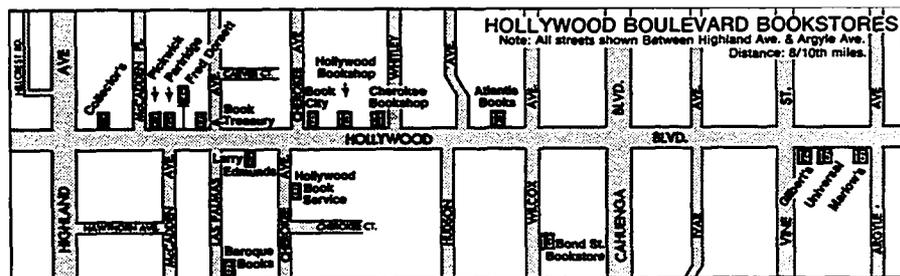


WEST VIEW

Leafing Through Hollywood Blvd.

BY BEN REUVEN



Times Map by Bob Allen

Hollywood Blvd. is a queasy combination of New York's 4th Ave. and 42nd St.—a scattering of serious bookstores among X-rated movie houses, garish souvenir shops, tattoo parlors and supermarkets of sexual paraphernalia. Not counting the porno bookshops and the Christian Science Reading Room, there are 16 general and specialized bookstores along Hollywood Blvd. from Highland Ave. to Argyle Ave., one block east of Vine St.

The booksellers coexist with bikers and gays and prostitutes and Hare Krishna chanters, all of whom are collectively known as "the weirdos" to the straight business community of Hollywood. Most bookshop proprietors agree that the Boulevard is not quite as kinky as it was during the mid-'60s—when the flower children made Hollywood their own turf—but L.A.'s biggest bookselling district still shares its sidewalk with some of L.A.'s most eccentric street people.

Still, the booksellers of Hollywood Blvd. share a fierce loyalty to the neighborhood and they refuse to consider a westward migration. "I moved to Westwood Village in 1971," says Jack Garvin, owner of Hollywood Bookshop, "and one year later I was back on the Boulevard. This is still the book center in Southern California."

The literary mystique of Hollywood Blvd.—which continues to attract new bookstores despite the deterioration of the area—is well-deserved. Nowhere else in Southern California can the bibliophile find 16 bookstores within comfortable strolling distance on a single street. But there are other reasons for staying put: "I may be fearful of the Boulevard after dark," says Milton Ludoviski, whose Larry Edmunds Bookshop has been a Hollywood fixture since 1938, "but the thought of moving is the most frightening thought of all. I'd rather go out of business than move the store."

The Hollywood booksellers boast their own colorful folklore, and they like to tell stories about some of the legendary figures of the Boulevard. Like the bookseller who went bankrupt because he preferred the company of novelists at Musso & Frank's to the humdrum of minding the store. Or the young bookstore entrepreneur who committed suicide when he failed to do the job with booze. Or the four brothers whose rival bookshops crowd the Boulevard and spill over into West Hollywood.

The storytelling heightens the pleasure of an afternoon on the Boulevard, but the real attraction is the sheer quantity of books—old and new, rare and commonplace, fine editions and comic books. Here is a tour of Hollywood's bookstores, starting at Highland Ave. and ending less than one mile east at Argyle Ave.

1—Collector's Bookstore, Inc., 6763 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 90028, 467-6950. You'll find Collector's under a huge sign that says "Bennett's"—a remnant of a brief venture in selling new books as well as collector's items. Nowadays, owners Leonard Brown and Malcolm Willits have gone back to their original inspiration: movie stills (almost three million of them), scripts, posters, science fiction magazines and rare comic books.

2—B. Dalton-Pickwick Bookstore, 6743 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 90028, 469-8191. It's been more than 30 years since Louis Epstein moved his used-bookstore from downtown Los Angeles to Hollywood, but the Pickwick Bookstore is still a landmark on the Boulevard. The store features a comprehensive collection of new hardcover and paperback books, but you'll also find some real book bargains among the thousands of remaindered volumes on the top floor.

3—Partridge Bookstore, 6739 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 90028, 466-1477. James I. Hubler's modest bookshop stands in the shadows of its giant next-door neighbor, but Partridge Bookstore valiantly offers an array of new hardback books at a substantial discount from publisher's prices.

4—Fred Dorsett Bookseller, 6729½ Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 90028, 463-3031. Tucked away inside "Artisan's Patio" on Hollywood Blvd., Fred Dorsett of-

fers a select stock of books and ephemera, including collections of modern literature, art, metaphysics and the occult, philosophy, examples of fine bindings and fine printing, cinema, theater and poetry. Says Dorsett: "I specialized in serendipity."

5—The Book Treasury, 6707 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 90028, 466-6527. Owners Jon Gentilman and Bob Weinstein offer the Boulevard's only collection of hardbound science fiction collector's items along with complete editions of modern first editions. And they scoff at the pretensions of the Westwood bookstores: "Westwood may be up and coming," says Gentilman, "but this is still the place to buy books. It's lively, it's colorful, it's alive and well—and business is phenomenal!"

6—Baroque Book Store, 1643 N. Las Palmas Ave., Hollywood 90028, 466-1880. An oversized electric chair and strains of Vivaldi give Shalom Stodolsky's Baroque Book Store a slightly surreal quality, but these are just props and sound effects. What draws such celebrities as Edward Albee and Alec Guinness is the small but well-focused collection of literary criticism, music biographies, theater and modern first editions. "I'm here for a specific reason," says Stodolsky of his location just south of Hollywood Blvd. on Las Palmas. "I'm 60 years old and I don't need the hassles of being on the Boulevard."

7—Larry Edmunds Bookshop, Inc., 6658 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 90028, 463-3273. Git and Milton Luboviski's bookshop is the unchallenged superstar of cinema and theater books and memorabilia, including scripts, stills, lobby cards, L posters, magazines—"Everything but film itself," says Milton Luboviski. The current catalogue lists 15,000 items in more than 500 pages, and the next edition will include twice the number of listings in two volumes. The Luboviskis have received dozens of business propositions to open branches of Larry Edmunds Bookshop in cities around the world, but Milton Luboviski vows to remain on Hollywood Blvd. until the final fade-out.

8—Hollywood Book Service, 1654 Cherokee Ave., Hollywood 90028, 464-4164. Proprietor Helen Hall is quick to point out that she is the only woman bookseller along the Boulevard, but her shop on Cherokee Ave. offers other unique qualities: a stock of used encyclopedias and other reference sets, an exhaustive book and movie-poster search service and collections of political science and economics, literature and movie materials.

9—Book City, 6627 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 90028, 466-1049. With 200,000 volumes in stock, owners Alan Siegel and Jerry Weinstein offer the largest inventory of new and used books on the Boulevard. The three-year-old shop features discounted new books as well as collections of Western Americana, occult and metaphysics, cinema, art and a section of antiquarian books.

10—Hollywood Bookshop, 6613 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 90028, 469-7409. "We're a general nonfiction used bookstore," say proprietors Jack Garvin and Ray Cantor, "with an emphasis on anthropology, archaeology and Americana." They're currently acquir-

ing old photographs and photography books for their growing photography collection, but Garvin says: "Our books are more for information or rarity than for appearance or fine-edition value."

11—Cherokee Book Shop, Inc., 6607 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 90028, 463-6090. Jack Blum founded Cherokee Book Shop in 1950, and today the store is operated by his two sons, Gene and Burt. Beneath its massive open-beamed ceiling is a world-famous inventory of comic books and Playboy magazines, but you'll also find museum-quality rare books: first editions, signed editions, finely illustrated books and sets in fine bindings. And it takes eight separate catalogues to list Cherokee's specialized collections, ranging from Western Americana and military history to folklore and witchcraft.

12—Atlantis Books, 6513 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 90028, 461-4491. Like the mythical continent itself, the origin of this bookstore's name is lost in legend—but you will not find a shop full of Atlantis lore. Instead, Harold Burroughs stocks used and out-of-print books on social, political and economic history including scarce and obscure items of historical value.

13—Bond Street Book Store, 1638 N. Wilcox Ave., Hollywood 90028, 464-8060. Look for Steve Edington's Bond Street Books just south of the Boulevard, and you'll find a stock of back-issue general magazines, science fiction, movie monsters, comics and used paperback books.

14—Gilbert's Book Shop, 6278 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 90028, 465-4185. Edward Gilbert's bookstore at Hollywood and Vine opened as the Satyr back in 1928—he put his own name on the shop in 1966—and so it ranks as Hollywood's oldest bookshop. Gilbert's is a general new-and-used bookstore with the most extensive collection of astrology and occult in Southern California, along with rare books, art, reference and Western Americana.

15—Universal Bookstore, 6258 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 90028, 467-6867. Universal had been in operation for 10 years when Jules Manasseh bought the store in 1972, and the new proprietor continues to stock a general collection of fine out-of-print books, including special sections of occult, black history, art, science fiction and history.

16—Marlow's Bookshop, 6250 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 90028, 465-8295. "It's called pure tumult," says the exuberant Marlow Selco about the cluttered interior of Marlow's Bookshop at Hollywood and Argyle. A former downtown bookshop owner, Marlow moved to the Boulevard in 1971 and set up a unique "media research service" for the film, television and theater industries. "We stock something like 60 tons of paper—books, periodicals, reference sets—and we're a source of background material for writers, directors, set designers, costume designers and libraries." If you can't find the book you're looking for—or if you get hopelessly lost among the stacks of books and unpacked crates—Marlow's also offers a search service.

Reuven is a regular contributor to Book Review.