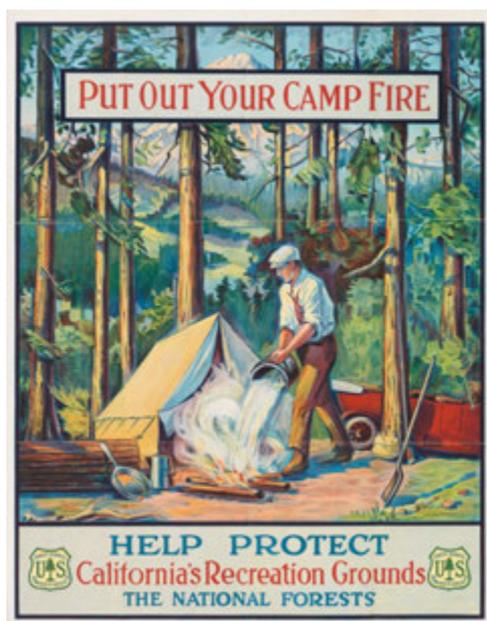


CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY

CALIFORNIA HISTORY SECTION

RESEARCH GUIDES

FIRES AND FIREFIGHTERS IN CALIFORNIA



By

Elena Smith, California History Section Librarian
Giancarlo Gilbert-Igelsrud, Library Intern

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Do you hold your breath for a loved one who is fighting California wild-fires every time he or she is deployed? Are you a fire-fighter yourself? Have you donated to or directly participated in relief efforts after a particularly devastating blaze? Explore the proud history of firefighting, fire management and even controlled burns in California via the [California History Section's](#) rich collections!

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ENJOY YOUR RESEARCH!

DIGITIZED RESOURCES

Can't come to the library just yet? No worries! There are a number of online resources you can explore related to fires and firefighting in California!



[Digitized Publications](#)

A few years ago we digitized some of our more fragile resources on California's fires. You can see them on Internet Archive!



URL: <https://archive.org/>

Type in Search Box: ((forest fires) OR (fire fighters)) AND collection:(californiastatelibrary) &sin=TEXT

Select Option: "Search full text of books"



[Digitized Images](#)

We have scanned and digitized a portion of our image collection. Check them out and remember that we have a lot more in the library.

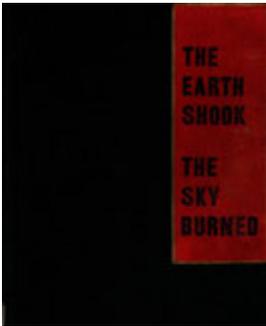


URL: <https://calisphere.org/institution/51/items/>

Type in Search Box: (Fires OR Wildfires OR (Forest Fires) OR Fire OR Burning)

BOOKS

Unsure about where to start? Consult a book! If you are interested in the history of California's urban fires, firefighters or wildland fire management, these books will get you going.



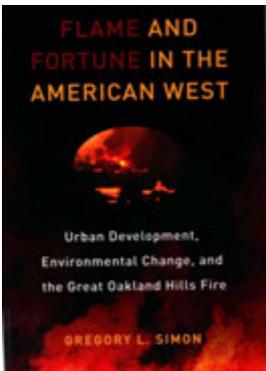
Bronson, William. [The Earth Shook, the Sky Burned.](#) Garden City: Doubleday, 1959. Print.

A seminal work on the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire, this thoroughly illustrated book chronicles the progress of the fire after the 1906 earthquake.



URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL

Search: 990001025250205115



Simon, Gregory. [Flame and Fortune in the American West.](#) Oakland: University of California Press, 2017 .

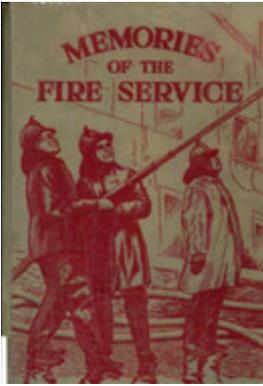
Written by a survivor of the 1991 Tunnel fire in the Oakland hills, this book examines both the factors that increased fire risk in the Oakland region and the factors that allowed this region to be so resilient in the face of disaster.



URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL

Search: 990016270410205115

BOOKS



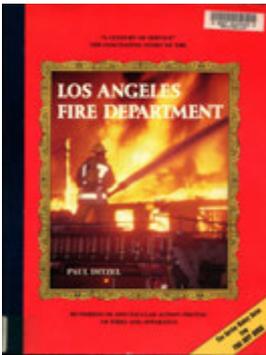
Heiser, Harvey. [Memories of the Fire Service](#). Fresno: Fresno Lithograph co., 1941.

A detailed history and memoir of Sacramento's fire department, this book covers major fires, regional competitions, the transition to a professional fire department and more.



URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL

Search: 990000541560205115



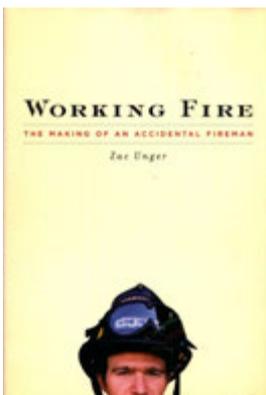
Ditzel, Paul. [Los Angeles City Fire Department, 1886-1986](#). Los Angeles: Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association, 1986.

Put out to mark the Los Angeles fire department's centennial, this book tracks the major technological changes, building fires and even deaths seen by this urban fire department..



URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL

Search: 990004342840205115



Unger, Zac. [Working Fire](#). New York: Penguin Press, 2004.

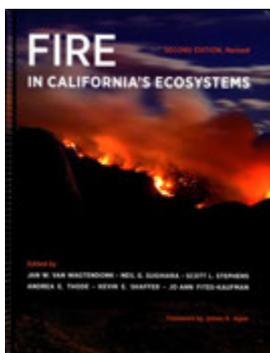
A memoir written by an urban firefighter, this book details the gritty details of working major building fires, urban-wildland interface fires and the daily firehouse life.



URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL

Search: 990012212070205115

BOOKS



van Wagtenonk, Jan W. et al. [Fire in California's Ecosystems](#). Oakland: University of California Press, 2018.

This comprehensive textbook lays out not only the environmental effects of prescribed burning on Native plant and animal populations in California, but offers practical advice on burning in different California sub-regions.



URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 9916471081205115

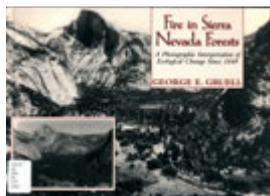


[California Fire Siege 2003](#). Sacramento, Calif: California Dept. of Forestry and Fire Protection, 2003.

An after-action report put out by the department of forestry after a particularly bad fire season, this book provides a near real-time snapshot of how California emergency responders triage and allocate personnel in the face of multiple serious blazes.



URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990012184460205115



Gruell, George E. [Fire in Sierra Nevada Forests](#). Missoula: Mountain Press, 2001.

Using extensive visual evidence, this book compares gold-rush era vegetation to current levels, via side by side comparisons of regional photographs. Although mostly letting the images speak for themselves, the author suggests that fire suppression has dramatically altered the character of California's forests.



URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL
Search: 990011495070205115

PERIODICALS

Don't want to read an entire book? Check these publications for real-time information on fires, fire departments and firefighting techniques.



[California Professional Firefighters](#)

Are you curious about firefighting or the opinions of firefighters? Covering firefighting news from 1977 forward, this publication provides information and updates on the firefighting profession in California. Additionally, it provides opinions about issues of government and law.



URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL

Search: 990005812210205115 OR
990006032770205115 OR
990010653770205115



[California Fire Service](#)

Do you want to read advice from professional firefighters? This publication gives readers legal advice as well as general fire prevention and safety advice. It also provides information on the firefighting profession. The library's run is from 1977 forwards.



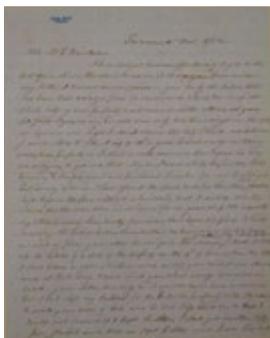
URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL

Search: 990005390860205115 OR
990005390850205115

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

In addition to books and periodicals, there are many archival resources that focus on California's fires and her firefighters.

Here are some relevant collections at the State Library.



[John Beeckman Collection](#)

This collection of Gold Rush correspondence contains a brief description of the 1852 fire that destroyed almost all of Sacramento. In particular it relates the financial losses Beeckman suffered as a consequence of this blaze.



URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL

Search: 990005578350205115



[Fire Department SMCs](#)

Containing organizational papers such as rosters and founding documents, these folder-sized collections cover various fire departments in California, mostly in the Sacramento and Motherlode regions.



URL: http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCalinfo.htm

Search: "Small Manuscript" Fire Department



[Linda Hirschler Collection](#)

Containing two detailed accounts of the 1906 earthquake's fiery aftermath, these letters, one written by a Japanese servant, Hiro Sawa and one written by Hirschler detail the fire and how they lived in a ruined city.



URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL

Search: 990015006040205115

CATALOG GENERAL RESEARCH TIPS

While many of our materials are online, even more are only in hard-copy. You can use the following resources to learn about our books, articles, and manuscripts on fire.



Catalog

If you are looking for images, books and articles on fire, your best source is our [catalog](#).



URL: <https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?>

[vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&lang=en&sortby=rank](#)

Type in Search Box: (Fires OR Wildfires OR (Forest Fires) OR Fire OR Burning OR Firefighters)

Limit: By desired material type



California Information File II

Sometimes the catalog doesn't provide as much detail as you might like. This is why we created the California Information File II. In this resource, you can find information about individual fire-departments, related articles and more!



URL: http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCalinfo.htm

Type in Subject Box: (Fires OR Wildfires OR (Forest Fires) OR Fire OR Burning OR Firefighters)

For a narrower search: Add a place to your keyword search

ON-SITE RESEARCH RESOURCES

Our collection predates computers and so do some of our access points! If you are in the library, be sure to check the following analog files for leads on more resources.



California Information File

In the library? Check the California Information File before you do anything else! This file indexes over 130 years of articles, books, and manuscript collections on California fires and more.



Subject Headings:

1. Firefighting (Various subdivisions)
2. Firemen (Various subdivisions)
3. Fires (Various subdivisions)
4. Forests and Forestry: Fires



Picture File

Sometimes a picture is worth a 1000 words and not all of our pictures are online. To check the rest of the collection search our picture file.



Subject Headings:

1. Fires
2. (Various Counties and cities): Fires

OTHER ON-SITE RESOURCES

Despite our best efforts, some of our resources defy complete description. We suggest that you ask a librarian about fire and fire management information in the following files:



Vertical Files

Our massive collection of vertical files cover a wide variety of topics including highways. You can check them for information on organizations that protect and use highways or sites famous for road systems.



Subject Headings: Subject: Fire



Postcard Files

Separate from our photo collection, our postcard collection contains a number of fire department and fire images. Most are not online.



Subject Headings: Check with librarians



Map Files

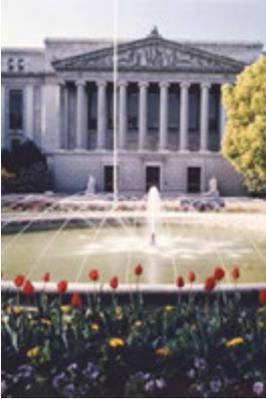
Our map files contain a number of maps related to California fires particularly Sanborn fire insurance maps. Most are not online but are catalogued in our card file.



Subject Headings: Check with librarians

OTHER PLACES TO LOOK

Of course the California History Section doesn't have everything, so we suggest that in addition to looking at our collections, you contact the following organizations



Other California State Library Sections

[Government Publications Section](#)

[Witkin Law Library](#)

[Sutro Library](#)

[General Information](#)



- <http://www.library.ca.gov/government-publications/>
- <http://www.library.ca.gov/law/>
- <http://www.library.ca.gov/sutro/>
- <http://www.library.ca.gov/services/>



Government Agencies

[California State Archives](#)

[California State Parks](#)

[California Department of Forestry and](#)

[Fire Protection](#)

[Board of Forestry and Fire Protection](#)

[Office of the State Fire Marshal](#)

[Governor's Office of Emergency Services](#)

Local California libraries or archives



- <http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/>
- <https://www.parks.ca.gov/>
- <https://www.fire.ca.gov/>
- <https://bofdata.fire.ca.gov/>
- <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/>
- <https://www.caloes.ca.gov/home>

OTHER PLACES TO LOOK



Government Agencies Cont.

[California National Guard](#)
[California Conservation Corps](#)
[California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation](#)
[California Emergency Medical Services Authority](#)
[California Department of Public Health](#)
[California Air Resources Board](#)
[California Volunteers](#)



- <https://calguard.ca.gov/>
- <https://ccc.ca.gov/>
- <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/>
- <https://emsa.ca.gov/>
- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/EPO/Pages/Wildfire%20Pages/Wildfires--.aspx>
- <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/>
- <https://californiavolunteers.ca.gov/>



Non-Profits and Stake-holders

[California Fire Museum](#)
[Fire Museum Network](#)
[Pioneer Mutual Hook and Ladder Society](#)
[San Francisco Fire Dept. Museum](#)
[Los Angeles Fire Department Museum](#)



- <http://www.cafiremuseum.org/>
- www.firemuseumnetwork.org/index.html
- www.sacramentofiremuseum.org/
- www.guardiansofthecity.org/index.html
- <http://lafdmuseum.org/>



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E-mail: cslcal@library.ca.gov
Hours: 9:30-4 Monday-Friday

This guide is also available online at:
<http://www.library.ca.gov/california-history/research-guides/>