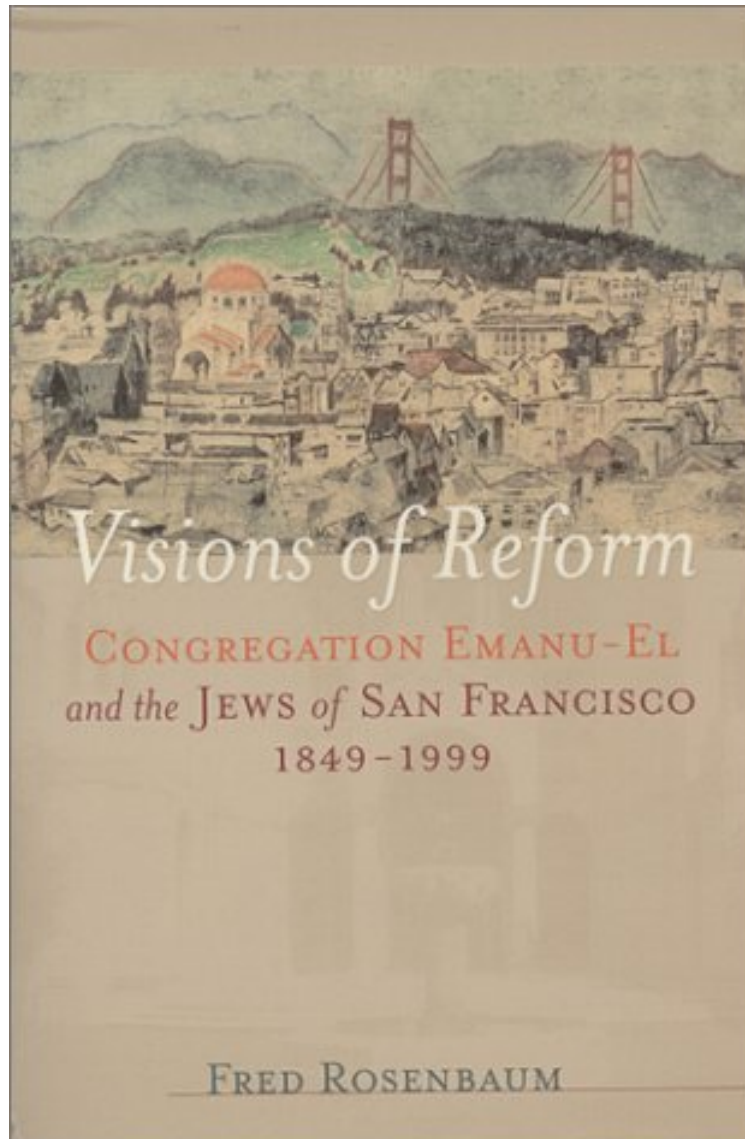


(Ebook free) Visions of Reform : Congregation Emanu-El and the Jews of San Francisco 1849-1999

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Fred Rosenbaum

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Fred Rosenbaum : Visions of Reform : Congregation Emanu-El and the Jews of San Francisco 1849-1999
before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Visions of Reform :
Congregation Emanu-El and the Jews of San Francisco 1849-1999:

2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. San Francisco history from the Jewish perspective
By Mary Mekko
As a tour guide and San Francisco history buff, I can highly recommend this well-researched book by Fred

rosenbaum. A great many movers and shakers in our city were and still are German Jews. They comprised about half of the German immigration at the time of the Gold Rush. They came for opportunity in wholesale and retail such as Loeb Strauss from Bavaria, better known as Levi. To read this detailed book is to see California history from a Jewish and also business perspective but also to learn why these European Jews wanted to break away for old world traditions. Read about Diane Feinstein our mayor and now senator, whose villa sat right behind the majestic synagogue. I believed she has sold it now. Fred Rosenbaum writes in an engaging style, definitely a storyteller. I knew him as a professor at University of San Francisco in the late 1980's. He taught the Holocaust class which fulfilled the religion requirement for freshman students. Most were Gentiles especially Catholics. He was known as the guy who could get you an easy A. Then you could concentrate on your real subjects. I enjoyed locking horns with this short and arrogant man. He gave university students a textbook written for junior high kids. Lots of photos and easy skim reading meant no in-depth analysis of the situation in Europe and specifically a desperate Germany. He made fun of Germans and their fear of losing their livelihoods as cuckoo clock makers, since automatic assembly lines were replacing small independent family businesses and craftsmen. The class laughed right along gleefully. Rosenbaum did not take criticism lightly. I raised my hand to offer a more modern-day example of job displacement. Professors, I said, cost colleges a lot of money in salaries and benefits. In students could take these same classes by computer much more cheaply, alas many highly paid professional lecturers would be forced to become simple and low paid data entry employees just monitoring tests online and typing from textbooks on to the website. Mind you this was a private expensive university 1986. Rosenbaum and my fellow classmates were not laughing as they had at the Germans. Suddenly it was too real. I told them, don't be sheep as the professor says the Germans see when authorities spoke. Analyze and think for yourself and question your professors. That is how you combat Nazism and save scapegoats like the Jews. 2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. First, the masterfully told history; then, dish the dirt. By Richard Katz I went to the synagogue, Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco, for a visit, just to see the place. It's famous. It's like, the Beginning of Reform Judaism in the US, maybe the world. (I didn't actually know that until I read this book, *Visions of Reform*; but that's getting ahead here.) They take you on a big tour of the synagogue, no charge. And at the end, they hand you a copy of *Visions of Reform*. I read the book and I could not believe the synagogue would hand out a copy of this book to people who stop by and look like they might want maybe to join. See, this book is SCANDALOUS! It goes on and on about the story of the synagogue, which is interesting enough, if you're Jewish anyway; and then, BOOM! A woman comes walking down the aisle at Friday night Shabbos services and says, right there in the middle of services, with Rabbi Kirschner pontificatin' up there on the ol' pulpit, that she was screwed by the Rabbi! Yes, that man there! Our Rabbi! Rabbi Bob is an adulterer, and he takes advantage of women who came to him for counseling, or for advice, or even thinking of joining. Oy! This was no joke. This was a real problem. There were LOTS of these women victims, and they were all over the San Francisco newspapers. And all of that is in this book. I assumed that the book was given to me by mistake, ie, the first edition of this book was twenty years before, and now this second edition had been updated, but the people who handle the tours of the building hadn't been told to stop handing out the book, which now contained lurid tales of fornication IN THE RABBI'S OFFICE! Now I'm not so sure about that, it seems from the secondary literature that actually the management of the synagogue not only knows about the book but in a way contributed to it, and WANTS to have the whole story out there. Interesting. Okay, all that having been said, that doesn't tell you whether you should buy this book. Well, if you are the least bit Jewish, you will find *Visions of Reform* fascinating, at least here and there; and the really interesting parts about how reform got started and got going, all of us should know about that. Look, some people I've asked think reform Judaism started around 800 AD. Seriously. Others, they have no idea that it did in fact start as early as 1850! Put it this way, I read it cover to cover right away, and that was cold turkey not having a clue that the last chapter was the bomb. Bombshell too. Check it out. Funny, there were no reviews on . This thing's been out for a long time. Could be that people are by and large really trying to keep the problems quiet at the synagogue; but it was all in the past by now anyway, I'm sure it's water over the dam. Rabbi Bob, by the way, never did get reinstated as a rabbi, although I'm not clear on whether he was ever totally equivalent-of-defrocked. Okay, enough already.

Congregation Emanu-El's portrait has been painted here in a broad canvas of a momentous century and a half of world Jewish History. Waves of immigration, the changing posture of the Reform movement, the response to the Holocaust, the acrimonious debate over the birth of Israel, and, in recent decades, the reaction to alternative expressions of Judaism are among the many important themes that shape this richly textured narrative.

How refreshing to see a synagogue history that tells the story as it was, warts and all. -- Professor Jonathan Sarna, Chairman of the department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of California, Berkeley
The book... is being seen as a sign of a new spirit of candor in American Judaism... -- E.J. Kessler, *The Forward*
About the Author: Fred Rosenbaum is the founding director of Lehrhaus Judaica, the largest school for adult Jewish education in Northern California, and has taught at the University of San Francisco, the Graduate Theological Union, and San Francisco State University. He is the author of several books, including the

widely acclaimed Architects of Reform, and numerous articles on Bay Area Jewish history.