Matthew Morse Booker
Department of History, NC State
mmbooker@ncsu.edu
History and water resources planning; or,

Why do bad ideas refuse to die?
The C. C. Walker Plan, 1929 – “Lake San Francisco”
Atlantropa Project, 1920s
Big Dam to Water Sahara

Turning the Sahara Desert into blossoming farm land, with water drained from the Mediterranean Sea, is the ambitious project for which Hermann Sorgel, German engineer, seeks international support. He proposes to dam the Strait of Gibraltar, and then cut a canal to flood portions of the Sahara below sea level. Evaporation from the inland lake thus formed would produce rain clouds and water a vast area, he maintains. By-products of the scheme would be hydroelectric power and new land reclaimed from the Mediterranean.

Above, artist's conception of the dam proposed for the Strait of Gibraltar and intended to help flood low parts of the Sahara Desert. At left, Herman Sorgel, originator of scheme, with model of Mediterranean.
John Reber, 1887-1960
Circus man, advertiser, backer of a plan to fill San Francisco Bay
Reber Plan, 1946
Detail, California Water plan 1952

“All American college crews can compete in one great race”
Area inundated by 16-inch sea-level rise
Area inundated by 16-inch sea-level rise
Tidal Gate Across San Francisco Bay Proposed to Manage Sea Level Rise

A large dam, gate or lock to manage tidal flows could help locals cope with anticipated sea level rise from climate change

By Colin Sullivan and ClimateWire  |  May 6, 2011  |  9

SAN FRANCISCO -- A giant tidal barrier stretched across the Golden Gate is among the adaptation remedies proposed by a Bay area nonprofit to cope with anticipated sea level rise caused by climate change over the coming century.

The San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association mentioned the idea this week as part of an extensive analysis of how global warming might affect the City by the Bay, which is thought to be highly susceptible to flooding and other dangers in the decades ahead.

Image: Robert Campbell via Wikimedia Commons
“Too often what are thought of as disciplines operate chiefly as biases—prescribed ways of thinking and of doing, into which the professional may retreat when shocked or challenged by some anomaly.” Ed Ricketts & John Steinbeck, 1940