

# LONG USED TO EARTHQUAKES

Golden Gate Metropolis Has Been Shaken Often In the Past.

PRESENT WORST EVER KNOWN

Some of the Skyscrapers and Other Buildings Destroyed—Magnificent City Hall in Ruins—Fires Arrested by Dynamite—Earthquake of 1868 Described by Mark Twain.

**T**HE recent disastrous earthquake extending over so large a part of the Pacific coast region and wrecking such an extensive section of the city of San Francisco was not the first of these catastrophes known in the western metropolis, though by all odds the most damaging.

For many years the municipal authorities refused to permit tall buildings in the city because of the fear of earthquakes, several of which had already been experienced. Finally the interdiction was removed, however, and a number of skyscrapers resulted. Prior to 1890 there was hardly a building in excess of five stories and only a few of that height. Today there is one eighteen stories high and quite a number from twelve to fourteen stories.

In the spring of 1808, about 10 o'clock one night, the city had a seismic shock that put to test its high structures. It was the worst earthquake since 1868, when for eight or nine blocks on the main street (Market) the ground was cracked open several inches.

In the upheaval of 1808 the tall buildings were given a fearful shaking, and some of their occupants were made dizzy and sick. The structures were uninjured, and ever since that time there has not been so much question of the safety of high buildings of modern construction—that is, buildings of structural iron frame and facings of pressed brick, terra cotta or stone.

It was M. H. De Young, the proprietor and editor of the Chronicle, who was the pioneer in this respect. He met with opposition from the municipal authorities fourteen years ago when he decided to erect a ten story house for his newspaper. It was believed to be a dangerous undertaking because of the earthquake fear, but Mr. De Young won out and thereby set an example of enterprise to other wealthy men who have since built more tall buildings. For instance, D. O. Mills, the New York banker, who owns a great deal of San Francisco property, has one of the tallest and finest structures in the city.

Claus Spreckels, known throughout the country as the sugar king and the

intersects Market, is located the great Spreckels building, the home of the Call; the De Young building, the home of the Chronicle, and the Hearst building, occupied by the Examiner, the three great Pacific coast newspapers having contributed handsomely to the building development of San Francisco in recent years. The city now has its share of tall buildings, one being eighteen stories in height. The major part of them are eight, ten and twelve stories, the eight storied being most numerous.

The Call and Examiner buildings were almost totally destroyed in the earthquake and many other skyscrapers were severely shaken, cracked and damaged.

One of the chief buildings which collapsed was the new postoffice. This was a substantial structure of granite, costing to exceed \$5,000,000. While not striking from an architectural standpoint, the postoffice was impressive from its massiveness.

The Postal building was badly damaged, and the operating room was a wreck. Power of every kind was destroyed, and there were no lights, either gas or electric. Neither the Palace hotel nor the St. Francis was destroyed as far as the framework goes, but the inside plastering and decorations were greatly damaged.

The business section of the city from Market street to Mission street and from the bay back was almost completely wrecked.

The most conspicuous building in San Francisco, the city hall, is almost totally ruined. It cost from \$6,000,000 to \$7,000,000, took twenty-five years in construction and was surmounted by a dome 332 feet high. It was thought to be very solidly constructed, being built substantially of brick, with the walls covered by cement. The interior of the dome was decorated with expensive marbles taken from the Pacific coast mountains.

Another very fine building, which cost over \$5,000,000, is the splendid hotel erected by Mrs. Herman Oelrichs on fashionable Nob hill. Mrs. Oelrichs, who is a daughter of the late Senator Fair, has shown fine taste in the architectural plans of Fairmont, the appropriate name of the new hotel. Seen from the bay this structure, with its classic outlines, makes the beholder think of a Greek temple. White and graceful, it looms above the busy market places, the great wholesale district, the crowded business section and picturesque Chinatown, which, by the way, is fast disappearing owing to the encroachments of commerce and the dwindling of the Chinese population.

Other imposing edifices, many of which have been more or less severely injured, are the Hotel St. Francis, the Palace hotel, the Hall of Justice, the Mutual Bank building, the Pacific Mutual Life building and the Callaghan building. The greatest property damage resulted in the manufacturing district and the greatest loss of life in the tenement house district.

The chief street of the city is Market, running diagonally for many miles. The destruction of many of the department stores and other business blocks on Market and Mission streets was almost complete. Fire added to the horrors of the situation, and, as the water mains had been burst by the shock, the fire department was helpless. The flames ate their way along Market street, and other fires started in differ-



THE CALL BUILDING, ALSO DESTROYED.

ent. Men and women rushed wildly forth in their night robes and fled in panic through the streets. Many were caught by the falling roofs and walls, and in the poorer districts the tenements collapsed like eggshells, crushing and suffocating their inmates before they had time to escape. In many cases fire finished the work of death, catching the victims as they were pinned still alive under the debris.

To arrest the spread of the fire along Market street many buildings were dynamited.

The track of one railroad was depressed four feet or more for a distance of three miles. At one point in the city the earth cracked open for a distance of six feet, leaving a yawning chasm of fathomless depth.

The destruction of all telegraph wires, except one belonging to the Postal union, made it almost impossible for the stricken city to communicate with the outside world. The severe injury to the Western Union and Postal offices, also the Associated Press, greatly added to the difficulty.

The practical destruction of six or eight blocks, coupled with the immense loss of life and damage to property throughout San Francisco and the entire coast region, makes this the worst earthquake disaster in American history, exceeding even the historic Charleston earthquake of a few years ago.

San Francisco has suffered from many slight seismic shocks, one of them occurring about a year ago. At that time a long article appeared in one of the papers, signed by a pro-

fessor in one of the observatories near by, stating that there was no particular danger from these tremors of the earth's surface. The coast region, according to this writer, was newer than parts of the country farther east and was therefore settling. He said people should feel no alarm, as nothing serious was liable to happen.

Evidently the earth's crust in the Golden Gate region has been doing some more "settling."

The most severe earthquake San Francisco has known prior to the present one was in 1868. Quite a little damage resulted, though nothing remotely comparable to this. It was the 1868 shakeup that was made famous by Mark Twain. The most surprising thing the genial Mark saw at that time was the opening up of the ceiling of his room, the lips of the orifice working to and fro like a mouth and a brick slipping through and held in suspension, like one lone tooth on the jaw of an old man.

The last earthquake that occurred in San Francisco was in January, 1900. Several distinct shocks were felt early in the morning, causing the vibration of buildings all over the city. The chief building affected was the St. Nicholas hotel, which was severely shaken. The walls collapsed in certain parts of the structure, guests were thrown out of their beds and furniture was destroyed.

In 1904 there was a severe seismic disturbance in Los Angeles, which was felt throughout the city and for a distance of several miles from the ground.

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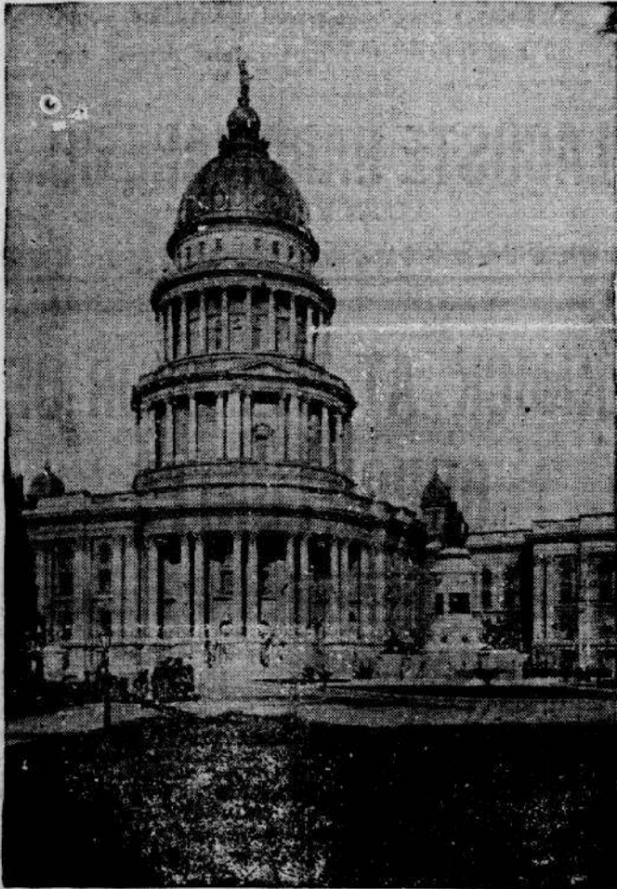
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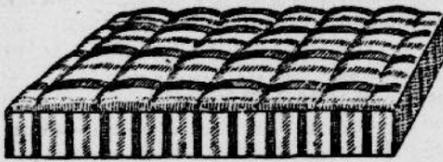


CITY HALL, WHICH WAS WRECKED.

richest San Franciscan, owns a building seventeen stories high, commonly known as the Call building. On three of the corner sites, where Third street

ent parts of the city. As the earthquake occurred but a little after 5 o'clock in the morning, practically the entire population was in

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