
A City in Ruins

James Hopper didn't sleep well. He was having a nightmare. He heard the sound of horses running. The noise kept getting louder and louder. Then a loud roar shook Hopper out of his bed. A real nightmare had just begun.

The surprised reporter rushed to his hotel window. The building was moving from side-to-side. Hopper heard the roar of bricks coming down. The rear of the three-story building was falling. It crushed the wooden houses below. This is death, Hopper thought. He waited to see what would happen next.

The Big Earthquake

It was early in the morning of April 18, 1906. The birds were singing. A thin moon hung in the sky. The morning weather report said, "Fair and warmer." It was 5:12 A.M.

Then, without warning, it happened. The earth began to shake **violently**. Streets rolled like waves in the ocean. Buildings swung violently from side-to-side and then crashed to the ground.

The **earthquake** lasted 40 seconds. Ten seconds of silence followed. Then a second earthquake, equal to the first, shook the city. Trains were tossed on their sides. People died instantly as they were crushed under **rubble**. Some of those who lived found that their fourth-floor windows were now level with the ground.

The streets quickly filled with people. Most were still in their pajamas. Strange sights were seen everywhere. One man ran along the street with his coat and hat. But he had forgotten his pants. A woman wandered through the streets. She carried a birdcage with four kittens in it. A black bull, freed by the earthquake, ran down the street.

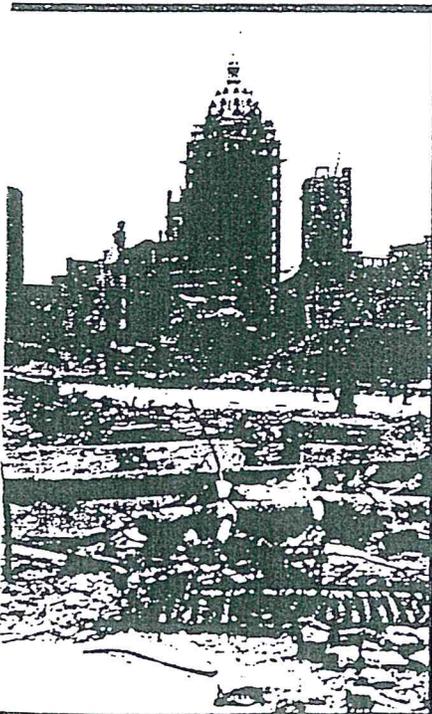
Some people stood in **shocked** silence. Others wanted to talk. Maybe if they talked, they could make some sense out of what had happened.

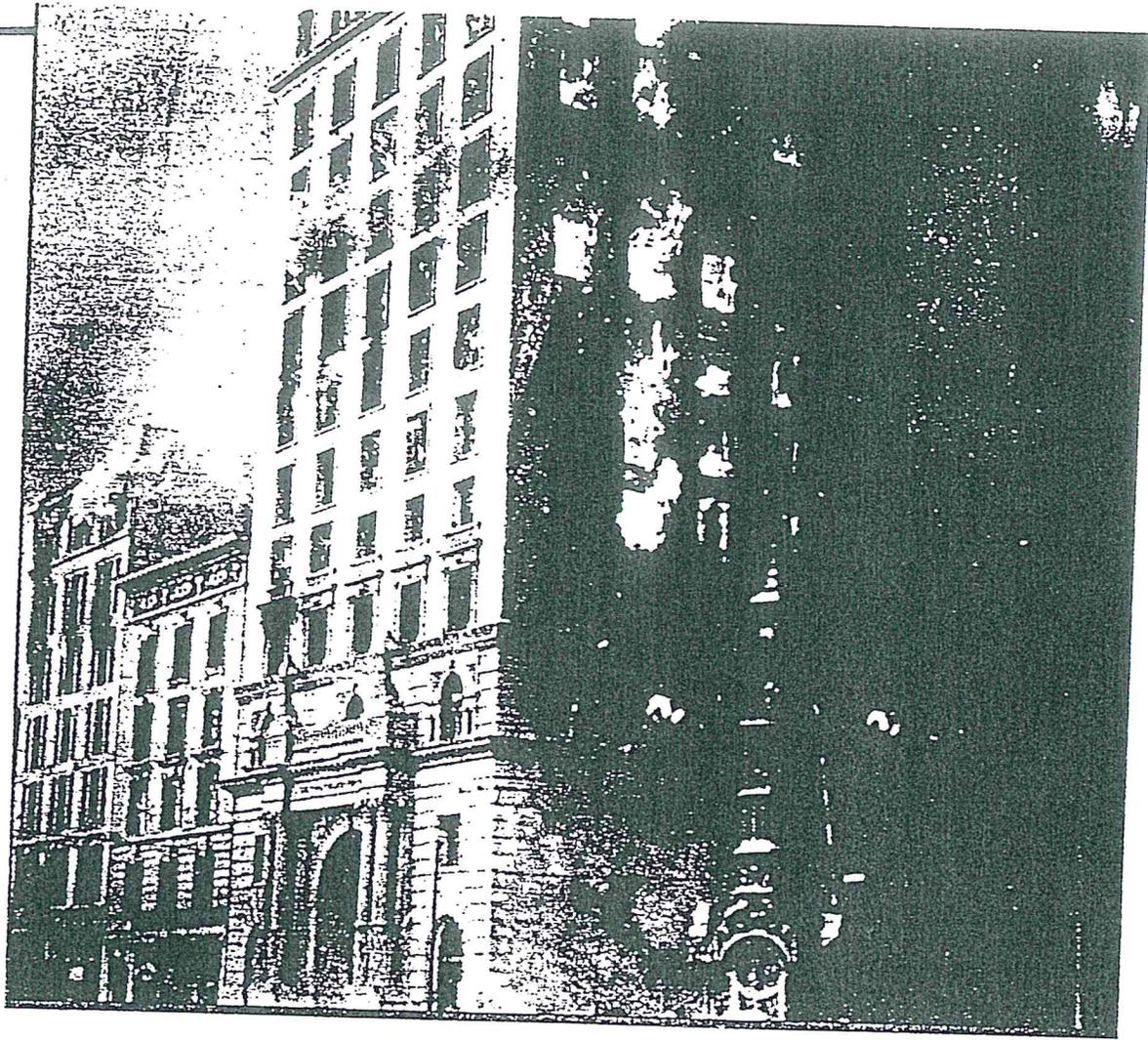
"Quite a rocker, wasn't it?"

"She'll have to shake harder than that to bring this town down."

"Not as bad as the quake in '68."

That was brave talk. But in truth, this was the worst earthquake ever to hit the United States. And the earthquake caused other problems. It broke gas lines and brought down telephone wires. Worst of all, it broke the main water pipes.





Raging Fires

In just a few minutes, dozens of fires started. Because of broken pipes, there was no water to fight the fires. Flames shot up from one end of the city to the other.

Fire horses and engines clattered toward the fires. Firefighters ran from one **hydrant** to another. Sometimes they would find a hydrant that worked. At other times they would use a well. But many times there was no water to be found.

The flames jumped from housetop to housetop. Smoke climbed high above the city. A large, black cloud of smoke could be seen one hundred miles away.

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People grabbed blankets or clothes from their homes. They sat outside their homes waiting. When the fires came too close, they left. Sadly, they dragged whatever they could behind them.

The refugees sat on hilltops watching the fires come toward them. The fires formed a wall three miles long. When the refugees could feel the heat on their faces, they moved on again. There were 250,000 people now without homes.

The fires took everything in their paths. Chinatown went. So did famous buildings. Flames burned The Emporium, the largest store in the West. Fire shot



up the eighteen-story Call Building. It exploded like a firecracker. San Francisco was burning to death.

Fighting Back

The mayor of San Francisco was Eugene Schmitz. Many people saw him as a weak leader. But he came out of this **crisis** a hero. He laid down the law. In a strong voice, he gave his orders.

"Is **looting** a problem? Protect people's property. Order the police and the Army to kill all persons found looting."

"Are people drinking and causing trouble? Then close the liquor stores. **Forbid** the sale of alcohol."

"What about the fires, sir?" someone asked.
"There's no water to fight the fires."

"We'll use **dynamite**," Schmitz ordered. "Get dynamiters from the Army. They can blow up buildings in the path of the flames. That will help stop the fires. When the fires reach the ashes, they'll burn themselves out."

But the dynamite didn't help much. The fires burned on for three days. They turned 510 city blocks into ashes. There was \$500 million in property damage and nearly 700 people dead. Four-fifths of San Francisco was destroyed.

Finally, it was over. Slowly people began to walk back into the city. They picked their way through the ruins. The place was a mess. But the people were not about to give up on their town. They began picking up the rubble. The bricks were still hot and burned their hands. But they could not wait. They took off their coats and rolled up their sleeves.

"Let's go," they said. "Let's get started."

San Francisco would live again.

Do You Remember?

■ Read each sentence below. Write T if the sentence is true. Write F if the sentence is false.

- _____ 1. The earthquake happened at noon.
- _____ 2. The earthquake lasted for hours.
- _____ 3. Many fires broke out after the earthquake.
- _____ 4. There were 250,000 people who lost their homes.
- _____ 5. Chinatown was not damaged.
- _____ 6. Mayor Schmitz ordered the Army to use dynamite.
- _____ 7. Most of San Francisco was destroyed.
- _____ 8. San Francisco would live again.

Express Yourself

■ Pretend that you are James Hopper. Write an article for a magazine. Describe what it felt like to live through the earthquake.

Exploring Words

- Use the words in the box to complete the paragraphs. Reread the paragraphs to be sure they make sense.

| | | | | |
|--------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|
| crisis | rubble | shocked | hydrant | violently |
| forbid | dynamite | refugees | earthquake | looting |

The (1) _____ hit early in the morning. The ground shook (2) _____. People were (3) _____ to see buildings fall. Then the city faced a new (4) _____. Fire raced through the city. Firefighters hooked up hoses to any (5) _____ that would work. People became (6) _____ as they left their homes, running from the fires. Some people began (7) _____ stores.

Mayor Schmitz took action. (8) "_____ the sale of alcohol," he ordered. He also asked the Army to bring in (9) _____. At last the fires stopped. People picked through the (10) _____. They began to build the great city again.