



Charlene Duval, Executive Secretary

cduval@sourisseauacademy.org

Leilani Marshall, Archivist

lmarshall@sourisseauacademy.org

Phone: 408 808-2064

Sourisseau Academy

Smith-Layton Archive presents:

1906 EARTHQUAKE: AS IT ROCKED SAN JOSE

by Lauren Miranda Gilbert

Les Amis (The Friends)
April 2015

Your donations help us purchase historic photos. Thank you!

<http://www.sourisseauacademy.org/>

Awful Result of Earthquake That Has Devasted San Jose and Vicinity

San Jose Evening News April 18, 1906

[33] At 5:13 a.m. on Wednesday, April 18, 1906, a great earthquake ruptured the San Andreas Fault just two miles offshore from San Francisco. It was felt both north and south along the fault line for a total of 296 miles, from southern Oregon to Los Angeles, and east to central Nevada. Though the Richter scale didn't exist in those days, it is estimated that the quake would have registered between 7.7 and 8.25.

As we all know, San Francisco was devastated by both the earthquake and the subsequent fire. More than 3,000 people died and over 28,000 buildings were destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of people were left homeless.

Further south, by comparison, San Jose didn't fare too badly. In fact, most people don't think about the fact that San Jose may have been impacted at all. Well, here's a little tour around downtown (mostly), where the bulk of the damage was done. Stories are what make up our lives, and San Jose had a few to tell that day.



[34] The grand Hotel Vendome on North First Street was the crown jewel of San Jose hotels at the turn-of-the-century. Completed in 1888, most of its 150 rooms were suites, and each included a bathroom. In 1903, a 3-story annex was built just northeast of the main building that was clearly no match for the Great Quake three years later. Fourteen people were staying in the structure when it collapsed, and one man died. The main building came through relatively unscathed. Afterwards, the owners of the hotel thought better of replacing the annex and built an enclosed swimming pool instead.



[35] Architect Willoughby Edbrooke's design for the post office was a vision of endurance and stability. This federal building had a concrete foundation embedded with steel pillars and topped by 3-4 feet thick walls and floors. The stately structure with a beautiful bell tower opened in early 1895. But when the quake hit less than a dozen years later, the tower fell. Though the damage appears extensive from this image, it was largely due to the collapsed clock tower and part of the roof. The rest of the building was sound. The redesign included a new clock, and a more modest tower. The new clock for the tower was called a "Century Tower Clock" – designed to last a century, by clockmaker Nels Johnson. Indeed, more than 100 years after the quake, the clock is still there and in working condition in the landmark building.



[36] At the southeast corner of Santa Clara and Lightston Alley stood the elegant Stone Building, which was built in 1875 by Dr. William H. Stone. Though Dr. Stone had died in 1882, his widow still owned it when the Elks Club moved into the building in 1902. Apart from the beautiful cupola lying on the ground, one would never know from this rear view shot that it was the Stone Building following the great quake. The Elks Club organization regrouped and by the following year moved to North Second Street. Their members were no doubt all relieved to be absent from the building at the time of the quake.



[37] In 1903, 24-year-old Sid Grauman leased space on the south side of Santa Clara just east of First Street and opened the Unique Theatre. His idea was to combine vaudeville acts with moving picture shows, as his father had done at two theatres in San Francisco. Actor and comedian Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle developed his talent there in the amateur acts and also served as ticket taker and mop boy. Al Jolson made one of his first appearances at the Unique Theatre. When the earthquake devastated the building, Sid Grauman moved to Hollywood. There, he opened a string of movie houses, including the famed Grauman’s Chinese and Egyptian theatres.



[38] In 1898, the first school dedicated solely to San Jose high school students opened on the southwest corner of San Fernando and Seventh Streets. The spacious three-story school was beautifully designed by the local architectural firm, Jacob Lenzen & Son. The earthquake did tremendous damage to the eight-year old building, as both the roof and walls collapsed. The saving grace was the early hour of the quake – if it had happened later in the morning when school was in session, the loss of life would have been catastrophic.



[39] St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, located at the northwest corner of Santa Clara and Ninth Streets, clearly suffered extensive damage in the quake. The tower and front wall fell across Santa Clara Street, and while the choir gallery remained intact, it was heaped with debris from the fallen roof. Additionally, the rear wall fell inward while the east wall fell outward. Undaunted by the destruction, parishioners set about rebuilding on the same site. The new church, completed in less than a year, served its parish for sixty-seven years, when a more modern structure replaced it.



[40] In the mid-1870s, Frenchman Edward Auzerais and A.E. Pomeroy opened this large mercantile store, selling groceries, hardware, crockery and agricultural implements. It stood on the southwest corner of Market and Post Streets. At the time of the quake, the store, then called the *Home Union*, was owned by William McGinty. Note how the quake peeled away the façade of the building and dramatically exposed much of the upper floor. Fortunately, neither of the original owners was still around to witness the destruction. Edward Auzerais had returned to France and passed away in 1896 and Pomeroy was gone also. The structure was rebuilt and thrived as a mercantile store, among other uses, until about 1943. For more about Edward Auzerais and the building he built with his brother John, see the next image.



[41] Edward Auzerai and his brother John were significant figures in downtown business history. The Auzerai brothers arrived here from France by way of a venture first in Valparaiso, Chile. Edward came in 1850 followed by John in 1851. They built several successful businesses including a mercantile store, and John did well branching off into the banking industry. In the mid-1860s, the brothers built the sumptuous brick and marble Auzerai House, a hotel with 110 well-appointed rooms filled with furniture imported from Paris. Designed by Theodore Lenzen, the three-story structure was the largest building in San Jose at the time it was constructed. Presidents and dignitaries spoke to crowds from the balcony overlooking Santa Clara Street. The Auzerai House stood on the north side of Santa Clara Street between Market and First Streets. By the time of the earthquake, it has been converted to a business block. As can be seen in this photo, it suffered significant damage in the quake. The Auzerai House was rebuilt and continued in business until 1946, then called the Grant Building.



[42] The Hall of Justice building stood on the southeast corner of St. James and Market Streets. The fine sandstone structure was designed by noted architects Frank Wolfe and Charles McKenzie. It was built with stone from the Goodrich Quarry near New Almaden, which had also supplied the stone for the San Jose Post Office and the original buildings on the Stanford University campus. The most highly skilled craftsman created a beautifully ornamented structure that was awaiting dedication when the earthquake struck. The damage was more severe than may appear evident from this photograph, and the Hall of Justice had to be almost completely rebuilt. The final result was considerably less ornate than the original design. It stood until it was demolished in 1962. The superior court building stands there now.



[43] James David Phelan, born in San Francisco in 1861, eventually became mayor of that fair city and a U.S. senator. He and his wealthy father owned numerous businesses in San Francisco and San Jose, long before he built his home in Saratoga and named it *Villa Montalvo*. The Phelan Building in San Jose stood on the southwest corner of Market and Post Streets (then El Dorado Street). It housed Thad W. Hobson's clothiers on the first floor, and offices and apartments on the upper floors. When the quake hit, the building collapsed, as is evident from this dramatic photograph. A dentist, Dr. Warren DeCrow died in the collapse. His wife and one other woman were recovered from the wreckage after being trapped for a number of hours. The exposed building next door was built by Peter Overton Minor, an early pioneer. Because of James Phelan's previous civic involvement, he was called to assist with the recovery in San Francisco. By July 1906, Phelan became Chairman of the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Relief and Red Cross Funds.



[44] The total cost of earthquake damage in San Jose was in the millions of dollars, and much of it was due to destruction on this block alone. The west side of South Second Street between Santa Clara and San Fernando Streets looked a bit like a war zone after the quake. The lovely Louise Building, seen here on the left about a dozen years beforehand, suffered great damage from the quake, but even worse from the fire that followed. The smaller structures just to the north, and then the five-story Dougherty Building all shared the same devastating fate. The Dougherty, built by James Dougherty in 1895, held no insurance. It was a \$100,000 loss. Offices there held historic San Jose weather records, as well as 24,000 glass negatives, which were the life's work of artist and photographer, Andrew P. Hill.



[45] Painter and businessman Michael Lenzen was part of a well-known and talented San Jose family. Older brothers Jacob and Theodore were highly esteemed local architects, with Jacob designing the Vendome Hotel and Theodore, the Auzerais House, both damaged in the 1906 Earthquake. Michael Lenzen and his sons also worked in the building business, but directed their efforts toward interior finishes such as paint and wallpaper. Their business stood on the south side of San Fernando Street, between Market and First Streets. Note the signs covering the large beams that are stabilizing the building – “of course it’s ‘Lenzen’,” and also the note on the window, “we’re here.” Keep calm and carry on, indeed!