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Today in History - April 18

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Today's Stories: **Earthquake!**



Earthquake!

At 5:12 a.m. on **April 18,** 1906, a magnitude 8.3 (Richter Scale) earthquake struck San Francisco. With thousands of un-reinforced brick buildings and closely-spaced wooden Victorian dwellings, the city was poorly prepared for the quake. Collapsed buildings, broken chimneys, and a water shortage due to broken mains, led to several large fires that soon coalesced into a citywide holocaust. The fire raged for three days, sweeping over nearly a quarter of the city, including the entire downtown area.



Ruins of San Francisco from the Site of the Mechanics' Pavilion. Oakland, Calif: Smith Bros., c1906. Panoramic Photographs. Prints & Photographs Division

Over 3,000 people are estimated to have died as a result of the disaster. For those who survived, the first few weeks were hard; as aid poured in from around the country, thousands slept in tents in city parks, and citizens were asked to do their cooking in the street. A severe shortage of public transportation made a taxicab out of anything on wheels. Numerous businesses relocated temporarily to Oakland, and many refugees found lodgings outside the city. Most of the cities of central California were badly damaged. However, reconstruction proceeded at a furious pace, and by 1908, San Francisco was well on the way to recovery.



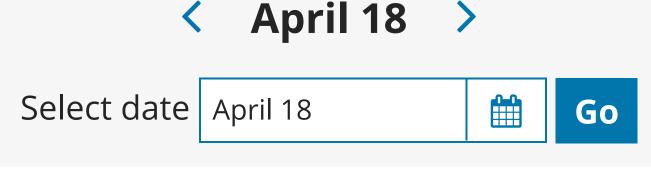
Three Years After, San Francisco, April 1909. San Francisco, Cal.: R.J. Waters Aerial Photograph Co., April 1909. Panoramic Photographs. Prints & Photographs Division

Learn More

- Search on *San Francisco earthquake* in Panoramic Photographs to find more photographs of San Francisco around the time of the 1906 earthquake and fire.
- Images of San Francisco throughout its history are found in the Library's pictorial collections.
- Search Chronicling America, a collection of historic American newspapers, to find articles about the earthquake. Start with Great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906: Topics in Chronicling America.
- Included in the Library's American Treasures Exhibition are several artifacts from the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906. Newspapers, images, and eyewitness accounts document the cataclysmic scale of the earthquake.
- The extraordinary circumstances resulting from the earthquake are demonstrated by "Proclamation by the Mayor" found in the collection, Printed Ephemera: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera.
- collection, The Chinese in California 1880-1925 . Search on earthquake to find images of the Chinatown section of San Francisco.

• The impact of the earthquake on the Chinese immigrant population is represented in the

- Before and After the Great Earthquake and Fire: Early Films of San Francisco, 1897 to 1916 consists of twenty-six films of San Francisco before and after the 1906 disaster. Seven films describe the great earthquake and fire. The collection also includes background information on Early San Francisco.
- Search Today in History on *San Francisco* to learn about more events in the history of this great city such as Andrew Smith Hallidie's cable car and the 1896 opening of the Sutro Baths.
- Visit the University of California Berkeley's Bancroft Library presentation The 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire ...



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