



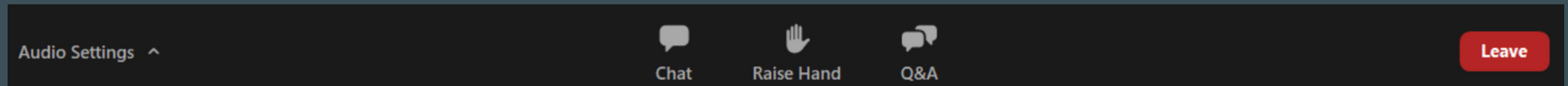
# INSIDE THE VAULT

The 1906 San Francisco Earthquake  
with Matthew Davenport  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2024

☆☆☆  
THE  
GILDER LEHRMAN  
INSTITUTE  
of  
AMERICAN HISTORY

☆☆☆

# How to Participate



- If you would like to ask a question, you can use the Q&A feature.
- We will be answering audience questions throughout the session.
- The views expressed here are those of the historian.

## For Security and Privacy

- Your microphone is automatically muted.
- Your camera is automatically turned off.



# Matthew Davenport



Matthew Davenport's first book, *First Over There*, a finalist for the 2015 Guggenheim-Lehrman Prize in Military History, was acclaimed as “a brilliant work for every library” in a starred review from *Library Journal* and was heralded by Pulitzer Prize-winning historian James McPherson as “military history at its best.” His 2023 book, *The Longest Minute: The Great San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906*, was hailed as a “remarkably granular account of the city’s most devastating tremor and its aftermath” by the *New York Times*, “an essential piece of San Francisco history” by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and a “vivid and meticulous recounting of one of America’s largest natural disasters” in a starred review by *Publishers Weekly*. He has been a contributing writer for the *Wall Street Journal Book Review* and salon.com and is a member of the Authors Guild. A native of Missouri and a former prosecutor, he practices law in North Carolina.

# Today's Document

Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack, April 20, 1906,  
(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC08697)

LAW OFFICES  
SILAS W. MACK  
PACIFIC GROVE MONTEREY

Monterey City, California, Apr. 20, 1906.

Clara W. Mack,  
Ayers Cliff, P.O., Canada.  
Dear Mother:-

I sent you a telegram yesterday worded "No damage whatever at Pacific Grove nor Monterey. All well". Most likely it is still in the office at Salinas and, for all I know a letter may reach you first. I might have written before but no mail has yet gone out since the 17th, and I do not know where it will go.

Wednesday, April 18th, will go down in history as the date of the most terrible calamity the United States, and particularly California, has ever known. I do not feel much like writing about it. Would feel better if I could cry but I cannot.

We were awakened at 5:15 A.M. by the shock of the earthquake. There have been several since I have been in California but only two before this were sufficiently pronounced so that I remember them. They did no damage. This one was much more violent even here and was accompanied by a dreadful rumbling noise and roaring, not particularly loud but coming as it were from mighty forces at war in the distance. The house swayed back and forth, it seemed quite a while but I think not more than 25 seconds, then with a sudden wrench stopped. I had gotten out of bed and rushed to the front door but it was so foggy outside that I could see nothing, the first fog of the season. The shocks continued throughout the day but were so light frequently as to be hardly noticeable. There was not the least damage done in the house and no dishes, vases or anything breakable hurled to the floor. And this was the general experience in Monterey and Pacific Grove.

At the Hotel Del Monte it was different. This establishment had some 40 chimneys, very large and since the introduction of steam for heating, useless but still retained, though there had been talk of removing them, to give the appearance of some baronial castle. These swayed back and forth and when the final wrench came at least one-half of them came toppling over onto the roof and fell with deafening roar to the ground, and the remaining half were so damaged that all of since been removed. Unfortunately there was one chimney towering far above the rest from the tower over the main entrance. This struck the roof and went through into one of the chambers where a bridal couple were sleeping carrying them bedstead and all into the chamber below. He was instantly killed and she has since died. No one else was hurt here.

None of us, for a moment, realized what was going on elsewhere. But as the day wore on we found that we were isolated from the rest of the world. Then parties got through from Salinas and reported over a \$1,000,000.00 damage there but all communication from the rest of  
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Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack

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April 20, 1906

“Wednesday, April 18th. will go down in history as the date of the most terrible calamity the United States, and particularly California, has ever known.”



Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack, April 20, 1906  
(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC08697)

# Map of San Francisco as it appeared in 1906



Daniel Huffman,  
*Map of San  
Francisco, 1906,*  
(Daniel Huffman)

# Down Market St. from corner of Kearney

## 1905



*Down Market St. from  
corner of Kearney, 1905  
(UC Berkeley, Bancroft  
Library)*

Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack

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April 20, 1906

“Now, do not worry as we are no more apt to get killed by earthquake than you are by lightning. Mt. Vesuvius is now repeating the scenes of Pompeii and Herculaneum and in 2000 years San Francisco may be again destroyed. But I expect to move before then.”



Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack, April 20, 1906  
(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC08697)

# Collapsed building on Golden Gate Avenue, near Hyde Street

1906

*Collapsed building on  
Golden Gate Avenue, near  
Hyde Street, 1906*  
(San Francisco History  
Center, San Francisco  
Public Library)



# Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack

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April 20, 1906

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Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack, April 20, 1906.

(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC08697)

# Sunken Valencia St. Hotel

## 1906

*Sunken Valencia St.  
Hotel after earthquake.  
Valencia St. between  
Eighteenth and  
Nineteenth Sts., 1906*  
(San Francisco History  
Center, San Francisco  
Public Library)



# Upheaval at Sixth & Howard Sts

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## 1906

*San Francisco Earthquake  
and Fire, 1906. Upheaval at  
Sixth & Howard Sts, 1906*  
(San Francisco History  
Center, San Francisco  
Public Library)



# Looking Down Sacramento St., 1906

## April 18, 1906



Arnold Genthe,  
*Looking Down  
Sacramento St.*, April  
18, 1906. (San Francisco  
History Center, San  
Francisco Public  
Library)

Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack

April 20, 1906

“I have talked with several Pacific Grove people who were there and they say that the sight was terrible though the direct effect of the shock was not so noticeable. It was the fire.”



Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack, April 20, 1906  
(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC08697)

# San Francisco during the fire 1906



*San Francisco during the  
fire, 1906 (San Francisco  
History Center, San  
Francisco Public Library)*



# Kohler and Chase Piano Building 1906

Doc Rogers, *Kohler and  
Chase Piano Building in  
San Francisco, 1906.*  
(San Francisco History  
Center, San Francisco  
Public Library)



# Bert Tuttle to Mary Butler

April 18, 1906



Bert Tuttle to Mary Butler,  
April 19, 1906 (Courtesy of the  
San Francisco History Center,  
San Francisco Public Library)

1. April - 18 - 1906  
10 AM  
Dear Mary -  
S. F. suffered a very heavy  
earthquake shock about 5:15 this morning.  
Hundreds of buildings were destroyed and  
nearly all the large ones are more or less  
damaged. all the stores are closed to day  
and the streets thronged with people. To  
add to the horror, fire broke out in  
every direction and the water mains being  
broken by the shock the firemen are  
almost helpless. Solid blocks along  
Market street are burning now. The  
Emporium, the Call, Examiner and in  
fact nearly every large building on the  
south side of Market St. is burning or  
is a heap of debris. I went down

# Market Street Burning

April 18, 1906



(Courtesy of the  
Edward J. Torney, Sr.  
Family Collection)



# The Call Building Burning

April 18, 1906

William J. Street, *The Call Building, Hearst Building Lotte's Fountain at 3rd and Market Street View from Kearny Street*, April 18, 1906  
(San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library)



# The Last Fires Burning

April 20, 1906



(Courtesy of the  
San Francisco  
History Center,  
San Francisco  
Public Library)



Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack

April 20, 1906

“Well, I must close. It will be strange if this letter is very well written as I do not feel at all like writing. The air is very hot and at night we can see the glare of the fire reflected in the northern sky.”



Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack, April 20, 1906  
(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC08697)

# Refugees on Market Street

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## April 20, 1906

W. J. Street, *Refugees  
on Market Street, San  
Francisco Earthquake  
and Fire, 1906.*

(Courtesy of the San  
Francisco History  
Center, San Francisco  
Public Library)



# Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack

## April 20, 1906



Silas W. Mack to Clara W.  
Mack, April 20, 1906  
(Gilder Lehrman  
Institute, GLC08697)

LAW OFFICES  
SILAS W. MACK  
PACIFIC GROVE MONTEREY

Monterey City, California, Apr. 20, 1906.

Clara W. Mack,  
Ayers Cliff, P.O., Canada.  
Dear Mother:-

I sent you a telegram yesterday worded "No damage whatever at Pacific Grove nor Monterey. All well". Most likely it is still in the office at Salinas and, for all I know a letter may reach you first. I might have written before but no mail has yet gone out since the 17th, and I do not know when it will go.

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At the Hotel Del Monte it was different. This establishment had some 40 chimneys, very large and since the introduction of steam for heating, useless but still retained, though there had been talk of removing them, to give the appearance of some baronial castle. These swayed back and forth and when the final wrench came at least one-half of them came toppling over onto the roof and fell with deafening roar to the ground, and the remaining half were so damaged that all of since been removed. Unfortunately there was one chimney towering far above the rest from the tower over the main entrance. This struck the roof and went through into one of the chambers where a bridal couple were sleeping carrying them bedstead and all into the chamber below. He was instantly killed and she has since died. No one else was hurt here.

None of us, for a moment, realized what was going on elsewhere. But as the day wore on we found that we were isolated from the rest of the world. Then parties got through from Salinas and reported over a \$1,000,000.00 damage there but all communication from the rest of  
1.

# Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack

April 20, 1906

“None of us, for a moment, realized what was going on elsewhere. But as the day wore on we found that we were isolated from the rest of the world. Then parties got through from Salinas and reported over a \$1,000,000.00 damage there but all communication from the rest of world still cut off. The enterprise of the great San Francisco newspapers is such that we knew in the afternoon, as the hours sped by and no boats put into port for news, that San Francisco must be having troubles of her own.”



Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack, April 20, 1906  
(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC08697)

# 1906 Voter Registration and 1900 Census for Silas Mack

## PACIFIC GROVE PRECINCT NO. 2

No.	NAME	Party	Age	OCCUPATION	POST OFFICE
69	Head, Herbert W. ....		46	Retired ....	Pacific Grove
70	Higby, Geo. R. ....	Rep	30	Cleaner and Dyer	Pacific Grove
71	Hoyt, Hubbard McKee..	Rep	51	Physician .....	Pacific Grove
72	Horning, Joseph W. ...	Pro	32	Carpenter ....	Pacific Grove
73	Jackson, Guilford E. ...	Rep	24	Blacksmith ....	Pacific Grove
74	Jenkins, Walter J. ....	Rep	55	Mill Foreman ...	Pacific Grove
75	Jorgensen, Henry G. ...	Rep	26	Attorney ....	Pacific Grove
76	Johnson, Curns ....	Rep	77	Carpenter ....	Pacific Grove
77	Jost, Geo. H. ....	Rep	75	Retired ....	Pacific Grove
78	Kenney, Chas. T. ....	Rep	35	Painter ....	Pacific Grove
79	King, Frank I. ....	Rep	28	Carpenter ....	Pacific Grove
80	King, James H. ....	Rep	62	Contractor ....	Pacific Grove
81	Knowles, David L. ....	Rep	68	Retired ....	Pacific Grove
82	Leek, Jasper O. ....	Rep	41	Clerk ....	Pacific Grove
83	Lewis, Edward B. ....	Rep	54	Jeweler ....	Pacific Grove
84	Looman, Cecil B. ....	Rep	26	Laborer ....	Pacific Grove
85	Lowe, Jesse R. ....	Rep	24	Painter ....	Pacific Grove
86	Mapes, Cassius N. ....	Rep	49	Merchant ....	Pacific Grove
87	Mapes, Wm. R. ....	Rep	57	Real Estate ....	Pacific Grove
88	Mack, Silas W. ....	Rep	43	Attorney ....	Pacific Grove
89	Mead, Lester A. ....	Rep	36	Jeweler ....	Pacific Grove
90	Mixter, Marshall L. ....	Rep	69	Retired ....	Pacific Grove

Pacific Grove Precinct No. 2 Voter

Registration Page, 1906 (Ancestry.com)

## TWELFTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES.

State California } SCHEDULE No. 1.—POPULATION. { Supervisor's District No. 2 Sheet No. 2  
County Monterey } Enumeration District No. 6  
Township or other division of county Gonzales Township Name of Institution, \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of incorporated city, town, or village, within the above-named division, Gonzales Ward of city, \_\_\_\_\_  
Enumerated by me on the 3d day of June, 1900, Mrs. Belle Kelly Enumerator.

LOCATION.			NAME	RELATION.	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION.							NATIVITY.			CITIZENSHIP.	OCCUPATION, TRADE, OR PROFESSION.	EDUCATION.			OWNERSHIP OF HOME.
Street.	House Number.	Number of family in the house, in the whole of the city.	of each person whose place of abode on June 1, 1900, was in this family.  Enter surname first, then the given name and middle initial, if any.  Include every person living on June 1, 1900. Omit children born since June 1, 1900.	Relationship of each person to the head of the family.	Color or race.	Sex.	DATE OF BIRTH.		Age at last birthday.	Whether married, married										

# Main tower on south side of Hotel del Monte 1906

G. S. Crosby, *Main  
tower on south side of  
Hotel del Monte, 1906  
earthquake, 1906*  
(Monterey Historical  
Society)



fine  
america

# Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack

April 20, 1906

“At the Hotel Del Monte it was different. This establishment had some 40 chimneys, very large and since the introduction of steam for heating, useless but still retained, though there had been talk of removing them...Unfortunately there was one chimney towering far above the rest from teh tower over the main entrance. This struck the roof and went through into one of the chambers where a bridal couple were sleeping carrying them bedstead and all into the chamber below. He was instantly killed and she has since died. No one else was hurt here.”



Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack, April 20, 1906,  
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# VIOLENT EARTHQUAKE

## Bride and Groom Killed at Del Monte

## Great Damage Done to Hotel

## Much Property Destroyed at Salinas and Hollister

About twelve minutes past five o'clock on Wednesday morning the people of this section of the State were aroused from their slumbers by an earthquake shock of considerable violence. The shock lasted for nearly two minutes and shook buildings until the timbers creaked and in some instances windows were broken in this city.

In the stores cans and boxes, glassware and other movable articles were thrown to the floor and in this way some damage was done.

At Hotel Del Monte the damage was greater than at any other point

linas river cannot be crossed for the reason that the approaches to the structure were demolished by the earthquake. It is reported that the water in the river is hot, but what truth there is in the rumor is not known.

It is said that there was great deal of damage done at Santa Cruz, and at Salinas the damage is reported to have reached several hundred thousand dollars. Fort & Sanborn's big store is report a total wreck, the Abbott House badly damaged.

At Castroville much damage was done, but no particulars are obtain-

cured during the day, about ten all, since the severe shock of morning.

Among the buildings damaged Salinas are the Abbott House, Opera House, the Jeffrey House, Masonic Temple, the Elk's Hall, Wahlrick's store and the High school building. The wagon bridge across the Salinas river is wrecked. The damage will, it is said, reach a million dollars. All the telephones in the city are knocked out and the phone service suspended.

Admiral Goodrich, in a letter to the Merchants' Association of Monterey, states that three war ships of the Pacific Squadron of the United States navy will visit Monterey some time during the first three days of May. The secretary has been instructed to write the Admiral and request that the ships be sent early enough to arrive in Monterey on May 1st.

Henry P. Lomas and wife of Cresco, Iowa, are guests at Hotel El Carmelo.

Mrs. E. D. Silliman of Philadelphia, are registered at Hotel El Carmelo.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leads on to fortune."

'Tis said that opportunity comes once to every door. Do not fail to take advantage of this one, for it may be your golden opportunity.

Consider well, how would you like to be one of an industrial corporation that earned over 50 per cent last year on the actual money invested in merchandise and over 9 per cent on the total capital invested for the past two years, including the advertising fund. Listen, Fortune knocks once at every door."

A Corporation only two years old manufacturing a staple commodity

were all either thrown down or cracked by the violence of the tremor.

As they fell they crashed through the roof and great damage was done, and there were two fatalities.

Mr. and Mrs. E. O. Ranzer, who registered from Bisbee, Arizona, Tuesday evening, were occupying a room near the high tower at the hotel entrance, and the massive chimney which stood by its side swayed back and forth and fell with a deafening roar. In its descent the chimney went through the roof directly over the bed in which Mr. and Mrs. Ranzer were sleeping and its great weight carried the bed and its occupants through the floor of the room to the room below. Mr. Ranzer was instantly killed, but Mrs. Ranzer lived until nearly noon when she expired. Her skull was fractured and a portion of it was broken off by the falling brick. She did not regain consciousness, after the accident. The young people had recently been married and were on their wedding trip.

The roof and verandas of the hotel were greatly damaged by the falling bricks and in other instances than the one related they fell into the rooms of the hotel but fortunately the rooms were unoccupied. It is estimated that the damage to the hotel will amount to anywhere from twenty thousand to fifty thousand dollars.

Cracks in the ground were found at various places on the grounds, varying in width from an inch to five or six inches and from a few inches to several feet in depth. Near the pumping plant at the artificial lake the ground sunk several inches.

Just beyond the Del Monte grounds the railroad track sunk from two to three feet at the point where it runs between two small lakes.

No trains either arrived at or departed from the Grove on Wednesday. The track was repaired by noon where it sunk near the Del Monte, but at some point above which was not known at the time of going to press for the reason that the telegraph wires were all down, the damage was supposed to be so great that trains could not be run. A landslide in the canyon of the Pajaro river near Logan is reported to have covered the railroad track and carried with it the telegraph poles.

The railroad bridge across the Sa-

luis City is said to be very badly damaged but to what amount is not known.

It is impossible to enumerate all the damage done in the Grove, but it is trifling in most instances.

In the living rooms of Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Wentworth back of their store in the Del Mar belock the plastering was badly cracked and some of it sifted down upon the floor.

Next door the large window glass was broken in the office of the Pacific Grove Transfer and the windows of W. B. Wood, the grocer, the Grove Cafe and J. K. Paul's furniture store were also broken.

In N. B. Burlingame's grocery some crockery and glassware was thrown from the shelves, and broken, the damage, however, was trifling.

It is supposed that there has been considerable damage done south of this point, as there has been no telegraphic communications south of King city since Wednesday morning.

Mr. Townsend came over from Hollister Wednesday afternoon in an automobile to notify his employer, J. O. Cox, that his store was badly damaged by the earthquake. Mr. Townsend also reports that the Granger's Union store is a mass of debris, and that four other brick stores are total wrecks. A dentist named Griffith was killed and his wife is not expected to live, so serious are her injuries. They were occupying rooms in one of the brick buildings which collapsed.

As Mr. Townsend came through San Juan he noticed that the old mission has been partially destroyed.

The Academy at Watsonville is wrecked.

At Santa Cruz the St. George Hotel is badly damaged. In a lumber camp of the Loma Prieta Lumber Co. near Santa Cruz 17 men are reported buried alive by a land slide. The Santa Cruz high school and the public school building for the lower grades are reported badly damaged. It is stated that a mile of track in the canyon of the Pajaro river is buried by a landslide, and that at Aromas a train was wrecked and 300 feet of the track destroyed. The tunnel is reported unsafe and the bridge at Chitenden a wreck.

Several distinct shocks have oc-

ies generally throughout the 12 Pacific Coast States and for which there is no limit to the supply and demand offers you a limited number of shares of their treasury stock.

Why is this stock offered, is the first question asked by the investor. The Company needs more machinery, more traveling salesmen and a large quantity of goods in stock; to be able to carry larger stocks in every hamlet, not only in the 12 States noted, but to the trade in every State in the Union and the islands of the sea.

The product is national. It is pure food. There is no limit to the territory that can be worked and with money at command to take advantage of all favorable conditions?

A few thousand shares only, will be disposed of and may be issued any number from 25 shares up. The par value is \$1 and in order to secure the money needed quickly, the directors have decided to make a discount of 20 cents per share. This is the amount usually paid to brokers and agents but they are disposed to allow the investor the first chance to gain it. The money may be paid at once or in partial payments.

Here is your chance to invest money, not only for a sure profit but to help build up an enterprise in this State that will bring in large amounts of money from all parts of the world to be paid out here in wages and dividends, for the good are as staple as gold.

One of the advantages in turning out our self-rising B. B. B. Flour is that we do not need a large amount of money invested in buildings and the manufacturing plant. Another advantage is, our advertising fund for this year is fully provided for and we are advertising in about one hundred publications throughout the States noted.

We have 83 stockholders now but we want 500. We have the best goods and we will have the largest and strongest Corporation in our list in the United States. Shall we consider you one of us? Who will be first? Don't get left. Send your name to the

ALLEN'S B. B. B. FLOUR CO.  
263 S. Market St., San Jose, Cal.

Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack

April 20, 1906

“We have not yet scarcely begun to realize the extent of the disaster. Thousands upon thousands of destitute people are headed this way and we must help take care of them. Congress has voted \$1,000,000.00 for relief of S.F. but what is that among so many? San Jose, Palo Alto, and other wealthy cities in the line of march, are themselves damaged to a great extent. It is said that Stanford University buildings are nearly all wrecked and \$5,000,000.00 will not replace them.”



Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack, April 20, 1906  
(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC08697)

# Damage to Memorial Church on Stanford University campus 1906



*Damage to Memorial  
Church, 1906*  
(Courtesy of the  
Stanford Archives)

View southeast from  
Clay St. above Polk  
toward Nob Hill  

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1906



Padilla Photo, *San Francisco fire. [View southeast from Clay St. above Polk toward Nob Hill.]*, 1906 (UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library)



# Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack

April 20, 1906

“350,000 people homeless and the number of killed will never be known as they were mostly cremated, or will be when the fire is finally extinguished. The earthquake shattered the watermains and although building after building was blown up by dynamite nothing could stop the progress of the flames. I have talked with several Pacific Grove people who were there and they say that the sight was terrible though the direct effect of the shock was not so noticeable. It was the fire. The great skyscrapers stood the earthquake quite well but fires at once broke out in twenty places, mostly caused by electric wires”



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# Refugee camp one week after disaster

1906



*Refugee camp one  
week after disaster,  
1906 (Courtesy of  
the Bancroft Library)*



Silas W. Mack to Clara W. Mack

April 20, 1906

“What the effect will be on Monterey and Pacific Grove it is very difficult to say. It may be even beneficial or it may be very injurious. These two towns stand on a peninsula of granite formation and no earthquake is likely to damage them to any great extent..S.F. was build up on sand dunes, or eroded land, which is worse. There is no doubt, however, that San Francisco will be rebuilt and in a far grander style than before. Building materials of all kinds will go away up in price and labor as well.”



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# San Francisco, one year later

## April 18, 1907



*Market St. One Year "After,"*  
April 18, 1907 (Courtesy of the  
San Francisco History Center,  
San Francisco Public Library)

# Upcoming Programs

## INSIDE THE VAULT:

- February 1, 2024: Abraham Lincoln's refusal to pardon slave trader Nathaniel Gordon with Dr. Jonathan White (Christopher Newport University)
- March 7, 2024: The Overland Trail with Dr. Sarah Keyes (University of Nevada, Reno)
- April 4, 2024: Japanese Servicemen in World War II with author Bruce Henderson (winner of the 2022 Gilder Lehrman Military History Prize)

## BOOK BREAKS: January 7 at 2 p.m. ET (11 a.m. PT)

- Elizabeth Varon will discuss her book *Longstreet: The Confederate General Who Defied the South*.

