

CHRONICLE

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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ALARUMS AND DIVERSIONS: DISASTERS AT CAL

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View of north Berkeley and the campus, *California Monthly*, 17: 2 (October 1923).

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

CHRONICLE



JULY



1923

A WORD TO OUR READERS

IN 1898 PROFESSOR BERNARD MOSES established *The University of California Chronicle*. He saw that “there were and would be public addresses at the University and documents relating to the affairs of the institution that ought to be preserved and made readily available.”* That *Chronicle*, appearing quarterly between 1898 and 1933, provided its readers with intelligent and entertaining accounts of contemporary events in the University’s social, academic, and administrative life. Moreover, the *Chronicle* no doubt assisted in creating and fostering an identity, crucial not only for the campus community but also in mediating the University’s dealings with the public.

Today our institutional identity might appear to be firmly established, but institutional memory is ebbing. Every year thousands of new students (along with faculty members and administrators) enter the University’s campuses with little knowledge of the institution beyond its admissions requirements and perhaps its reputation for radicalism in the 1960s. And every year almost as many students leave knowing little more about their alma mater than when they entered. While institutional identity will and must evolve, it should maintain a self-consciousness of its direction by acknowledging its past. Without memory there is no identity; without identity the University is left as a mere collection of disparate buildings and people.

It is with this in mind that we, the Editorial Board, are now reviving *The University of California Chronicle*, in spirit if not in content. Like the original, the new *Chronicle* occasionally will record noteworthy current events and people. Our focus, however, will be on teasing from the records—literary, archival, oral, and pictorial—interesting and illuminating episodes from the University’s past and presenting them for the *Chronicle*’s readers. The editors and contributors intend, in this way, to increase the store of institutional memory and thereby to revitalize institutional identity and enhance community.

The Editorial Board

* This quotation is from Moses’ unpublished autobiography (The Bancroft Library). Bernard Moses was the University’s first Professor of History, serving from 1875 to 1930, and with his colleagues of that era, instrumental in effecting Cal’s transition to a modern research institution—promoting such “innovations” as Ph.D. programs, scholarly research and publications (many of which appeared in the original *Chronicle*), and undergraduate specialization in particular branches of knowledge.

THE DAILY San Francisco Examiner **6 A. M. EXTRA**

75 MISSING, 6 FEARED DEAD
BERKELEY PROBES

EXTRA San Francisco Chronicle **BERKELEY**
Towns in North State

FIRE SWEEPS BERKELEY
MYSTERY OF DESTROYER CRASH DEEPENS

LAI **IN RUINS**
HUNT BODIES
EVERY CHIMNEY YES!

Los Angeles Examiner
BERKELEY FIRE LOSS \$10,000,000

1500 BERKELEY HOMES BURN
IN RUINS:
YESTERDAY A HOME

GAUNT, RAGGED RUINS: TAKEN FROM A BERKELEY HILLTOP
BERKELEY'S LOSSES
\$10,000,000

Oakland Tribune
1,000 HOUSES ARE BURNED
Berkeley Disaster Reaches \$10,000,000

San Francisco
FIRE RAZES BERKELEY HOMES

DAILY CALIFORNIAN
ESTIMATE OF DAMAGES:
\$15,000,000 IS TOTAL FOR STATE

Berkeley
IDEA OF
Evening Express
15,000,000 CALIF. FIRE GET RAZED
BERKELEY VICTIM

60 CENTS A MONTH **The Bulletin** **FINAL HOME EDITION**

EXTRA
BLOCKS RAZED; 6000

THE SAN FRANCISCO CALL **NIGHT EDITION**

GUARD BERKELEY RUINS!
New North Bay Fires Threaten
REMARKABLE PHOTOS OF COLLEGE CITY IN FLAMES

Many Periled As Flames Cut Through City



1925 Blue and Gold.

ALARUMS AND DIVERSIONS: DISASTERS AT CAL

AT AN EARLY MEETING, the Editorial Board of the just-created *Chronicle* agreed that “alarums and diversions” would be the subtitle of our Disasters issue. Months later the question of the subtitle’s source came up and Shakespeare and Thurber were offered as authors. We never went further.

Beginning to talk about the disaster theme with colleagues on campus, and friends off, we received from the former, “oh, you mean the budget,” and from the latter, “oh, you mean those new buildings.”

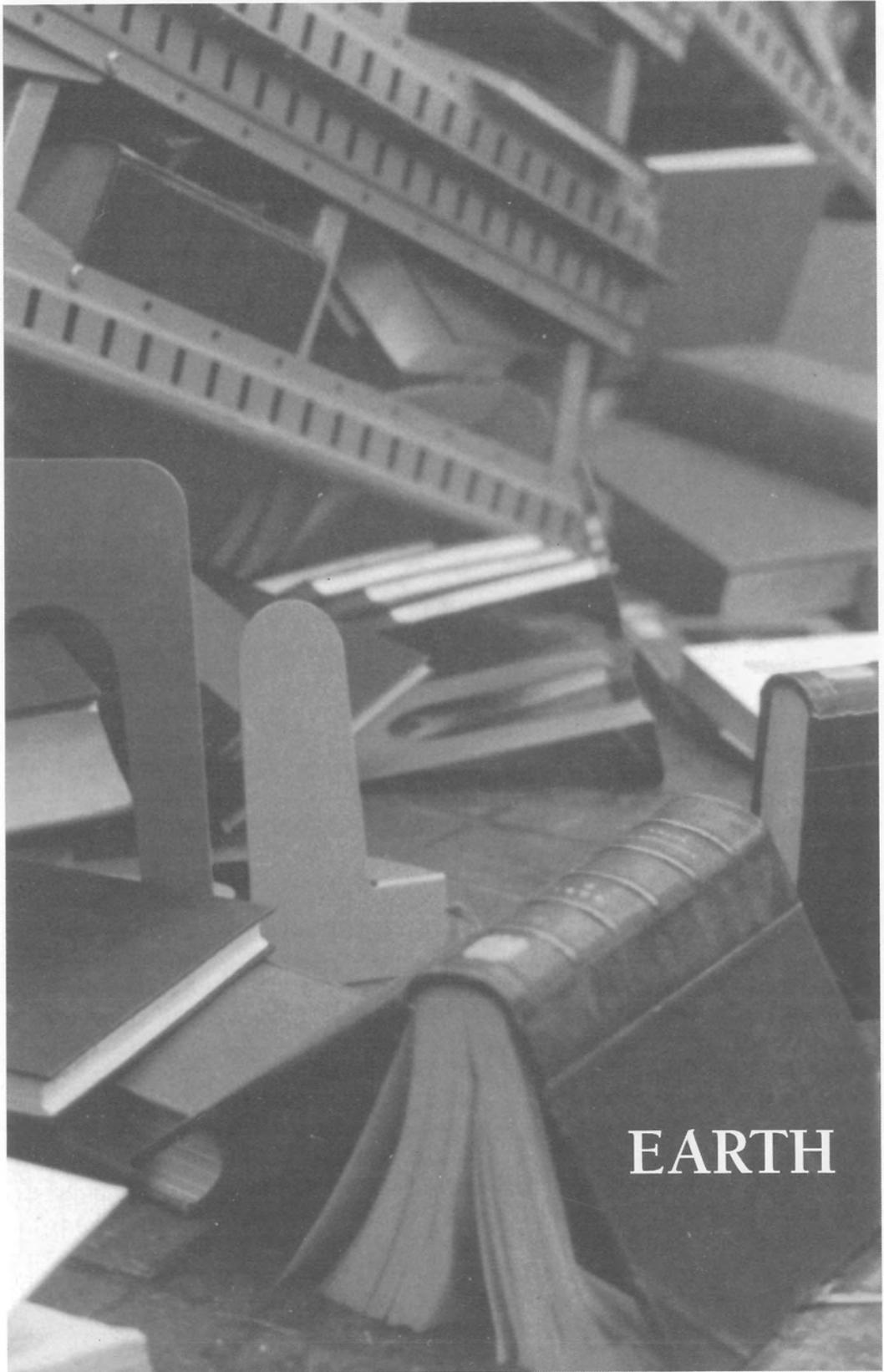
But why “disasters,” and particularly in our first issue? Partly, of course, because earthquakes, fires, epidemics, and floods produce attractive prose and good material for illustrations. The immediate reactions of the participants or witnesses of momentous happenings are cinematic material. Our first inspiration for a “disaster” issue was the discovery of the unpublished account of September of 1923. An eminent physics professor, Raymond Birge, after successfully saving his house above campus from what he thought was a small grass fire, turned around to find all north Berkeley in flames. And this is true too of people who wrote fifty years after the event like Lucy Sprague Mitchell, or of fictional witnesses like Ish in George Stewart’s *Earth Abides*, or the professor in Jack London’s *The Scarlet Plague*.

Stories of these events are told here. Where possible we have tried to gather unpublished information and personal accounts and photographs for an original contribution to the historical record. However, we have also reprinted previously published accounts and stories, including official University announcements, newspaper headlines, and contemporary photos and illustrations, now fallen into obscurity. Our aim is to make the past, in this case, Berkeley’s brushes with natural disasters, not only vivid, but comprehensible to our own time.

We make no claim to be complete in our survey. Additional natural disasters probably still lurk in the imperfectly chronicled history of the University: the fire of 1905 only came to light when a researcher looking into the accounts of the 1906 earthquake stumbled across the account we republish here. Remember, too, that lesser extremes of nature have visited the campus—windstorm, drought, infestation (our Monterey pines and eucalyptus are both threatened with incurable pests or maladies), and periodic record-breaking heat waves or freezes.

Very little, perhaps, to write home about. But today, as the rain clouds pile up, Strawberry Creek can spill over. As the rains let up we should remember that sixteen major wild fires have burned up and down the East Bay hills since 1905. As the administration creates task forces to make seismic repairs, the Hayward fault sits silently below us. Jack London’s and George Stewart’s scenarios are fiction, but the influenza epidemic of 1918 was real and many medical researchers now wait uneasily for the appearance of unknown infections that could strike with cinematic suddenness. Disaster history provides entertainment but practical lessons as well—and not only in the University’s classrooms.

The Editorial Board



EARTH

Biosciences Off-Campus Collection, Marchant Building, October, 1989.
Photo by Dan Johnston.

SOUTH HALL AND SEISMIC SAFETY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA IN 1870

Stephen Tobriner



South Hall. University of California, Berkeley. West facade, circa 1885.
Courtesy of University Archives.

OVER ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO South Hall,* the University of California at Berkeley's first building, was designed to be "earthquake proof."¹ Although it was one of the most thoughtfully conceived seismically resistant buildings of the 1870s, the institutional memory of how and why it was constructed long ago faded. Ironically, only because South Hall was judged to be a seismic risk was its extraordinary history recovered. Because its walls were brick, engineers evaluating the seismic hazard on campus in the 1970s judged it might be dangerous. Testing Engineers, Inc. commissioned by the structural engineering firm of Henry J. Degenkolb and Associates, undertook detailed studies of South Hall in 1975 and 1982.² They were surprised by what they found: ribbons of iron running through the courses of bricks attached to rods bolted to the exterior iron pilasters. K. C. Dewell of Testing Engineers, Inc. concluded his report with an accolade: "We are proud of the planning architect, Mr. David Farquharson, for his forethought and advanced thinking."³ But South Hall was still brick and considered hazardous, so a retrofit project began. The structural engineering firm of Rutherford and Chekene worked with the architectural firm of Esherick, Homsey, Dodge and Davis from 1986 to 1988 to further reinforce South Hall's brick walls and bring its seismic performance up to modern standards.

* When it was designed, South Hall was called the College of Agriculture and subsequently the College of Agriculture and Sciences. After 1873 it was also called South Hall to differentiate it from the wooden North Hall, completed in 1873 and demolished in 1917.

The seismic strengthening required the excavation and denuding of large areas of the interior of South Hall. As the demolition of the interior progressed Dom Campi, project director for Rutherford and Chekene Engineers, found lapped joists, heavy joist timbers thoroughly tied to the exterior walls, diagonal floor sheathing, iron girders, T-shaped iron columns, and ribbons of iron linking corner blocks and exterior plate ornaments.⁴ This kind of reinforcement was exceptional and very peculiar. It revealed beyond a doubt that the original architect, David Farquharson, had attempted to build a seismically resistant brick structure in 1870.

Tons of iron, the backbone of Farquharson's system, were cut out of the walls and floors of South Hall and discarded but Farquharson's intent must not be so summarily dismissed. The structural system of South Hall is important because it tells us how architects and their clients tried to confront

earthquakes in the nineteenth century. Farquharson built a seismically resistant building because his clients, the professors and regents of the new University of California, wanted one. In their report on the University in 1870 the regents wrote that the buildings of the new campus were being erected "of brick and iron in the most substantial manner, with special reference to resistance to possible earthquake shocks."⁵ The regents and their architect were trying to build earthquake safe school buildings sixty-three years before the first California seismic code designed to protect school buildings, the Field Act of 1933.⁶



South Hall. University of California, Berkeley. During retrofit in the 1980s. Wall coverings and fireplace flue bricks have been removed. Horizontal pieces of bond iron can be seen running across the flue between tops and sills of the right and left windows.

Photograph by author.

The regents were concerned about earthquakes in 1870 because the Bay Area had experienced multiple destructive earthquakes in the early nineteenth century culminating in the temblors of 1865 and 1868.⁷ Not only was the 1868 earthquake strong (magnitude 7.0) and destructive, its epicenter was on the Hayward Fault in the East Bay, perilously close to the location of the new University of California.⁸ Regents O. P. Fitzgerald, Richard Hammond, Horatio Stebbins and John W. Dwinelle, writing in 1868, cautioned about ignoring the danger:

We publish pamphlets to demonstrate that earthquakes in California are not so destructive of human life as lightening and tempests are in the Atlantic States. But still, the historical fact is well established that earthquakes have occurred in California, which have caused a fearful destruction of life and property... We are of the opinion that we have no right to disregard these warnings, that one of our first cares should be to make our buildings as safe as possible for the youths who may be confided to our charge... The building which we propose to erect for the purpose of instruction is to be

filled three times a day, for eight months a year, with California youth and as we trust, with the flower of that youth, and to be occupied most of the time by the professors and their assistants. Any great calamity which should happen to a large portion of that youth on the site of the University would not only be a great calamity to the State and to the nation, but also create a great prejudice against the University itself.⁹

After the widespread damage of the 1868 earthquake, architects, engineers and freelance inventors tried to formulate "earthquake-proof" design solutions, some of which were applied to the new University of California building. In order to understand the validity of the attempts let us recall some basic principles of seismic engineering.¹⁰ Buildings are designed to support static loads. These include the weight of the materials in the walls, floors and roof (dead loads), and whatever rests on the floors like people and furniture or falls on the roof like snow (live loads). These loads are usually applied to the structure slowly and vertically. The waves generated from the epicenter of an earthquake create dynamic forces which are applied to the structure and change magnitude rapidly. The building vibrates in response to the seismically induced ground motion. It may oscillate back and forth and side to side horizontally as well as moving up and down vertically. When shaken side to side a properly-braced, square, wooden three-story structure moves laterally with its foundations. All floors may move together or a kind of whiplash movement may occur. In the latter case, a building's upper mass lags behind; as it springs back to vertical these floors gain momentum and swing past their starting point. Lateral forces are the most dangerous in an earthquake because buildings are designed to accommodate vertical, not horizontal, stress. The square wood building oscillates without breaking because wood can bend and return to its former shape. A similar brick structure would be heavier and stiffer. Whereas the wood building might dissipate energy by bending back and forth without breaking apart, the brick building might be so stiff that its walls dissipate the force by cracking instead of bending, causing collapse. Although the architects and engineers of 1870 had nothing like the sophisticated conceptual framework of modern structural engineering they grasped the idea of ductility and understood that buildings that were tied together to act as units performed better in earthquakes. Few present-day engineers would claim their buildings to be "earthquake proof." But in nineteenth century San Francisco "earthquake proof" like "fire proof" seemed possible.¹¹

From the start the issue of earthquake safety complicated the choice of construction materials for South Hall. On August 12, 1868, John T. Doyle of the Building Committee introduced a resolution to the regents that "the Building Committee be instructed to obtain plans and estimates for a building of stone, brick or iron to be erected on the University site."¹² One month later on September 19, 1868, the Building Committee changed its mind announcing a competition which stipulated plans for "a building of wood."¹³ Earlier I quoted the preamble to the conclusions presented by Regents Fitzgerald, Hammond, Stebbins, and Dwinelle. This powerful letter from the Committee on Instruction may have been responsible for the Building Committee's new choice. After reaffirming the basic premise that the school building must be safe, the regents cite instances in which stone buildings failed during earthquakes in California and South America. They chide fellow Californians: "We smile at the apprehension of such danger in Upper California, even while most of us take special care to live in wooden houses." Wood buildings, they argue, can be protected from fires, but "no stone structure standing alone by itself can possibly survive the shock although a block of buildings in a city may be only shuttered by it... Besides, all our buildings will be weakened by many and large openings on all sides."¹⁴

The *San Francisco Bulletin* launched an attack against the decision to build in wood. Editors called the proposed building an “educational tinder box” and pointed out that new building technologies of iron and brick had been proven effective against earthquakes.¹⁵ They objected not only to the wood building itself but to it as a symbol of California.

Are we to begin the work of liberal education by such architectural antics in wood, and end it by a libel on the country, in assuming that the danger from earthquakes is so great that nothing more enduring than this is warranted? ...We protest against the erection of monuments to earthquakes, and to the whole significance of the standing falsehood repeated every day to the youth of the State, and to mature men at home and abroad.¹⁶

A competition was held to choose the architects who would be responsible for construction of all campus buildings. When the final competition winners, architects John Wright and George Sanders, presented their designs on July 5, 1869, they provided descriptions of seismic solutions for wooden, brick, and stone buildings, as if to assuage the fears of the regents.¹⁷ As was the case in the 1870s they engineered their own structures. They described three earthquake-resistant construction options: their first option, a wooden building, would have earthquake-resistant diagonally sheathed walls. Diagonal sheathing was important because these pieces of wood helped to limit the lateral deformation and drift of the building. These diagonal sheaths running between the supporting members helped to counter the shearing forces in the wall.¹⁸

The second and third options were to build the University buildings either of brick or stone. Four years previously Wright and Sanders used an interior timber framework and bond iron method in their British Bank of North America in San Francisco which they must have considered to have been earthquake-resistant.¹⁹ They explained a similar strategy to the regents:

In case of stone being selected as the material of construction, the walls should be much heavier laid on broad and deep foundations of concrete, strengthened and tied by means of iron bars, laid continuously in through the length and breadth of the building above, through the walls, to be laid of fine tooled and coursed ashlar, faced on the inside, laid with strong iron bond at each story, and above and below all windows. In all cases heavy iron bolts to be continued through the joists at every floor, and the whole of the building to be thoroughly earthquake proof, having strong internal timber framing bolted to the walls, and affording independent support to the roofs and floors throughout.²⁰

Wright and Sanders offered a similar strategy for brick. They are describing a dual system in which the internal wood framework is self-supporting and independent of exterior walls; and the brick or stone exterior is independent as well. However they are attached to each other. The exterior brick or stone walls are additionally tied together as effectively as possible by iron rods and bars. This system was very popular in San Francisco. A well-known building which incorporated it was the new Grand Hotel built by architect John Gaynor and completed in the 1870s. The advertisement for the hotel read:

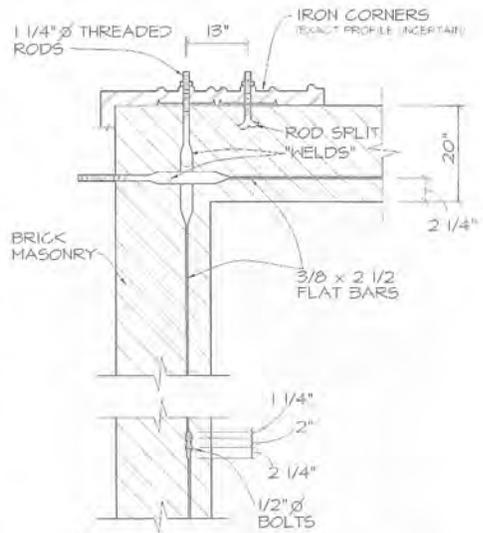
Last of all and perhaps first in consequence...The hotel is a complete frame building, surrounded by brick walls. The frame is of heavy timber, bolted, braced, and strapped together with massive iron bolts, bars and anchors, attaining a strength almost rivaling that of a ship. To this frame the brick walls are appropriately fastened. But, should the city ever be visited by

an earthquake so destructive as to throw down these brick walls, that must need fall outward, and will leave standing the skeleton of the Grand Hotel, with its roof and floors unmoved. In this view its modest four story height, its floors spreading broadly over the ground instead of soaring in ambitious tiers towards the sky, possess for the San Franciscan eye a hidden beauty where the earthquake inexperienced eye might think to discern a defect.²¹

Wright and Sanders never got the chance to put their design ideas into effect because the regents decided to employ someone else to erect the campus buildings in order to save money by not paying them the usual five percent of the cost of the completed structure. Wright and Sanders contested this decision and resigned from the job by August, 1869.²² Within days David Farquharson of Kenitzer and Farquharson architects, signed a contract for all campus architectural designs.²³

In 1870 Farquharson began to build South Hall. Describing the building in 1873 he wrote, "The building is bonded throughout in every direction with wrought iron, and the floors are supported by heavy wrought iron girders."²⁴ Farquharson explained his design philosophy in an article he published in 1868.²⁵ While he mentioned the possibility of inserting an interior frame of wood on the inside surface of the brick, as Gaynor had in the Grand Hotel, he thought iron inserted directly in the wall was more appropriate than the dual wall system.

Another system of construction with reference to earthquakes has occurred to me, which might be practiced in cases where expense was not the first consideration. The making use of cast-iron for the first story fronts of business buildings is now the general practice, but I propose to go a step farther, and make the bearings and supports throughout the building wholly of iron. There can be no doubt of the fitness of cast-iron for this purpose, its elasticity is well known, and there is no instance—that has come to my knowledge—of a cast-iron column, or a lintel, being broken by the earthquake. It is not proposed to dispense with the use of brickwork, but the use of iron and brick together, in such a manner that although the brick would form the bulk of the walls, yet the dependence for support would be wholly in the iron. The brick forming the muscles of the structure, so to speak, and the iron the articulation or skeleton.²⁶



South Hall. University of California, Berkeley. Horizontal section of wall illustrating flat bars of bond iron and rod connections. Drawing by K.C. Dewell, January 18, 1982, redrawn by Mike Tobriner.

In explaining his concept of iron columns and brick walls working together, Farquharson anticipated metal-frame construction, the basis of the modern skyscraper. In such construction, the columns and girders, not the masonry walls, bear the structure's entire

vertical load. The iron and steel framework actually serve as both “skeleton” and “muscles,” in contrast to Farquharson’s proposal. Metal-frame construction did not become a reality in the U.S. until the 1880s and Farquharson’s system might be seen as a step on the road to a complete metal frame support system. In Farquharson’s system the iron embedded in the wall kept the building upright while maintaining the integrity of the bricks which contributed to lateral stiffness. Farquharson was able to put his ideas into practice, inserting vertical iron supports in a number of new structures, including the north and south wings of South Hall.²⁷

Thus, Farquharson’s anti-seismic system was an architectural composite; it depended upon a building’s brick walls, wood supports, diagonal sheathing and floors, and iron tie bars, iron anchors, and iron columns working together to ride out an earthquake. He considered how every part of the structure, from its foundation to its chimneys, could be tied together. He believed that a building’s structure as well



South Hall. University of California, Berkeley. Southeast corner illustrating pilasters which are fastened to bond iron and threaded rods by decorative nuts at the level of the window cornices on each floor.

Photograph by author.



South Hall. University of California, Berkeley. During retrofit in the 1980s. Edge of vertical iron T column and iron girders exposed after wall excavation. Bond iron can also be seen in front of the T column. *Photograph by author.*

as its decoration could aid in its seismic resistance. The seismically resistant parts need not be concealed but celebrated, creating a new style of architecture adapted to the constraints of earthquakes but beautiful because of its frank expression of its purpose.²⁸

South Hall exemplifies Farquharson’s ideas. First, as Farquharson said, the building is bound together by bond iron. In addition, the brickwork and lime mortar are exceptionally strong, even by modern standards. Pieces of bond iron measuring 2-1/2 by 3/8 of an inch were worked through the brick above and below the apertures on each story and at the joist level. These pieces of iron were spliced together with two bolts at each joint to form a continuous belt around the whole structure. As each belt of bond iron approached an end wall of the structure, it was forged into a threaded rod. Depending upon their position, these rods either entered heavy corner impost blocks or went directly through the wall of the building to be bolted to iron pilasters on the exterior. This network was clearly intended to hold the whole structure together should

the bricks begin to fail.

A second line of defense can be seen on the building's exterior, which is decorated with vertical ornamental panels made of iron. They appear at the corners and sides of the building, often with the threaded rods of the bond iron protruding through them. The rods are secured to the panels by decorative bolts which form a regular pattern, appearing even where no rods are present. Rather than securing the panels (which are held in place by special iron hooks) these bolts unite the bond iron from one side of the building to the other. This linking, and particularly the right-angle iron corners bolted to lengths of bond iron, suggests that Farquharson hoped to form a sort of exoskeleton to hold the building together in an earthquake.

Floor joists extend continuously from the exterior walls across the corridor, alternately framing from the east or west walls and effectively creating a lap splice over the full corridor tying the building together. Joists were anchored to exterior walls by a rod bolted to a heavy round plate washer embedded three widths in the exterior walls.

If the brickwork began to break up, vertical iron Ts implanted in the north and south walls of each of the large lecture halls on the north and south wings of South Hall provided support. Two great iron girders spanned the north and the south lecture halls supporting 4-by-16-inch wooden joists. Above the iron girders on each side of the room a vertical iron T column supported the iron girder above it to create a redundant brick and iron wall support. Although Farquharson quoted earlier said that iron would form the "skeleton," this "skeleton" is not fully developed and the iron would probably have buckled without brick around it. Farquharson in South Hall obviously envisioned the iron taking the load (acting as the "skeleton") along with the brick (which in this case acted as both "muscle" and "skeleton").

Although South Hall's construction proceeded in fits and starts, Farquharson's seismically resistant design remained intact.²⁹ On May 28, 1870, work began on construction with the first stone being laid on July 17 of the same year. But after completing the granite basement, work was suspended for lack of funds on January 28, 1871.³⁰ Work began again in July 1872,³¹ and finally an official cornerstone was laid into the completed granite basement on October 9, 1872.³² By March 15, 1873, the structure was roofed.³³ Meanwhile North Hall, designed in wood for the sake of economy, had been built and was already being used for commencement exercises on July 17, 1873, when Daniel C. Gilman, President of the University, said:

Incomplete as are the surroundings, the plan of these edifices is obvious; the one a costly, massive and enduring hall, proof, it is hoped against the quakings of the earth and the inroads of time; the other spacious, economical and in a high degree convenient, but possibly liable at some future day to yield its place to a more solid structure.³⁴

A little more than a hundred years after Gilman's address, workers began the task of ripping out the interior of South Hall to make it a seismically safe building. If Farquharson had tried so conscientiously to design such a building, why was it gutted in the 1980s? There is currently general but not complete agreement that even well-built brick buildings are hazardous in earthquakes. California law requires that all masonry bearing wall buildings in the State be formally posted as potentially hazardous in the event of an earthquake until they are brought into compliance with certain standards for seismic safety. When examined against these standards, the engineers found some notable weaknesses in the building's seismic resistance. South Hall is characterized by a large number of chimneys that would be expected to fail and fall in a moderately strong earthquake. One death of two that oc-

curred at Stanford University during the 1906 earthquake resulted from the failure of a masonry chimney that fell through the wood roof of Encina Hall. The horizontal planes in South Hall—floors and roofs—were intended to act as diaphragms to hold the exterior walls from falling away from the structure. But the roofs of the north and south wings were poorly conceived and badly built, preventing them from serving this function.³⁵ In order to preserve the original curved ceilings and central skylights in these rooms, new concrete ring beams were installed around their perimeters to securely brace the tops of walls and the bases of chimneys. Clearly, the masonry walls of South Hall were well built and the quality of mortar excellent. However, floor-to-floor heights are very large and dynamic testing performed in conjunction with the development of current standards has shown that walls with height-to-thickness ratios similar to South Hall are prone to out-of-plane buckling. Lastly, calculations indicated that there was a somewhat insufficient amount of wall in the building to reliably resist the very strong shaking expected at the site.

In order to strengthen South Hall in the 1980s, the engineers decided to install new concrete walls around the perimeters of the north and south wings to create reliable cores, and to tie the central section of the building to the ends with new steel and concrete floors installed in the center corridor. At the end, wall finishes were removed and the inside walls of chimneys were cut away to expose the flues. The opening of the chimneys clearly exposed the bond iron system that Farquharson used; unfortunately it was required to be moved in many cases to allow newer strengthening measures to be installed. Anchors of steel were drilled into the brick and frameworks of reinforcing bars constructed. Then the whole interior was sprayed with concrete, called gunite, attempting to create a more reliably reinforced wall. In order to make this concept work, the first and second floors had to be cut back from the walls (the second floor was replaced with a reinforced concrete slab), severing most of Farquharson's ties in the process. In order to strengthen walls at the central section against out-of-plane buckling without affecting the interior appearance of the building, 5-inch diameter holes were drilled vertically down 60 feet in the brick from the roof to the foundations and reinforcing bars were inserted into the holes and bonded with a special grout. During the drilling of holes both the bond iron and plate washers embedded in the wall to anchor floors were cut, revealing more of the original design. The engineers were interested to find bond iron because at the time bond iron was little studied and its appearance was puzzling. As Dom Campi went through the demolition process he was more and more impressed by the thoughtful construction of South Hall, but the reinforcement plan dictated that even strongly built details had to be sacrificed.

Years after the retrofit, William Lee, a student in the joint Architecture and Structural Engineering program, simulated the performance of the original South Hall on the computer using the SAP 90 program. He also tested samples of bond iron from South Hall in the engineering laboratory at Davis Hall.³⁶ Lee found that bond iron was stronger than expected and very ductile. However it behaved like a loose rubber band once it reached its yield strength and therefore could not hold the bricks together under the very strong lateral forces produced by a major earthquake. In other words, the bond iron might not have been able to restrain end walls from falling outward, or horizontal walls from buckling. Further, the iron T columns were not numerous enough, properly designed, or well tied to the girders to offer much vertical continuity in the building. Last, the numerous chimneys broke the continuity of the wall planes compromising their shear-resisting capacity. So although Farquharson's attempt was laudatory, South Hall as he designed it was a hazard according to our present-day standards. Farquharson did the best he could for his time and his anti-seismic efforts made the building far more earthquake-resistant than unreinforced brick buildings then and now.

Chancellor Robert Berdahl's announcement in the fall of 1997 that the University of California at Berkeley was embarking upon a multimillion dollar plan for seismic upgrading reflects

the spirit in which South Hall was undertaken. In 1870 professors and regents saw the problem of seismic safety as paramount. The architect responded, creating the safest building he could. Despite the cost, the structure was built and served the University well for more than a hundred years. It was built so well that it could be seismically upgraded and artfully reassembled to function even more effectively than it had when first built. The University now faces the daunting task of retrofitting buildings considerably younger than South Hall. The challenge is to confront the denial of the great earthquake predicted for the Hayward Fault by remembering the concern of the regents of 1870.

NOTES

- 1 Work on the history of South Hall formed part of an earlier investigation on the development of seismically resistant architecture in the San Francisco Bay Area which was funded by the National Science Foundation. The results of this work were incorporated in talks entitled "Reinforced Masonry and the Development of 'Earthquake-Proof' Design after the San Francisco Earthquakes of 1865 and 1868" presented at Structural Engineers Association of Northern California, March 1989 and "Old South Hall and San Francisco's first anti-seismic skyscraper," presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians, Boston, 1990. Portions of the study were published in "A History of Reinforced Masonry Construction Designed to Resist Earthquakes: 1755-1907," *Earthquake Spectra*, 1, (November, 1984), 125-150. "Bond Iron and the Birth of Anti-Seismic Reinforced Masonry Construction in San Francisco," *The Masonry Society Journal*, 5, (January-June 1986), 12-18 and "Costruzione anti-sismiche in muratura nella storia di San Francisco," *Costruire in Laterizio*, 15 (May-June, 1990), 191-196. The present study is part of a book on the history of reconstruction after earthquakes in San Francisco. I would like to thank William Holmes and Dom Campi of Rutherford and Chekene for their help during the seismic upgrade in the 1980s and Dom Campi for reviewing this manuscript. My research assistant Keith S. Tsang and the staff of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, deserve special thanks. In spring 1997 William Lee was working with both Professor Filip Filippou of Civil Engineering and myself to complete computer studies and laboratory tests on the materials of Wurster Hall. He died in a tragic swimming accident in summer 1997.
- 2 Degenkolb Associates commissioned Testing Engineers and sent a copy of the report dated February 23, 1982 to me on July 15, 1986. Years earlier the existence of an iron reinforcing system in South Hall was known: Robert Sibley, *University of California Pilgrimage* (Berkeley, 1952), 35: "During my first course in Physics in this building [South Hall] under Freddie Slate, head of the department, I noticed in the laboratory that the compass needle, in some of my experiments, pointed almost east instead of north. So I asked the instructor why the phenomenon. He said in 1868 there had been an earthquake, thought by many to be more severe than the earthquake of San Francisco in 1906, but since California's population and industrial growth were so small at that early date, little damage had been done. Nevertheless in building South Hall, the first building to be erected upon the campus at Berkeley, particular attention had been given to reinforcing the brick walls with iron supports; hence the deflection of the magnetic needle."
- 3 Report of Testing Engineers, Incorporated, Material Consulting, Work no. 81124, K.C. Dewell, Civil Engineer, February 23, 1982.
- 4 Dom Campi, Project Director for Rutherford and Chekene Engineers, was interested and surprised by the complexity and good quality of construction of South Hall. Conversations with the author during the retrofit.
- 5 The report of the Board of Regents to the Governor..., *Directory of the City of Oakland and the County of Alameda for the Year of 1870* (Oakland, 1870), 3.
- 6 The Field Act of 1933 mandated special seismic requirements for California schools. For its importance and requirements see Tobriner, "The History of Building Codes to the 1920s," and Donald R. Strand, "Code Development Between 1927 and 1980," *Proceedings, Structural Engineers Association of California, 1984 Convention, Monterey, California* (San Francisco, 1985), 49-69.

- 7 There is an extensive literature on early California earthquakes and particularly the earthquakes of 1865 and 1868. See in particular Don Tocher, "Seismic History of the San Francisco Region," *San Francisco Earthquakes of March 1957*, California Division of Mines, Special Report no. 57, 1959, 39-48; Tousson R. Topozada et al., "Preparation of Isoseismal Map and Summaries of Reported Effects for Pre-1900 California Earthquakes," Annual Technical Report Fiscal Year 1979-1980, California Division of Mines and Geology, Sacramento, 1980, 40-44; Topozada et al., "Compilation of Pre-1900 California Earthquake History, Annual Technical Report—fiscal year 1978-79," California Division of Mines and Geology, Open File Report, OFR 79-6 SAC, 13-15, Sidney D. Townley and Allen W. Maxwell, "Descriptive Catalogue of the Earthquakes of the Pacific Coast of the United States," *Bulletin of the Seismological Society of America*, 29 (1939), 1-207; Harry O. Wood, Maxwell W. Allen and N. H. Heck, "Destructive and Near-Destructive Earthquakes in California and western Nevada 1769-1933," U. S. Department of Commerce, Special Publication No. 191, Washington, 1934; Walter L. Huber, "San Francisco Earthquakes of 1865 and 1868," *Bulletin of the Seismological Society of America*, 20 (December, 1930), 263.
- 8 See individual chapters in *Scenario for a magnitude 7.0 Earthquake on the Hayward Fault*, Earthquake Engineering Research Institute, Oakland, 1996.
- 9 Letter to the Regents of the University of California from the Committee on Instruction, Committee file 1868-1879, University Archives, CU-1, box 2, folder 11, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
- 10 For a more complete description of how earthquakes affect buildings see Matthys Levy and Mario Salvadori, *Why Buildings Fall Down* (New York and London, 1994) and *Why the Earth Quakes*, (New York and London, 1995), 90-192.
- 11 Two examples of the many articles on "earthquake proof" construction: "Earthquake Philosophy and Earthquake-Proof Building," *The Mining and Scientific Press*, 17 (November 7, 1868); "Earthquake-Proof Houses," *San Francisco Bulletin*, October 27, 1868. Also see my article "Bond Iron" above.
- 12 Resolution introduced by Mr. Doyle, University Archives, CU-1, box 1, folder 14, The Bancroft Library.
- 13 Resolution Sept. 1, 1868, University Archives, CU-1, box 1, folder 14, The Bancroft Library.
- 14 Letter to regents...from Committee on Instruction, *ibid.* The regents are right in their view that stone structures built adjacent to one another in blocks can be designed to resist earthquakes effectively (see Antonino Giuffrè, ed., *Sicurezza e conservazione dei centri storici, il caso Ortigia* (Rome-Bari, 1993), 132-226). They are also right in observing that voids weaken the shear resistance of walls.
- 15 *San Francisco Bulletin*, March 20, 1869 in Bancroft Scraps, 72, The Bancroft Library.
- 16 *San Francisco Bulletin*, March 22, 1869 in Bancroft Scraps, 72, The Bancroft Library.
- 17 For the career of Wright and Sanders see H. Kirker, *California's Architectural Frontier, Style and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Layton, Utah, 1986), 58, 84, 94. A description of the structure of South Hall can be found in the *Oakland Daily News*, July 23, 1869. Mention of the seismically resistant features is vague. The basement is "secured with wrought-iron ties" and the walls above are "laid in cement and iron bond throughout." Interestingly the description of Wright and Sander's building, "English Renaissance, that is the modern adaption of Italian with certain French features" sounds identical to Farquharson's final design. Perhaps he cribbed Wright and Sander's design but definitely added his own structural system.
- 18 Unfortunately shear walls composed of nailed off diagonal boards are not nearly as efficient as plywood walls. See Peter Yanev, *Peace of Mind in Earthquake Country, How to Save Your Home and Life* (San Francisco, 1974), Chapter 6, 137-180.
- 19 Henry G. Langley, *The San Francisco Directory for the Year Commencing December, 1869* (San Francisco, 1869), 18-20 mentions that the British Bank of North America by Wright and Sanders and adjacent buildings "are secured by iron braces to an inner structure of wood to render them, as far as possible, earthquake-proof."

- 20 To the Board of Regents of the California State University, July 6, 1869 "with specific reference to the college of Agriculture..." University Archives, CU-1, box 1, folder 14, The Bancroft Library.
- 21 *The San Francisco Newsletter*, May 7, 1870, 3.
- 22 Wright and Sanders contest regents' decision and resign in a document dated August 24, 1869. University Archives, CU-1, box 1, folder 14, The Bancroft Library. Also see *Oakland Daily News*, December 16, 1869.
- 23 Farquharson's August 31, 1869 contract, University Archives, The Bancroft Library. For Farquharson's career see Anne Bloomfield, "David Farquharson," *California History*, 59 (Spring 1980), 16-33.
- 24 Bloomfield, 22.
- 25 Farquharson's treatise on architecture can be found in Bancroft Scraps: 71-72. The Bancroft Library.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 John Cotter Pelton, "San Francisco: Its Position in Architectural and Constructive Development," *Modern San Francisco*, 1907 (Western Press Association, n.d.), n.p.: After the 1906 earthquake and fire had reduced Farquharson's Nevada Block in San Francisco to ruins, John Pelton, a famous local engineer, saw the remains of one of the "T" columns embedded in brick and remarked that this form of skeletal construction predated skeleton construction in Chicago by almost a decade.
- 28 Farquharson in Bancroft Scraps, 70-71.
- 29 An otherwise accurate article in the *Alta California*, October 10, 1872, reports that the plan of South Hall was "somewhat changed" to "complete the edifice in brick and iron instead of granite" and seemed to associate this change with the replacement of the original contractor, J. W. Duncan, with Dennis Jordan in 1872. I am skeptical that the change in the design of the structure occurred so late but it is possible. Even if the exterior of the building had stone revetment, brick would have been laid behind the stone. In either case Farquharson's seismically resistant system could have been used. Farquharson was in control of the work at least until the roof was being constructed and was mentioned as the architect in 1873. *San Francisco Bulletin*, March 29, 1873.
- 30 *Oakland Daily News*, October 10, 1872.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 "The building has been far advanced since our last previous visit. The stone work is nearly all completed, and most of the iron and brick work of the first story is in already up. The corner-stone is in the northeast corner of the building. It is about twenty-six inches in thickness, and four and a half feet square, and weighs about four tons." "The foundation already complete, and the second story nearly so, the northeast corner having been left low for the formal laying of the corner-stone." *Oakland Daily News*, October 10, 1872.
- 33 *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, March 15, 1873.
- 34 *The Morning Call*, July 17, 1873.
- 35 The roof was built after the change in contractor, and perhaps the poor detailing might be explained by the fact that Farquharson paid less attention to construction in its last phases.
- 36 The late William Lee (see note 1), a student in the joint program in Architecture and Structural Engineering, was in the process of completing work begun during a class on the history of structures, taught by myself and Professor Gary Black in 1995, when he died in a swimming accident in summer 1997. Lee ran tests on the bond iron of South Hall using samples I collected. The tests were conducted with the technical assistance of Bill McCracken. At the time of writing I have been unable to locate the draft of his final report or the samples tested. The conclusions presented here are based on my notes of his work.

THE 1906 EARTHQUAKE AND ITS AFTERMATH IN BERKELEY

As told by Lucy Sprague Mitchell, Henry Morse Stephens,
Berkeley newspapers, and University documents

Edited and compiled by Janet Ruyle



1908 Blue and Gold.

FOLLOWING THE 1906 EARTHQUAKE the above heading appeared in the next year's *1908 Blue and Gold* over a sedate four-page article by Professor Henry Morse Stephens about the campus response to the earthquake of April 18 and the ensuing disastrous fire in San Francisco. Most of his article is reproduced below. Professor Stephens taught modern European history at Berkeley from 1902 until his death in 1919 and was Dean of Extension from 1902 to 1912. At the time he wrote these pages he was a respected and popular middle-aged scholar.

Lucy Sprague was at the time of the earthquake a young unmarried woman recently appointed as the first Dean of Women at Berkeley. She was at Berkeley from 1903 to 1912. Her article below is a personal and lively account of her experiences that spring. Except for those who lived in the Bay Area in April of 1906, most people tended then, she tells us, and most of us still tend, to refer to this disaster as the earthquake of 1906; but in fact, the fire that followed the quake was the greater of the two disasters. Thus the heading.

The headline in the evening edition of the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* published on that fateful Wednesday, April 18, 1906 was a huge banner reading: "CLIFF HOUSE IN OCEAN, PALACE HOTEL IS ON FIRE." In the city of Berkeley, in addition to some chimneys falling and structural damage to the high school and a few other buildings, the Berkeley shoreline suffered a "tidal wave" in the form of a heavy swell or wall of water about five feet in height that swept in from the bay. "The force of this wave carried away one hundred and twenty feet of wharf of the West Berkeley Lumber Company together with approximately 50,000 feet of lumber that was piled upon it...." A man who was working there that early morning was thrown into the bay, but climbed out unhurt.¹

The condition of the University was page-one news that evening with the reassuring headline: "University Escapes With Slight Damage."

The first shock as recorded by the Ewig cismograph [sic] of the Students' Observatory occurred at precisely 5 hours 12 minutes 38 seconds this morning....The principal shock was in two sections and lasted for two minutes. In violence the tremblor [sic] far exceeded either the earthquake of 1868 or

the terrible one of 1898....

Later Vibrations

Professor Irving Stringham [acting president in President Benjamin Ide Wheeler's absence and Dean of the Academic Faculties] at the Faculty Club noted subsequent observations as follows: 5:13, 5:59, 6:10, 6:[missing]8, 6:45, 8:14, 11:06, and 12:04....buildings escaped unharmed, while houses were being shaken down and chimneys toppled over on all sides of the campus. As far as could be learned all came through unscathed with the exception of the Stiles Hall of which two chimneys were snapped off and hurled by the devastating temblor far out on the lawn below.

Withstands Shock

Curious as it may appear and to the surprise of the University authorities as well as every one else, "Old North Hall" which has been condemned for these many years, and which is expected to be pulled down as soon as other quarters are provided, met the terrible shock without so much as a misplaced brick. [Not until 1917 would the upper floors of the building be partially pulled down. The building was completely demolished in 1931.] South Hall and the three-story Civil Engineering Building, both of which are brick, did not sustain the slightest damage whatever.

No Damage to Greek Theater [sic]

It was falsely reported that the Greek Theater [completed in 1903] had been split open by the earthquake, but was found upon examination to be intact. During the course of the forenoon, this spot became the mecca of many of the distracted mothers who were expecting a repetition of the shock, were unwilling to [go back] into their houses but fled with their children to the safety of the hills.

Stands Solid as a Rock

California Hall [completed in 1905] and Hearst Mining Building [and the President's house, both under construction] were not affected by the shaking up in any way whatever. The manner in which these massive structures met the earthquake is regarded as a good indication of the class of workmanship which is being put into the building of the Greater University.

Although the earthquake caused the cancellation of further classes and final examinations, the campus recovered quickly, so that the Greek Theatre was the site of many festivities only four weeks later. Sunday morning, May 13, the Baccalaureate sermon was delivered.² On the morning of May 15 the last University meeting was held, and that afternoon the sixth and final symphony concert, postponed for three weeks, was presented, albeit with a revised program and 75 rather than 100 members of the orchestra. Commencement exercises were held the next day, with nearly 500 undergraduate and graduate degrees conferred. But the Class of 1906 had no Class Day exercises, with the exception of the Pilgrimage, and other Commencement Week activities were greatly reduced.³

The following afternoon, May 17, a month after the disaster,

...a very large audience witnessed the production of Racine's 'Phédre' [sic] in the Greek Theatre by Mme. Sara [sic] Bernhardt and her company. This is, perhaps, the most significant event in the history of the Greek Theatre in connection with the development of the dramatic interests of the University. The tragedy was magnificently rendered, and the most profound impression produced upon every one who saw it.⁴

Sarah Bernhardt herself was deeply moved. Backstage after the performance she said to her friend, photographer Arnold Genthe:

I never have played Phèdre like this, and what an audience! Never has there been one like it. Never have I been so stirred. How marvelous to think that they could come to me today, after all they had been through, and respond with such sympathy and appreciation. They felt that I had something to give to make them forget the loss of their material possessions.⁵

She had arrived in the Bay Area about two weeks after the day of the earthquake, and because accommodations were so uncertain she stayed in her private railroad car in Oakland. She asked for a tour of the devastated city, and Genthe relates that there were still some smoldering fires in some places and dangerous walls and chimneys continued to be destroyed with dynamite for safety reasons. Bernhardt had taken on the devastation as if she had lived through it herself and was moved to tears by the time she reached the Palace Hotel, where she was to have stayed. "Such was the power of the divine Sarah's imagination that she projected herself, not as a mere spectator but as a sufferer in the very heart of the disaster." After looking at the photographs he had taken the day they toured the ruins of San Francisco, she recalled "incidents of the fire and quake which had taken place only in her mind." When she talked about it years later, "what she really had seen was colorless by comparison with what she claimed to have been through." Once, in New York, she asked him to tell her other visitors "how you saved my life when that wall collapsed. It was terrible."⁶ While his amusing anecdote reflects the dramatic flair of Sarah Bernhardt, her empathy for the people and circumstances of April 1906 is probably quite appropriate.



Sarah Bernhardt in the Greek Theatre, 1906.
Photograph by Arnold Genthe.

Let us turn directly to firsthand accounts of the events and aftermath of the earthquake and fire as they were seen by the Berkeley faculty and students of the University of California, whose lives were affected. The newspaper extracts at the time are from the *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, since the *Daily Californian* ceased publication with its last issue on April 18, printed the night before the earthquake occurred, and resumed at the beginning of summer session on June 26. The publication of the June issue of *The University Chronicle* was delayed until September because "it was found impossible to secure paper sooner."⁷

The Reminiscence of Lucy Sprague (Mitchell)

The following excerpt is from *Two Lives, the Story of Wesley Clair Mitchell and Myself* by Lucy Sprague Mitchell, published in 1953 when the author was 75 years old. It tells the story of her life from Chicago heiress to founder of the Bank Street School in New York, from a shy Radcliffe undergraduate at the feet of Royce, Santayana, and James, to Professor of English and Dean of Women at Cal, and wife of Wesley Mitchell, a pioneer in the field of scientific economics.⁸

One never-to-be-forgotten experience came to all of us in Berkeley on April 18, 1906. Easterners speak



Lucy Sprague
(ca. 1906).
Courtesy of The Bancroft Library.

of this event as the great earthquake, Californians call it the great fire. For it was the fire that did the terrible damage. Both Robin [Wesley Clair Mitchell, Lucy's husband after 1912] and I had a share in the work that followed—he in San Francisco, I on the University campus.

I happened to be spending the night at the Millers' [Lucy's older sister and her husband], who had had a party the evening before. At four in the morning we were violently awakened by the rocking house. Adolph and Mary dashed downstairs. Adolph gave my door a passing bang, shouting, "Out of the house!" I sat up, but I couldn't leave my bed. For out of the window, I saw a most extraordinarily fascinating sight. The house across the road [Ridge Road] was definitely moving across my window, first one way and then the other. This house had cement chimneys shaped on the top like tulips. These chimneys were swaying and not in the same directions. One toppled over—then the other. Only then did I realize that our house was swaying perilously. The noise was terrific. Above the creaking of the wooden house rose a grating and groaning of the earth itself. I felt absolutely no fear. I was spellbound with interest. I simply sat in bed and watched and listened. Then it stopped, and I heard Mary and Adolph yelling wildly for me to come. I started downstairs when the second shock came. The stairs writhed under me. Now I was terrified. I reached the open front door at last. The houses near us were so widely spaced that they were in different sections of the earth wave—tilting crazily in different directions, back and forth. Then it stopped again. The silence was overpowering—more than the noise.

We went back into the house. Great bowls of flowers for the party were everywhere dumped on the floor. The bookcases, in the impromptu fashion of California, were not fastened to the wall and had spilled all the books. Emerson's decapitated plaster head lay on one heap. The bronze Pompeian Narcissus had leaped from the table and now swung by his nose from a chair arm, his hand with the pointing finger still raised in calm contemplation of his own beauty. We laughed hysterically and started to clean up the mess.

Not until six o'clock did we look across the Bay. We had assumed that this was one of the private quakes we often had on our hill, caused by filling in a brook without drainage. But in San Francisco we saw great clouds of smoke billowing up in a dozen places. Fires, started by broken electric wires all over the city, raged. The earthquake had killed only three people, but one of them was the fire chief. Water mains had been broken. Water had to be pumped from the Bay. The fire raged three days. People fled before it and jammed up on the docks. They were nearly pushed off by the panicky people



Earthquake refugee tent colony on California Field.
Courtesy of University Archives.



Refugee paperwork on California Field.
Courtesy of University Archives.

behind them. Little ferries carried crowds to Oakland and Berkeley as fast as they could. Berkeley had been a town of twenty-three thousand. It grew to forty-six thousand in three days and never again had fewer than that number. [The 1910 census reports a population of 40,434 in Berkeley.]

The first to come were the Portuguese from the water front. Then the Chinese. Then everyone. President Wheeler was away, and in his absence the University organized itself to meet these swarms of refugees. That meant about five self-appointed “head” committees

began issuing orders! I was put in charge of Stiles Hall, where the refugees came to be assigned living quarters. Berkeley had not a single hotel. Fraternity and sorority houses and private homes could take a few people. On the campus, three camps were established, one for married people, one for single men, and one for lost children and people who were looking for their families.

Harmon Gym was turned into a laundry where everyone’s clothes were boiled and given back to the owners. Huge outdoor cafeterias, run by the women students, were established.

Three hospitals sprang up on the campus—an emergency, a contagious and a maternity hospital.



Hospital at Hearst Hall. The Golden Book of California, 1937.

The maternity hospital was incredibly busy, for all babies who were due in

the next three or four months took this occasion to arrive. Big signs appeared everywhere, reading, “Do not spit,” in nine languages. Others, over hogsheads of water, read, “You may spit here,” in nine languages. Public toilets were erected at cross-sections of all main streets, attached to water pipes and sewers. [A brief article on April 20 in the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* headed

“Sanitary Instructions,” informed its citizens and refugees that “Laterines (sic) (water closets) can be found in all University and other public buildings and at all points adjacent to camps.” One of the first committees to be created was concerned with sanitation and was headed by Professor Hyde.] Hygienic Berkeley managed to accommodate twenty-three thousand people in three days without an epidemic.

Stiles Hall, where I was in charge, was a seething mass of people asking questions in all nine languages, and in all stages of despair. Young fathers from farms and mines searching for their families. Mothers who had lost their small children in the crowds.



Laundry at Harmon Gym. The Golden Book of California, 1937.



Refugee Center at Stiles Hall. The Golden Book of California, 1937.



Courtesy of University Archives.

Literally hundreds of mothers turned up without their children but with their parrots. We had a zoo, mostly parrots and cats, but a few of every known pet. Most frantic of all, however, were the Portuguese mothers who still clutched their swaddled babies. These babies are sewn in for the winter and should not be unsewn by all Portuguese mores until May. And the order was to take their babies out of their clothes so that the clothes could be boiled! They thought we were condemning the babies to sure death.

Berkeley continued to work feverishly. Many mechanisms of our smoothly running culture broke down under this catastrophe. Banks closed. Father sent us some cash by express from Pasadena. Stamps gave out. But any scribbled piece of paper with an address on it stuck into a mailbox went on its way. All University boys as a part of the state militia were ordered to unlighted San Francisco. I was anxious to send some of the girl students home. Any order to a railroad signed by me took a girl anywhere free.

While I was immersed in the work in Berkeley, Robin was immersed in the work in San Francisco. The emergency problem of relief in the city was acute. Edward Devine was sent by the Red Cross [and President Roosevelt] to handle the local relief. Robin became his assistant. He moved to the city for the five weeks of greatest distress immediately after the fire. During the crisis, everyone worked day and night, but when the drama subsided, workers fell off. Robin and Winifred Rieber [wife of Professor Charles Henry Rieber], however, kept doggedly at the overwhelming problem of finding homes for the twenty-three thousand new people.

San Francisco discovered Berkeley in those days, and to the little academic town was added a permanent suburban population commuting to San Francisco. As I think of those refugees, one stands out. She was Mrs. Folger, Adolph Miller's old German mother. I met her as she stepped off the electric train which connected with the ferry. She had her two grandchildren with her, thriftily dressed in their best clothes, as they could carry only what they wore. Mrs. Folger as a young German girl had come to San Francisco in the 1830's across the Panama Isthmus, then the only route except by covered wagon. She was now over eighty and had lost nearly everything. But was she discouraged? No. She kept repeating, "I see San Francisco grow from sand dunes. Now I see it grow from ashes—not so hard as sand dunes. You just watch. San Francisco all right." And of course she was right. Long before real building could commence, one-story houses of galvanized iron appeared everywhere, and San Francisco picked up its old life in its own characteristic way. Luxury stores came first. People, dazzled by insurance money, bought furs and diamonds and dined again at wonderful restaurants. Plucky, dramatic, debonair San Francisco!

Professor Henry Morse Stephens' Account

The following excerpt is from "The University and the Fire" written by Professor Stephens for the *1908 Blue and Gold* that came out in 1907.⁹ He was born in Edinburgh in



*Photographs courtesy of
University Archives.*

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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TENT CARD
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is assigned to Tent No.
in

MAY L. CHENEY,
Sub-Committee.



1857 and educated at Oxford, where he later lectured. Brought to Berkeley from Cornell by President Wheeler, a former colleague at Cornell, he was actively involved in the acquisition of The Bancroft Library and was intimately connected with its move to Berkeley after the earthquake.



Henry Morse Stephens (ca. 1906).
Courtesy of The Bancroft Library.

...The first impression made upon the minds of those members of the University who reside in Berkeley was that of the slightness of the damage done by the earthquake to the buildings of the University upon the morning of April 18. In the stillness of the morning hours, produced by the cessation of all traffic, it could be seen that, while chimneys of Berkeley had suffered and particularly that the High School had been badly rent, the buildings of the University stood intact, except for the overthrowing of one or two chimney pots. So sound did the University itself appear that attempts were made to hold classes during the eight o'clock period and it was not until later in the morning that the seriousness of the situation in San Francisco began to be appreciated. Then and not till then did the members of the University realize how splendidly their buildings had stood the shock, and in the days that followed when the extent of the wreck of the buildings at Stanford began to be realized, the splendid work of the builders of both the old and new buildings of the University of California became a subject of pride and thankfulness to all who had ever been connected with the State University. But while we may echo a year afterwards our gratitude to architects and builders, old and new, for the way in which they placed our foundations upon the rock, yet we should remember that a University is more than its buildings and bear in mind that the income of the University has been seriously affected by the events of last April.

The details of the loss the University suffered through the fire in San Francisco can be seen in the last report of the Secretary of the University. The details can be read there, and it is enough to say here that in addition to the loss of the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art and to other direct losses amounting to nearly \$36,000.00, the income of the University has been reduced by nearly \$100,000.00 a year through the burning of income-producing buildings in the city of San Francisco. The State met this loss of the University for the remaining months of 1906 by a special grant made by the emergency Legislature of \$83,800.00, which enabled the University to continue its work without impairment of its efficiency [sic] to the end of the year.

"A University is more than its buildings," yes, and a University lives by more than its money income; the real effect of "the great days" of April has been upon the souls of those who dwelt in Berkeley last April. It has been said with justice that the disasters of last April are more memorable for the spirit of gay courage and of "earthquake love," which manifested itself in all classes in San Francisco, than for the material damage done by earthquake and by fire. It is good for every man and woman and for every community to pass at times through periods of strain and stress in order to try their nerve and to see that what is best and most courageous in them shall have opportunity to express itself. As the years roll by the memory of the "great days" of April will stand out as giving proof of California courage and California gayety of heart; plenty of legends will arise and imagination will probably

place haloes upon wrong heads and bring into light the wrong heroes, but for all that there will remain the ineffaceable memory of having passed through a great crisis. It will be no small thing in the future that can shake the courage and the belief in the sympathy of man for man in the hearts of those who lived through the "great days" of last April.

Two things stand out in the experiences of the members of the University who dwelt in Berkeley, first, the dispatch of the University cadets to aid in maintaining order in San Francisco and second, the swift organization of relief for refugees upon the campus of the University. Early on the 18th of April the rumor flew about that martial law had been established in San Francisco and later came a rumor that the University cadets were to be given the opportunity to show whether their military training made them of the slightest use to the community at large. There exists some haziness as to the precise circumstances that led to the dispatch of the cadets to the city. But it is quite certain that at an early hour upon the 18th of April the idea of being of use occurred [sic] to the fertile mind of Colonel Force and that a request for the military services of the cadets was brought to Berkeley and received by Captain Nance, who decided to act, upon the direct authorization of Prof. Stringham, acting as president of the University in the absence of President Wheeler, who was at that time on his way to Texas to deliver an address at the inauguration of the new president of the University of Texas. It had been inspection day for the cadets and the men were almost expecting a summons. The summons came in the course of the afternoon; the cadets reached San Francisco after dark in the evening; they were allotted to a particular section of the city between the areas assigned to the regular soldiers and the California National Guard. In the city they remained for two nights and two days doing regular guard duty and reassuring the citizens by their presence.

...After long and harassing guard duty the cadets returned wearied and tired out, but conscious of having passed through an experience such as has never before been afforded to any battalion of cadets in any State University in America. Nor was their service without its casualties. Private Aten of the class of 1908 was severely wounded in the course of duty, though it is satisfactory to be able to report that he has since recovered.

If the men students of the University had their opportunity in helping to guard the city, the women students expressed their energies in the help that they gave to the refugees. Perhaps a defense of coeducation may be found here. Most certainly a community of men students could not have washed the clothes of the refugees, and even the refugees themselves, could not have cooked for them, and could not have taken care of the babies, in the way that the women students did. Hearst Hall was turned into a lying-in hospital, and the kindly administration of the women students of the University of California will long be gratefully remembered by the refugees from San Francisco who made their way to Berkeley. It was no slight work to provide for those thousands of scared beings, and though the citizens of Berkeley did nobly in throwing open their houses and providing food and clothing for the thousands of refugees, it was the women students of the University of California who took upon themselves the kindly care of the refugees in the relief camps. Never will the aspect of the University campus in April, 1906, be forgotten.

If the members of the Legislature of the State of California had visited Berkeley during the last days of April, 1906, they would have been proud of the institution that the State of California maintains and would have realized that the sons and daughters of the State who get their education here learn more than Latin and Greek, than physics and mathematics, that they learn how swiftly to organize, when a crisis in human affairs calls, to afford protection, aid, and sympathy in time of need.

Relief Work by University Faculty and Staff

Many of the faculty and the staff of the University provided help in one way or another following the disaster, on the campus, in the city of Berkeley, in San Francisco, and at the state level. The following excerpt is from the June 1906 issue of *The University Chronicle*.¹⁰

In the interval between the closing of the regular session and the opening of the Summer Session many of the members of the University faculty were engaged in active relief or reconstruction work in San Francisco.

President Wheeler was appointed a member of the Committee of Forty, which has general supervision of the work of reconstruction

Eugene R. Hallett, Secretary to the President, acted as Secretary to Dr. Edward T. Devine, the special representative of President Roosevelt and the National Red Cross

A. H. Allen, Secretary of the Editorial Committee, was Secretary of the Berkeley Relief Committee

W. J. Cooper, President of the Class of 1906, and a member of the History Department, is Assistant Secretary at the National Red Cross headquarters

Professor C. L. Cory, Dean of the College of Mechanics, is interested in the work of reconstruction

C. Derleth, Jr., Assistant Professor of Structural Engineering, is an investigator of structural materials

J. W. Flynn, Superintendent of the University Printing Office, had charge of the Red Cross printing

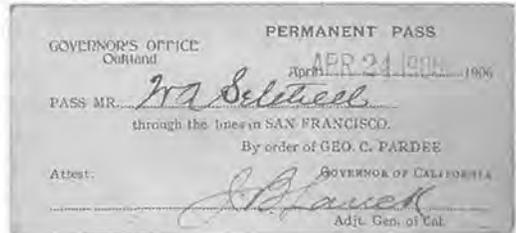
Professor John Galen Howard, head of the Department of Architecture, is advisor to the Reconstruction Committee and a member of the committee having in charge the question of the widening of the streets, etc.

A. C. Lawson, Professor of Mineralogy and Geology, is chairman of the commission appointed by Governor Pardee to investigate the causes of the earthquake

J. N. LeConte, Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering, and Professor A. O. Leuschner, Director of the Students' Observatory, have been associated with Professor Lawson...

W. C. Mitchell, Associate Professor of Commerce, acted as assistant to Dr. Edward T. Devine, President Roosevelt's special representative

Carleton H. Parker, Secretary for University Extension and staff lecturer, is a member of the History Committee



Courtesy of University Archives.

Carl C. Plehn, Dean of the College of Commerce, is head of the registration and statistics department of the Red Cross

Dr. G. F. Reinhardt, Professor of Hygiene and Medical Examiner, is sanitary officer at Berkeley

Professor Henry Morse Stephens, Director of University Extension, is at the head of the History Committee

Professor Irving Stringham [Mathematics], Dean of the College of Social Sciences, was chairman of the University Relief committee

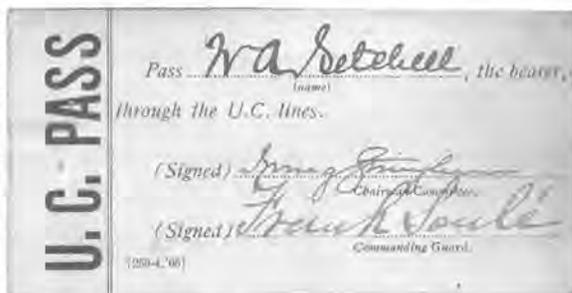
James Sutton, Recorder of the Faculties, was a member of the Executive Committee of the University Relief

Dr. A. H. Gray was superintendent of the camp maintained on California Field until the end of May

Professor Elmer E. Hall [Physics] was manager of the supply stores for the Berkeley Relief Committee, and

Professor William Popper, assisted Professor Hall

Professor M. E. Jaffa [Agriculture] had charge of the commissary department which for several weeks prepared and served meals for the homeless encamped on California Field



Courtesy of University Archives.

Of course, more faculty and staff were involved in relief work, officially or unofficially, besides those reported above from *The University Chronicle*. The obvious example is Dean Lucy Sprague and J. T. Nance. During the first week following the quake, others mentioned by the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* leading the relief work in the city of Berkeley included Professor Elmer E. Brown [Pedagogy] in charge of collection and distribution of supplies, Professor John H. Fryer [Oriental Languages and Literature] responsible for Chinese and Japanese refugees, Professor Joachim H. Senger [German] in charge of free transportation to outside points, Professor William D. Armes [English] in charge of all matters of publication, Professor E. B. Clapp [Greek Language and Literature] in charge of the office of housing, and Professor Charles G. Hyde [Sanitary Engineering] in charge of University sanitation.¹¹



Courtesy of University Archives.

Obviously the faculty and staff served the community well, sometimes in their areas of professional expertise and in other cases apparently in ways totally unrelated to their academic backgrounds.

Student Experiences

Student accounts reported here come primarily from the *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, with some reference to University documents and the *Daily Californian*.

Cadets Do Good Work

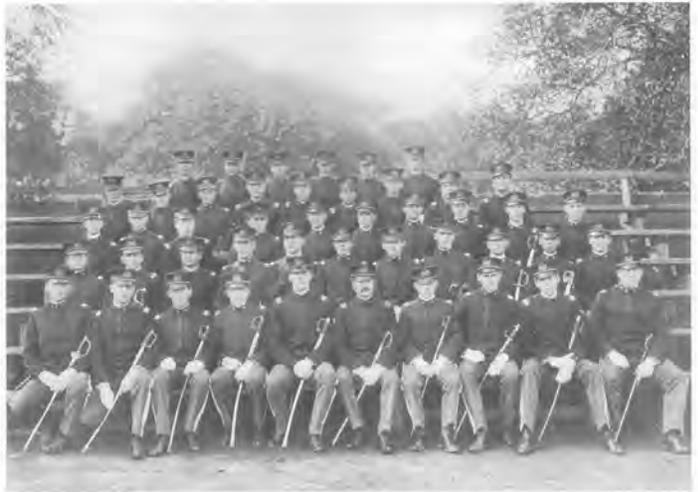
The day after the earthquake the *Gazette* announced that the U.C. Cadets had gone on duty in San Francisco.

At 8:27 o'clock last night some 300 University of California cadets, under orders from Captain J. T. Nance, departed for San Francisco in full uniform. The ordering of the college men to the doomed city was given on the call from General Pardee [the Governor], who issued orders that they be sent to assist Government and State Troops in preserving order.

Guns and ammunition were supplied each cadet, together with a day's supply of rations. Upon arriving in San Francisco the cadets were ordered to the Western addition where they were placed on guard duty. All night the youthful soldiers paraded that section of the city, guarding life and property.¹²

The next day an article related one cadet's personal experiences while on duty in San Francisco, under the heading, "Cadets Returning."

Frank Simpson, a member of the Phi Sigma Delta fraternity, who went over with the first detachment of cadets on Wednesday evening, returned to this city at 9:30 this morning. He reported that the boys were safe, but worn out, when he left and would probably be relieved and sent home some time this afternoon. Simpson was weak from exhaustion, but after resting a few hours returned to the scene of devastation. The



1906 Cadets. *Unpublished 1907 Blue and Gold.*

cadets have been on continual duty since arriving in San Francisco at 10 o'clock Wednesday night. Watches of 24 hours' duration are all that is being required of the regulars, so it is believed that the boys will have been relieved before this time.

"At the time I left," said Simpson, "the fire was practically under control, a few blocks from Van Ness. It is estimated on that side of the bay that fully two thirds of the city has been wiped out by the flames."¹³

After the weekend, the paper published more of Cadet Simpson's story under the heading, "Cadets Do Good Work":

Saturday afternoon the University of California cadets returned to this city, the army forces in San Francisco having been increased by several regiments of regulars from outlying points. Then, too, the cadets were without supplies or blankets and it was thought that they might be needed in Berkeley.

When seen this morning, Captain Nance stated that the cadets had been withdrawn from San Francisco by the permission of General Funston at his request, on account of lack of equipment. Hardly any of them were provided with blankets and in many instances they were without proper

clothing. Almost every boat that landed was bringing in militiamen from all parts of the State, who were equipped for such an emergency.

On Union square last Thursday, Frank Simpson and a companion found a dentist selling coffee for the exorbitant price of 25 cents a cup. The penniless people were complaining bitterly of the outrage and besought them to come to their rescue. Upon examination it was found that the man was selling government goods. They were immediately confiscated by Simpson and his companion and the dentist compelled to sell the coffee for a moderate price. Upon learning the true state of affairs the mob tried to lynch the dentist. Simpson, however, intervened and saved his neck. Simpson now stands in danger of being deprived of his rank, because it has been discovered that the incident occurred outside of his particular territory.

One of our students was ordered by a second lieutenant to clear a crowded room. A few minutes later a regular appeared and told the boy with an oath that he should have shot half of them.

Captain James Force related a numbers [sic] of incidents in which cadets, off duty, who should have been resting, worked to assist women, or walked the whole length of the city to send a telegraph message for the stricken.¹⁴

An official University version of the cadets on duty appears in the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* on Wednesday, April 25 (p. 8), following President Wheeler's return and a meeting of the Academic Council the night of his return (April 23). The version below from *The University Chronicle* is almost identical to that printed in the paper. Both versions say the cadets were relieved of duty on Friday, rather than Saturday as printed in the paper earlier.

Captain J. T. Nance, Commandant of the University Cadets, took the student regiment to San Francisco on the day of the great fire, where a strip of territory in the residence district, twenty-seven blocks long and nine blocks wide, was placed under their protection. The cadets remained on duty in San Francisco until the following Friday, when they were relieved and returned to Berkeley at the request of the citizens of Berkeley, who desired their services to guard the property on this side of the bay. Their work in San Francisco called forth the friendly praise of the regular troops and police, to whom they rendered every possible assistance.¹⁵

"U.C. Student Loses Limb" appeared in the newspaper two days after the quake. "It was reported early this morning that a University student, supposed to be a man by the name of Aitken, was shot in the leg yesterday afternoon, while assisting in quelling a saloon brawl. It was later reported that his limb was removed above the knee."

Fortunately, this story was not entirely true, as Professor Stephens mentioned earlier. We learn from an item in the *Daily Californian*, months later, that Irvine Aten, the cadet who was accidentally shot while on patrol duty, was recovering at home and would be returning to his studies at the University. The student paper adds that his attending physician announced that "he will not be a cripple, as was first feared."¹⁶

College Girls to the Rescue

In addition to the work of the women students in helping to feed, clothe, launder the clothes and otherwise help the refugees, there was this story about the harrowing experiences of other women students in the *Gazette* on Saturday, April 21.

Ten sorority girls badged with authority, armed with bread and filled with determination to assist in relieving the suffering people still in San Francisco, have crossed the bay. Willing to work at anything, they started through the Ferry Building but found it unnecessary to go further.

Hundreds of people huddled together on the steps and in every corner, sat and stood, awaiting the death that to them seemed inevitable. Believing that Berkeley and Oakland were entirely submerged, they were unwilling to enter the ferryboats.

Dry-eyed and dazed, they sat, gazing into vacancy and clutching, tightly, the bundles from which most of their choicest possessions had slipped unnoticed. An old man and woman sat hand in hand, expecting momentarily that their frail bodies would be wrapped in flames. A mother held her baby tightly in one hand with the other clutched an empty bird cage containing a few singed feathers. Such sights were to be seen on every hand.

Many of the Sorority girls proved themselves heroines and all of them comforters to these stricken, half demented people, and brought large numbers of them here, where they were provided shelter and food.¹⁷

Blue and Gold Prepared by Class of 1907 Almost Entirely Destroyed

One of the casualties of the earthquake and fire that greatly dismayed the students was the loss of the *1907 Blue and Gold* that was to have been. All that was saved of the annual is contained within the covers of a single document placed in the University Library, now in the University Archives. In the words of its editor, J. R. Gabbert, in his cover letter to the remains of the book, it is

made up of spoiled press-proofs, casually picked up among scraps of paper in the printing rooms of the Sunset Press, San Francisco, on the seventeenth of April, 1906. Practically everything else that would have contributed toward making the annual was destroyed on the morning of the following day, when the shock of the big temblor disturbed the pressmen as they were watching the printing presses run off all that remained to be printed of the book.

One of the features that makes the present record pathetically incomplete is the absence of a large number of "inserts," on which were grouped hundreds of pictures that were to have given a complete pictorial record of all happenings of the college year and the personnel of the different college organizations.¹⁸

J. R. Gabbert is later quoted in the second issue of the *Daily Californian* of the fall semester on the loss of the *Blue and Gold*, and the remains he gave to the archives: "...[These] may give an inadequate idea of what the book might have been.... They do not make up for the book that the class looked forward to, however..."¹⁹



Unpublished 1907 *Blue and Gold*.



Unpublished 1907 *Blue and Gold*.

written note of encouragement from the White House from President Theodore Roosevelt to the yearbook staff.

The *Berkeley Daily Gazette* reports on April 25, 1906 that President Wheeler had a welcome telegram awaiting him upon his return from Texas from his friend, President Roosevelt: "I earnestly hope the University of California has not suffered as much as reported. I share the horror and grief of the country at the disaster that has befallen California."

That Was the Week That Was: Newspaper and Other Accounts, April 19–26, 1906

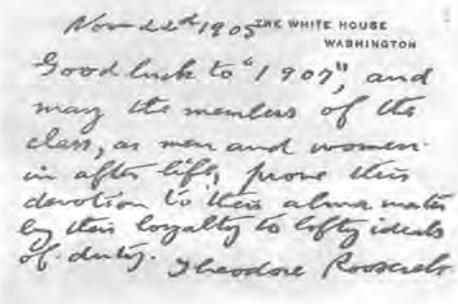
On the day after the earthquake the main headline in the Extra! 12 o'clock edition of the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* read "SAN FRANCISCO DEVASTATED, Entire Business Section of Western Metropolis One Mass of Smoking Ruins—Fire Has Extended into Residence District." The final edition that day had this headline: "SAN FRANCISCO WIPED OUT, Last Vestige of Once Beautiful City Now a Raging Furnace.... Many Women and Children are Begging for Water and Food." In Berkeley, the newspaper reported that relief work had started with help coming from the business sector, city government, women's organizations, the churches, the YMCA, and the Native Sons and Daughters and others providing information, shelter, and food.

This Afternoon the Town Trustees of This City Ordered All the Sprinkling Carts Filled With Water and Sent to San Francisco for the Suffering Thousands that Have Gathered at the Ferry Building; The Carts Went by the Creek Route, Necessitating a Drive to Oakland.... This afternoon Berkeley is rapidly filling with refugees from the razed city. Hundreds of Chinese and Japanese arrived shortly after noon and lined Addison street for a block. Every available space is being utilized for the care of these and hundreds of others, irrespective of color. The baseball field on the Campus is to be utilized by the refugees. Hundreds of tents are being erected to shelter them tonight.

Private homes provided some lodging, but lodging also was found in Stiles Hall, the YMCA, the churches, Cloyne Court, and many other places as well. "Between 12 and 1 o'clock today fifty refugees were fed at Stiles Hall and as many more at Trinity Methodist...."

In a University of California official "Notice" dated April 19, the Acting President suspended classes for three days to allow all members of the University to participate in relief work. Students and cadets from the University assisted in providing order and showing the refugees where they had been assigned lodging. They worked on the campus and at the

Many of the pages that were saved have charming drawings and interesting articles. (See the article on the 1905 fire included elsewhere in this issue of the *Chronicle*). Another example is the drawing of California Hall, a John Galen Howard building completed in 1905. Among the first pages of the only copy, incomplete though it is, is a copy of a hand-



Unpublished 1907 *Blue and Gold*.

YMCA. The city's paper that day had an item on page four addressed to the students, "All University students and graduates are requested to meet at the armory this evening [April 19] at 6 o'clock for special guard duty." The U. C. cadets already had gone to San Francisco.

Other heads of the two *Gazette* editions the day after the quake report its effect in other areas besides San Francisco, reflecting the horror (and possibly the misinformation) that followed the disaster (pp. 4, 8):

Chicago Safe
 Los Angeles Is Fortunate
 No Deaths in Capital City [Sacramento]
 Santa Rosa Ruined
 Garden City a Total Wreck [San Jose]
 Santa Clara [affected]
 Vallejo Suffers
 Stanford Razed
 Shock at Napa
 Felt in Portland
 Felt in Stockton

The banks were closed, but the post office remained open, even on Sunday.

By the next day, Friday, April 20, the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* published three editions. "Conflagration Controlled" was the page one headline that day for the situation in San Francisco. But also by that time, "Berkeley Wants Martial Law" says the head on page one. "...Professor Charles Mills Gayley, head of the English department at the State University, has volunteered to bring the matter [martial law] to the personal attention of Governor Pardee, now at Oakland and get an immediate answer..." The following day's paper has a small item that begins, "Governor Pardee has declined to grant martial law for Berkeley as he believes the greatest danger is now over..." (p. 2) At this time other Berkeley news is that "no passes [are being issued] to doomed city," "free fares [are available] for refugees," and the citizens of Berkeley have to "clear streets at ten o'clock..."

Citizens are warned that they must not raise prices in Berkeley.

...No scarcity of food has yet made itself manifest, though refugees are pouring in by the thousands, some directly from San Francisco and others constituting the overflow of the Oakland exodus. Eleven hundred barrels of flour arrived this morning and a number of large bake shops are running full capacity day and night to supply the hungry men, women and children quartered on the campus and elsewhere. (p. 8)

On Saturday, the *Gazette* printed only one edition with an article on page one about the reorganization of the city's relief committees. The paper repeats the warnings to clear the streets at 10 o'clock and that no passes can be issued to the "doomed city." It reports that the Relief Committee "sent ten big relief wagons across the bay last evening [Friday] at about six o'clock to rescue the sick and injured and transport them to the improvised hospitals in this city. Every train that came in brought many suffering either from burns, broken bones from falling walls or suffering from some sort of disease." (p. 4)

On the same page, it is reported that the total number of refugees fed up to the noon hour that day at the various public places was between 7200 and 8000. At the private homes it was estimated that between 1000 and 3000 had been fed. The main need of the refugees reported by the relief committee is for bedding and clothing, "especially underclothing and hose for women and children." Local subscriptions received by the relief committee reached



Courtesy of University Archives.

\$4500 only three days after the earthquake. On page six is a list of “refugees who have found food and shelter in Berkeley.” No paper was published on Sunday, but aftershocks continued.

Among the items in the Monday paper’s first page was the fact that there had been a “slight earthquake shock” Sunday afternoon at about four o’clock and another at midnight. Neither did any damage. Most of the front page was devoted to the loss of life in San Francisco, clearing of the rubble, and the growth of the relief fund donations from across the country. At the bottom of the page is a one-sentence item entitled, “Wheeler Returns.” It declared that “President Wheeler returned from Texas this morning and at eight o’clock this evening [April 23] a meeting of the Academic Council will be called for the purpose of deciding what shall be done in regard to examinations and the closing exercises.”

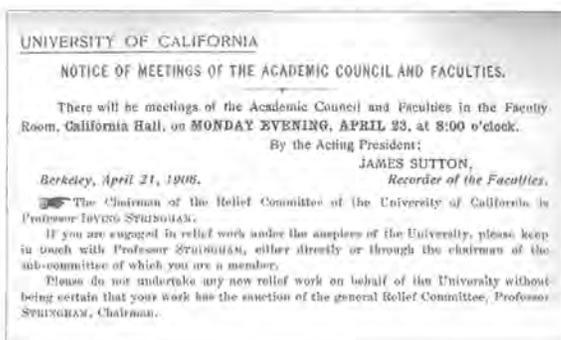
The announcement of the meeting was made two days earlier, dated April 21, and came from the Acting President. Of interest is the announcement that Professor Stringham is the chairman of the campus relief committee, that he should be informed of any relief work under the auspices of the University that faculty may be doing, and that any new responsibilities must first be sanctioned by the general Relief Committee. Clearly, in the proliferation of committees and the desire of so many to be helpful it was time to begin to restore order and to clarify responsibilities. For example, the cadet sentinels were probably being asked to do whatever seemed helpful at the time by others, including their professors. So a letter addressed “To the Members of the Faculties” from President Wheeler was sent on April 24:

Cadet sentinels on guard on the campus will have, among other orders, the following:

To receive, transmit and obey all orders from, and allow yourself to be relieved by the President of the University, Commandant of Cadets, officer of the day, an officer or noncommissioned officer of the guard only.

All members of the faculties other than those named in the foregoing are requested, therefore, to refrain from giving orders or instructions of any nature to any of the cadets on duty as members of the campus guard.

The Commandant of the Cadets will gladly give orders to the guard to carry out the wishes of chairmen of faculty committees where the same are presented to him and can be carried out by the guard at his disposal and are not inconsistent with instructions from higher authority.²⁰



Courtesy of University Archives.

With his return, the President of the University obviously was back in the saddle!

Following the meeting of the Academic Council and Faculties, the *Gazette* reported:

President Wheeler definitely announced today that the summer session of the University of California will be held from June 25 to August 4. While the University suffered very heavily in the loss of income property in the San Francisco fire, the University buildings and their contents in this city suffered very little damage. The University work will continue as usual, as soon as the refugees, who are housed in various buildings on the campus

have been cared for. The Academic Council met last night [April 23], and in consideration of the fact that the University Cadets will probably be employed for some time further in guarding property, and the women students of the University will be busy with Relief work, the council voted to suspend the rules, which require that final examinations be given before marks for the term can be filed with the Recorder. The students will be passed in their subjects on the basis of term's work, which was within one week of completion at the time of the earthquake. In cases where the instructor is doubtful as to the students having satisfactorily done the work of the course, examination will be deferred until the opening of college next August. Commencement exercises will be held. The date of the exercises and the form they will take will be announced later. (April 25, p. 2)

The article continues:

It may be impossible for the National Educational Association to meet in San Francisco on account of lack of accommodation. There will be, however, ample accommodations in this city for all who desire to attend summerschool [sic]. Aside from the pleasure of attending courses given by some of the greatest scholars and teachers in Europe and America, the great opportunity of watching the reconstruction of a great city should attract an unusual number in this year's summer session.

While their motivation has not been reported, over 700 students registered for that summer session.²¹

In the official announcement to faculty and students from the April 23 meeting,²² President Wheeler is given authorization to assign the hours for Military 1, thus maintaining the cadet corps as needed. Students who were not cadets could leave the University to go home, as soon as they had permission from Professor Edwards for the men and Miss Sprague for the women.

The University staff recognized that job placement for the students and graduates would be difficult if some kind of recommendations were not available. Appointment Secretary May Cheney sent this form letter, dated April 27, to the faculty, probably with a list of names:

Dear Sir,

As many of the graduates and students of the University have lost everything in the recent disaster, and need work at once, we want the reports of their professors, in order to know in what way we can help them. Please send me a line, stating the qualifications of those you knew well enough to recommend! Where you have no definite information, please write "No report" on the blank and return it, that we may know that it has not been overlooked.

Sincerely, (signed) May Cheney²³

May Cheney, a Berkeley graduate of 1883, served as appointment secretary (placement counselor) from 1902-1938. She and Dr. Mary Ritter (the women students' physician) were the only women on the University staff when Lucy Sprague came to Berkeley, not including the informal role of University benefactor and regent Phoebe Hearst.

Under a single major heading, "Important Notices," on page two of the Monday paper of April 23, were articles reflecting some of the fears of the population, but also some of its altruistic responses to the emergency:

Call for Policemen
 No Smallpox
 Keep Children In
 Free Employment
 Want Soap and Cloth
 Distributing Food by Tons
 Do Not Waste
 750 Transports Issued 15,000 Refugees
 Caring for the Injured
 Screens Wanted
 Attempts Suicide
 Insane People Cause Trouble



Tent colony.
 Courtesy of University Archives.

Monday's newspaper was expanded from its usual 8-page length to 12 pages to accommodate the pages of the List of Refugees, with names and locations in Berkeley. Besides addresses of private homes, organizations, public buildings, they also list California Field, Baseball Field, Cloyne Court, and Stiles Hall.

The Tuesday evening edition of the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* (April 24) also was 12 pages, again because of the list of refugees. The paper claims the number of refugees is dropping in an article entitled, "Weeding Out Drones."

There is a general decrease in the number of people being cared for at various camps on the University grounds. Yesterday morning 1000 were fed at breakfast. This morning the number dropped to 350. This is partially explained by the fact that many have left town and others have secured lodgings in the different homes of the city.

The inauguration of the work system in local camps, whereby all able-bodied men have been pressed into service to lighten the labor of the girls who have worked indefatigably in their behalf, has had much to do with the exodus. The scheme has been most efficacious in weeding out the drones and the unworthy. (p. 8)

The first mention of conditions at Stanford in the Berkeley paper was on the day after the quake with the headline, "Stanford Razed." In the Saturday edition students offer to help in San Francisco: "One hundred Stanford students have offered their services to the stricken city. They will work under the general direction of the Associated Charities." (p. 1) On page 12 of the Tuesday paper is an article entitled, "Begin Work at Stanford." It gives detail of the serious damage to some buildings and notes which buildings are unlikely to be restored. (The list includes the Memorial Church, the memorial arch, the new library, the gymnasium and the museum of the university.) One student was killed in Encina Hall by being buried when a chimney crashed through four floors. Twelve others were slightly hurt. The following is the first paragraph:

But little destruction was in evidence on the campus today [April 24]. The students still here lack funds. [Banks are closed.] Martial-law continues and no one is allowed upon the quad without a pass, as a result of several valuable articles being stolen yesterday. Workmen are clearing away the debris of the Memorial Church. Most of the campus dwellings have been repaired.

Several of the articles in Tuesday's *Gazette* reflect a growing optimism and a return to a more orderly existence. Money is pouring in to help the relief effort. The condemned tower of the Ferry Building is to be rebuilt. The state militia is about to be withdrawn from San Francisco, in favor of the Federal troops under General Funston already policing the city. In Berkeley, all volunteer and special officers were dismissed, to allow "experienced regular officers to take their places." (p. 8)

In one article "Bankers Say Good Outlook," especially for Berkeley. After extolling the physical virtues of the east bay for residences, and the resources for business interests, a Berkeley banker concludes, "Eastern capitalists who have seen California realize that such a calamity cannot down the 'banner state' of the Union, and that the resources now for investment will be greater than ever before." (p. 8)

Thursday's *Gazette*, April 26, has two articles on page one indirectly related to the University. The first states that "travel over the lines of the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe from this city to San Francisco is now open. It is no longer necessary to secure passes or permits from officials of city or state and all day yesterday and today each train took across crowds of sightseers intent upon getting a glimpse of the ruins before they are dynamited."

The second article reports on the number of refugees cared for in Berkeley during the first week after the quake with some statistics from the hospitals and the relief committees on the "Work Berkeley Has Done."

Refugees registered at relief headquarters, 5,000; Odd Fellows' Hall, 1750; Native Sons' Hall, 1500; Chinese in city, 1000; Japanese, 1000. Total registered, 10,250.

Hospital entries: Emergency Hospital, Odd Fellows' Hall, entered 206, remaining 17, deaths 1. Hearst Hall, medical and obstetrical wards, entered 69, remaining 51, deaths, 2. Old Town Hall site, contagious ward, entered 10, remaining 10, no deaths.

Free transportation issued to fire refugees to various parts of the state, 1550. Application made this morning by Relief Committee for free transportation for refugees to San Francisco.

More paragraphs follow, accounting for 15 carloads of supplies (general groceries, bread, oranges, potatoes, bananas) received from various areas in California (Fresno, Hanford, Stockton, Greely, Colton and Hollister) and out of the state from Reno, the Dalles, and Portland with clothing, blankets, hospital supplies and more groceries. These were distributed to San Francisco and locally. "Food demands up to date growing larger, yesterday's record being largest." No further mention of the University is made on this day, except for some repeated items. But on page two there is a historical review of California earthquakes for the last century—since 1803.

So those are the highlights from the local press of the week following the 1906 earthquake.

We conclude with the voice of the students who produced the first editorial of the fall semester in the *Daily Californian*, August 20, 1906, "The Disaster of April 18."

THE DISASTER OF APRIL 18.

THE disaster of April 18 has brought about many changes in the last few months, and the University should consider itself very fortunate that it escaped as easily as it did. The buildings on the campus were practically uninjured, even old North Hall standing the shock much to the surprise of all. The loss that the University sustained was in city property in San Francisco, Hastings Law Library and Mark Hopkins Institute of Art. Of the minor losses there may be mentioned the 1907 Blue and Gold, the many intercollegiate events which were called off and the omission of the Senior week festivities. In considering the enormous loss of property which was destroyed by fire and earthquake the losses of the University are very small.

The work of the University, both faculty and students, in aiding the refugees that came to Berkeley was certainly very commendable. The Cadets did nobly in San Francisco, and in spite of a few false reports which were circulated, acted as gentlemen from start to finish and were worthy representatives of California.

A great deal of credit is due the authorities for the prosperous condition which the University is in after the effects of the disaster. Besides various bequests which we have received since April 18, the authorities of the University have succeeded in increasing the salaries of many of the professors. Several new appointments have been made and very few of the departments have lost any of their teaching staffs.

This subject cannot be passed over without saying a word of sympathy and cheer to our rival and sister institution—Stanford University. It was Stanford's misfortune to be near the center of the shock and consequently her damage was considerable. But it will only be a matter of a few years before she will rise from her ruins stronger and greater than ever and will be able to look back and know that she has survived one of the historic disasters of the world. Here is to the success of our worthy rival—Stanford University.

[But just the same, Go Bears!]

NOTES

- 1 *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, April 18, 1906.
- 2 William Ford Nichols, "Class Vision," in *The University [of California] Chronicle*, 8:4 (June 1906), 365-376.
- 3 Albert H. Allen, "University Record," in *The University [of California] Chronicle*, 8:4 (June 1906), 414-15, 420, 422.
- 4 Allen, 422.
- 5 Arnold Genthe, *As I Remember* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1936), 100.
- 6 Genthe, 99-101.
- 7 Allen, 396.
- 8 Lucy Sprague Mitchell, *Two Lives* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), 201-204.
- 9 *1908 Blue and Gold*, 1907, V. 34, pages not numbered.
- 10 Allen, 418-419.
- 11 *Gazette*, April 21 and 23, 1906.
- 12 *Gazette*, April 19, 1906, 1.
- 13 *Gazette*, April 20, 1906, 8.
- 14 *Gazette*, April 23, 1906, 1.
- 15 Allen, 419.
- 16 *Daily Californian*, July 26, 1906, 2.
- 17 *Gazette*, April 21, 1906, 4.
- 18 *1907 Blue and Gold*, 1906. V. 33. Unpublished, one copy of signatures 1-16, 19 and 20 (entire edition consumed by April 1906 fire), University Archives, University of California, Berkeley. Pages not numbered.
- 19 *Daily Californian*, August 21, 1906, 1.
- 20 University Archives, Pamphlets Historical, V. 6.
- 21 Allen, 423.
- 22 University Archives, Pamphlets Historical, V. 6, "Notice to Students and Instructors," April 24, 1906.
- 23 University Archives, Pamphlets Historical, V. 6. May Cheney, letter dated April 27, 1906.



“POURING OUT OF THE CITY BY MILLIONS”

AIR

Jack London, *The Scarlet Plague*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1915).

THE 1918 SPANISH INFLUENZA, BERKELEY'S "QUINTA COLUMNA"

Rex W. Adams



Oakland Tribune,
October 17, 1918.

Author's note: The influenza epidemic of 1918 was a disaster of international proportions. Indeed, as Fred van Hartesveldt notes, "[i]nfluenza undoubtedly killed more in one-fifth the time than World War I's soldiers managed with all their machine guns, poison gas, and rapid-fire artillery."¹ The world-wide death toll of the epidemic has been estimated at somewhere between 20 and 40 million. Spanish Influenza has even been held responsible for crucial developments in the Great War. Dr. Woods Hutchinson, a local physician, argued for a Berkeley audience that "it is due to this disease that the German offensive was held up for two weeks last spring, giving our American boys a chance to do their fine work at Chateau-Thierry."²

The epidemic came to the University of California in three waves, the first and most serious in October and November of 1918. During this period almost a quarter of the campus community contracted the disease. It resurfaced briefly in December and again in January, causing Spring semester to be delayed by two weeks. Though the State Hygiene Laboratory on the university campus developed a vaccine in late October by using blood donated by Berkeley students, the serum was distributed first to the military camps and secondly to students and by the time it was made generally available, the epidemic had largely run its course.³

FALL SEMESTER, 1918. Over the summer break, the University of California had set about doing its part to make the world safe for democracy. Students and faculty returning to Berkeley found themselves encouraged to volunteer in military training units and a Red Cross division was established at the University. A writer to the campus newspaper remarked on

the altered campus,

With the first week of college over it may be well for us to pause a moment and consider what is happening. In a surprisingly short time the University has become virtually a military camp. This time next week will probably see a great many, if not all of the men housed in barracks and with a good start in the work of the Students' Army Training Corps or Naval Unit . . . To the casual observer, it would seem that University life had not changed very greatly. Yet the change has been great. Those who are in touch with the main arteries of our University life realize that this is true.⁴

With its "main arteries" engorged with patriotic sentiment and activity, still the pulse of campus life beat steadily on. The *Daily Californian* notes, "we have successfully held our customary Freshman Rally, the classes have met and organized, and we have a football team training in the field."⁵ Yet even as American soldiers went over the top to face the certainty of German fire in Europe, men and women on the home front would come to fear an invisible enemy, one as likely to arrive on the breath of a friendly "hello," or the lips of the next lover's kiss, as to mingle anonymously in crowded classrooms, lecture halls and theaters. A microscopic virus would affect the University in a way that a world war could not. The most serious influenza



Oakland Tribune, October 12, 1918.

epidemic to date would witness university buildings converted into make-shift hospitals, a segment of the campus quarantined, women students working as assistant nurses and "flu mask" manufacturers, public activities curtailed, classes canceled and spring semester delayed. The Spanish flu found a university knuckling down to fight a distant crusade. Within weeks of its arrival, this fifth column, the influenza virus, had outdistanced the foreign threat and become itself the focus of the campus' struggle.

Two airmen arriving from the east coast and entering the campus with the returning students, brought with them an unsuspected stowaway. On October 6 they fell ill and the university medical staff diagnosed Spanish influenza. The airmen were duly placed in the small university infirmary for isolation and treatment. But the flu of 1918 was particularly virulent and three days later seventeen people had contracted the disease.⁶ Within a week, 68 had taken ill on campus and the numbers continued to mount.⁷ In all, estimates suggest that somewhere between 1200 and 1400 people contracted the disease at the University during October and November,

INFLUENZA

SYMPTOMS AND PREVENTION

- I. GAUZE MASKS.
All students and employees are required to wear gauze masks while attending classes or while inside any of the University buildings.
- II. COLDS.
No student or employee is permitted to attend any University exercises of any nature who is suffering from a cold, or who has any of the symptoms of influenza.
- III. CARE OF MASKS.
(a) Boil the mask every night for five minutes and dry thoroughly.
(b) Be careful to keep the outer side of the mask (marked) away from your face.
(c) If possible, provide yourself with several masks.
(d) Provide a receptacle for your mask—such as a piece of cloth, which can be boiled or destroyed.
- IV. SYMPTOMS OF INFLUENZA.

Fever.	Sore throat.
Headache.	Cough.
Backache.	Nausea.
Pains in muscles, bones, joints.	Prostration.
A hard cold.	

PROSTRATION may be the chief symptom.
- V. HOW TRANSMITTED.
By the secretions of the nose, mouth and throat, especially in sneezing, coughing, or talking.
- VI. HOW TO AVOID SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES.
(a) Act intelligently, but no not become alarmed FEAR reduces your resistance.
(b) Take out-door exercise.
(c) Avoid over-work.
(d) KEEP AWAY FROM ALL CROWDS.
AVOID STREET CARS as much as possible.
DO NOT ATTEND ANY PARTIES OF ANY NATURE.
(e) Gargle and wash nasal passages with a solution such as Lister's, one part to-water three parts, or same proportion of Dobell's.
(f) GO TO BED AT ONCE if you feel sick—take no chances.
This is the best way to avoid PNEUMONIA.
INFLUENZA IS A PERSONAL CONTACT DISEASE.
DO YOUR PART TO STOP THIS EPIDEMIC.
By direction of
BENJ. I. WHEELER
President

Berkeley, October 21, 1918.

Daily Californian, October 24, 1918

"Give Us Beds, Bedding," Is the Plea of Flu Hospital



Emergency Wards in Care of 100 Patients Today
With patients coming in thronging, but only at the rate of one every fifteen minutes, the emergency influenza hospital in the Oakland Auditorium established by the city, stands at 100 beds, under the management of...

This picture shows a section of the Oakland auditorium that was converted into a hospital for the care of sufferers from Spanish influenza. *Oakland Tribune*, October 24, 1918.

the peak of the epidemic. President Benjamin Ide Wheeler, in his *Annual Report* of that year, would record that the flu had claimed the lives of 20 students (two of whom were assistant nurses) and a faculty member.⁸

Influenza spread first among the ranks of the S.A.T.C. (Students' Army Training Corps). Only eight days after the first diagnoses, 45 members of the S.A.T.C., the Naval Unit and the School of Military Aeronautics fell ill. Their numbers quickly overwhelmed the small campus infirmary and the Zeta Psi fraternity house had to be commandeered to accommodate the overflow. In spite of this dramatic spread of infection, the *Daily Californian* continued to report, as it had

from the beginning, that the epidemic was under control and even decreasing.⁹ Yet as October progressed, with 468 students ill, seven dead, and military barracks, Stiles Hall, Hearst Hall and Harmon Gym converted into temporary infirmaries, no one could ignore the serious threat posed by the virus. On October 22, the commanding officer of the S.A.T.C. took action to localize the disease by ordering all unit members quarantined.¹⁰ The S.A.T.C. was not to leave the campus premises, though they could mingle freely with the rest of the student population.

Even this caveat to the general quarantine could not mitigate the situation for S.A.T.C. students who had already given up much of ordinary civilian life and who were now, by virtue of the quarantine, singled out as dangerous acquaintances for their fellow students. The rest of the campus, however, rallied to their support. At least one student, noting that the quarantine coincided with the football season, advocated that the S.A.T.C. be provided with free tickets to home games asking, "[i]s it fair that men in uniform should be required to part with their day's wages in order to see one of Cal's football games when...the games are absolutely the only form of entertainment in which the men can indulge?" The Student Store expanded its lines of merchandise to accommodate men who could no longer shop in downtown Berkeley. The *Daily Californian* notes,

There is very little in the way of toilet articles which can not now be procured without leaving the University grounds and the quarantined soldiers are proving excellent customers.... To accommodate the distressed soldiers who peer longingly through Sather Gate but dare not venture beyond in search of necessities, the Students' Store has established a messenger service to attend to the off-campus business of the S.A.T.C.¹¹

**SURGEON GENERAL ISSUES ORDERS
REGARDING SPREAD OF INFLUENZA**

Owing to the prevalence of Spanish Influenza in the army camps, Brigadier-General Charles Richard, acting surgeon general of the United States army has issued the following twelve suggestions for avoiding the disease:

1. Avoid needless crowding—influenza is a crowd disease.
2. Smother your coughs and sneezes—others do not want the germs which you would throw away.
3. Your nose, not your mouth, was made to breath through—get the habit.
4. Remember the three C's—a clean mouth, clean skin, and clean clothes.
5. Try to keep cool when you walk and warm when you ride and sleep.
6. Open the windows—always—at home at night; at the office when practicable.
7. Food will win the war if you give it a chance—help by choosing and chewing your food well.
8. Your fate may be in your own hands—wash your hands before eating.
9. Don't let the waste products of digestion accumulate—drink a glass or two of water on getting up.
10. Don't use a napkin, towel, spoon, fork, glass or cup which has been used by another person and not washed.
11. Avoid tight clothes, tight shoes, tight gloves—seek to make nature your ally not your prisoner.
12. When the air is pure breathe all of it you can—breathe deeply."

CHARLES RICHARD.

Brigadier General, Medical Corps, Acting Surgeon General, U. S. Army

Daily Californian,
October 17, 1918.

INFLUENZA DIET

DIRECTIONS FOR FEEDING INFLUENZA PATIENTS

Diet During the Fever Period
The patient must be induced to eat more than his reduced appetite usually demands. Liquid, or semi-liquid food only must be given at least every four hours.

1. The basis of the diet is milk, supplemented by sugar and starch. The latter may be given in toast, starch and bread puddings, cereal mushes and gruels. Ice-cream may be given two or three times a day if desired.

2. No coarse vegetables or fruit fiber should be given but purees of spinach, asparagus, peas, carrots may be given in the form of milk soups.

3. Meat broths are of little value, and cannot be relied upon as conveying nutrition. They may be given occasionally for variety.

4. Sugar should be added plentifully to mushes, fruit juices, pudding, and even to the milk given as a drink.

5. Fruit juices, well chilled, are refreshing and valuable. Orange, apple, logan-berry, grape juice and lemonade are all equally satisfactory.

6. Egg-nogs and custards may be given if desired. There is, however, no imperative necessity of adding eggs to the diet during the fever.

No other foods than those mentioned should be used. Do not experiment with the patient's digestion during the critical period.

Diet During Convalescence

When the patient's temperature

becomes normal, egg dishes, simple vegetable salads, with plenty of oil dressing, broiled or boiled lean meats and fish, bacon, rice, baked and mashed potatoes, macaroni and fresh fruit may be added to the diet advised for the fever period.

Menus for Convalescents

Breakfast: (1) Oatmeal, cornmeal, cream of barley, wheat, etc., milk or cream; (a) milk toast with butter or oleomargarine; (3) orange, melon or ripe bananas; (4) weak coffee or tea in moderate amounts with plenty of cream and sugar if the patient desires it, may be allowed. Cocoa or chocolate made with milk if tea or coffee is not demanded.

Luncheon and Dinner: (1) a vegetable milk soup; (2) mashed or baked potatoes, or creamed macaroni and cheese, or rice; (3) toasted bread or muffins, with butter or oleomargarine; (4) tomato, asparagus, lettuce, or artichoke salad with plenty of oil dressing; (5) an egg omelet, soufflé, or custard, or broiled lean meat or fish, such as lamb chops, beef steak, sole, or a creamed dish such as creamed codfish; (6) ice cream or a frozen custard.

Not all of these varieties of food need be given at a single meal. A combination of any three of six classes, providing class five is represented, will usually suffice.

A glass of milk, ice cream, custard, or cup of cocoa, should be given in the between-meal periods and at night.

Daily Californian, October 25, 1918.

As the quarantine entered its third week, Professor S. J. Hume, Director of the Greek Theatre, organized a "vaudeville" performance for the S.A.T.C. Student musical numbers and skits, along with three short films, entertained the student-soldiers in "one of the most enthusiastic gatherings ever assembled in the classic amphitheater."¹²

In the meantime, the contagion spread to regular students and faculty members. Dr. Robert Legge, the university physician and Professor of Hygiene, fell ill while attending to flu patients and a military doctor had to replace him for the remainder of the epidemic.¹³

Professor Gayley contracted the disease in mid October and had to postpone his lecture series on "The Ideals of the Present War."¹⁴ President Wheeler and Berkeley health authorities placed a ban on all public gatherings, including student clubs, activities, and a performance by Lucien Muratore, "the world's greatest tenor."¹⁵ Finally, class attendance flagged and instruction languished. With the increasing absences due to illness, Wheeler recommended a moratorium on new assignments for ten days at the end of October. The President suggested that the time be used "mainly for review and individual assistance" to keep large numbers

**MASKS MUST BE WORN
IN CAMPUS BUILDINGS**

Masks are to be worn in the corridors, halls and rooms of all University buildings. Do not remove your mask until you are in the open air. By order of Major Brooks, Post Surgeon.

Daily Californian, October 23, 1918.

of students from falling far behind.¹⁶ With Fall Semester yet half underway, the University's vital functions had come as close to a complete shutdown as any natural disaster would ever bring them.

Contemporary doctors knew relatively little about preventing, containing or even treating the disease. As Van Haresveldt notes, "[u]nfortunately for the ill of 1918, the improvements in treatment had only gotten as far as reducing the likelihood that the physician would harm the patient by his actions."¹⁷ This did not prevent

the medical world and the media from extolling a colorful array of preventatives and treatments. The "influenza diet" appeared in every Bay Area newspaper, along with recommendations to avoid fear and tight clothes, and to seek and inhale deeply fresh, clean air.

Perhaps the most noteworthy, and certainly the strangest, preventative measure witnessed by the campus was the appearance of the "flu masks" on October 21. A day before the S.A.T.C. quarantine order, President Wheeler mandated the wearing of influenza masks on campus (a common step taken to combat the flu around the world, the cities of Oakland, Berkeley and San Francisco would follow suit in a matter of weeks).¹⁸ "Students in attendance on classes within the University buildings must wear gauze masks, likewise those reading in the library. The help of you all is asked in the enforcement of this order."¹⁹ The sight of students, professors and administrators strolling past Sather Gate, attending such classes as were held and seeing to the university's daily affairs seems to have affected onlookers almost as profoundly as the presence of the virus itself. One writer notes the "ghostly appearance" that the masks gave to the campus at night.²⁰ Other students, echoing the political rhetoric of the day, remarked on the "democratic" aspects of mask wearing.

It was rather an unusual sight to see people go about the campus yesterday, trying to decide whether the persons in front of them were or were not acquaintances. No doubt several unintentional "snubs" were given and probably some may have thought a wildly democratic fever had suddenly seized every member of the University. Some of us found ourselves in amusing situations. Few of us stopped to consider the serious side of the order issued to wear masks.²¹

The masks seemed to offer the greatest safeguard against infection, yet their "democratizing" function eerily mirrored the flu's own morbid democracy. Aside from afflicting most intensely those between twenty and thirty years of age (the most populous group on campus), the flu was essentially indiscriminating.²² The university mass-produced masks for

its members in a race to overtake an enemy replicating itself with equal fervor. Infection and masks became peculiar leveling agents, the one mingling undiscerningly among students and faculty, and the other producing a kind of "democratic" anonymity. One rhymester quipped,

*Floo Masks have their good points, too,
Of which I'll enoomerate a few.
They mingle on a equal basis
All females, no matter what their faces.*

He then switches to a somewhat darker tone,

*One Prof. I know with a squeeky voice
Has a class what wears these masks by choice.
Beecause they thus can safely shriek
And laff at each new funny squeek.*

*O fokes, this is a funny erth,
Into which you have give me birth,
We go around like muzzled dogs,
And snort and breathe and act like hogs.
O I look up to Parrydise
Where peepul breathe and all iz nice.²³*

Most of the campus seems to have complied with the mask ordinance, yet the number of diatribes against "mask slackers" to appear in the *Daily Californian* indicates a not insignificant resistance, at least among students. A day after the mask order at the University, an editorial cites that "many of the students have even dispensed with their masks for protracted periods during recitations."²⁴ Another student asks rhetorically, and somewhat hysterically, why people are allowed to attend classes without their masks, "is it because some people do not understand the serious character of the situation upon the campus, or is it another instance of selfish indifference on the part of a small group of individuals?"²⁵ These answers may indeed indicate the motivation of some students, but others undoubtedly resisted the identity effacing masks as a way of asserting their individuality, of taking some, albeit negative, power into their own hands. Another letter to the *Daily Californian* observes,

Since the ordinance requiring that everyone wear a mask has been in force most people have had to obey at least the letter of the law. But many have missed or ignored the spirit and are still evading the law in every possible way as though it were a sign of superiority to disregard it.

And so on all sides we see little useless masks the size of a postage stamp, and masks worn on the chin and neck.²⁶

When city councils adopted mask ordinances they imposed severe penalties for non-compliance. Oakland established a 300-person special police force to coerce its citizens to wear their masks. The "mask cops" were to take down names of violators who, if they persisted, would be subject to \$5 - \$100 fines and/or jail sentences.²⁷ In Berkeley, mask fines could range up to \$500. Two days after the Berkeley mask ordinance went into effect, 171 men and 4 women had been arrested as "mask slackers."²⁸

Sometimes crises produce heroes. The unsung heroines of the 1918 influenza epidemic at Berkeley were the university women. Lucy Stebbins, the Dean of Women who four years earlier



Daily Californian, November 1, 1918.

had spearheaded the development of the Home Economics Department at the University, organized the mobilization of women students and encouraged them in the manufacture of flu masks.²⁹ In total, 648 women students (about a fifth of all women students at the University) labored to produce 23,991 gauze masks during the height of the epidemic.³⁰ Working tirelessly, they manufactured 8,300 within the days of Wheeler's injunction that masks be worn.³¹ Wives of faculty members assisted in the effort of both creating the masks and manning the distribution booths established at Wheeler Hall, Hearst Hall and the Library.³² Three hundred twenty women students volunteered as nurses' aids or to do maintenance work in the sick room.³³ Two of these students themselves became ill and died as a result of this work, and the single faculty member to succumb to the flu was Stebbins' colleague in the Home Economics Department, Ethel Taylor.

At its height, Spanish influenza infected a number approaching a quarter of the total campus population. But like the flu masks, the use of figures (bodies or sickbeds) to qualify the impact of a disaster inevitably obscures individual human tragedies which, after all, are ultimately what gives these events their significance. Among the most poignant personal experiences to come to us from the 1918 influenza epidemic at Berkeley was that of Walter Steilberg, professor of structural engineering. A survivor himself, Steilberg lost his wife, his mother and his infant daughter to the epidemic. Mrs. Helena Lawton, Steilberg's daughter, recalled these events in an addendum to her father's oral history:

There was a service for her [Steilberg's wife] and the brief text, read by Dr. John Wright Buckham, stressed that one life is often sacrificed in order that another one may survive. That other life [Steilberg's newborn daughter] . . . was extinguished only two days later, as was that of Walter Steilberg's mother shortly afterwards. Losing himself in work was his panacea, and this was so for the rest of his life.³⁴



Students receiving haircuts from masked barbers outside the ASUC store in the basement of North Hall, November 1918. *Courtesy of University Archives.*

NOTES

- 1 Fred van Hartesveldt, *The 1918-1919 Pandemic of Influenza: The Urban Impact in the Western World* (Lewiston, 1992), 2.
- 2 *Daily Californian*, October 28, 1918.
- 3 *Daily Californian*, October 28, 1918, and the *Oakland Tribune*, October 24, 1918.
- 4 *Daily Californian*, October 7, 1918.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 For brief summaries of the epidemic at Berkeley see Harvey Helfand, *An Architectural History of Ernest V. Cowell Memorial Hospital at the University of California Berkeley* (The Bancroft Library, 1992). See also *The University of California Chronicle*, 21 (January 1919), 5.
- 7 *Daily Californian*, October 14, 1918.
- 8 President, *Annual Report . . . 1918-1919*, 22-24. Cited in Verne A. Stadtman, *The University of California 1868-1968* (New York, 1970), 196. See also Helfand, *Cowell Memorial Hospital*, 18.
- 9 *Daily Californian*, October 14, 1918.
- 10 *Daily Californian*, October 22, 1918. The quarantine would last until November 11.
- 11 *Daily Californian*, October 29, 1918.
- 12 *Daily Californian*, November 4, 1918. The three films shown were "Bridge of Ships," "Of no use to Germany," and "Out West."
- 13 *University of California Chronicle*, 21 (January 1919), 5.
- 14 *Daily Californian*, October 16, 1918.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Daily Californian*, October 28, 1918.
- 17 Van Hartesveldt, *Pandemic*, 4.
- 18 *Daily Californian*, October 30, 1918.
- 19 *Daily Californian*, October 21, 1918.
- 20 *The California Alumni Fortnightly*, 12 (February 1919), 19.
- 21 *Daily Californian*, October 22, 1918.
- 22 *Daily Californian*, October 28, 1918.
- 23 *Fortnightly*, 12 (February 1919), 19.
- 24 *Daily Californian*, October 22, 1918.
- 25 *Daily Californian*, October 23, 1918.
- 26 *Daily Californian*, November 11, 1918.
- 27 *Oakland Tribune*, October 26, 1918.
- 28 *Daily Californian*, November 1, 1918.
- 29 Verne A. Stadtman, ed. *The Centennial Record of the University of California* (Berkeley, 1967), 83, describes Stebbins' activities as Dean of Women. For her role in the influenza epidemic see various articles in the *Daily Californian* between October and November of 1918.
- 30 *The Centennial Record of the University of California* indicates that there were 3400 women at the

University in 1918-19, including graduate and undergraduate students. The number of masks and participating students is printed in *The University of California Chronicle*, 21 (January 1919).

31 *Daily Californian*, October 22, 1918.

32 *Daily Californian*, October 21, 1918.

33 *The California Alumni Fortnightly*, 12 (March 1919), 67.

34 From *Julia Morgan History* [a transcription from oral sources], 1 (The Bancroft Library), 252.

EARTH ABIDES

GEORGE R. STEWART AND THE END OF HISTORY

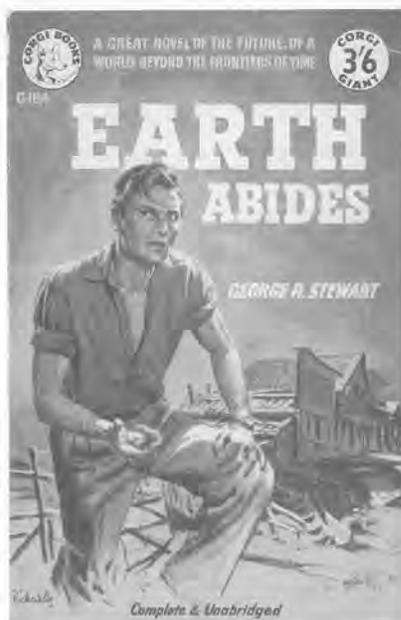
Kerwin Lee Klein

THE GOLDEN GATE RUSTS into the sunset, its cracked surface empty save for a single abandoned car. In Berkeley, vacant buildings haunt the University of California. On a rotting golf course, lost dogs chase feral cattle. Alone at home, watching the lights dim, sits Isherwood Williams, "Ish," the "last American" and the hero of George R. Stewart's 1949 novel, *Earth Abides*. Stewart's award-winning fantasy gave readers a carefully visualized picture of America devolving into a posthistoric future, and California served as the prophetic edge of the world's end.¹

Earth Abides began with its hero, Ish ("Hebrew for Man"), thrashing about the Sierra backcountry while working on his dissertation in ecology. Bitten by a rattlesnake, he falls into a fever from which he emerges to find most of the world dead. The cities lie silent, bodies rot, and dead cars clog the roadways. Ish overcomes various technical challenges, meets other stragglers, and marries a Berkeley woman, Em. Eventually, they build a new multiracial community, and Ish becomes the leader of "The Tribe." Nostalgic for the age of reason, Ish tries to salvage civilization, but he finally reconciles himself to historical devolution. At the novel's end, surrounded by the Tribe's second generation of hunter-gatherers, the senescent Ish dies on a corroded span of the Bay Bridge. Stewart, no stranger to Biblical allusion, quoted "Ecclesiastes" I, 4: "Men come and go, but the earth abides."

Stewart's other California histories gave *Earth Abides* an intriguing authorial context. By the time of his death in 1984, Stewart had established himself as one of the most prolific historians of California with at least a dozen nonfiction works on the Golden State. The best of these, *Ordeal by Hunger: The Story of the Donner Party* (1936), was the nonfiction twin to *Earth Abides*. In each book a grim disaster shadowed California's place in American destiny. And each inverted conventional understandings of America's frontier heritage while narrating pasts and futures in which civil society devolved rather than progressed. In the West, history decayed from civilization through barbarism and into savagery. The mixture of apocalypse and entropy was old hat by the forties, but Stewart's scholarly concerns gave *Earth Abides* a certain intellectual heft. The man who was probably the most widely read historian of the Golden State ran history backward and littered California with the wreckage of the dead past.²

In 1949 Stewart was a seasoned resident of the Bay area. He was born in Pennsylvania in 1895, but his Presbyterian parents joined thousands of other Americans in moving West, and Stewart grew up on the Pacific edge. Like many of California's bright high school graduates, he attended Berkeley. Unlike most of his



1970

peers, he went on to Columbia to complete a Ph.D. in English. Stewart loved writing and research, but he had only passing interest in the topics that dominated literary scholarship. His thesis, a forgettable analysis of English poetics, was a sheer formality, but it did help ensure his return to the Golden State, for in 1923 Berkeley's Department of English offered him a job as an assistant professor.³

Stewart spent many frustrating years in the shadow of the academic giants in Berkeley's stodgy Department of English. Promotions dragged, and he supervised only four doctoral dissertations in his long career. Although he enjoyed teaching, his real interests lay in fields foreign to period literary scholarship: anthropology, ecology, geography, California and the West. He had few chances to teach these subjects, but writing was another matter, and his first real book was a biography, *Bret Harte*. Undaunted by the bemusement of his colleagues, Stewart spent weekdays in The Bancroft Library and weekends in the Sierra on the trail of a topic in California history with little potential for career advancement. In *Ordeal By Hunger* (1936), Stewart urged readers to imagine the Donner Party tragedy as an allegory of history, the wagons moving "unreversing into the west" like humanity itself, suspended between the "half-remembered past and the unknown future," and finally degenerating into a Hobbesian state of nature in the California wilderness.⁴

Stewart's allegory was the product of several years of careful historical research. The author had located primary documents at the Bancroft, and he retraced the story on foot and automobile, combed local archives, and hired a research assistant with New Deal dollars. And although depression America seemed likely to be hostile to a history of westering pilgrims reduced to eating their dead (Constance Lindsay Skinner's publication puff called the Donner tragedy "our only pioneer horror story"), the book struck gold. To the surprise of both Stewart and his publishers, Henry Holt, the book quickly climbed the nonfiction bestseller lists, its progress boosted by friendly reviews, and a few years later, *Ordeal By Hunger* made an eerie companion for John Steinbeck's best-selling 1939 novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, the two books offering factual and fictitious renditions of historic and modern California migrations, the Donner Illini and the Okie Joads, each ending in disaster.⁵

With *Bret Harte* and *Ordeal By Hunger* Stewart had two California histories to his credit. He followed these works with an amazing number of histories, articles, lectures, reviews, and novels. Two novels about natural disasters, *Storm* (1941) and *Fire* (1948), won especially impressive responses. Although these two books today are (justly) forgotten, at the time they were minor cultural events. Each was favorably reviewed in the weeklies, evidence that Stewart had emerged as one of America's big authors. Canny reviewers saw the pattern: Stewart was charting the tribulations. If *Ordeal By Hunger* had documented "famine," the new novels took the most common of natural disasters. Surely plague would be next.⁶

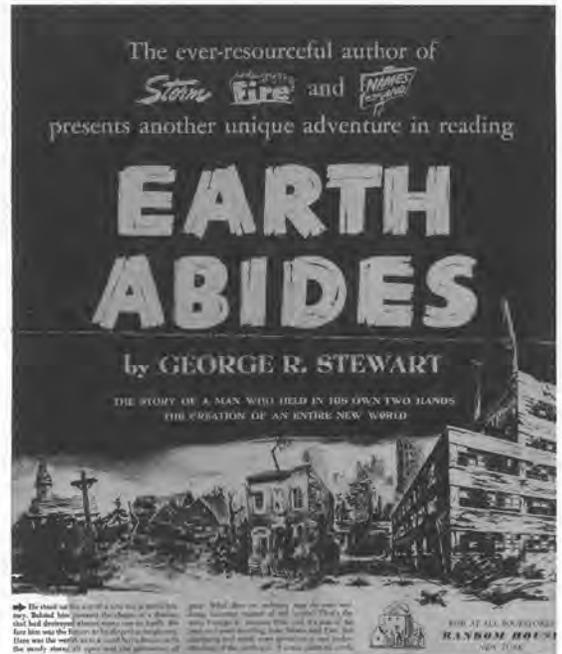
The pandemic in *Earth Abides* identified the book as another of Stewart's tribulation chronicles and placed it in California's venerable narrative traditions of entropy and apocalypse. In 1912 Jack London's strange novella, *The Scarlet Plague*, anticipated the plot of *Earth Abides*. In London's tale, a mysterious plague ruined the California countryside, and the few who survived the disaster struggled in vain to hold civil society together as the new tribal forms led to spiralling cycles of violence and the emergence of a totalitarian state. In 1921 Marie Corelli's novel, *Secret Power*, recounted the adventures of a Nietzschean superman who built a homemade atomic bomb in his cabin in the San Gabriel mountains. The inevitable explosion triggered the destruction by earthquake of Los Angeles. In 1939 Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust* chronicled the trials and tribulations of an unsuccessful studio artist whose painting of "The Burning of Los Angeles" comes to life in the novel's climactic scene. And in 1947 Ward Moore's *Greener Than You Think* told the story of "The Metamorphizer," a demonic fertilizer that transformed the Bermuda grass in a dessicated Hollywood lawn into

an engine of world destruction. The grass engorged southern California, then the rest of the country. The story ended with the final survivors adrift on a shrinking ocean as Bermuda tentacles penetrate the surface of their raft.⁷

Stewart knew at least some of these books. Characteristically, he had thrown himself into research for *Earth Abides*. To begin with, Stewart paid the Library Research Service at *Encyclopedia Britannica* for a subject search on “Novels of Destruction of the Human Race and Civilization,” and they provided him with a survey of S/F holocausts. Prominent among the titles and authors were names that Stewart probably already knew: the dystopian novels of H. G. Wells and Aldous Huxley, for instance, and Mary Shelley’s novella, *The Last Man* (1815). But the bibliographies also pointed him towards the pulp fiction that was becoming the stuff of teenage male fantasy in America, from such middlebrow titles as Olaf Stapledon’s *Last and First Men* (1931) down to works of increasing obscurity. Stewart, a thorough researcher, read his way through all fifty or so of end-of-the-world novels housed in Berkeley’s main library.⁸

By January of 1948 Stewart was composing frantically, and in March he sent an early draft to his editor, Saxe Commins, who was nearly ecstatic at the progress. Commins thought the manuscript was “better than Wells, more imaginative than Rider Haggard.” In May, Stewart completed the final draft, and it took a little over a year for Random House to push the book through production. For the cover the publishers used a stark illustration of a postapocalyptic Berkeley campus, the buildings in ruins, overgrown by vegetation, the library haunted and empty. (For the German edition, *Lieben ohne Ende*, whose audience had too much experience with ruined cityscapes, they used a simple picture of an empty Golden Gate Bridge.) Bennett Cerf, the president of Random House, knew Stewart for a moneymaker, and Cerf put some weight behind the book. Random House saturated potential reviewers with advance copies, and *Earth Abides* opened to critical applause in national weeklies and local papers.⁹

Reviews were almost uniformly favorable, and many simply glowed. The single most common approach to *Earth Abides* treated the novel as a “what if” book and “a powerful picture of a world that might lie just around the corner.” “Preposterous?” asked the *Cleveland News*, “Possibly so, but easily within the valences of the dour possibilities being conjured up for us by scientists.” For many, the book suggested practical questions: How would I respond if civilization ended? What sort of day-to-day responses would be required? Other reviews bypassed counterfactual social engineering for more philosophical terrain. “This is no romantic back-to-nature idyll,” observed Nancy Barr Mavity in the *Oakland Tribune*, “but a grim anthropologist-eye view of history turned backwards.” Still others sought analogies and allusions. Joseph Henry Jackson noted the similarity of *Earth Abides* to London’s *Scarlet Plague*, and Granville Hicks, writing for the *New York Times*, declared that “in its narrative force, it is more than a little like *Robinson Crusoe*, and it has the same kind of fascination.”¹⁰

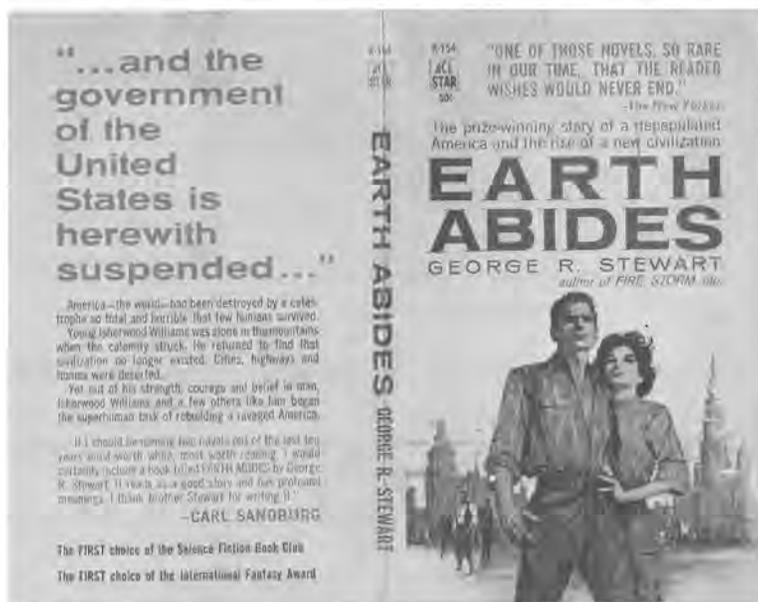


1949

The most engaging discussion appeared in an essay written by Fletcher Pratt for the *Saturday Review of Literature*. Pratt noted the growing strength of science fiction and fantasy literature, and he surveyed a range of titles that he believed transcended the genre. George Orwell's *1984* was the best known of these books, but Pratt thought *Earth Abides* was "probably the best science-fiction-fantasy book of 1949." Within the broader category of science fiction, Orwell and Stewart's novels belonged to a subgroup of literary works that imagined the imminent end of the world. The rise of endist discourse in itself was no cause for alarm, Pratt argued, but the grim tone of all these authors was more than a bit depressing. Virtually none of the new prophetic stories imagined a democratic future. Whatever their utopian influences, none of these writers prophesied a thousand years of heaven on earth. Indeed, Stewart's depressing tale of a steady descent into tribalism could be read as an optimistic account of social adaptation. That was how fantasy writer August Derleth read the book, as a statement of "faith in man's destiny."¹¹

Reviews are not retail sales, and *Earth Abides* was as a great a commercial disaster as it was a critical success. By December of 1949 Random House had sold only 10,500 copies, and 10,000 of these had been advance "sales" for promotions and reviews. An unhappy Stewart accused San Francisco columnist Herb Caen of burying *Earth Abides* beneath a publicity wave for Caen's own memoirs, *Baghdad by the Bay*, and suspected Random House of not giving the novel the promotion it deserved. Faced with Stewart's threat to leave the Random House stable, Bennett Cerf tried to reason with the author. "I am frankly nonplussed by the failure of *Earth Abides* to do better in California," he wrote Stewart, and "The only explanation we can get around New York is that people simply will not go for fanciful stories about possible catastrophes in the future." Cerf noted that Aldous Huxley, a longtime success at Harper, had just had his own notable disaster with *Ape and Essence*, another postapocalyptic California novel that sank quickly into the commercial sea.¹²

With hindsight, we can say that Bennett Cerf was right, for virtually no "realistic" treatments of the end of the world sold well in the late forties. By the end of the fifties consumers were ready for more realistic ends, and "fables of nuclear survival" became a commercial genre. The success of Nevil Shute's depressing 1957 psychodrama, *On the Beach*, which made it to the screen in 1959, showed the change.¹³ That surge of popular interest in "serious" apocalyptic, coupled with the increased distribution of literature in paperback, gave a second life to George Stewart's *Earth Abides*. In 1962 Ace Books was already printing cheap paperback editions of Stewart's *Ordeal By Hunger* and *Storm*. Stewart convinced them to take on *Earth Abides* as well, and they sealed the deal with a \$1500.00 advance. Stewart prevailed upon Carl Sandburg for a publication puff, and the Great Man



1962

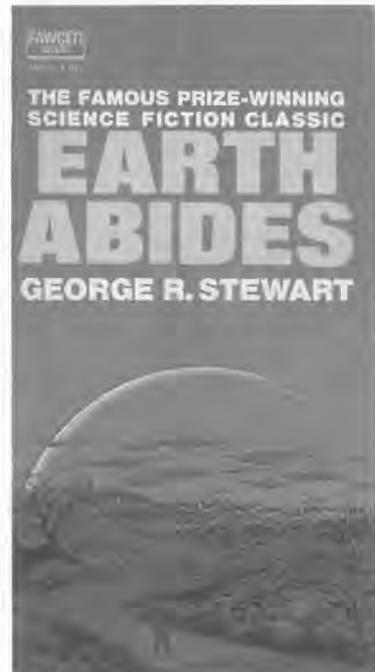
obliged. In the summer of 1962 the Ace edition hit the market with a new cover (a heroic Ish and, standing behind him, a sexy Em sporting a postapocalyptic perm) and a commendation from the poet of Chicago: "One of the five best books I have read in the last five or ten years." By fall, a gratified Ace editor could tell Stewart that *Earth Abides* "continues to move steadily." But the market for such stories declined again in the years after the Cuban Missile crisis.¹⁴

The end of history did not disappear from American popular culture, however, and Stewart's apocalyptic novel found a third life with the rise of the youth cultures in the sixties. As the sales of Ace editions of *Earth Abides* lagged, a small alternative press, Hermes, stepped in and picked up the book. Attuned to the back-to-nature tastes of young Americans with discretionary income, Hermes repackaged the tale as an ecotopian manifesto, and the publisher's advertising flyers, perhaps a bit wishfully, described *Earth Abides* as "one of the best sellers on college campuses across America."¹⁵

It is easy to see how an editor might have hoped to find a small but profitable niche with a reprint of *Earth Abides*, for the book had anticipated many of the ingredients of counterculture classics. Ish had been a graduate student wandering the backwoods while working on his thesis, "The Ecology of the Black Creek Area." That title alone certified Stewart as a hip author, and the tribalism of *Earth Abides* spoke to youthful nostalgia for a Golden Age where Native Americans, imagined as the original hippies, had inhabited a land unscathed by pollution and greed. Certainly the market was ready for a breakthrough novel that turned S/F apocalyptic to countercultural ends. Aldous Huxley's last utopian novel, *Island* (1962), found some readers among literary hippies, and Robert Heinlein's S/F version of the Second Coming, *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), sold thousands of copies to young Americans. And in 1975 Berkeley resident Ernest Callenbach scored a big hit with *Ecotopia*, a fictional account of a future in which northern California, Oregon, and Washington had seceded from the United States and created a hippie paradise of hairy, dope smoking, cosmopolitan arcadians.¹⁶

Earth Abides, though, had little countercultural promise. The story had Noble Savages, but the hyper-rational Ish was not one of them. That role belonged to his children and grandchildren, a dim set of barely rendered stock figures who wandered vaguely along the edge of the book's action. The novel had ecology, but it lacked drug and music references. Although the book had interracial relationships, it had no sex scenes. If the story's politics verged on the millennial, many of the key characters were frankly conservative. And if measured against such postmodern Californiana as Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1964), *Earth Abides* looked positively stodgy. Moreover, Stewart's politics were scarcely ecotopian. In a 1971 interview, the elderly author bridled at the modest suggestion that his book owed a meaningful debt to the Transcendentalist tradition of nature worship. "Thoreau is not a democrat," snapped a cranky Stewart. "Thoreau is an anarchist."¹⁷

Ultimately, *Earth Abides* was just a good bit of genre fiction from another era. The story outlived its Hermes incarnation and was picked up by Houghton Mifflin in



1971

the middle seventies simply because it had survived. Like Ish, *Earth Abides* was a historical remnant, and the book had some market value for that very reason. When Houghton Mifflin's paperback house, Fawcett, repackaged the book yet again, editors could draw upon a range of quotes, commendations, and graphic ideas. Fawcett trotted out the old Sandburg citation, thirty-year-old *New Yorker* reviews, and prizes from the Science Fiction Book Club and the International Fantasy Award. The publisher's New Age artwork clashed with the product's narrative content. The cover showed a faceless figure alone on a road edged with wrecked cars. In the blue distance, an alien moon arced over a shimmering city of crystal. The big block letters on the back cover ripped the book out of 1949 and dropped it into the flattened temporal horizons of postmodernity: "*Earth Abides*—A Novel About a Tomorrow That Could Happen Today."¹⁸

Earth Abides had hardened into an artifact of literary history. In 1985, one year after Stewart's death, David Pringle's *Science Fiction: The One Hundred Best Novels* placed *Earth Abides* with George Orwell's *1984* as one of the founding classics of science fiction literature, and Paul Boyer, in his magisterial history of atomic culture, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, named *Earth Abides* the best apocalyptic novel of the late forties. In 1981 John Caldwell placed his dissertation, *George R. Stewart*, with Boise State University Press, a house known for its books on western writers. And in 1978 Elizabeth Cummins Cogell, in an article for *Science Fiction Studies*, argued that *Earth Abides* was "antihistorical" like the myth of "American Adam, or the garden of the world myth where the yeoman of the West stands free of his European past."¹⁹

One of the attractions of the nation's origin story had been the easy way in which the westering American casually shrugged off the past and strode into the sunset, reinventing his white, middle-class, male self with each new step. By the time Cogell wrote her essay, scholars like Henry Nash Smith, Leo Marx, and Richard Slotkin had tracked frontier tropes from Walt Whitman to pulp westerns and mapped their place in the making of a false historical consciousness. Many academics had come to believe that frontier mythology obscured class, racial, and gender conflict in American history, and the frontier hero embodied a pathological individualism. *Earth Abides*, with its celebration of pioneer life and the heterosexual, nuclear family, reinforced traditional patterns of western history. Still, while George Stewart's novel grew out of frontier historiography, it also participated in the debunking of that tradition.²⁰

Earth Abides explores three different ends of history: The end of history as a progressive march of reason; the end of history as a way of experiencing time; and the end of history as a form of discourse. Throughout the narrative, Ish struggles to maintain a proper historical consciousness for his community. There is a sense in which the narrative is a study in extended nostalgia, each terminal bit of the past breaking off and floating away, the world descending into an infinite existential now without any sense of direction. "[T]ime," Ish reflects, "was history, and history was tradition, and tradition was civilization." But each index of history, from monuments to books and calendars, crumbles into the past as the story runs backward from the historical consciousness of the twentieth century into a medieval serialization of events and seasons, and finally a primitive denial of historicity.

The Library at the University of California, for instance, becomes sacred ground. Ish seals it in hopes of saving the reservoir of knowledge for future generations. But the Tribe's children grow "primitive." They have no interest in books, save as markers of the patriarch's supernatural authority. Ish cannot even persuade other adults to concern themselves with longterm plans, and as the future ebbs away, so does historical consciousness. As a hedge against social amnesia, the Tribe keeps time through a crude form of annals, numbering each new year forward from the date of the "Great Disaster" and carving the numerals into a rock

in the Berkeley hills. The years take on the names of great events: Year One, The Year of the Baby, The Bad Year. But this effort, too, fails as Ish grows old.

The hero laments the passing of historicity, but we could as easily imagine *Earth Abides* as a celebration of history's end, for racial politics complicated the narrative tone. Em, the mulatto matriarch of the Tribe, sees history as a problem that is best forgotten. When the excited Ish urges the young men to explore back East and connect the Tribe with whatever social life may survive abroad ("Lewis-and-Clark in reverse"), Em registers her reservations. Ish thinks that contact with other civilizations inevitably produces progress. Em is less naive: "[I]t wasn't so good for the Indians when they got into communication with the white people, was it? Or how about all my people on the coast of Africa when they got into contact with the slavers?" Later, a chastened Ish sits on the granite stairs of the dead library, chipping idly away at the monumental steps.²¹

Earth Abides remains ambivalent about the posthistorical future. Will the Tribe suffer for its loss of historical discourse? Will the Tribe benefit from its unwillingness to fashion a sense of destiny? Was history simply a mask for imperial crimes? Ish, no omniscient narrator, cannot answer these questions. Although *Earth Abides* stood frontier history upside down—as the book's characters leave civilization behind for yeoman farming and ultimately give up even that pioneer stage for a more "primitive" tribalism—it tempered devolution with a vague optimism. As Ish realizes before he dies, the Tribe is happy and successful, and if technology has regressed, we might conceivably read the story's moral development as progressive.

In the end, Stewart left history obscure. Ish, trained in the scientific method, constantly attempts to force his experiences into a coherent theory of history, but the facts are slippery, the theories imperfect, and final knowledge elusive. The competing philosophical possibilities of *Earth Abides*—history as cycles, history as social devolution, history as apocalyptic, history as moral progress—remain empirically underdetermined, and Ish finds that he can at various times fit one or another scheme to the evidence at hand. These vagaries contributed to the book's endurance, since different readers could so easily adapt the story to their own ends, but the vagueness also made its own philosophical points: Humanity would happily survive the end of historical discourse.

NOTES

- 1 George R. Stewart, *Earth Abides* (1949; Reprint, New York: Fawcett, n. d. but circa 1975.) All references will be to this edition.
- 2 Stewart, *Ordeal By Hunger: The Story of the Donner Party* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1936).
- 3 George R. Stewart, *The Iambic-Trochaic Theory in Relation to Musical Notation of Verse* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1925). Biographical details are found in John Caldwell, *George R. Stewart* (Boise: Boise State University Press, 1981), and George R. Stewart, *A Little Bit of Myself: Interview by Suzanne B. Riess*, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1972. See also Stewart's incomplete autobiographical manuscript in the George R. Stewart Papers, C-H13, carton 9, folder 81, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
- 4 Stewart, *Bret Harte* (New York: Henry Holt, 1934); GRS Papers, C-H13, carton 1, folders 1-8; Stewart, *Ordeal By Hunger*, 12.
- 5 Promotional materials in GRS Papers, C-H13, carton 1, folder 15. For Stewart's research notes, see GRS Papers, C-H13, carton 1, folders 9-18. For reviews, see Constance Lindsay Skinner, *Books* April 19, 1936, 6; *Manchester Guardian* November 17, 1936, 7; Frederick Laws, *New Statesman and*

Nation 12, October 10, 1936, 560; Lewis Gannett, *New York Herald Tribune* March 26, 1936, 17; F. F. Kelly, *New York Times* April 26, 1936, 11; William M. Sloane III, *Saturday Review of Literature* 13, April 25, 1936, 6; *Time* 27, April 13, 1936, 92.

- 6 See, for instance, *East of the Giants* (New York: Henry Holt, 1938); *Doctor's Oral* (New York: Random House, 1939); *Storm* (New York: Random House, 1941); *Fire* (New York: Random House, 1948); and *Man: An Autobiography* (London: Cassell, 1948).
- 7 Jack London, *The Scarlet Plague* (1912; 2nd ed., New York: Macmillan, 1915); Marie Corelli, *The Secret Power* (New York: Doubleday, 1921); Nathanael West, *The Day of the Locust* (1939; Reprint, New York: Time-Life, 1965); Ward Moore, *Greener Than You Think* (New York: Henry Holt, 1947). For a quick overview of S/F apocalyptic, see Albert I. Berger, "Theories of History and Social Order in Astounding Science Fiction, 1934-1955," *Science Fiction Studies* 15 (1988), 1-26. Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (1985; Reprint, Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1994), 262-265, reads *Earth Abides* as part of the genre of atomic holocaust novels. See also Zbigniew Lewicki, *The Bang and the Whimper: Apocalypse and Entropy in American Literature* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1984); J. S. Dewey, *In a Dark Time: The Apocalyptic Temper in the American Novel of the Nuclear Age* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1990); and David Ketterer, *New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975).
- 8 Olaf Stapledon, *Last and First Men and Star Maker: Two Novels* (1931; Reprint, New York: Dover, 1968). See the research notes for *Earth Abides* in GRS Papers, C-H13, carton 3, folders 1 and 6. Apparently, Jack London was not one of the authors that Stewart researched. In an exhaustive source study, Robert C. Lyon, "The Tribes of George Rippey Stewart's *Earth Abides* and Jack London's *The Scarlet Plague*," paper presented at the Western Literary Association, October 4, 1984, Reno, Nevada, found no debt to London's story.
- 9 Stewart, *A Little Bit of Myself*, 52-70, 253; Saxe Commins to Stewart, March 8, 1948, GRS Papers, C-H13 box 5, folder 13; Bennett Cerf to Stewart, May 22, 1949, in *ibid.*
- 10 The quotations come from the following clippings in the GRS Papers, C-H13, carton 3, folder 5: Nancy Barr Mavity, *Oakland Tribune* December 4, 1949; Joseph Henry Jackson, *San Francisco Chronicle* October 30, 1949; Frank O'Neill, *Cleveland News* October 26, 1949; Fletcher Pratt, *Saturday Review of Literature* December 24, 1949, 23.
- 11 Pratt, *Saturday Review of Literature* December 24, 1949, 23; August Derleth, *Saturday Review of Literature* 32, November 26, 1949, 14. Compare Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 262-265.
- 12 Bennett Cerf to George R. Stewart, December 7, 1949, in GRS Papers, C-H13, box 5, folder 13; GRS Papers, 70/88, box 3, folder 7; Aldous Huxley, *Ape and Essence* (New York: Harper, 1949).
- 13 Nevil Shute, *On the Beach* (1957; Reprint, New York: Scholastic, n. d.); Stanley Kramer, dir., *On the Beach* (United Artists, 1959). On the timing of interest in atomic holocaust, see Dewey, *In a Dark Time*, 4-6; Ketterer, *New Worlds for Old*; and Martha A. Bartter, *The Way to Ground Zero: The Atomic Bomb in American Science Fiction* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1988).
- 14 George R. Stewart to Jerry Gross, March 20, 1962, GRS Papers, 70/88, box 1, folder 12; Gross to Stewart, April 2, 1962, in *ibid.*; Gross to Stewart, September 4, 1962, in *ibid.*
- 15 See the Hermes promotional materials for *Earth Abides* in GRS Papers, C-H13, carton 3, folder 4.
- 16 Aldous Huxley, *Island* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962); Robert Heinlein, *Stranger in a Strange Land* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1961); Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia* (New York: Bantam, 1975).
- 17 Stewart, *A Little Bit of Myself*, 22.
- 18 For the Houghton Mifflin campaign, see GRS Papers, C-H13, carton 3, folder 5.

- 19 David Pringle, *Science Fiction: The 100 Best Novels* (London: Xanadu, 1985), 23-25; Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 341; John Caldwell, *George R. Stewart* (Boise: Boise State University Press, 1981); Elizabeth Cummins Cogell, "The Middle-Landscape Myth in Science Fiction," *Science Fiction Studies* 5 (July 1978), 135.
- 20 I have treated this topic at greater length in Kerwin Lee Klein, *Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America, 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
- 21 *Earth Abides*, 174.

JACK LONDON'S *THE SCARLET PLAGUE*

Steven Finacom

FAMOUS AUTHOR and Oakland native Jack London was not unfamiliar with the nearby University of California. He had enrolled at the campus for a term in 1885-1886, older and with much more worldly experience than most undergraduates. He ultimately left without a degree.

London used his familiarity with the University in various stories of contemporary life, including the semi-autobiographical *Martin Eden* (1909). He also tried his hand at what we might today call science fiction. His characters roam in the prehistoric past in *Before Adam* (1907), and inhabit an Orwellian future in *The Iron Heel* (1908).

Among London's lesser known futuristic works was a novella, *The Scarlet Plague* (1912). It is set in the twenty-first century when repressive oligarchs rule the world, and a life of culture and learning is reserved—on an increasingly hereditary basis—for a privileged few. Yet rich and poor alike, learned and unlearned, are suddenly struck down by a pestilence that turns the human body red right before death—hence its name, the Scarlet Plague.

The novella is primarily set in the Bay Area, and in the early pages London draws a vivid and unforgettable picture—perhaps the best and most complete in fiction—of destruction visited upon the Berkeley campus of the University of California. We reproduce below an excerpt.

The narrator is a young member of the faculty, eventually one of the few immune to the plague. He and his campus colleagues struggle to evade the disaster, sometimes with forthright action, and sometimes in a typically university way—by organizing committees.

As in George Stewart's *Earth Abides*, the protagonist of *The Scarlet Plague* endeavors to save the memory of western civilization—namely literature and science—for posterity, and accumulates and preserves books in a cave on Telegraph Hill.

In them is great wisdom. Also, with them, I have placed a key to the alphabet, so that one who knows picture-writing may also know print. Some day men will read again; and then, if no accident has befallen my cave, they will know that Professor James Howard Smith once lived and saved for them the knowledge of the ancients. (p. 175-176)*

Ultimately, however, he realizes that civilization will need to rebuild itself on its own; one man cannot save it, particularly in its more complex and technical aspects.



Jack London

* All references are to Jack London, *The Scarlet Plague* (New York: Macmillan, 1915).

As *The Scarlet Plague* begins, the once distinguished professor is an elderly man camped on Ocean Beach in San Francisco, telling his three disbelieving grandsons the story of the disaster.

“You remember those great stone houses, Edwin, when we came down the hills from Contra Costa? That was where I lived, in those stone houses. I was a Professor of English literature.”

Much of this was over the heads of the boys, but they strove to comprehend dimly this tale of the past.

“What was them stone houses for?” Hare-Lip queried.

“You remember when your dad taught you to swim?” The boy nodded. “Well, in the University of California—that is the name we had for the houses—we taught young men and women how to think, just as I have taught you now, by sand and pebbles and shells, to know how many people lived in those days. There was very much to teach. The young men and women we taught were called students. We had large rooms in which we taught. I talked to them, forty or fifty at a time, just as I am talking to you now. I told them about the books other men had written before their time, and even, sometimes in their time—”

“Was that all you did?—just talk, talk, talk?” Hoo-Hoo demanded. “Who hunted your meat for you? and milked the goats? and caught the fish?”
(p. 50-52)

After discussing the social and economic arrangements of the earlier era, the narrator comes back to the tale of the Scarlet Plague. It had spread with extreme rapidity all over the world, striking down people apparently at random, killing them in as little as 15 minutes time once the symptoms appeared.

On the campus, a student in an English literature class becomes one of the first to die in Berkeley. As news of her death spreads, students, faculty, and staff drop what they are doing and flee from the campus. In minutes, the campus is abandoned. But as a responsible faculty member concerned about proper procedure, the narrator makes his way to the President's office to officially report the death.

President Hoag, I found in his office, all alone, looking very old and very gray, with a multitude of wrinkles in his face that I had never seen before. At the sight of me, he pulled himself to his feet and tottered away to the inner office, banging the door after him and locking it. You see, he knew I had been exposed, and he was afraid. He shouted to me through the door to go away. I shall never forget my feelings as I walked down the silent corridors and out across that deserted campus. I was not afraid. I had been exposed, and I looked upon myself as already dead. It was not that, but a feeling of awful depression that impressed me. Everything had stopped. It was like the end of the world to me—my world. I had been born within sight and sound of the university. It had been my predestined career. My father had been a professor there before me, and his father before him. For a century and a half had this university, like a splendid machine, been running steadily on. And now, in an instant, it had stopped. It was like seeing the sacred flame die down on some thrice-sacred altar. I was shocked, unutterably shocked. (p. 81-82)

After the narrator leaves the campus, he describes the chaos descending on the Bay Area

as more and more die from the plague. Thousands of people try to flee the urban centers on foot, by vehicle, and by airship.

When the great exodus from the cities around San Francisco Bay began, and while the telephones were still working, I talked with my brother. I told him this flight from the cities was insanity, that there were no symptoms of the plague in me, and that the thing for us to do was to isolate ourselves and our relatives in some safe place. We decided on the Chemistry Building, at the university, and we planned to lay in a supply of provisions and by force of arms to prevent any other persons from forcing their presence upon us after we had retired to our refuge. (p. 92-93)

The next day he makes his way to the campus, through scenes of fires, looting, and death.

After being turned aside twice again by the advancing fires, I succeeded in getting through to the university. On the edge of the campus I came upon a party of university folk who were going in the direction of the Chemistry Building. They were all family men, and their families were with them, including the nurses and the servants. Professor Badminton greeted me, and I had difficulty in recognizing him. Somewhere he had gone through flames and his beard was singed off. About his head was a bloody bandage, and his clothes were filthy. He told me he had been cruelly beaten by prowlers, and that his brother had been killed the previous night, in the defence of their dwelling.

Midway across the campus, he pointed suddenly to Mrs. Swinton's face. The unmistakable scarlet was there. Immediately all the other women set up screaming, and began to run away from her. Her two children were with a nurse, and these also ran with the women. But her husband, Doctor Swinton, remained with her.

"Go on, Smith," he told me. "Keep an eye on the children. As for me, I shall stay with my wife. I know she is as already dead, but I can't leave her. Afterwards, if I escape, I shall come to the Chemistry Building, and do you watch for me and let me in." (p. 107-109)

After securing the building, they find that over 400 people have taken refuge inside it.

But the Chemistry Building was large, and, standing by itself, was in no danger of being burned by the great fires that raged everywhere in the city.

A large quantity of provisions had been gathered, and a food committee took charge



"BUT THIS NEW PLAGUE WAS QUICKER THAN THAT -
MUCH QUICKER."

of it, issuing rations daily to the various families and groups that arranged themselves into messes. A number of committees were appointed, and we developed a very efficient organization: I was on the committee of defense, though for the first day no prowlers came near. We could see them in the distance, however, and by the smoke of their fires knew that several camps of them were occupying the far edge of the campus. Drunkenness was rife, and often we heard them singing ribald songs or insanely shouting. While the world crashed to ruin about them and all the air was filled with the smoke of its burning, these low creatures gave a rein to their bestiality and fought and drank and died. And after all, what did it matter? Everybody died anyway, the good and the bad, the efficient and the weaklings, those who loved to live and those that scorned to live. They passed. Everything passed.

When twenty-four hours had gone by and no signs of the plague were apparent, we congratulated ourselves and set about digging a well.... We feared that the fires in the city would burst the pipes and empty the reservoirs. So we tore up the cement floor of the central court of the Chemistry Building and dug a well. There were many young men, undergraduates, with us, and we worked night and day on the well. And our fears were confirmed. Three hours before we reached water, the pipes went dry. (p. 110-112)

For a time the refugees think they are free of the plague and will survive; yet the disease has only been incubating.

[T]he third day disillusioned us. I can never forget the night preceding it. I had charge of the night guards from eight to twelve, and from the roof of the building I watched the passing of all man's glorious works. So terrible were the local conflagrations that all the sky was lighted up. One could read the finest print in the red glare. All the world seemed wrapped in flames. San Francisco spouted smoke and fire from a score of vast conflagrations that were like so many active volcanoes. Oakland, San Leandro, Haywards—all were burning; and to the northward, clear to Point Richmond, other fires were at work. It was an awe-inspiring spectacle. Civilization, my grandsons, civilization was passing in a sheet of flame and a breath of death. At ten o'clock that night, the great powder magazines at Point Pinole exploded in rapid succession. So terrific were the concussions that the strong building rocked as in an earthquake, while every pane of glass was broken. It was then that I left the roof and went down the long corridors, from room to room, quieting the alarmed women and telling them what had happened.

An hour later, at a window on the ground floor, I heard pandemonium break out in the camps of the prowlers. There were cries and screams, and shots from many pistols. As we afterwards conjectured, this fight had been precipitated by an attempt on the part of those that were well to drive out those that were sick. At any rate, a number of the plague-stricken prowlers escaped across the campus and drifted against our doors. We warned them back, but they cursed us and discharged a fusillade from their pistols. Professor Merryweather, at one of the windows, was instantly killed, the bullet striking him squarely between the eyes. We opened fire in turn, and all the prowlers fled away with the exception of three. One was a woman. The plague was on them and they were reckless. Like foul fiends, there in the red glare

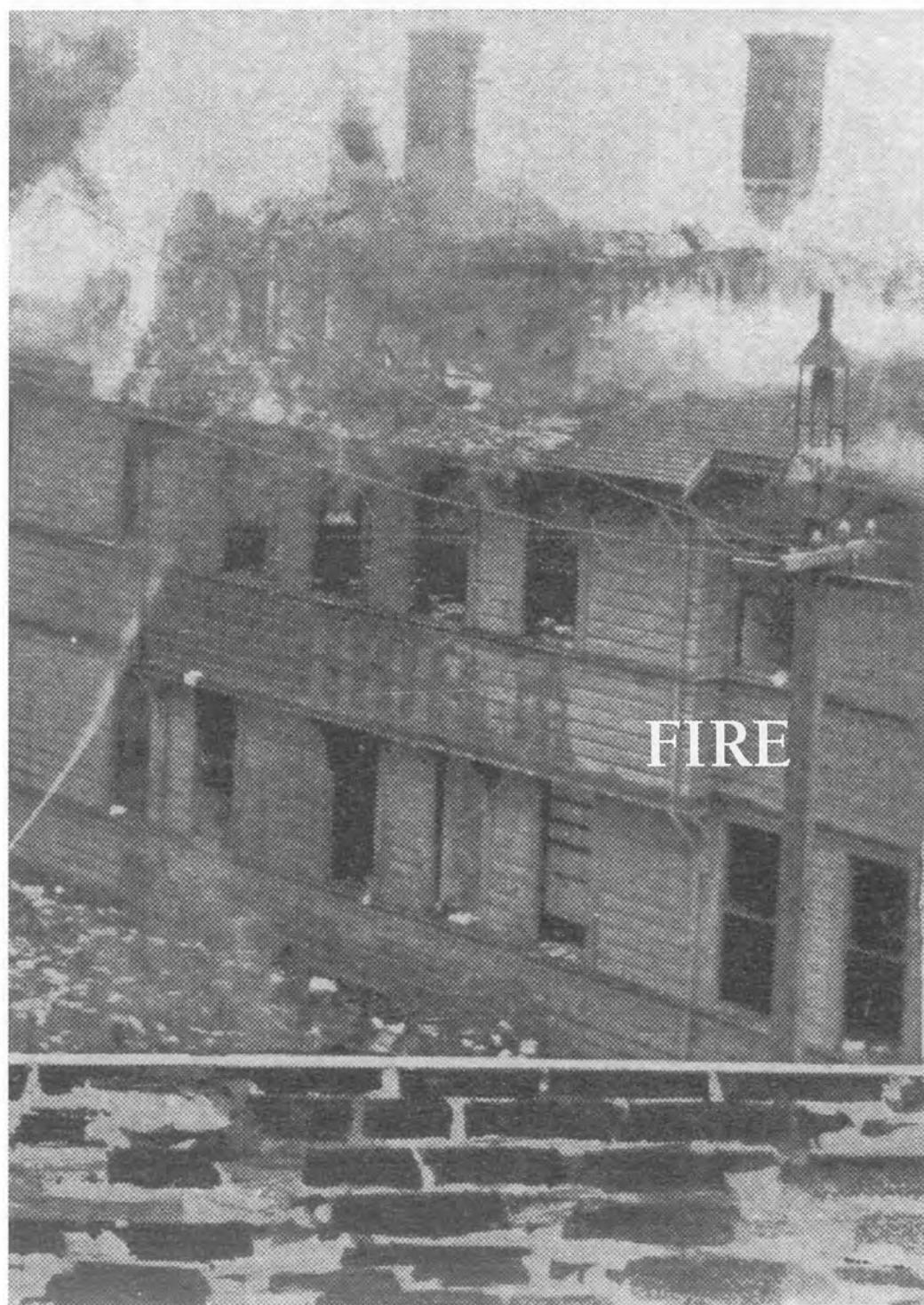
from the skies, with faces blazing, they continued to curse us and fire at us. One of the men I shot with my own hand. After that, the other man and the woman, still cursing us, lay down under our windows, where we were compelled to watch them die of the plague.

The situation was critical. The explosion of the powder magazines had broken all the windows of the Chemistry Building, so that we were exposed to the germs from the corpses. The sanitary committee was called upon to act, and it responded nobly. Two men were required to go out and remove the corpses and this meant the probable sacrifice of their own lives, for, having performed the task, they were not to be permitted to re-enter the building. One of the professors who was a bachelor, and one of the undergraduates volunteered. They gave up their lives that four hundred others might live. After they had performed their work, they stood for a moment, at a distance, looking at us wistfully. Then they waved their hands in farewell and went away slowly across the campus toward the burning city...

Then it was that the horror began. Leaving the dead where they had fallen, we forced the living ones to segregate themselves in another room. The plague began to break out among the rest of us, and as fast as the symptoms appeared, we sent the stricken ones to these segregated rooms. We compelled them to walk there by themselves, so as to avoid laying hands on them. It was heartrending. But still the plague raged among us, and room after room was filled with the dead and dying. And so we who were yet clean retreated to the next floor and to the next, before this sea of the dead, that, room by room and floor by floor, inundated the building.

The place became a charnel house, and in the middle of the night the survivors fled forth, taking nothing with them except arms and ammunition and a heavy store of tinned foods. We camped on the opposite side of the campus from the prowlers, and, while some stood guard, others of us volunteered to scout into the city in quest of horses, motor-cars, carts, and wagons, or anything that would carry our provisions and enable us to (fight our) way out to the open country. (p. 113-119)

This last desperate effort to save a unified group of University people proves of no avail. Professor Smith might have remained where he was. All those remaining, except him, die of the plague. He is the last member of the faculty and the last to preserve the memory of the University as a living institution.



The burning of the Agriculture Building, University of California, Berkeley, 1897.

THE BURNING OF THE AGRICULTURE BUILDING IN 1897

Steven Finacom

A STUDENT'S INATTENTION during an experiment, a combustible wooden structure, and shortcomings in the University's fire-fighting resources all contributed to the University's first major trial by fire a century ago on April 16, 1897.

On the Berkeley campus today, the pedestrian walking along busy South Drive past collegiate gothic Moses Hall can be excused for having no inkling of that day a century ago when on that site fire destroyed the Agriculture Building, and wine flowed like the building's blood into tranquil Strawberry Creek. The laboratories and most of the important records of the College of Agriculture and other University departments and academic divisions were destroyed in the fire.

Although the building itself was not large—just two wooden floors and an attic over the brick basement—the loss was great, since at that time the University had merely a half dozen other permanent buildings at Berkeley. The number of faculty and students was of a corresponding size: only 169 active faculty, of whom about 100 were assistant, associate, or full professors. Just under 1,500 students were enrolled, including 121 graduate students.

A disaster of equivalent magnitude on today's campus would be a fire consuming an entire complex of buildings, destroying the facilities and work of hundreds of faculty and graduate students and a generation's worth of records and research materials.

Among those most severely affected by the fire was Professor Eugene Hilgard, Dean of the College of Agriculture and one of the most important personages and shapers of the early University.



The Agriculture Building burning on April 16, 1897. *Photograph by Roland Letts Oliver. Courtesy of University Archives.*



The campus in 1895. The Agriculture Building appears between the flagpole and South Hall. Courtesy of University Archives.

The building stood alongside Strawberry Creek, just about where Moses Hall is located today, and owed its existence in part to the efforts of Napa and Sonoma valley wine makers, who had agitated in the state legislature for “an appropriation for a viticultural building and necessary cellar for experimental work,”¹ resulting in the construction of a small frame building for research work.

In 1888, the wine makers again pushed through the legislature an outright appropriation for a building; but it was rendered so inadequate by a little clause slipped in that it sufficed for only half a building. But we built this on a large foundation and when it was halfway up the first floor was roofed over with a temporary roof of felt, leaving the second floor an “aching void.” At the next session of the legislature a committee of university inspection was sent from Sacramento. They commented with some amusement on the “rump” building representing the College of Agriculture, and promptly reported on their return a bill appropriating funds enough to complete the building and equip (sic) it modestly.²

The second stage was completed in 1889. The building provided 14,175 square feet (including the basement wine cellar) and cost \$10,000 to build, including \$7,000 in “University funds” and \$3,000 from the Federal Government under the Hatch Act of 1887.³

Designed by Clinton Day, architect of several buildings on the early campus, as well as commercial buildings and residences in San Francisco and the East Bay, the University’s first permanent agriculture building was also the first officially designated Agricultural Experiment Station in the United States, and the center of the extensive experimental station system built up by Dean Hilgard throughout California.

The April 16 fire was apparently caused by a mishandled or forgotten gas jet. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that “the fire, which started on the third floor, was ignited from a lighted gas sterilizer which has been left by some of the students standing close to a wooden partition. It was discovered shortly after noon by three students, Tom Carroll, Al Lean and Al Down, who were returning from the training table. They immediately turned in an alarm.”⁴

A slightly different version of events appeared in the *San Francisco Examiner*, which



The Reading Room of the Agriculture Building, two years before the fire. Newspapers line the walls, periodicals and research publications are piled high on the tables, and the three faculty members or students present seem to be undertaking the pursuit of knowledge with appropriate gravity. Some botanical specimens—perhaps among those collected by Dean Hilgard—appear on the top shelf of the cabinets to the right. *William Carey Jones, Illustrated History of the University of California, 1895.*

sophomores had a battle with Babcock fire extinguishers in North Hall, so that not one was available,” the *Examiner* reported.⁷ A water fight would not be an out of the ordinary event on campus, where much student life—particularly among lower-division men—centered on class rivalries, ceremonies, and horseplay.

The *Chronicle* was more caustic, alleging that “fire extinguishers were brought from various parts of the University, but were of no avail, from the fact that certain of the students had, a few day before, for no further apparent reason than distinguishes many of their pranks, emptied the contents and rendered the safeguards useless.”⁸

Fire hoses on hand also proved insufficient. “The Agriculture Building is plentifully supplied with hose, but when the necessity for use arose it was found that none of it would fit the mains. The Fire Department arrived about a half an hour after the fire had been discovered, and meanwhile only two small streams of water could be brought to bear on the flames. The Students organized a bucket brigade and did what they could to check the flames. The lack of water made it impossible for the Fire Department to throw more than two additional streams on the flames.” Five local companies—Berkeley, Peralta, Beacon, Posen, and North Berkeley—all responded to the fire “and did as good work as possible with the limited supply of water.”⁹

reported that “Ernest Denicke, the son of Regent Denicke, was first to discover the blaze, which started in the bacteriological laboratory on the third floor of the building. It is supposed that some careless student did not turn off the gas jet when he left his sterilizer to go to luncheon. After the water had evaporated the apparatus grew hot and soon the woodwork was ablaze.” Dean Hilgard told the *Examiner*, “I have always feared that this would come to us some day, as our work requires that we use an immense number of gas jets and coal oil lamps.”⁵

“Professor Charles W. Woodworth, a member of the faculty who was on the spot when the alarm was given, went up stairs and discovered the wooden partition in flames.”⁶ As the alarm spread, students and faculty ran to find fire extinguishers, but apparently many had been emptied by students. “Last week the



Unidentified laboratory in the Agriculture Building. Note the extensive experimental apparatus, and the wooden walls. *William Carey Jones, Illustrated History of the University of California, 1895.*

Another newspaper account confirmed the problems with the hoses, noting that “before the town fire department arrived the students had a hard time trying to fit the worn out college hose to the hydrants.”¹⁰

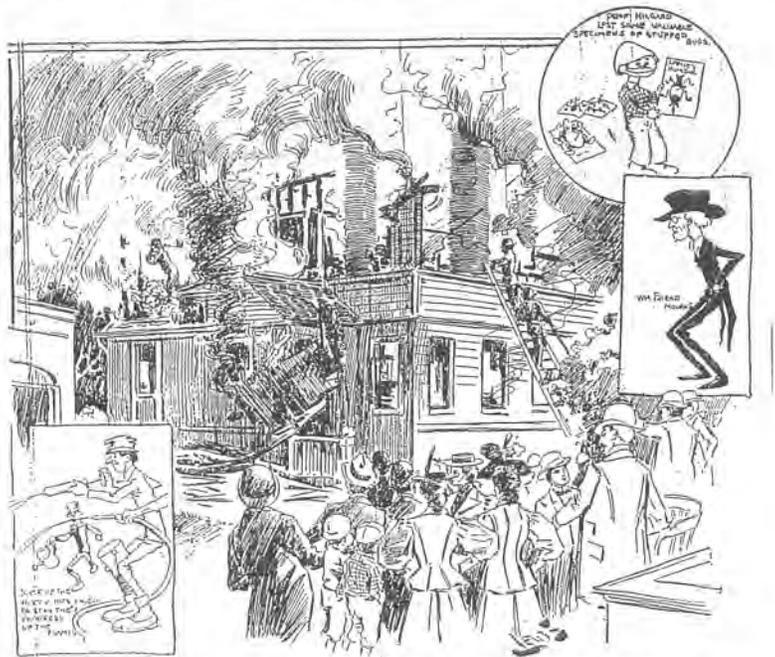
The destruction of the building was well documented by both photographs and newspaper illustrators who could rapidly produce engravings for the next day’s paper. The building, with its several brick chimneys, is seen burning from the center of the attic outwards, then down to the lower floors as crowds watch from around South Hall and along South Drive.

As it became clear that the Agriculture Building fire would not be easily quelled, efforts began to remove contents of the building, aided by the fact that the structure was burning from the top down.

The students and the professors, the co-eds and the townsmen, all were energetic in saving college property. Bottles of bugs and bacteria, bundles of documents, dried-up butterflies and other specimens were dumped on the campus and good red wine flowed into Strawberry Creek.¹¹

The *Chronicle* correspondents saw a more sinister motive in the removal of valuables.

In the basement of the building were stored many samples of wines, and when it was found that the destruction of the edifice was inevitable, efforts were concentrated on the work of saving the contents of the cellar. A number of the students not engaged in checking the flames volunteered their assistance in saving the wine. That some of them did this from an ulterior motive was developed by the discovery of a number of them in the place where the wine was deposited driving in the bungs of the casks and proceeding to enjoy the contents. Professor Hilgard’s threat of expulsion from the University saved the wine that had escaped the flames from thirsty students.¹²



Scene at the Fire Which Destroyed One of the University Buildings

The Agriculture Building in flames while a nattily dressed crowd of Berkeleyans looks on. The cartoon at lower left refers to the sophomore class water fight of the week before which allegedly had left campus fire extinguishers dry. In the upper right hand corner Dean Hilgard is lampooned as a child losing his bug collection, and the drawing of “William Friend Mourns” apparently refers to the president of the senior class, although the reason for his portrayal is obscure. *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 17, 1897.

Losses to the building and contents were estimated at between \$25,000 and \$30,000. Nothing was insured. "The departments of viticulture, agriculture, horticulture, entomology, and agricultural chemistry all had their homes therein, and, with the exception of some samples of wine and a little inexpensive furniture, the records and specimens of all these departments were destroyed." Research apparatus, including a valuable microscope owned by Professor A.P. Hayne and brought by him from Germany, burned. "So valuable did he consider it that he carried it in his hand during the whole journey" to Berkeley.¹³

At the time of the fire, the Agriculture Building was literally stuffed full of the fruits of Dean of Agriculture Eugene Hilgard's labors not only at Berkeley, but during his previous research in the Midwest and South. He lost all his academic holdings and research collections in the fire.

"Professor Hilgard's loss was the greatest. For over forty years he has been collecting the 10,000 plants (in the University's herbaria collection). A large collection of soils is scattered over the campus. This collection cannot be duplicated." Hilgard told a reporter, "We have lost all the data of the students' work and will have to promote them on our general knowledge of their ability. My loss is heavy. There is my herbarium, my pet collection, gone forever."¹⁴ Other items lost were "geological data obtained by the Professor in the Mississippi valley and arranged for publication, besides many scientific treatises. These works were the result of years of study and labor..." Four thousand insect specimens in the University's embryonic entomological collection were destroyed, along with records of soil analysis and "progressive experiments." Forty thousand pieces of correspondence, representing the bulk of the records of the Agricultural Extension, also burned.¹⁵



One research collection that may, in part, have escaped the fire was a library thought to be the best of its type in the nation, more than 1,000 works on wine-making and grape cultivation that had been given to the College by the State Viticultural Commission in 1896. It appears that most of the books, aside from "such works as are necessary for daily reference" had been housed in the University Library rather than the Agriculture Building.¹⁶

Like many other academics affected by disaster at Berkeley, Hilgard tried to move quickly to recover.

Professor Hilgard feels his loss deeply, but will begin to-day to straighten out matters. He said last night, "I shall employ my staff immediately to see what the extent of the loss is. I think that the most valuable part of the apparatus has been saved, but these could have been replaced if they had been lost. The serious loss to the college is that of the entire set of reports from 1877 to the present time. My personal loss is one which is irreparable..."¹⁷

With the agriculture headquarters ruined, Hilgard sought the assistance of his colleagues. The day after the fire he had a temporary office in the Chemistry Building, just up South Drive from the ruins. "Through the courtesy of Professor Rising, we will carry on our work in the Chemistry Building until other quarters are provided. For the time being the regular proceedings of the college must cease."¹⁸ Fortunately, the summer break was at hand and the College would have some time to make other arrangements before the regular academic year began in the fall.

In the months following the fire the University moved to replace the building on the same site, since the brick basement had survived structurally intact.

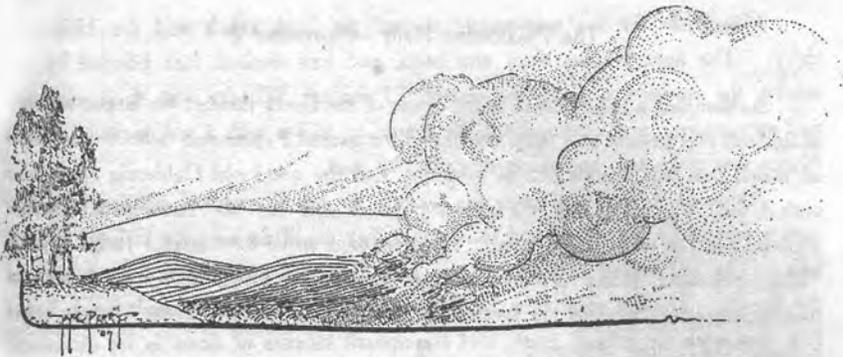
The University was tremendously fortunate that Hilgard had 22 years before the disaster to build the College, extend its activities, and establish its prestige. After the fire the College of Agriculture continued to expand and flourish. Although it was true of Hilgard in a strictly scientific sense that “the great work of his life was reduced to ashes along with many another scientific treatise to which he had devoted some of the best years of his life,”¹⁹ it can also be argued that his true “great work” was establishing the College of Agriculture, and that success survived the fire.

NOTES

- 1 Hilgard address, *The University Chronicle*, 15:1 (January 1913), 130.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 131.
- 3 Verne A. Stadtman, ed. *The Centennial Record of the University of California* (Berkeley, 1967), 52.
- 4 *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 17, 1897.
- 5 *San Francisco Examiner*, April 17, 1897.
- 6 *Chronicle*, April 17, 1897.
- 7 *Examiner*, April 17, 1897.
- 8 *Chronicle*, April 17, 1897.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Examiner*, April 17, 1897.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Chronicle*, April 17, 1897.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Examiner*, April 17, 1897.
- 15 *Oakland Tribune*, April 17, 1897.
- 16 *Daily Californian*, January 31, 1896.
- 17 *Chronicle*, April 17, 1897.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 *Ibid.*

THE FIRE ON THE HILLS

From the unpublished 1907 *Blue and Gold* (for the academic year 1905-1906)



The Fire on the Hills

Berkeley boasts of no Vesuvius, but let her not repine on that score, for old Grizzly, when he takes it into his head, can do something quite respectable in the line of fire and smoke and flying sparks. He showed us this early last October.

On the morning of October ninth, about nine o'clock, the loungers on North Hall steps saw a light cloud of smoke floating over the hills. The wind, however, was so strong that the cloud faded away before it got over the campus. But it kept on coming, and about eleven o'clock, in spite of the wind, the smoke settled down about the University buildings. The students in the recitation rooms began to sniff and it was even strong enough to be detected in Chemistry mixed with the various fumes which Dr. Morgan was manufacturing. Bits of burning grass began to sail through the air, and whirling around in the wind, scattered themselves about the University buildings.

Before this, President Wheeler had noticed the fire and sent word to the men students to relinquish the pleasures of drill for that day and to go and help put it out.

As soon as the word got around, men began to stream out of all the buildings. Stopping to get pieces of wet sacking and old carpet, they ran through the eucalyptus grove and up Charter Hill. Up there the wind was blowing a gale and it forced the smoke down the throats of the climbers and filled their eyes with bits of grass that stung. A back fire was started at once, but there were not enough men to handle it, and getting beyond their control, it swept down the hill towards the trees around the Greek Theater. The men fought unyieldingly, and with the assistance of fresh recruits coming up continually, they finally checked it a little way from the trees.

Meanwhile the fire was raging around the Such ranch and the University dairy. The fight to save them was hard, and half choked, half blinded by the smoke, the students worked desperately. President Wheeler was there directing and encouraging, and beating back the spreading flames with a wet sack. Captain Nance was there, too, and many other faculty men.

Although it was long past one o'clock no one thought of hunger. A few men overcome by the smoke and feeling that they could do no more to help, left the hills. The rest stayed at their posts. Two thousand men defied the advance of the flames. The fire crept into the canyons, and finding the dry underbrush better fuel than even the hillside grass, shot triumphant tongues of flame in all directions. Bushes were cut away and trees felled by the fighters. Finally a stand was taken at the Fish Ranch road. Here, it was thought, was a chasm that the fire could not leap across. It did cross it, however, in a few places, but made no more advance towards Berkeley, yet burned along the ridges in the direction of Oakland.

Up on the hillside is a group of houses, several of them occupied by members of the faculty. They seemed to be in a very defenseless position; students rallied around them, however, and by beating back the flames with their sacks, throwing buckets of water from the windows and using the garden hose, no serious damage was done beyond a slight fire on one roof.

The fire-fighters were still working at six o'clock, but by this time the fire was checked. After that it spread back into the hills and burnt itself out about midnight. Watchers stayed on the hills all night to check any new outbreak which might occur.

The next day the havoc that had been wrought showed plainly. The sun shone down on black hills where cow paths stood out white, like strands of a tangled web. Where there had been manzanita and small oak stood charred stumps. It was a scene of utmost desolation, but nothing could be done to relieve it, until the rains came and washed away the burned grass and fresh green covered the hills. In time, nothing will remain as a reminder of the fire but a few bits of charred wood buried in a new, luxuriant growth along the canyons, but no one who was in college in October, 1905, will ever forget the day when the fire from Grizzly threatened the University and its neighbors with destruction.

Editor's note: The events of October 9, 1905, might be called the "forgotten firestorm." We have found only this account from the *Blue and Gold*, but the fire has all the hallmarks of more devastating fires that followed later in the century: the furious wind, choking pall of smoke and embers, the rapid spread southward from canyon to canyon, flames jumping roads and firelines, and the anxious wait into the evening to see if the fire has finally been checked.

A few things have changed since 1905, or might be obscure to today's reader. The fire appears to have originated in upper Strawberry Canyon where the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory is now, the "eucalyptus grove" was then behind the Greek Theatre and "Charter Hill" where the Big C is today. The "University Dairy" and the "Such Ranch" both sat in the lower reaches of Strawberry Canyon, and the "group of houses" where professors lived is quite clearly today's Panoramic Hill. "Drill" refers to military training then required for all male students; Captain Nance was the commander of the Cadet Corps.

THE UNIVERSITY AND BERKELEY'S GREAT FIRE OF 1923

Various accounts

Professor Raymond T. Birge

On the UC Berkeley faculty from 1918 to 1955, chairman of his department for 22 years, and professor emeritus until his death in 1980, Professor Birge wrote an unpublished five-volume "History of the Physics Department" sometime in the 1960s. In this excerpt he recalls the great fire of 1923.

"...Berkeley experienced its greatest disaster—the fire of Sept. 17, 1923. The University suffered only minor material damage, but every department was necessarily affected to greater or less degree. Hence a brief account of this tragedy seems in order.

The damage in Berkeley totalled some ten million dollars, only *half* covered by insurance. About 640 houses were completely destroyed. Fortunately, of the fifteen members of the physics staff, only four lived north of the campus, and only *one* lived in the fire area. The one victim was Professor E. E. Hall, whose house was at 1501 Le Roy Ave., directly opposite the end of what is now called Hawthorne Terrace. Except for what belongings he could pile in his car, he and his wife lost everything. This loss included *all* his lecture notes since he was accustomed to prepare his lectures at home. Other departments fared much worse. The following quotation is taken from a letter written by President Campbell and dated October 8, 1923, to the Editor of *Science*.

'In the burned area lived about 60 University professors, associate professors and assistant professors, and about 50 instructors, associates, and assistants; about 30 secretaries, library assistants, clerks and stenographers in the employ of the University; and 1042 University students. The number of fraternity and sorority houses consumed was about 12.'

My own house miraculously escaped and since I was as close to the fire as anyone not in the actual burned area, I am in a specially favored position to describe the event. On September 17 there was a very strong (40 mi/hr) wind blowing from the east, or northeast, and the humidity was exceptionally low. The fire started early in the afternoon in grass some three miles east of Berkeley,— no one knows how or by whom. At that time there were few houses in the hills and *no* provision for fighting grass fires. In fact, all the 'hill area' (both west and east of the present Grizzly Peak Blv'd) was then part of *Oakland*, and hence the Berkeley fire department had no plans and no responsibility to fight fires in that area.

The fire spread out in fan shape and when it reached the crest of the Berkeley Hills (about 2 P.M.) it was one and a half miles wide. My own house was, and still is, at 1639 La Vereda (the last street up the hill), in the vicinity of Virginia Street. The fire reached the back of my house simply as a grass fire. It is possible that Mrs. Birge was the first person to send in the alarm, when smoke started coming over the hill. Anyway, she was able to reach me at the university by telephone. (A little later every telephone was tied up.) I reached my house

Editor's note: Professor Emeritus of Physics Robert Birge (born 1924), who very graciously has given us permission to publish his father's reminiscences, tells us that his mother disputed some of the above story. She told him she put out the earlier fire with wet gunny sacks she took from their woodshed. She also told of how her husband climbed on the roof of their house and forbade the dynamiters to blow up the house.

(probably in ten minutes) at least twenty minutes before the flames arrived. I wet down with our garden hose everything in back of the house. Most fortunately we had water—from Spruce Street reservoir—all during the fire. But the houses below us, supplied from another source, very shortly had *none*.

Thus, when the grass fire reached my residence it simply went out and we supposed that that was the end. But when we walked around to the front of the house we were startled to see apparently the entire city in flames! This is what had happened. East of the end of Cedar Street there was (and still is) a large grove of eucalyptus trees, and burning branches from these trees had been carried by the wind down onto the roofs of houses to the west and south. (During the height of the fire branches were thus carried several miles, some even as far as the heart of Oakland.) Roof fires thus started independently in at least five different houses, where no one happened to be at home to do anything about it. The first house to catch fire was one on Hawthorne Terrace.

Then the fire spread west and south, completely out of control. One who has not seen such a conflagration can conceive the magnitude of it. At one time the fire swept from one block to the next in *ten* minutes! At the north edge of the fire (Euclid Avenue, just north of Hawthorne Terrace) a house *across* the street from the fire (which did *not* burn) got so hot that a metal curtain rod was melted! In the case of a house in the fire area, the entire house would get so hot that at one instant it would be quite intact and at the next instant one mass of flames.

It is quite possible that the entire city of Berkeley would have been consumed, but by some miracle the east wind after some two hours suddenly died down and a gentle west wind began to blow. At that time the fire had reached Walnut Street on the west, and the edge of the campus (Hearst Ave.) on the south. (Nothing on the campus was burned.) It had, on the east, reached the corner of Euclid Ave. and Virginia Street, three blocks directly west of my house. Then it started slowly *back* up the hill! All fire equipment was on the west edge of the fire, naturally. But finally one *hose cart* arrived in our area and there fortunately a new *high pressure* water line available (needing no pump). The fire was then stopped at a half-burned house at 1639 La Loma, belonging to Dr. Morgan of the Pacific School of Religion. Thus La Vereda was the *only* entirely unburned street in the area east of Euclid Avenue near the campus.

One could write at great length on various aspects of the fire, especially as a study in *human psychology*. *No one* was killed in the fire—another miracle. But the next day one could hear stories such as that of a man seen standing on a wall, which suddenly collapsed, plunging him into the flames, etc. Persons of education and presumably quite sane acted completely differently. Most remained calm and did what they could to help. But others became quite petrified with terror. At least two professors whom I knew personally simply fled from their homes. Then their students arrived and saved both houses (which were just on the edge of the fire area). There were cases where a family simply stood by its car as in a trance, not even trying to put anything in the car. Then when the flames arrived they jumped into the car and drove off, having saved *nothing* but themselves.

The moment the fire was over looters swarmed into the area, but since all that remained were the *chimneys* of the burned houses, there wasn't much to steal. A military cordon was, however, very quickly thrown around the area and those with houses inside it had to procure a pass from the City Hall to get into it. But the entire affair, as an example of how various persons react when under great stress, was most enlightening and in some ways most disheartening.

President Campbell, in his letter, tells in some detail of the relief measures that were promptly organized, but I will not go into this phase of the matter. I do want, however, to note that many of us were greatly indebted to the thousands of students who swarmed into

the area, helping to save what could be saved. My own students arrived promptly and the contents of every closet, cupboard, bureau drawer, etc. in our house were carried up onto the hillside back of our house which, having been burned over, was safe from further damage. From that vantage point my wife and nineteen month old daughter watched the fire, fortified by a loaf of bread and a bottle of milk. Household goods in large quantities were piled up on the campus. I believe that very little was stolen, but probably most of it was being guarded."

Dorothy Bennett, Student

Cal senior Dorothy Bennett wrote this firsthand account of the fire, published in the *San Francisco Examiner* on Wednesday, September 19, 1923, two mornings after the catastrophe. She watched the fire from the vicinity of Hearst and Euclid, where the north gate to the campus now stands.

"The fire came down Euclid Avenue almost to the university campus. We could see the houses burning up the street, and the smoke and flames came thick toward new houses.

At the entrance, there, a truck dashed up with furniture and boys. They unloaded, and went up again, and the girls, standing around, with their suitcases and bundles, sat down in the chairs or on pianos and couches and sewing machines.

'Stand back, we're going to dynamite'—an automobile of khaki-clad students came from somewhere and went out through the gate.

Two men in blue and khaki football uniforms trotted past. They went on up Euclid avenue to meet the fire that was fierce and gorgeous, as it leaped on from house to house.

We saw figures on a roof—they were boys fighting for their fraternity house. The furniture of the house was being dragged out by others, who rushed it down to us, at the campus. They were wet and dirty and determined.

From the west we saw flames further down, and heard the dull thud of dynamiting. The smoke was in our eyes, and the wind blew, hot and dry, toward the campus, carrying burning cinders. But the boys on the roof of the wooden Architecture Building soaked it steadily from their hose.

A cinder stung my head, and I reached up and brushed it off. The girls around me were burned out, they had only had time to drag a suitcase with them before the fire came, but they stood still and watched the fire coming down as if they were daring it to come, and they'd fight it again.

Sooty, and hot, and hurried, the boys would come down to us, and leave a load of furniture, or somebody's sewing machine—there were five sewing machines there, and two or three pianos—and then they'd go up again, as unafraid as if they were playing a game against the fire.

We heard the crash of roofs falling, and the dynamite squad blowing up buildings, and the flames sighing their way through this part of Berkeley. The north, in front of us, was lighted way up the hill, where the fire had come down. The west was burning brightly. The campus waited, all the buildings and trees and green lawns covered with black falling cinders, and heavy smoke, blown by the wind.

The boys on the frat house roof were fighting still, but the fire was nearer them—only a house or two away. We hoped they'd come down quickly. We could feel the terrible heat from where we were.

Then I felt a cool puff of wind on my dry cheek. It came from the southwest. The wind had changed.

All the campus was safe, now, and the frat house, and the big apartment house near

the university. The flames were blowing north, doubling back on themselves.

'You can't beat us,' the campus seemed to say, 'and you can't beat those boys who have fought so long and so hard for me, and the girls that stood by with water and food, and were burned out with a smile.'

And that's true, because I saw the boys go up toward the fire, with the joy of adventure on their sooty faces and I saw the girls look at their remaining possessions, and take their losses bravely, and stand by to help others.

With such a fighting spirit, and with the friendly wind that came, even that savage fire was checked in its tracks. And the campus is standing untouched, by the side of the poor scarred black patch that was all the beautiful homes and tall trees of North Berkeley."

L. B. Reynolds, Student

This firsthand description of the 1923 Berkeley fire, written by L.B. Reynolds, Class of '24 and published in the *Daily Californian*, on the morning after (September 18), draws a short—but most eloquent—word picture of the catastrophe. In the first paragraph, the reference to "another land and another scene of greater desolation" alludes to recent earthquake and fires in Tokyo, news of which had filled the Bay Area papers in the week preceding the Berkeley fire.

"It is just falling dusk, and from the hills a scene of hellish beauty presents itself. Below lies some fifty blocks of burned homes, still smoldering and flickering. And while I sit writing this, the sun sinks redly down toward the open sea beyond the Golden Gate, towards another land and another scene of greater desolation which we can understand so much better today.

Up here in the hill roads and lanes the licking, consuming flames showed some mercy to goods stored in the open streets, and I can write in comparative comfort, using a desk and table that lately was housed in the gray-black heap of ashes behind me. It is ridiculous and yet pitiable, the haphazard, crazy way in which the streets and vacant lots are littered. Phonographs, chairs, dressing tables, pictures, a baby's crib, a handsomely carved teakwood cabinet, a washing machine, three cups and saucers set along a cement retaining wall, bed clothes—. On the street below a grand piano stands in isolated grandeur, while some irresponsible, not to be deterred by the lack of a stool, touches it with the sure hand of practiced syncopation.

Somehow it seems quiet and not all out of the ordinary now. But a short hour or two ago, when we were all on the front of an onrushing line of flame that would not brook the feeble efforts of man to quell it, there were scenes to wring the heart yet force a smile.

An old negro woman sat sobbing while her husband stood helplessly by. A bent greybeard, insane with grief, watched the roaring flames whip his home into nothingness. Someone said his wife had been left inside. Yet a postman, ruled perhaps by the all-powering force of habit, left mail at a deserted house whose roof was already afire.

It is very nearly dark now, but the dancing fire still lives, reaching out until it is met by the gleam of lights perhaps a full mile from here. Yesterday the home of some thousands of people, today nothing but a hideous forest of stark-naked chimneys and charred telegraph poles."

President William Wallace Campbell

William Wallace Campbell, noted astronomer and UC President at the time of the 1923 fire, moved quickly to quell distressing reports about the disaster's effect on the Berkeley campus. On September 19, just two days after the fire, Campbell issued a statement to the press (printed in *San Francisco Examiner*, September 20, 1923). Aside from estimating that \$25,000 would be needed to help faculty and staff who lost their homes in the fire, Campbell wrote:

"The spirit of the campus today is to carry on. Classroom work is again essentially normal. Everyone who suffered loss, whether professor or student, is aiming for the quickest possible return to the conditions of work which prevailed before the catastrophe of last Monday occurred.

One does not hear lamentations or complaints. Praises are sounded on all sides for the service rendered by the students during the critical two hours of the conflagration. They responded instantly to the call of duty.

Several thousand of them fought the flames and saved a large number of residences. Deeds of heroism were numerous. The high value of experience gained in student self-government, which has prevailed in the University through more than two decades, was clearly shown.

Fully 800 students volunteered their services for military duty on Monday night and Tuesday morning. The women students also did everything which young women could do to help.

It is estimated that 81 professors or administrative officers of the University lost their residences and essentially all the residences contained.

Most regrettable have been the losses of manuscripts embodying the results of important and long continued investigations. Replacement of these manuscripts will be for their authors an extremely serious matter.

It appears that 300 students were burned out. Most of these lost essentially all of their possessions. About 150 of these students are working their way through the University, wholly or in part, and their losses are for them and for the University a serious matter.

The leading civic organizations of the city of Berkeley, operating through the Berkeley Chapter of the American Red Cross, have most generously offered to assist those who are in need of financial help. A committee of university officials, composed of Professor Leon J. Richardson, Comptroller Sproul, Robert Sibley and Professor Woods, assistant dean of the university, is co-operating. It is estimated that students who have suffered loss of clothing, books and other essentials will need the sum of \$15,000, and a considerable number of burned-out professors, who have already exhausted their collateral, can make good use of at least \$10,000 in the form of unsecured loans.

In behalf of Stanford University, President Wilbur generously tendered any and all assistance which his institution could offer. Similar offers have come from other institutions and from individuals."

Within a month, President Campbell sent a longer and more detailed statement to the journal *Science* ["The Fire in California," 58, no. 1505, (November 2, 1923), 345-346]. He took pains to emphasize the resumption of normal functioning at the University and the fact that the main campus suffered no substantial damage.

Steven Finacom, "Wading through the Ashes of Scholarship and Literature"

Editor's note: In addition to the firsthand accounts above, the following essay provides a broad overview of the events surrounding the 1923 fire.

New buildings on the Berkeley campus were being constructed "to remain for over a thousand years" the *Daily Californian* proclaimed on the morning of Monday, September 17, 1923. Only hours later, as if nature was responding to such hubris, a wall of flame swept through Berkeley from the north, threatening the campus with complete destruction in a considerably shorter period of time.

The 1923 fire remains the University's most direct and dramatic brush with natural disaster. More than 600 structures in north Berkeley were destroyed. About one quarter of the University's faculty, many staff, and one out of ten Cal students lost their homes. A thriving neighborhood alongside the campus was reduced to ruins. The residences of student living groups, unique private libraries and research collections of professors went up in smoke. For days the campus swarmed with refugees and those assisting them. Students played a significant role—perhaps the most significant of any discrete group—in responding to the fire and dealing with its aftermath. The horrific and heroic events of September 17, 1923 are worth remembering, not only for their extent, but because the course and development of the fire was so similar to 1991.

"Unheeded Messengers of Disaster"

Stepping up from the campus along steep, twisting streets, Berkeley's trademark brown-shingled homes crowded the lower slopes of the north Berkeley hills. Streetcars wound through the hills along Euclid Avenue, placing what were considered some of the Bay Area's finest residential districts just a few miles and minutes away from the ferries to San Francisco, where many Berkeleyans worked. Many Berkeley residents had their roots in San Francisco, but had fled the City for new East Bay homes in the wake of the 1906 earthquake and fire.

Below north Berkeley's residential districts spread the UC campus, with only about a third of the academic and student population of today and much more extensive open space. Within the buildings, a thriving and increasingly notable center of learning had been nurtured under the administrative leadership of recently retired University President Benjamin Ide Wheeler. Faculty strolled, or rode the streetcars, to and from the University, returning in the afternoon or evening to comfortable homes nearby. Large numbers lived in the hills above campus.

Far above the campus proper, the Berkeley Hills still drowsed in a relatively undeveloped state. There was no Centennial Drive, no Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, and no Grizzly Peak Boulevard; just slopes of grass and chaparral, interspersed with tree plantations. In the early fall of 1923, conditions in those hills were ripe for fire. A typical rainless summer and an Indian summer with little cooling fog off the ocean had left earth and vegetation dessicated while temperatures rose into the 80s and 90s. On the day before the great fire at least 11 small grass and roof fires erupted in Berkeley as a dry wind blew across northern California.

All through the night the hot gale swept across the city, dry as ashes and laden with a murky fragrance like incense. People fell asleep listening to the rustle of the dried leaves that scurried endlessly along the empty streets—unheeded messengers of disaster.¹

When they awoke Monday morning, Berkeley residents were greeted by continued heat and strong winds.

The seventeenth of September was a hot, dry day. At mid-morning, the wind blew heavily from inland, the air was too clear, in exaggerated visibility, for the eye's comfort, while the big tea-colored hills of Berkeley appeared to rise and float...²

The gusting wind that morning damaged chimneys and roofs, blew down trees, broke windows, and tore small boats from their moorings on Lake Merritt and San Francisco Bay.

"It Burst with Such Unimagined Abruptness..."

On Monday morning fire broke out in north Berkeley—but not yet the great fire. Sparks from a chimney ignited the roof of the Dwight Club at 1547 Euclid, one of the private clubhouses on Northside for male students. The city fire department sounded two alarms because of the threat of the high wind, and managed to put the fire out before it could spread.³ The Dwight Club would not escape disaster twice that day.

Soon the pungent smell of smoke was coming down the hills on the hot wind. In the upper hill neighborhoods this was rapidly followed by a rain of ash and flaming debris that helped the fire "spot" far out in front of its edge, frustrating efforts to build a line of defense in front of it.

The direct origin of the fire was a grounded wire of high voltage which fell...at noon in the grass of Wildcat Canyon. The wire was blown by (the) terrific gale, starting a grass fire which gradually spread to a grove of eucalyptus trees. The conflagration was then carried down Wildcat Canyon in the neighborhood of Bruno Rancho, and from there spread to the residential districts north of Berkeley.⁴

When the catastrophe did come, it burst with such unimagined abruptness that the fire, leaping from Wildcat Canyon into Cragmont and from there to the neighborhood of the Reservoir had already cut a swathe through several streets before the alarm became general. People were still talking about forest fires in the interior (of California) when news came of the blaze threatening Mills College and Leona Heights above East Oakland; and they were still talking of this when they saw the long vicious tongues of flame coiling into the very heart of their own city, and stood appalled before a towering billow of smoke that poured heavenward like the reek of some gigantic altar in Biblical story.⁵

The first house to burn was that of A.G. Brodeur, professor of English, on Shasta Road. From that point, the fire swept southwest before the wind, ultimately blanketing most of the district between the present day site of the Berkeley Rose Garden and the campus. A triangle—more precisely, a rough "L"—of homes and buildings northeast of the campus and along upper Hearst Avenue was spared as the fire passed rapidly downhill to the west and northwest.

As firefighters learned again in 1991, it was difficult, if not impossible, to stop an "urban wildfire" that had taken hold in a built-up area with a strong wind to carry it along.

... rivers of water could have been poured into that blaze without deterring it. Lashed forward by the wind, the flames flattened and spread laterally, every blaze becoming a torch to the adjoining region, and scattering its hot embers and ashes for miles.⁶

Wind speed reached an estimated 40 miles per hour and, by some measurements, may have risen as high as 60 miles per hour. (By comparison, in 1991 the wind blew at least 35 miles per hour, combined—as in 1923—with humidity around 25 percent and temperatures as high as 90 degrees.)

“Within Two Hours The City Seemed Doomed...”

As the fire swept downhill, hundreds of homes vanished in the course of a few hours. A few were saved in small enclaves by determined efforts at defense (see the account of Professor Birge in this issue) or by happenstance, as the fire surged over or around them. On Buena Vista Way the residence of architect Bernard Maybeck burned, while down the street the reinforced concrete home he had designed for Professor Andrew Lawson (noted geologist and namer of the San Andreas Fault) survived. Lawson had planned his home to withstand earthquakes, but fire was its first successful test.

At 2:30 o'clock the conflagration was pouring an impenetrable barrage of dark, black smoke over the city. Within two hours the city seemed doomed. Flames broke a fiery, red path to the region around Euclid Avenue. Soon the entire area from Hearst Avenue north to Rose Street, and south (sic) to Oxford was a flaming mass of crackling ruins. From there the fire penetrated to Shattuck Avenue...⁷

The sky was covered with a heavy black pall of smoke, from which flaming cinders and embers dropped steadily, menacing the business section of the city, and setting fire to many other residences, as well as inflicting minor burns and injuries on scores of persons.⁸

“The Heart Of The City Was a Scene of Confusion...”

By late afternoon, the fire was—both figuratively and literally—at a crucial crossroads. Scores of residential blocks of Berkeley were blazing within its circumference. Along its main southwestern front it had now reached the edge of Berkeley's flatlands and downtown, including Shattuck Avenue—then, as now, the city's major commercial street.

University and Shattuck Avenues, the heart of the city, was a scene of confusion. Traffic officers shouting and blowing whistles, fire engines and relief trucks, their sirens and horns screaming warnings, machines filled with refugees charging across streets, the grinding of brakes, filled the air with a babel of sounds.⁹

Several commercial and residential buildings Downtown caught fire—some more than once—but were saved as additional fire engine companies arrived, some rushed over from San Francisco on a commandeered ferry boat. Two University-owned houses on the west side of Oxford Street burned.

Much further south and west a rain of wind-blown embers was falling in a relentless, incendiary, barrage. Buildings as far south as Russell Street—a mile from campus—were endangered and buildings near campus—including the First Congregational Church at Dana and Channing—briefly caught fire.¹⁰

“If Our Building Must Go, We Will Go With It!”

East of, and uphill from, downtown Berkeley the University campus was imperiled: wooden buildings, including the Students' Observatory, the Architecture Building, or “Ark” (now Northgate Hall), and today's Naval Architecture Building, stood in the path of the flames now only a few blocks away on Euclid Avenue. Just off campus several large, wood-shingled

buildings—including the Cloyne Court apartment complex (which survives today as a student cooperative) were also extremely vulnerable.

Students had brought a hose into play on at least one building, but at any moment a shift of the wind or relaxed vigilance of the firefighters could sweep the blaze into the campus. Some buildings along Euclid Avenue were dynamited, but it is unclear whether a fire-break, or just additional kindling for the flames, was the result. At least one group of residents resisted the dynamiting, to good effect.

Standing on the roof of the Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity house in Euclid Avenue, which was directly in the pathway of the flames, a half dozen students pleaded with a dynamiting squad to spare their building, a large stucco affair, from destruction. "If our building must go, we will go with it," they cried to the dynamiters and they refused to budge. Finally the dynamiters moved on and the fraternity house was permitted to survive.¹¹

The house residents worked frantically, hauling bedding to the roof where they wet and spread it in a successful effort to douse the downpour of embers.

Phi Kappa Sigma was one of the few student living groups saved in the direct path of the fire. About a dozen others were completely burned or severely damaged, including Japanese and Filipino student residential clubs and the unfortunate Dwight Club.

Finally in late afternoon, the hot and gusty wind from the hills lessened.

Those who saw the fire rush down to the University and Shattuck in the heart of Berkeley know how close a call that section and even Oakland had. With the terrific wind the front moved incredibly fast and central, south Berkeley, and Oakland were in its path. It was then that the hot north wind of two days stopped. A cool, fog-laden breeze moved in from the Bay and the danger was over.¹²

With the change in the wind the fire turned back on itself, and the rain of ashes and embers over the town slowed and ceased. It had singed, but spared, the main campus. Along lower Hearst Avenue houses had burned across the street from the campus grounds and the University President's mansion (now University House), but no buildings on campus burned.

Eastwards, however, the fire still threatened from the hills. Far into the night after the wind subsided it crept through the undeveloped canyons. Burned areas included part of Charter Hill above campus, as well as spots as far south as Claremont Canyon, and southeast towards "Orinda Park." Southeastern Berkeley neighborhoods were threatened, but successfully defended by corps of student volunteers. Several hundred trees and a considerable amount of fencing on the slopes of Strawberry Canyon burned.

This mosaic of grass fires would have burned more slowly after the wind died, and could be fought with more conventional lines of firefighters wielding shovels and objects to beat out the flames.

Eyewitness accounts of damage and firefighting efforts confirm that the 1923 fire was far more extensive than is generally recalled today. It was not confined to the built up residential district of north Berkeley, but actually burned parts of several major canyons along the hills. Only the relative lack of settlement in those areas prevented a much more widespread disaster on the order of 1991.

"No Other Group Did As Much As The Students"

As the fire swept down the hills and through the rows upon rows of homes, squads of University and High School students searched every home

ahead of the blaze to make sure that every occupant had been gotten out. Many ill persons were removed from homes, in several instances sick persons being gotten out just in time to avert their being trapped in the flames.¹³

Students were summoned to the base of the Campanile...by the ringing of the chimes. Assembled there, the collegians were dismissed from their classes by Paul Cadman, assistant dean of men, and were told to give their services to the stricken city.¹⁴

The evening after the fire, the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* estimated that “fully four thousand men students answered the call for volunteer fire-fighters....”¹⁵ If true, that would have represented an astonishing 40 percent of all Cal students. And Berkeley Mayor Fred Stringham remarked to the press after the fire: “The students of the University of California rendered splendid and effective service not only in burned districts but in hills back of Claremont until both fires (sic) were under control.”¹⁶ The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported:

Every fire fighter on the scene of the disaster had the help of at least ten students, while numerous others were commissioned as special police officers to handle the ever-increasing traffic....When taken from a standpoint of actual aid rendered, it is safe to state that no other single group did so much in the disaster as did the students of the University of California. There can be no doubt but that they carry off the majority of the honors for heroism in the disaster.¹⁷

One of the most memorable moments of the afternoon came when Football Coach Andy Smith released his players from practice and sent them to the fire area. One contingent arrived in time to evacuate some belongings from the home of President Emeritus Wheeler before it burned.

“A Haven Of Refuge...”

On campus, hundreds of students—primarily coeds—immediately and effectively rallied and organized to care for lost children, provide first aid, food and drink, locate housing for refugees and commandeer cars to transport firefighters to danger spots. Open spaces on the campus became crucial gathering points to absorb the crowds of refugees. “Homeless hundreds...were flocking on the Campanile green, the botanical gardens, the field in front of California Hall, and the drill field.”¹⁸ (The Botanical Gardens were, at the time, located in the glade between Doe Library and Observatory Hill).

Memorial drill field on the University of California campus provided a haven of refuge for many of the homeless, the fire reaching as far south as Addison street along the western edge of the field. Many individuals could be seen sitting alongside small piles of belongings rescued from the flames—faces blank, eyes staring—shocked into mental blankness by the disaster.¹⁹

As dark fell on the evening of the fire,

[T]he campus was thronged with men, women and children, milling around in fear of the flames. They were huddling under trees, in entrances to the campus buildings and in every sheltered nook. Many were burdened with works of art, books, clothing, divers household articles which they had saved from their burning homes.²⁰

Newly opened Stephens Memorial Union, operated by the ASUC, became a temporary

relief center.

[L]ast night Stephens Union, the student headquarters, presented a picture that will live for a long time in the minds of observers...At a desk in front of the east entrance to the Union a group of coeds were busy taking names of refugees, promising and giving assistance to those in search of relatives and friends and giving general information. In one of the inner halls another corps of girls were feeding many of the 500 [sic] students who lost their homes in the great fire. The Berkeley Chapter of the Red Cross was busy in one office treating the minor injuries of the fire-fighters. And on the top floor, nearly a hundred children were being cared for while their parents were being located.²¹

“Help In Our Hour of Need...”

Military troops, the Berkeley police, University cadets and other volunteers turned out to help patrol the devastated area and bring order as the fire subsided and the darkness fell.

Local companies of the California National Guard were called out immediately...Colonel Nance of the University R.O.T.C. also called out the cadets for guard duty on the campus....They assisted the guardsmen and Berkeley police until the early hours of the morning.²²



View from University Avenue and Oxford Street. *Courtesy of The Bancroft Library.*

Colonel Nance later reported that the city asked for 300 volunteers, and 604 ROTC cadets actually volunteered for duty “in guarding property in the burned area and on the campus and in regulating traffic.”²³ Berkeley’s acting Chief of Police sent the following note to President Campbell after the fire:

Please accept my hearty thanks for the excellent service rendered our fair city by the military of the University (the cadet corps) during the recent catastrophe. Without their help in our hour of need we should have faced

insurmountable difficulties; with their wonderful cooperation we suffered no fatalities, no looting and no serious crimes.²⁴

What accounted for the extraordinary and organized student response to the fire? In 1923, the campus, with its 10,000 students, was still small enough that campus traditions and student organizations were vigorous. The social and organizational of these groups helped students organize quickly during the fire.

The cadet corps also provided a core of discipline and experience to react to the immediate threat. Today, when only a handful of men and women wear military uniform on campus—and those who do are often regarded as out-of-place curiosities—it must be kept in mind that in 1923 virtually all the male students had, through their cadets corps training, at least some experience in drill, proper handling of tools and weapons, team-work, following orders, and responding to crisis.

“A Slumbering Field of Somber Ruins”

During the night, as the flames died down, a reporter surveyed the burned area:

The destruction of North Berkeley from the university campus to Cragmont was so complete that it resembled a huge cemetery in the late hours of the night. The chimneys stood as ghostly monuments of ruined homes. Glowing coals and debris still burning lighted the scene of terrible destruction. Twisted masses of metal marked the spots where automobiles had been abandoned, or pianos and heating apparatus had fallen in clouds of ashes.²⁵

What was once a modern residential district of colorful, picturesque homes is now a slumbering field of somber ruins watched over by tall mute chimneys. Streets darkened by the smudge of cinders, wind rustling lonesomely among the desolate piles of debris. Here and there a tiny stream from a broken main spouts upward as though in jest of the Fire God so lately vanquished. What were tall trees are now scarecrows of pointed sticks, scraggly and forlorn. A grand piano, its varnish wrinkled and blistered, sprawls awkwardly in a gutter.²⁶

“We Were Wading through the Ashes of Scholarship and Literature”

As the main fire subsided across North Berkeley, the University administration appealed “for permanent quarters for refugee faculty members and students”²⁷ as more than 5,000 people were said to be homeless. Relief efforts began immediately. The California Alumni Association organized a relief committee. UCLA students sent thousands of dollars. Stanford President Ray Lyman Wilbur apparently told President Campbell that Cal students could be housed at Stanford’s dormitories, a gracious gesture which Campbell declined with equal grace, citing the distance between the two campuses.

The University Mothers Club “offered to mend and repair any clothing which is donated for use of the destitute students,” and ultimately organized a large and efficient operation to supply replacement clothing and personal items.²⁸ Students and faculty were excused from fines for lost library books and periodicals (nearly 500 were estimated to have burned), and the campus took steps to reproduce and copy lecture notes for some classes. A benefit concert by the San Francisco Symphony was swiftly organized for October 7 in the Greek Theatre. Faculty who had lost their homes received complimentary tickets. The concert cleared nearly \$3,000, after expenses.²⁹

The Red Cross ultimately provided the campus with nearly \$50,000 in donations for

relief. Twenty thousand dollars was allocated among 103 faculty members and staff, and \$30,000 disbursed in various ways to 549 students. There was enough money to give salary bonuses to those faculty who had been burned out, and to many of the staff as well.³⁰

Most of the displaced faculty were able to find accommodations within town or nearby, but it is not completely clear where many of the more than one thousand displaced students went to live, although most of the burned out fraternities and sororities soon reported that they had found temporary quarters, primarily south of campus.

However quickly professors could build or buy new homes, they could not easily replace large private library and research collections or manuscripts, or research in progress. One professor had, against campus rules, borrowed the only copy of his own thesis from the University library to work with it at home. It burned. Another professor had visited the University librarian on the morning of the fire to ask if he could house his rare books in the stacks of the library. Almost all of his large collection was destroyed at his home.

Years later, Hildegarde Flanner, a Berkeley undergraduate who lost her family home in the hills, wrote poignantly about returning to the fire area to view the ruins.

Yesterday the students had been dismissed to work as firemen to save the contents[at] many the homes of professors—dwellings stored with fine libraries and manuscripts of importance. We were wading through the ashes of scholarship and literature.³¹

“Our University Community Is Well On The Road Towards Normal Conditions...”³²

In the days immediately after the fire, salvaged property cluttered the grounds and rose in huge piles in Stephens Union. Columns of classified ads filled the local papers identifying valued possessions lost in the confusion and asking for their return.

Men and women students of the University, after aiding greatly in combating the fire...continued their good work yesterday (Tuesday) by doing relief work under the direction of the various agencies of the city. Whenever a person was needed for some special service, there were usually several University students at hand to be called upon.³³

Even as the campus was thronged with fire fighters, military guards, and refugees, University officials “notwithstanding the near escape of the university itself from the flames...announced...that there would be no interruption in attendance at classes.”³⁴ Although “[l]ast night scores of university students slept on the campus under trees.”³⁵

Professors and students admitted today that the holding of classes was an expedient to attempt to quiet the excitement caused by the disaster.³⁶

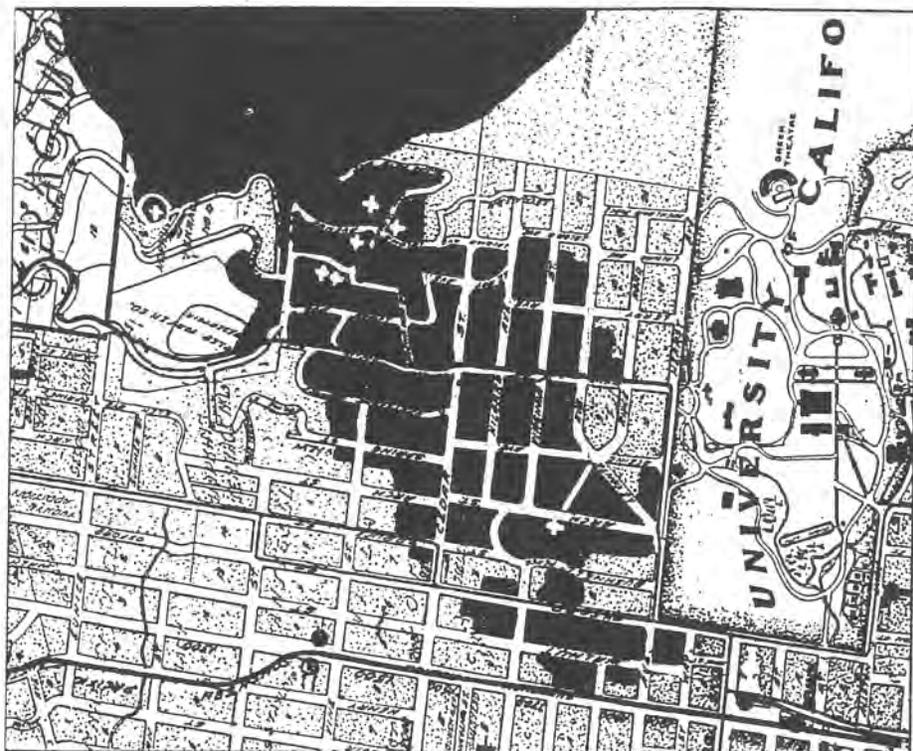


North Berkeley, September 1923.
Courtesy of University Archives.

President Campbell firmly told the press that the campus would carry on. Telegrams, then letters, poured in from the heads of educational institutions around the globe often reflecting exaggerated national and international press reports of near total destruction on the campus; Campbell may have feared that a portion of the University of California's rising reputation was slipping through his fingers. According to the president, reports of the death of the University were greatly exaggerated.

The *Daily Californian*, however, felt constrained to add to its praise for heroic responses to the fire a note of editorial concern, asking faculty to be more understanding of those students in their classes who had lost their homes and belongings and couldn't just resume normal academic routines after a few days. But life quickly began to return to normal. On Saturday, September 22, only days after the fire, a crowd of 18,000 packed California Field to see the first football game of the season, California's twenty-ninth consecutive victory on the gridiron over a squad of its own "Wonder Team" from previous years. Many of the players on both sides had participated in the rescue of President Emeritus Wheeler's belongings earlier in the week.

Swarms of sightseers poured into Berkeley to look at the ruins, and the police had to temporarily enforce one-way loops on streets north of campus along the edge of the burned zone. The University received one unexpected financial benefit. The observation deck of the Campanile offered a panoramic view over the burned area, and hordes paid for the elevator ride to the top. One newspaper cartoonist depicted the tower filled with so many spectators that it leaned to the north.



This *Daily Californian* map printed on Wednesday, September 19, 1923, shows the approximate area burned by the fire in relation to the campus. White crosses mark buildings within the fire zone that survived.

“A Repetition Of Such Fires Could Most Easily Be Prevented...”

There was a boosterish attitude among many as efforts to rebuild began almost immediately, spearheaded in some cases by prominent faculty and alumni who had lost their homes. There was also the inevitable debate over the causes of the Fire. Inadequate water, flammable building materials, and the wind were all blamed, although the roofing industry tried to absolve shingle roofs and siding from any complicity.

Although Mayor Stringham also announced that “the municipal government of Berkeley...is bending every effort to rebuild the burned area and to so direct and regulate construction that the fire hazard will be reduced, the traffic ways improved, and the uses of property better adapted to locality...” he and other officials were fighting a losing battle against the pressure to rebuild where, when, and how the displaced residents wanted.

Streets were not regraded or widened, and property lines remained the same with the few large parcels eventually redivided into smaller lots. In Northside, higher density was permitted and lots which formerly had single-family homes were allowed to build duplexes and apartment houses.³⁷

In addition to the impetus for immediate rebuilding of private properties in the fire area, there were suggestions that the University campus expand into the Northside area by buying up burned over parcels. This would have required additional funding from the Legislature, however, and ultimately private rebuilding went on, and the University acquired only one block of land, today’s “Oxford Tract.”

Perhaps the last word on the 1923 Berkeley Fire should belong to the prescient O. Winningstad of Berkeley who, on September 20, 1923, sent a letter to the *San Francisco Chronicle*:

All fires of any magnitude that have threatened Berkeley in recent years, as also the present disastrous fire, have all started in the dry grass and brush in the hills back of the town. A repetition of such fires could most easily be prevented by turning a band of about 10,000 goats loose and let them browse over the hills during the summer. They would keep the hills so clean of grass and also the small brush that the fire would find nothing to feed on.

Fence in the hills and use them for goat pasturage—that is the cheapest and most efficient way of preventing future fires.³⁸

The Chronicle editors headlined the letter, “Fine Idea, but Who supplies the Goats?”

Berkeley would have to wait six decades for an answer, but by the 1980s the University was using a regular program of rented goats (herded within a moveable, electrified fence) to browse some of the most dangerous slopes of Strawberry and Claremont Canyons. At least one lesson of the 1923 fire had, in part, been learned.

NOTES

- 1 Aubrey Boyd, “The Berkeley Fire,” reprinted in *The Berkeley Fire* (Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, 1992, np).
- 2 Hildegarde Flanner, “Wildfire: Berkeley, 1923,” reprinted in *ibid.*
- 3 *Oakland Tribune*, September 17, 1923.
- 4 *Daily Californian*, September 18, 1923.

- 5 Boyd, "The Berkeley Fire."
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 *Daily Californian*, September 19, 1923.
- 8 *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 18, 1923.
- 9 *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, September 18, 1923.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 *San Francisco Examiner*, September 18, 1923.
- 12 *Tribune*, September 18, 1923.
- 13 *Gazette*, September 17, 1923.
- 14 *Tribune*, September 18, 1923.
- 15 *Gazette*, September 18, 1923.
- 16 *Daily Californian*, September 19, 1923.
- 17 *Chronicle*, September 18, 1923.
- 18 *Daily Californian*, September 19, 1923.
- 19 *Gazette*, September 18, 1923.
- 20 *Chronicle*, September 18, 1923.
- 21 *Gazette*, September 18, 1923.
- 22 *Daily Californian*, September 18, 1923.
- 23 General Order No. 83 to the Cadet Corps from Professor J. T. Nash, October 5, 1923. University Archives, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. CU-5 1923-1927, folder 172.
- 24 *Daily Californian*, September 27, 1923.
- 25 *Examiner*, September 18, 1923.
- 26 *Daily Californian*, September 19, 1923.
- 27 *Examiner*, September 19, 1923.
- 28 *Chronicle*, September 20, 1923.
- 29 Various items. University Archives, CU-5 1923-1927, folder 172.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Flanner, "Wildfire," np.
- 32 President Campbell to President Hicks (University of Cincinnati), October 12, 1923. University Archives, CU-5 1923-1927, folder 172.
- 33 *Daily Californian*, September 19, 1923.
- 34 *Chronicle*, September 18, 1923.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 *Tribune*, September 18, 1923.
- 37 Susan Cerny, *Berkeley Landmarks* (Berkeley: Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, 1994), 205.
- 38 *Chronicle*, September 18, 1923.

THE CALLAGHAN HALL FIRE OF 1985

Steven Finacom

ARSON, NOT ACCIDENT, was the cause of the most recent fire to completely destroy a Berkeley campus building. Callaghan Hall, a wooden two-story building on Cross Campus Road, burned early in the morning of Monday, February 18, 1985. It was the 40th anniversary of the flag-raising on the island of Iwo Jima during World War II. Ironically, one of the few contents of the building to survive the fire was a bronze model of the famous statue of that event.

Callaghan Hall was originally used as a World War II military building at Camp Stoneman in Pittsburg. It was moved to the Berkeley campus in 1947 and was named in honor of Admiral Daniel Judson Callaghan, a former officer and faculty member in the Naval ROTC program on campus and a casualty in World War II.

The three-alarm fire began at 3:21 A.M. and was brought under control by 4:00 A.M., although the ruins were still smoking at mid-day. Eight City of Berkeley Fire Department engines and 28 firefighters fought the fire. The blaze completely destroyed and collapsed the interior of the building, leaving only portions of the exterior walls standing.

At the time of the fire the building was occupied by the campus Naval and Air Force ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) programs. Displaced by the fire were an estimated 22 faculty members, instructors, and staff with offices in the building and 280 students enrolled in the program. The Army ROTC program's facilities survived, since they were quartered in nearby Harmon Gym.

The fire was not the first attempt to destroy Callaghan Hall by arson. Campus Vietnam War protests focused on the building in the 1960s, and in 1969, the front of the building was damaged by a firebomb. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that "in 1968, an unknown bomber set an explosive that ripped apart the main entrance of the ROTC headquarters. For protection, Callaghan Hall had been reinforced with a fire retardant wall, steel doors and wire mesh over its windows" (February 19, 1985). In December, 1984, just two months before the disastrous final fire, a device described by police as an undetonated Molotov cocktail was found lying on the ground at the rear of the building.

In addition to departmental administrative and academic records and equipment, the 1985 fire destroyed a library and museum room in the building dedicated to Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, who established the NROTC program on the Berkeley campus in 1926 and went on to military fame as one of the senior commanders in the Pacific during World War II; after the war, Nimitz also served as a UC Regent from 1948 to 1958. The room was used as a study and social center by NROTC students and contained Nimitz memorabilia and an archive of his personal papers, as well as one of only two complete sets of the *Naval Proceedings* journal; all was lost in the fire.

The motivation for the fire and the identity of those responsible remain a mystery. No major or recent protests against the on-campus military science programs preceded the fire, although later that year objections to ROTC on campus were once again on the rise, and a series of demonstrations and forums took place.

Fears of some ROTC cadets that the program would be ended at Berkeley because of the fire proved unfounded, but the fire did eventually end a half-century of a separate ROTC

building on the Berkeley campus. The site was cleared and portable buildings were brought in to serve as new quarters by August 1985 and were informally referred to by their occupants and users as the “temporary ROTC trailer park.”

Nina Council, a now-retired University staff member who worked as one of the administrative support staff at the NROTC program, says that the reconstruction of records was a daunting task. “I never had a break. Everything was destroyed.” Every file and record, “every last diskette” was gone. “We had to redo every single student health record, every student file.” After the fire, “there was a strong feeling of fear,” Council said. Periodic protests still targeted the building. “Three different times we had to evacuate the building because people were throwing rocks and pounding on the walls.”*

Now, all the campus ROTC programs are located in Hearst Gymnasium. An American flag next to an unmarked glass door is the only hint that a military program is housed there. In late 1997, the portable buildings were removed from the old Callaghan site, ending a 50-year military education presence at that location.

* Nina Council, personal interview with Steven Finacom, September 18, 1997, Berkeley, California.

MEMORIES OF THE 1991 FIRE

Several accounts

“FIRE LEAVES CAMPUS, BUT NOT PEOPLE, UNSCATHED,” ran the headline from the *CalReport/Winter 1992* (a publication no longer in existence). Indeed, the firestorm of October 20, 1991, touched the lives of the entire campus community—a community which came together in the disaster’s wake to support the over 500 UC employees and students who lost their homes.

Chancellor Chang-Lin Tien wrote to each campus employee on October 28, 1991:

I want to express, on behalf of the entire campus community, the sadness we feel at the loss you have suffered from the recent fire. At times like this, the community can offer essential support to help make lives whole again. The University of California system and the Berkeley campus will provide whatever assistance we can to ease your burden. Enclosed is a listing of services that may be of help to you.

This listing included CARESERVICES, which contacted all directly affected faculty and staff several times during the year, offering group meetings and individual counseling. The Community Living Office gave assistance in finding housing, both temporary and permanent. Loan funds were made available, as was tax advice. Vice Chancellor Daniel Boggan, Jr.’s memo to “Deans, Directors, Department Chairs and Administrative Officers” conveyed the Chancellor’s authorization of administrative leave with pay and asked that “supervisors...be as understanding and flexible as possible...”

These are only a few examples of the immediate and compassionate response. It would be impossible to document all, or mention each individual, which in itself speaks volumes! Below are three different memories of October 20, 1991, by members of the editorial board. *G.L.*

Editor’s note: The author of the above lost her house in the fire.



Photograph by Ron Delany.

Fire Memories One

For years a phrase from a book by historical novelist Mary Renault has stuck in my mind: "Disaster came to us unlooked for, out of a clear noonday sky." On October 20, 1991, in Berkeley and Oakland, disaster was like that.

I was on College Avenue near Dwight Way that morning, and a friend and I both remarked on the unusual weather. It was sunny, warm and dry, although the sunlight had a faintly odd cast. A slight wind was picking up from the northeast, down from the hills, and desiccated sycamore and elm leaves were skittering along the pavement with an audible crackle.

In Berkeley, with its morning fogs and prevailing westerly breezes, this sort of weather sticks in your mind. If disaster follows, you will remember it forever.

Oddly enough, I ended up that morning at Ghirardelli Square—a place I rarely visit. Not a breath of moisture or wisp of fog was in the air along the San Francisco waterfront. Browsing inside a store, I noticed that the quality of light was changing. Outside, the sun had turned brassy. There was a high brownish pall spreading rapidly from the East Bay.

Driving back to Berkeley via the Golden Gate and San Rafael bridges presented a surreal sight. Tranquil Berkeley basked under a cloudless sky, against a backdrop of enormous, vividly malignant smoke clouds boiling away to the southwest for miles.

Although the most publicized image from this side of the conflagration is of a huge, cube-shaped house that resisted fire for quite some time, while standing on my own roof looking up Russell Street, my clearest memory is watching a long, low house burn from south to north. The fire took it as neatly and evenly as a gentle wave lapping up a beach. First it was untouched, just beyond the edge of the fire. Fifteen minutes later the southern wall was ablaze. Half an hour from the beginning the fire had fastidiously burned to the middle of the house, but the rooms on the north end could still be seen untouched, through binoculars. Finally, it was completely wiped away.

For the first and only time I had the experience of seriously contemplating what I would take with me in a disaster, and I encountered the odd combination of mental clarity and paralysis that many people seem to feel at such a moment. Looking around my home, crowded with possessions, I literally could not think of a single item that was essential to save. Finally, I decided to write it all off, if the fire came; it could all go, with the possible exception of my computer.

Unlike disaster films, real disasters have no convenient and definitive end. The fire day ended with the fire still burning, although it now seemed as if it wouldn't spread much further; uncontrolled. The next day, the ruins still smoked.

My university life was affected in one direct way by the fire. I had been at work on the University's project to develop faculty housing in central Berkeley. The campus had just taken possession of the empty Presentation High School building which was going to be converted to housing. The day after the fire, the private Bentley School in the Oakland hills inquired about using the vacant building, and we were immediately at work figuring out arrangements and logistics. The Bentley School had been partially burned, and partially wrecked by smoke and water damage and many of the teachers and students had lost their homes nearby. But only days after the fire, teachers and parents arrived at the Presentation campus, decorated classrooms, and moved the students in to resume their regular academic program, an astonishing act of resilience in the face of disaster. They stayed for several months, while their own campus was rebuilt.

In the days after, one memory stands out in my mind. I had been grocery shopping at the Claremont Safeway in Oakland. Heading home in the dusk along College Avenue, I saw a long line of fire engines, sirens silent but lights blinking, heading south in a convoy. There

were dozens of engines of different types, labeled with fire district names from Monterey to Santa Clara. As they passed, I felt overwhelmed. These were all people who had come a great distance to save Berkeley and Oakland. I thought I should be doing something, but applauding inside a car seemed rather pointless, and honking the horn would have been tinny and perhaps misconstrued by drivers in front. So I just waited in silence while they drove into the Indian Summer night. *S.F.*



Photograph by Peg Skorpinski.

Fire Memories Two

We've lived for 30 years on Roble Road which lies between Tunnel Road and Chabot Road, within a half mile of the Claremont Hotel. Our house was built in 1925 by the Galloway family whose house on the Northside was burnt down in 1923. On that Sunday I turned down the idea of being out in the sun as it was too hot and windy and retired to the shade of the living room to watch the football game. At about the time I noticed that the outdoors had become sort of orange in color, my husband Bob, heard about the fire first on the upstairs radio and then out on the street where the neighbors were gathering to discuss the situation and look up into the hills to the east.

Sometime later—half an hour?—he ran in to say that someone had driven down Roble Road yelling, "Get out! Get out!" We both grabbed things: I, the passports and some overnight clothes and one sleeping bag; he, three paintings and some family photographs. We urged our

son Robert, indolent on a Sunday morning, to get dressed, and we got in the car. Which way to go? I assumed that Tunnel Road would be blocked by traffic so we started for Chabot Road and Oakland but trees were on fire at that end. We turned around and went back to Tunnel and down into Berkeley to our old neighborhood on Oakvale Avenue where a sort of old-home-week was taking place as other escapees converged for about two hours until we were all told to leave.

Meanwhile, we put in the first of many positional calls to our other children who happened to be together in upstate New York. At our Oakvale friends' house we watched the fire, now on television, alternately on the screen and out of the window.

Stopping at the Safeway to pick up toothbrushes, we went to campus, a calm and strangely smokeless place, and let ourselves into South Hall Annex to put the cold drinks and TV dinners into the fridge. Calling the Women's Faculty Club got us a room for the night—two beds and a place for the sleeping bag; after a Telegraph Avenue supper, we went back to the Club's TV set to watch the replay of the flames and listen to the stories of those who had fled burning homes. Our Oakvale hosts had set out for their daughter's home in

Petaluma but decided to stop at Trader Vic's for dinner. Then they went home.

The next morning I called our number, the answering machine answered, and later that day we saw from the police lines on Tunnel Road that our redwood trees were unscathed; all in the end that we suffered were a couple of scorched pine trees and the sad sight of the ashes of our neighbors' books blown across our garden. My sharpest picture of those hours of anxiety is of something I didn't really see: our son and daughter, their children and spouses gone to bed, blankets around their shoulders, in front of the TV in Mt. Morris, New York, watching the world of their childhood burn. *C.B.*

Fire Memories Three

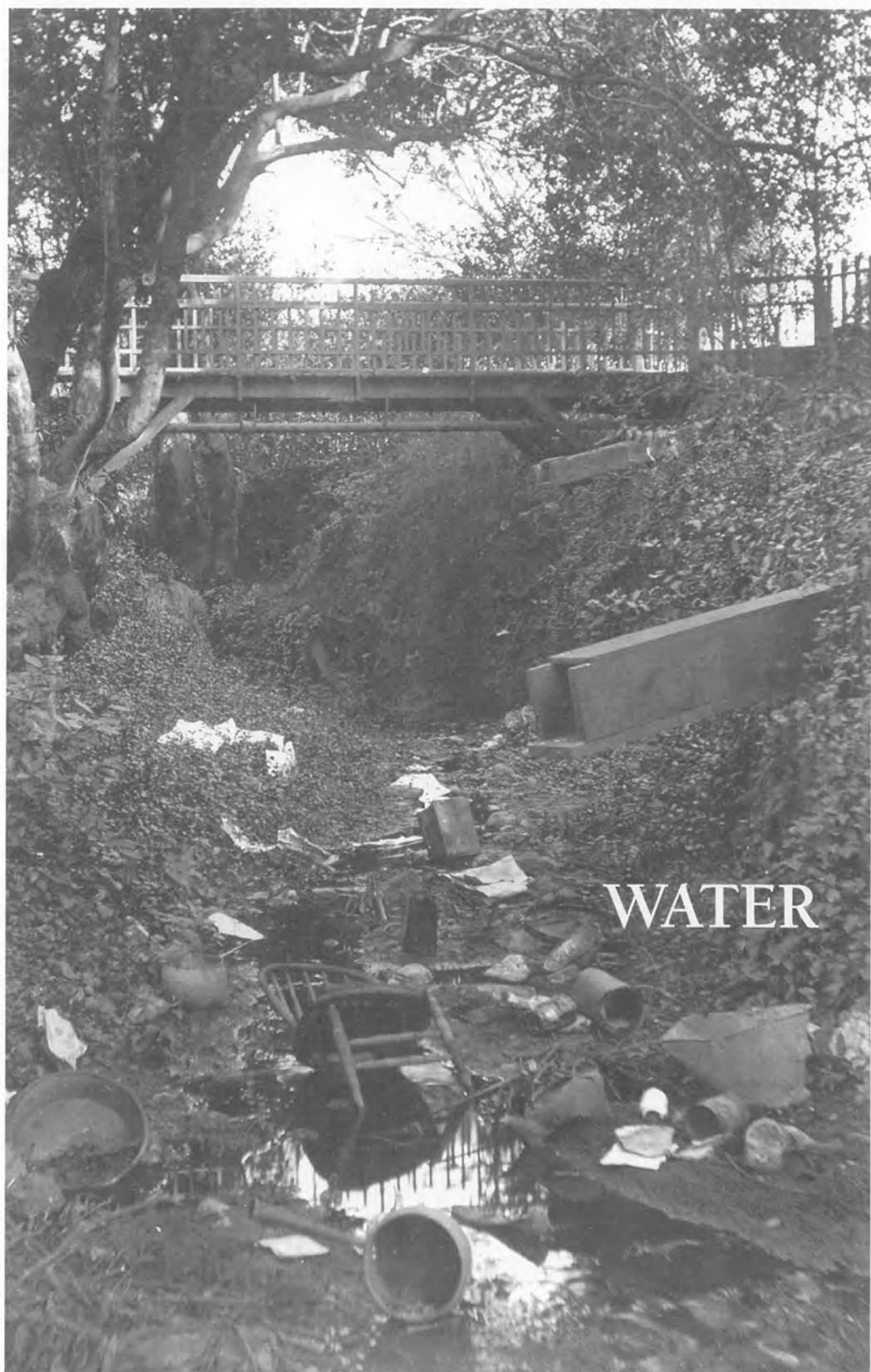
It was a warm morning; a brisk wind was blowing up the hill! An inveterate backpacker, I found this a little disquieting. Although I had promised my neighbor that I would join a golfing foursome, I had plenty of school work to do. (Golf, as far as I am concerned, is for exercise, something my play does not belie.) Early in the morning we had jointly decided that we did *not* like the weather; hence, I was jolted into reality when my neighbor walked in at 10:50 a.m. and said: "What is that?"

I turned, and looking northward, saw a large column of grayish white smoke. The signs were ominous! My phone call to 911 elicited the response: "The fire has been reported; we have a unit up there now!" "A unit," I blurted out, "you have a four-alarm fire right now!" (Trout-fishing trips with my father during my youth had introduced me to the seriousness of forest fires.) Within thirty minutes, what appeared to be a 200-foot wall of flames extended more than a mile to the north; transformers began to explode. So did the crowns of Monterey pines that dotted the East Bay hillsides. By 12:15 p.m., these were exploding and scattering their embers every thirty seconds.

I climbed onto my roof and sprayed it with water, which was an entirely futile gesture (one feels compelled to do something), drove my truck to a parking space in Montclair, and somehow ran the half mile back home. At 1:05 p.m., I said to my neighbor: "Put your dog in your car, I'm getting in mine, and we are 'out of here!'" By then, all lanes of the Warren Freeway were headed away from the fire.

Having no idea if my house had survived, the following day I wended my way through back yards and blocked roads to my street. Ascending the crest, I could not bear to look to the right. In front of me it looked like a scene from the moon. Bare and stark fireplaces and foundations, burned-out automobiles, and charred trees were the only things in sight. Small clouds of smoke arose from a host of smoldering ruins! Marshalling as much courage as possible, I looked to the right and saw the house that my grandfather had built in 1922. It was one of only seven that had survived on the west side of the street for more than a mile in each direction.

By 1997, more than seventy percent of the destroyed dwellings in my neighborhood had been replaced. There have been massive changes, however. Formerly modest houses had nestled among evergreen trees; the vast majority were Monterey pines beyond their functional lifetime. Now massive structures that allow little room for a tree or a bush crowd the hillsides. Small wonder that deer, raccoons, squirrels, skunks, an occasional possum, and birds in great abundance regularly—and happily—invade my property *R.P.*



WATER

Strawberry Creek. *Courtesy of University Archives.*

THE STRAWBERRY CREEK FLOOD OF 1962

Steven Finacom

RELIABLE ACCESS to a year-round water supply was one of the principal reasons the private College of California, followed by the University of California, adopted rural Berkeley as a campus site. The College was able to secure land along the banks of Strawberry Creek, as well as rights to much of the Strawberry Canyon watershed in the hills above campus.

The first physical development on the campus site was not a building, but construction of a system of water pipes and check dams by the College of California. When this was largely completed, the College celebrated by opening the taps on the campus grounds and letting streams of the impounded water fountain into the air to the delight of picnickers and dignitaries who had come to see this marvel in the hinterlands.

Since those days, Strawberry Creek has changed to a largely aesthetic amenity. The University now draws its water from the Sierra Nevada, through the pipes of the East Bay Municipal Utility District. Strawberry Creek is valued mainly for its picturesque character on campus and opportunities for ecological research along its banks, particularly in the undeveloped canyon. The two-branched stream gently trickling through campus attracts dogs, wading children, picnickers and sunbathers to its banks and pools.

Sometimes, however, the University's cup runneth over.

As far back as the nineteenth century the creek would flood during heavy rainstorms. Just after the turn of this century there are press mentions of plans to reinforce critical points along the bank—particularly the sharp bend just upstream of Sather Gate—with rock and plantings. In more recent decades, the creek has been significantly reshaped, with concrete and stone retaining walls, artificial waterfalls, and even an environmentally friendly “crib wall” of logs at one point near Stephens Hall.

Most of these flood control measures came about because of the events of the second week of October, 1962.

Eleven inches of rain produced the most memorable creek flood in campus history. Saturday brought the worst flooding and damage. By midday, the south branch of the creek was a raging torrent from Strawberry Canyon to its entrance into the culvert at the western campus boundary under downtown Berkeley. At several points it poured over its banks, inundating roads, pathways, and campus construction sites. “Mud, water, and debris from the recent rain caused an estimated \$100,000 damage to the University and hardest hit locations will not be restored until April.”¹

Three major buildings were under construction: Barrows Hall, Wurster Hall (then called simply the Environmental Design Building) and Etcheverry Hall. Building excavations had been pumped out to clear the accumulated runoff from the week, but the Saturday flooding filled them up again. Some of the worst damage occurred at the Etcheverry Hall site, where a temporary retaining wall and part of Le Roy Avenue collapsed into the excavation. The Wurster Hall excavation became an instant lake and “four rivers of mud flowed...down toward half-completed Barrows Hall.”²

Mud was the main problem at the eastern end of the campus as well. The Poultry Husbandry area, then an active research facility, was flooded with up to three feet of mud in the occupied chicken coops, and part of one building collapsed.



During the dry summer months, Strawberry Creek runs low enough to step across this small waterfall just upstream from Sather Gate. In this photo, the muddy torrent rises during a downpour on February 2, 1998, but to nowhere near 1962. *Photograph by author.*

Just downhill, the entrance of the Strawberry Creek culvert under the Strawberry Canyon Recreation Area and Haas Clubhouse was too small to take the flash of water barreling down the canyon. "The pool deck was buried under six inches of mud. Chairs and tables were upturned and covered with slime. The pool itself was filled with muddy water and debris.... Tractors and bulldozers operated by a 40-man crew have been working steadily at Strawberry Canyon since Friday." Photographs two days later showed both pools still filled with mud. Mud slides further up the canyon and flooding had also closed roads.³

Below Memorial Stadium, the mud besieged low-lying Cowell Hospital (where the Haas School of Business complex now stands) and International House. "A river several inches deep flowed across the I House ground floor and out the front door."⁴

Male students living at Bowles Hall and the student co-op at Oxford Hall turned

out to pile sandbags around Cowell Hospital on Saturday "to prevent flooding of radioactive material in the new wing."⁵ Gayley Road, adjacent to Cowell Hospital, was closed by mud. Further west on campus the floodwaters backed up at Sather Gate.

"By noon Saturday, the Sather Gate area was almost impassible, with muddy water pouring down from various construction projects and from an overflowing Strawberry Creek. The water pouring down past Sather Gate flowed back into Strawberry Creek or into the Student Union basement. In both places it created new havoc. Strawberry Creek overflowed its banks below Dwinelle Hall, with the flood reaching a width of twenty feet and a depth of three feet near the Eucalyptus Grove. It roared down to the western edge of the campus, covering Center Street with 10 inches of water."⁶

Midway along this maelstrom at the Student Center complex, water poured into the underground garage, and besieged the Student Musical Activities offices in the basement of what is now the Chavez Center. Students from the Cal Band and singing groups piled sand-

bags to prevent flooding.

The storm also toppled a number of trees on the campus, including a pine that fell across the Haviland Hall parking lot. In the aftermath of the flooding, the campus undertook a considerable amount of construction work to reshape the creek bed and to build retaining walls along the banks. Heavy rains in the early 1980s successfully tested the precautions, but the campus has not seen another flood of the same magnitude as that of 1962.

NOTES

- 1 "Storm Damages Near \$100,000", *Daily Californian*, October 16, 1962.
- 2 "Rain Submerges Most of Campus", *Daily Californian*, October 15, 1962.
- 3 *Daily Californian*, October 16, 1962.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 *Daily Californian*, October 15, 1962.

A WATERY WORLD

J. R. K. Kantor

IT RAINED, HARD, ALL DAY on Friday the twelfth of October, 1962, and the drive across the Bay Bridge that evening to attend the San Francisco Opera performance of *Der Rosenkavalier* was not an easy one. Exiting the Opera House four hours later with the voice of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf still sounding in my ears, I faced an even harder downpour and a crawl back on the bridge to Berkeley.

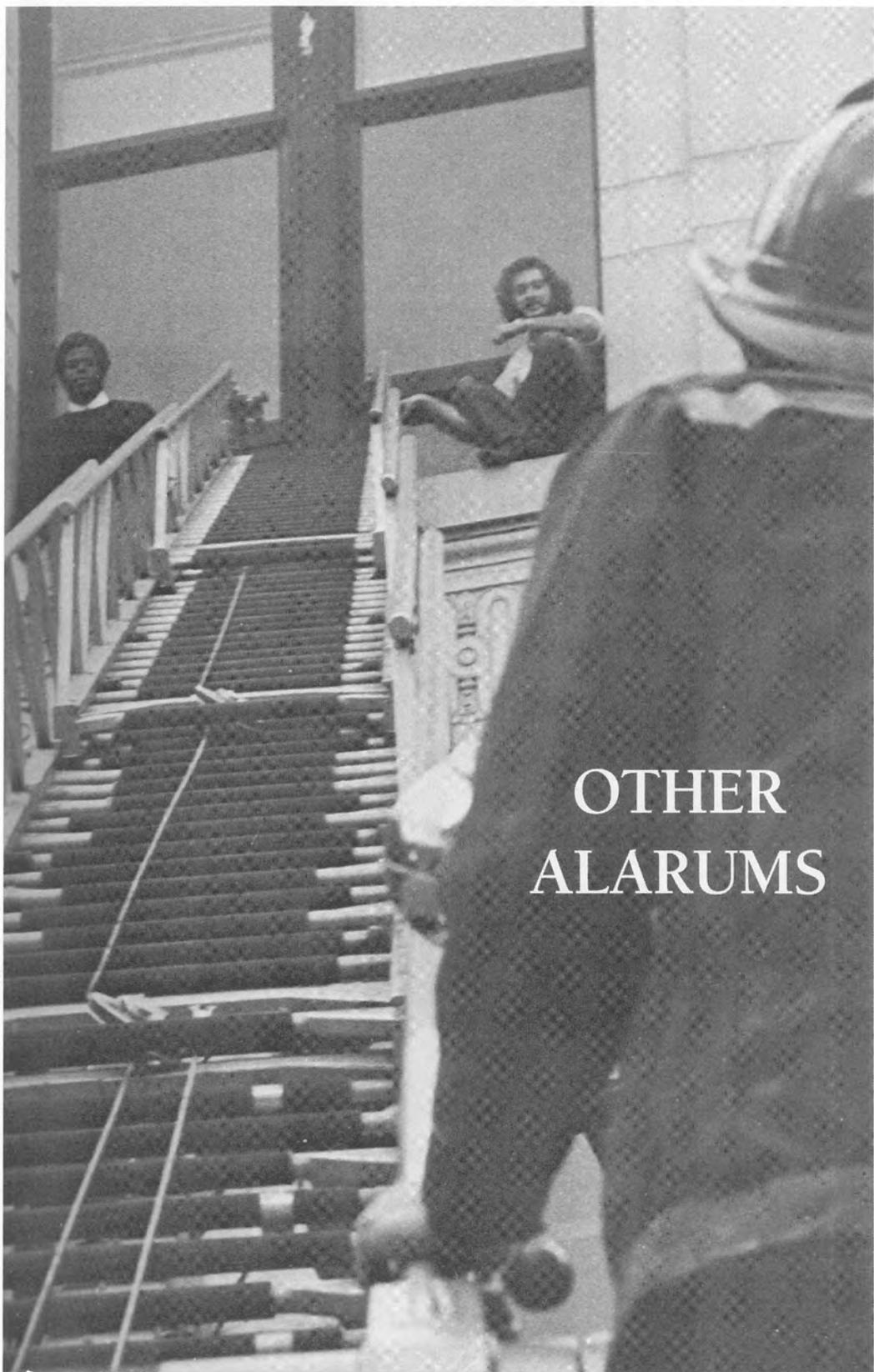
Down came the rain all through the night, and by Saturday noon there were reports of trees down, roads closed. Due at The Bancroft Library at one o'clock I donned my U.S. Infantry boots, then almost ten years old, and made my way down Panoramic Way onto the campus, arriving rather soaked at the library. Four hours later, the rain still drenching the sodden earth, I climbed back up the hill. Fortunately, there were no electrical outages so one at least had warmth and comfort once indoors again.

Sunday was to be a special day, for the San Francisco Opera was coming to the Hearst Greek Theatre for a performance of Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, and lo! the morning came upon us without rain. By noon the sun was shining and the decision had been made to present the opera, without scenery and without costumes. Hordes of people arrived at the Greek, carrying baskets of food and blankets to place on the wet grass, and there was truly a celebratory atmosphere that afternoon. As though Noah's ark had landed in the Berkeley Hills.



Water cascaded through the entire building and down the front steps of International House, October 1962. *Courtesy of International House.*

When classes resumed on Monday morning the world did not look the same: a great cascade of mud which had swept down from Strawberry Canyon and had poured through International House was to be seen on the front steps of that building on Piedmont Avenue. It would be many months before the damage in the canyon itself would be mended; the creek was undergrounded so that it would not again force its way into the swimming pools, filling them with mud. Closer to home here on the Hill, the watercress which had grown wild for decades along the Jordan Trail disappeared, buried under the tons of earth that had been swept down from above.



OTHER
ALARUMS

Evacuation of Doe Library, March 9, 1970. *1970 Blue and Gold*.

A GAME TOO GOOD TO LOSE

Roberta J. Park

ON APRIL 18, 1906, the peninsula south of San Francisco was rocked by a series of violent tremors. The following day the Stanford Advisory Board suspended classes for the remainder of the semester. Although damage on the Berkeley campus was far less severe, athletic and other extracurricular events were curtailed. One month earlier an event had occurred that many students and alumni considered an “athletic disaster.” A joint University of California-Stanford University Committee had voted to replace American football with English rugby!

What led to this decision? How was it received? What were the consequences for sports at Berkeley and on the West Coast?¹

America’s first “intercollegiate” football match took place in 1869 when Rutgers defeated Princeton by six goals to four. The game was “soccer” (Association Football). That same year the University of California began classes in the city of Oakland. Following the move to Berkeley in 1873, students played occasional interclass matches. A University “fifteen” was formed in 1882; in 1886 the University of California first played the eleven-man American game. Geographically remote from such East Coast athletic leaders as Harvard and Yale—and from programs emerging at Midwestern universities—Berkeley students had to be content with games against local clubs, small colleges, and high schools until Stanford University opened in 1891. The first Cal-Stanford “Big Game,” held in San Francisco on March 19, 1892, was greeted with great enthusiasm.²



The Big Game of November 14, 1914, California Field. In the background, at the left, is the Spreckels Physiological Laboratory. *Courtesy of University Archives.*

American football (which rapidly evolved from English rugby after McGill University played Harvard in 1874) was very different from the form of the game to be seen at the 100th Big Game. “Mass momentum plays” and the “flying wedge” (a compact V-shaped wall of players protecting the ball-carrier) dominated. The forward pass (difficult to execute with the larger rugby ball) was first successfully used in the 1913 Army-Notre Dame game. Although some players wore leather nose and ear guards, equipment was wholly inadequate. Collisions between unprotected bodies resulted in serious injuries (concussions, fractured vertebrae, ruptured spleens, etc.) and numerous deaths.³ In 1905, nineteen were reported in major newspapers—others in various medical journals!⁴



Lincoln Beechey flies over the Big Game, 1914, with unfinished Campanile in the background. *Courtesy of University Archives.*

The situation was complicated by the widespread use of “tramp athletes” (players who offered their services for a price); a growing commercialization; and what many believed was the abdication of an “amateur” in favor of a “professional” ethos in college sport. The Football Rules Committee was dominated by Walter Camp (Yale’s football mentor), a major force in crafting the American game and deeply interested in its persistence. The absence of even a modestly effective regulating body made the situation worse.⁵ (The N.C.A.A. was formed in 1906 in response to such concerns.) Some individuals considered the “moral evils” of football and the excesses associated with the game to be far more serious than the physical dangers.

Initially, both Cal and Stanford had obtained their coaches for the Big Game (the only contest of consequence) from Eastern colleges.⁶ In 1900, student leaders entered into a five-year agreement that bound each institution to using only those men who had graduated from the respective universities (the “graduate coach”). A new agreement, enacted in early 1905, permitted full latitude in the selection of coaches.⁷ (Cal first hired J. W. Knibbs, captain of the Dartmouth varsity; Stanford engaged James F. Lanagan, a former Stanford varsity baseball player, who coached through the 1914 season.) The November 11, 1905 Big Game was characterized as both a contest for football supremacy of the Pacific Coast and a test of what was then called “the graduate vs. professional coaching system.” Victory went to Stanford by a score of 12-5.

Among those who had become deeply concerned about “the football problem” were Benjamin Ide Wheeler and David Starr Jordan, presidents of the University of California and Stanford University. Each man endorsed “good, clean athletics.” (Wheeler had rowed and played baseball while an undergraduate at Brown University; Jordan had played baseball at Cornell.) In the early 1900s, each became convinced that the current situation was unacceptable. At the November 1905 convention of the Association of State University Presidents the need for football reform was widely discussed. Upon his return from these meetings, Wheeler addressed the Berkeley student body and suggested that football should be abandoned in favor of “soccer.” (His remarks were circulated in the *New York Tribune*, *Boston Globe*, and other newspapers.)⁸ Two days later (November 25), a player was killed in the New York University vs. Union College game. Wheeler was now adamant; “The game

of football must be made over or go."⁹

Berkeley's Academic Council declared its unwillingness to submit to a game that was governed by the Rules Committee, urged the creation of a new set of rules for the California-Stanford contest, and turned the matter over to the Faculty Committee on Athletics (chaired by mathematics professor George C. Edwards). Wheeler and Jordan met with their respective athletic committees on December 11; and a proposal to replace American football with English rugby ensued.¹⁰

Over the next few months, the fate of American football (at the time viewed as wholly a "college" game) was intensely debated in private and in the public press. Wheeler declared his views in a brief article entitled "Shall Football Be Ended or Mended?" (Appearing first in the January 1906 *American Review of Reviews*, this was reprinted in Wheeler's autobiography, *The Abundant Life*.) The President of the University of California cast his lot with "Ended," holding that: "There is nothing final or ideal about the present form of the game, nor does it exist by an authority descending out of Sinai."¹¹

As few individuals on the West Coast had any familiarity with rugby, William Greer Harrison (President of the Olympic Club) helped ensure that a New Zealand rugby team currently touring Great Britain and Ireland would pass through San Francisco on its way home. Exhibition matches against a team from British Columbia were arranged. In spite of overwhelming victories for the New Zealanders (43-6 and 65-6), local newspapers expressed enthusiasm for the "dazzling play" and openness of rugby.¹²

Players, former players and many alumni at the two universities were *not* convinced! The *Daily Palo Alto* rejected what it called "a mongrel form" of football. The *Daily Californian* opposed any radical change in the American game and railed against the March 20, 1906, decision to substitute rugby for football, blaming faculty pressure and the insistence of President Wheeler. Such efforts were in vain.¹³ In early fall, the University of California and Stanford University varsities began to practice *rugby* in anticipation of the 1906 Big Game.

The influence of the state's two largest universities was considerable but by no means absolute. The College of Santa Clara, St. Mary's College, St. Ignatius, the University of the Pacific, and the U.C. agricultural branch at Davis switched to rugby, as did a number of high schools, especially those closest to Stanford and Cal. (American football remained more widespread in the southern part of the state.) The University of Nevada (which also converted to rugby in 1906), the Olympic Club, and various rugby clubs that were formed (e.g., Titans, Barbarians), comprised a part of Cal's annual schedule. The University of Southern California came north to play at Berkeley in 1910.

To increase interest and improve local play, efforts were made to arrange visits from Australian, New Zealand, and British teams. For several years the British Columbia Rugby Union invited the winner of the California-Stanford Big Game north for matches. (The winner of the contests was awarded the perpetual Cooper-Keith Trophy.) In 1909, the Australian Wallabies played a series of matches in the Bay Area on their way home from England and Wales. The following year a squad of twenty-three students (from the University of California, University of Nevada, and Stanford University) undertook a 16,000-mile rugby tour of Australia and New Zealand.¹⁴ The Waratahs (Australia) visited in 1912. The New Zealand All-Blacks, who visited in 1913, overwhelmed the Stanford and California teams and culminated their tour on California Field with a 51-3 victory over an "All-American" squad made up of men from the Stanford, California, and the University of Santa Clara varsities, the Olympic Club, the Titans, the Barbarians, and the Los Angeles Athletic Club.¹⁵

Between 1906 and 1914, the Big Game attracted large and enthusiastic crowds, although attendance at other matches was limited. However, student athletic leaders at the Univer-



"The signals rattle, a pigskin thud—they're down"—

American Football's Back!

"It's Root, Hog, or Die"

All Classes Celebrate

1866 - 1915

On the eve of the Big Game—California versus Washington

Joint Football Banquet

An Old-Time Good Time
Save the Date

Friday Night, November 5

Q *A Great Mob*
A Square Meal
Lots of Song and Jubilation
A Battery of Twenty One-minute Speeches

Commercial Club, San Francisco

Top Floor, Merchants Exchange

Two Dollars a Plate

Under the auspices of the Association of Alumni Classes

EDWARDS-BACHENFREY STAFF CO., S. F.

Return of American football; a poster for the Big Game of 1916, played with the University of Washington. Stanford had not readopted American football in time for the 1916 game. Courtesy of University Archives.

sity of California had become committed to returning to American football. Their reasons were summarized by a Berkeley student: (1) the forward pass, end runs, and changes in the rules had made the American game safer and more interesting; (2) the University of California was eager to extend its athletic connections to other parts of the country (a sentiment that had been growing since the track team's successful Eastern tour in 1895); (3) students wanted to know that their institution was "playing an American game the same as other great American universities."¹⁶

Stanford, which had won five of the nine Big Games between 1906 and 1914 (the 1912 game was a 3-3 tie), was opposed to any change. Early in 1915, the Berkeley student-body directed the A.S.U.C.'s Intercollegiate Athletic Committee to insist upon the "freshman eligibility" rule (which barred first year students from varsity games) when promulgating any new five-year pact between the two schools. The reason given was to bring Cal into line with other major universities. But, as the *Daily Palo Alto* and local newspapers speculated, the primary motivation was to return to American football.¹⁷ (Informal discussions with the University of Washington had already occurred.)

Cal and Stanford failed to negotiate a new athletic pact but settled for a "gentleman's agreement" whereby competitions in baseball, track, and sports other than "football" might continue. Wheeler was dismayed by the official break between the two universities, and wrote to Stanford's Acting President John C. Branner: "I care more for this than the mere outward form of intercollegiate sport."¹⁸ Prior to leaving for a series of meetings, Wheeler informed his secretary that if no resolution could be achieved he was to permit the Executive Committee of the A.S.U.C. (which governed athletics) to proceed with arrangements to play American football in 1915. The stage was set for football's return!

Two matches were arranged against the University of Washington. In the initial contest, the University of California (which had not played the American game for nine years) suffered an overwhelming 72-0 defeat. Nonetheless, both the *Daily Californian* and local sports fans were jubilant. A few weeks later the A.S.U.C. seemed vindicated—Cal lost its second game with Washington by the close score of 13-6!¹⁹ Between 1915 and 1918, Cal's "Big Game" was with the University of Washington; Stanford continued to play rugby, choosing the University of Santa Clara for its "Big Game."²⁰

Interest in restoring the Cal-Stanford Big Game had reached major proportions by 1917. The return of this widely popular annual event was accelerated by the disaster of World War I. As part of its efforts to mobilize men, the War Department established Students' Army Training Corps (S.A.T.C.) on various college campuses. Stanford was named S.A.T.C. headquarters for California, Nevada, and Utah; and the athletic program was placed under the campus military contingent, which included officers who were Berkeley graduates. "Football" not rugby was deemed the appropriate sport to instill the spirit needed by the fighting man. Renewed relationships in American football were facilitated by the November 1918 campaign of the United War Work Fund. The A.S.U.C. president issued an invitation to play a benefit match, the proceeds from which would be donated to the Fund. As an incentive, Cal agreed to a rugby match in Palo Alto early in 1919, provided rugby would be henceforth designated a "minor" sport.²¹

With the benefit of its three years of playing the American game, Cal overwhelmed Stanford by a score of 67-0 in the late November 1918 match, which received in the local press almost as much attention as had the armistice a week earlier.²² (Disagreements ensued regarding whether this 1918 contest should be included in the Cal-Stanford standings.) A year later (November 22, 1919) the University of California and Stanford University played their first "official" game of American football since 1905. Students, alumni, and the sports-

loving public were ecstatic.²³ The close contest (14-10 to California) betokened decades of future intense football rivalries. For devotees of the “other” sport, the years between 1906 and 1915 did much to make the state of California the major center of rugby in the United States.

NOTES

- 1 This short account is derived from: Roberta J. Park, “From Football to Rugby—and Back, 1906-1919: The University of California-Stanford University Response to the ‘Football Crisis of 1905,’” *Journal of Sport History*, 11 (1984), 5-40.
- 2 Phil Weaver, Jr., “Inter-Collegiate Football on the Pacific Coast,” *Overland Monthly*, 21 (February 1893), 113-131.
- 3 For example, “Foot-Ball: The Killed and the Wounded,” *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (April 10, 1884), 358-359; “Foot-ball vs. Insurance,” *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (January 18, 1894), 76; “The Brutality of Foot-ball,” *Medical Record* (December 1, 1895), 695; “Football Casualties and Fatalities,” *Medical Record* (December 15, 1894), 753.
- 4 The December 3, 1905 [*Cincinnati*] *Commercial Tribune* headlined twenty-five killed including a Miss Bernadette Decke of Cumberland, Md.
- 5 Ronald A. Smith, *Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); John H. Moore, “Football’s Ugly Decades, 1893-1913,” *Smithsonian Journal of History*, 2 (Fall 1967), 49-68.
- 6 Ralph D. Paine, “The School and College World: View-Points from the Pacific Coast,” *Outing Magazine*, 47 (December 1905), 366-368.
- 7 *Daily Californian*, January 30, 1905 and February 15, 1905; *Daily Palo Alto*, January 30, 1905; *California Occident*, January 1905, 35.
- 8 For example, *Daily Californian*, November 24, 1905; *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 24, 1905; *Boston Evening Globe*, November 25, 1905; *New York Tribune*, November 27, 1905.
- 9 Wheeler, handwritten note to *Chicago Tribune*, n. d. (University Archives, University of California, Berkeley, Records of the Office of the President, 1905-1909).
- 10 These events were summarized as “The Football Situation” in *The University Chronicle*, 8:3 (March 1906), 296-299.
- 11 Benjamin Ide Wheeler, “Shall Football Be Ended or Mended?,” *American Monthly Review of Reviews*, 33 (1906), 72-73.
- 12 William G. Harrison, letter to Benjamin Ide Wheeler, December 5, 1905 (University Archives, Records of the Office of the President, 1905-1909); *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 11, 1906; *San Francisco Call*, February 11, 1906.
- 13 *Daily Californian*, February 12, 1906; *Daily Californian*, March 22, 1906; *Daily Palo Alto*, February 12, 1906.
- 14 *Stanford Alumnus*, September 1910, 10-11; *Stanford Quad*, 1910, 334-335.
- 15 *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 14, 1912; *California Alumni Weekly*, March 3, 1913.
- 16 A University of California student’s comments reported in the *Stanford Illustrated Review* (May 1916), 12-15.
- 17 *Daily Palo Alto*, January 8, 1915, January 12, 1915 and January 18, 1915; *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 15, 1915 and January 17, 1915.

- 18 Benjamin Ide Wheeler, letter to John C. Branner, June 3, 1915 (University Archives, The Stanford University Libraries).
- 19 *Daily Californian*, November 10, 1915, November 11, 1915, November 15, 1915 and December 2, 1915.
- 20 Accounts of annual Cal-Stanford "Big Games" may be found in several sources, as for example: Dan Brodie, *66 Years on the California Gridiron, 1882-1948* (Oakland, Calif.: Olympic Publishing Co., 1949); Nick Peters, *100 Years of Blue and Gold: A Pictorial History of California Football* (Virginia Beach, Va.: JCP Corp of Virginia, 1982); John T. Sullivan, *The Big Game: A Game-by-Game History of America's Greatest Football Rivalries* (New York: Leisure Press, 1983).
- 21 *Daily Palo Alto*, October 23, 1918 and November 8, 1918; *Daily Californian*, September 30, 1918, October 31, 1918 and January 22, 1919.
- 22 *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 26, 1918; *Oakland Tribune*, November 26, 1918; *San Francisco Call and Post*, December 11, 1918.
- 23 *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 23, 1919; *San Francisco Call and Post*, November 21, 1919; *Daily Californian*, November 21, 1919; *Daily Palo Alto*, December 2, 1919.

A PHOTO ESSAY ON CAMPUS DESTRUCTIONS

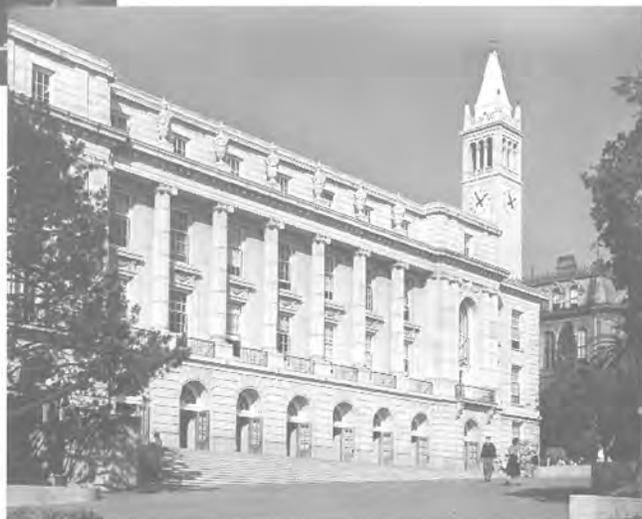
William Roberts

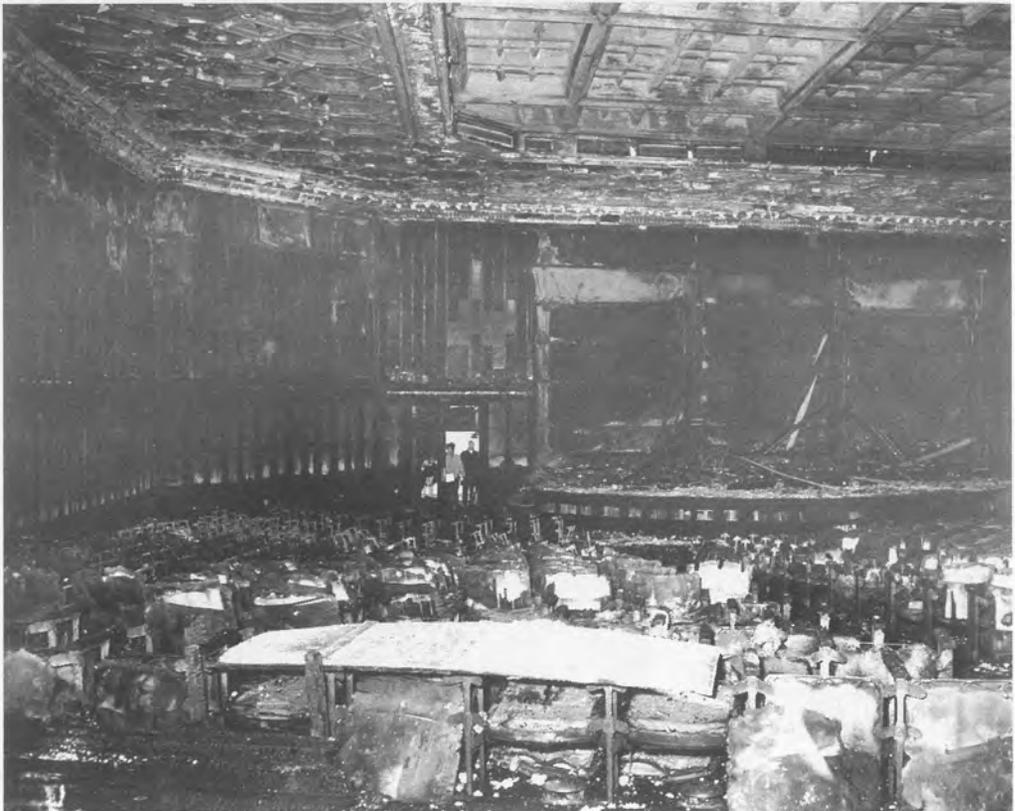
All photos from University Archives.



Wheeler Hall

On the evening of Monday, January 22, 1969, a late-working professor of English in Wheeler Hall heard a crackling noise, looked into the well housing Wheeler Auditorium and saw it full of flames. By 10 p.m. three alarms were in, and firefighters battled the blaze in an effort to save the historic auditorium. Wheeler Hall had been built in 1917 by John Galen Howard; the auditorium was the largest on campus for many years thereafter, and it was used for dramatic presentations and musical events, in addition to the more usual large class lectures. The intricately carved wooden ceiling was a prized legacy of Howard's campus architectural career. While the structure of the building was not compromised, the auditorium was a total loss.

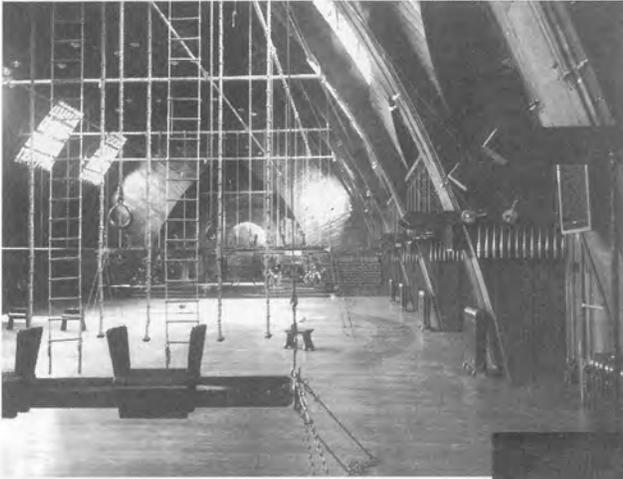






Hearst Hall

One of the early benefactions of Phoebe Apperson Hearst was to present Hearst Hall to the University for the use of women students. Mrs. Hearst had originally had the hall designed by Bernard Maybeck as a large reception hall; it stood next to her residence on Channing Way near Piedmont Avenue. After a few years, the building was moved to the campus, north of College and Bancroft; it served as a place for women students to gather as well as a place to exercise and participate in sports. Its destruction by fire in 1922 not only deprived the campus of an extremely unusual architectural landmark, it left women students without any facilities to call their own. The completion of Stephens Memorial Union in 1923 helped the social life of women on campus, but it was not until 1927 that Hearst Gymnasium for Women was built, a memorial by William Randolph Hearst to his mother.

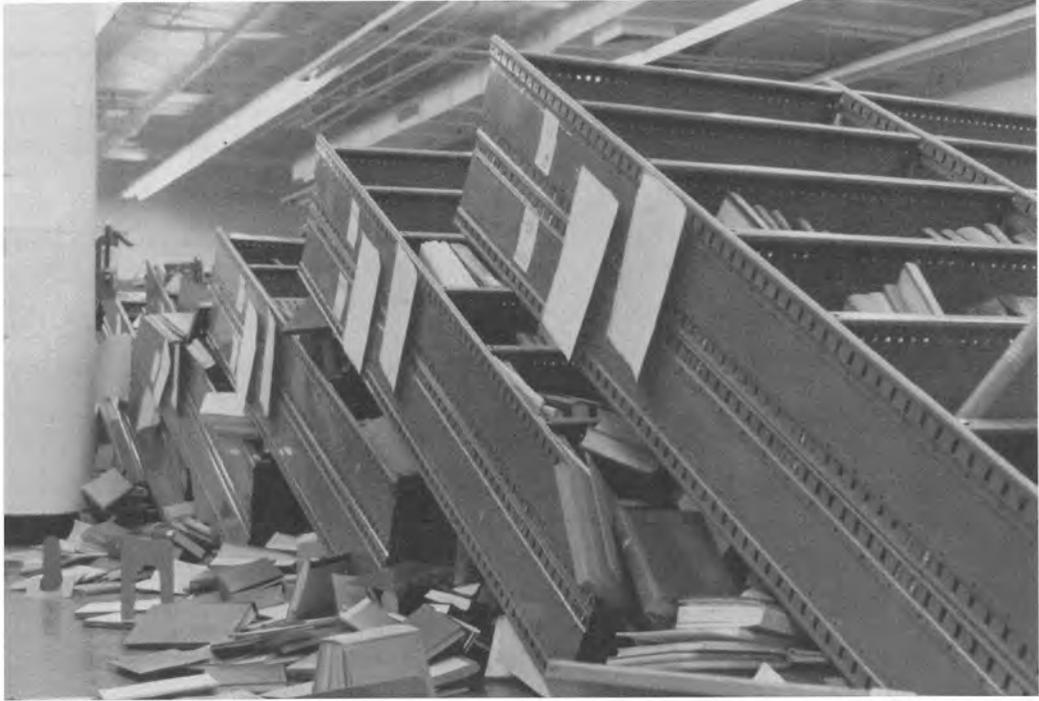


Doe Memorial Library

Late afternoon on Monday, March 9, 1970, a 3-alarm fire broke out in the first floor reading room in Doe Memorial Library, gutting the reading room, sending hundreds of people out of the building, and causing \$320,000 in damage. The fire came just before finals for the Winter Quarter, so the reading room was crowded with students. Miraculously no library materials were lost, due in part to the care with which firemen used water to combat the blaze, and only four people sustained minor injuries, primarily from smoke inhalation. It was later announced that arson was the cause of the fire; flammable liquid traces were discovered in a typing room adjacent to the reading room, although no one was ever accused of starting the fire. The building suffered no structural damage and reopened the next morning.







Biosciences Off-Campus Collection

At the time of the October 1989 earthquake, the Life Sciences Building was undergoing renovation and the Biosciences Library had moved into temporary quarters in Giannini Hall. A large portion of the Biosciences collection was in temporary storage at the Marchant Building on San Pablo Avenue, where some 45,000 volumes were hurled to the floor as 20 percent of the book stacks toppled over. It took almost three weeks to restore this storage facility to full operation. The Main Library at Berkeley survived the temblor with only minor plaster damage. The earthquake also affected other libraries in the San Francisco Bay Area: Stanford University Library and the San Francisco State University Library were particularly hard hit, and some services did not resume for months, while complete building renovations took much longer.





TREES OF DEATH

Steven Finacom

IT'S NOT JUST BUDGETS and buildings that might be falling in Berkeley.

Tranquil glades, venerable oaks, California bays arching over Strawberry Creek, and shady nooks lure the wanderer on through the less-developed parts of the Berkeley campus grounds.

Bucolic landscaping is usually, and rightfully, seen as a benign or benevolent element of a university setting. But in one corner of the campus an air of both actual and impending tragedy once drifted among the trees.

The western side of the current Haas School of Business complex was previously the front of Cowell Hospital, which housed the University Health Service. When Cowell Hospital was built, College Avenue ran in front of the main entrance. The siting and design of Cowell Hospital, Minor Hall and the Haas complex conform to the old line of the street, although its use as a public thoroughfare has long since vanished.

Where Cheit Hall now stands stairs ran up from the sidewalk to the main hospital entrance across a tranquil, sloping lawn with a variety of trees and a nice path for strolling.

Such was the scene on Monday, February 17, 1936, as Berkeley dripped and drained from two weeks of incessant storms. Let the *Daily Californian* from the next morning recite the grim tale:

Two hours after he had been crushed beneath the branches of a giant eucalyptus tree in front of Cowell Memorial Hospital, Prof. Robert P. Utter, 65, of the department of English died last night.

Utter was struck down beneath the toppling tree at 9:15 p.m. suffering a fractured skull, a broken right leg, and a broken elbow in the accident, according to Robert T. Legge, University physician.

Saturated with hundreds of pounds of rain water, the tree fell silently upon the professor who was taking his regular evening stroll. Roots loosened by the torrential rains of the past two weeks are held responsible for the tragedy. No warning of the impending accident was given.

Horrified at the spectacle, eye-witnesses rushed to the aid of the victim, but were unable to remove the tree from his body. Only after 15 minutes



The fatal tree? This photograph shows the west facade of Cowell Hospital about 1930. Two leaning eucalyptus trees grow prominently to the right of the main entrance, and one of them is likely the "huge eucalyptus" responsible for Professor Utter's unhappy demise half a decade after this photograph was taken. *Courtesy of University Health Services Archives.*

of arduous work was the Berkeley Fire Department able to extricate him. *

Professor Utter, a well-liked teacher, specialist in the English novel, and frequent contributor to national magazines such as *Harper's* and *The Atlantic Monthly*, was also an outdoorsman and Sierra mountain climbing and hiking enthusiast like many of the early members of the University's faculty.

He was the fourth member of the English Department faculty to die in relatively quick succession; the recently deceased included such early campus literary luminaries as Charles Mills Gayley, and Chauncey Wells. (Utter was also the second University professor killed in a tragic and unusual accident in less than a year; the previous spring Perham Nahl, a respected Professor of Art whose paintings still adorn the Faculty Club, was fatally injured while crossing a street in San Francisco by a car allegedly driven by a drunk driver.)

The freakish death of Professor Utter made such an impression on the campus that emeritus University Archivist Jim Kantor recalls being told the story when he arrived as a graduate student decades later. In the version of the story Kantor heard, Professor Utter was said to have paused for a fatal moment beneath the tree while searching his pocket for a match that his colleague had requested.

The death of Professor Utter probably can be dismissed as simply an accident at a random point on the campus, but another potentially deadly tree stood nearby. Three decades later, in a 1970s survey conducted by landscape students assessing "tree hazards" of the campus, a venerable Monterey pine on the lawn west of Cowell Hospital was documented as one of the most dangerous trees on the entire campus. Its top-heavy trunk drooped ominously to the southeast, and campus landscape architects used to point it out as a poster child of deferred landscape maintenance work in an era of tight budgets.

In the 1990s the Monterey pine finally fell—but to the contractor's chainsaw, not inclement weather. Construction of the Haas School of Business complex erased both Cowell Hospital and its landscaping. Now, Cheit Hall and the monumental southwestern stair approach to Haas spread their concrete where the trees stood—and there are only small saplings growing in the vicinity.



Professor Utter, the victim of the tree. Courtesy of University Archives.

by a drunk driver.)

* *Daily Californian*, "Falling Tree Kills Professor Utter," February 18, 1936, and "In Memoriam," editorial page, February 19, 1936.

WHERE WERE THE CAMPUS CHIEFS?

AS ARTICLES WERE SUBMITTED for this publication, an interesting question arose: was the chief executive of the Berkeley campus always out of town when natural disaster struck on or near the campus?

Certainly not, at least in the beginning. When the 1905 fire—so vividly described in the republished account above—threatened Berkeley, President Benjamin Ide Wheeler was on campus, and actually directed students to leave class and head for Strawberry Canyon and Panoramic Hill to help fight the fire.

In 1906, however, President Wheeler was en route to speak at the inauguration of the President of the University of Texas, at Austin, when the great earthquake and fire occurred.

In 1923, when fire swept down out of the north Berkeley Hills, President William Wallace Campbell was in Pasadena, attending a convention of the American Astronomical Society. Dean Walter Morris Hart was in charge at the Berkeley campus.

In 1991, when the Oakland/Berkeley hills firestorm struck, Chancellor Chang-Lin Tien was in Toronto, Canada, according to Assistant Chancellor John Cummins.

All three chief executives changed their plans and returned directly to Berkeley, once they learned of the disasters.

The 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake found Chancellor Ira Michael Heyman at home in his official residence, University House. However, it might have been better from a public relations standpoint if he had been off campus. The actual shaking of the earthquake on the campus was not severe, no major damage to the University occurred, and a *Daily Californian* reporter who reached Heyman by telephone at home shortly after the quake elicited an informal comment that the campus would continue to function normally.

In subsequent days, as the extent of the damage outside of Berkeley—including freeway collapses and the closing of the Bay Bridge—became clear and many faculty, staff, and students had difficulty getting to campus, Heyman was criticized for not officially closing the campus the day after the earthquake.

NEWS FROM THE REGIONAL ORAL HISTORY OFFICE

Germaine LaBerge and Ann Lage

RECENT INTERVIEWS ON THE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

DOCUMENTING THE HISTORY of the University of California has been a responsibility of the Regional Oral History Office since the office was established in 1954. The most recent oral history memoirs with Berkeley faculty, academic administrators, and alumni are listed below. The oral histories, both tapes and transcripts, are open to scholarly use in The Bancroft Library. Bound, indexed copies of the transcripts are available at cost. For the complete series list and lists of other university related oral histories documenting campus life, university administration, and alumni contributions to their communities, contact the Regional Oral History Office, 486 Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720-6000 (510-642-7395). Or visit the ROHO Web Page at:

<http://library.berkeley.edu/BANC/ROHO>

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Baker, William B. (in process). University Vice President, 1983-1997.

Blum, Henrik (in process). Professor of Public Health, 1966-1984.

Bowker, Albert "Sixth Chancellor, University of California, Berkeley, 1971-1980; Statistician, and National Leader in the Policies and Politics of Higher Education," 1995, 274 pp.

Brown, Delmer M. (in process). Professor of Japanese History, University of California, Berkeley, 1946-1977.

Esherick, Joseph, "An Architectural Practice in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1938-1996," 1996, 800 pp.

Frazer, William (in process). University Vice President, 1981-1991.

Gardner, David Pierpont, "A Life in Higher Education: Fifteenth President of the University of California, 1983-1992," 1997, 810 pp.

Heilbron, Louis, "Most of a Century: Law and Public Service, 1930s to 1990s," 1995, 397 pp.

Heyman, I. Michael (in process). Berkeley Chancellor, 1980-1990.

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Newman, Frank, "Professor of Law, University of California, Berkeley, 1946-present, Justice, California Supreme Court, 1977-1983," 1994, 336 pp. [Available through California State Archives]

Nyswander, Dorothy B., "Professor and Activist for Public Health Education in the Americas and Asia," (1946-1957), 1994, 318 pp.

Pitzer, Kenneth (in process). Professor of Chemistry, 1937-1961; 1971-1998.

Reeves, William, "Arbovirologist and Professor, UC Berkeley School of Public Health," (1946-1987), 1993, 686 pp.

Riasanovsky, Nicholas V., "Professor of Russian and European Intellectual History, University of California, Berkeley, 1957-1997."

Stampf, Kenneth M., "Historian of Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, University of California, Berkeley, 1946-1983."

Stern, Milton, "The Learning Society: Continuing Education at NYU, Michigan, and UC Berkeley, 1946-1991," 1993, 292 pp.

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Townes, Charles H., "A Life in Physics: Bell Telephone Laboratories and WWII, Columbia University and the Laser, MIT and Government Service; California and Research in Astrophysics," (UC 1967-present), 1994, 691 pp.

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Whinnery, John W., "Researcher and Educator in Electromagnetics, Microwaves, and Optoelectronics, 1935-1995; Dean of the College of Engineering, UC Berkeley, 1959-1963," 1996, 273 pp.

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Bridges, Robert L., (b. 1909) (in process). Attorney.

Broussard, Allen E., (1929-1996), "A California Supreme Court Justice Looks at Law and Society," 1997, 279 pp.

Haas, Walter A., Jr., (1916-1995), "Levi Strauss & Co. Executive, Bay Area Philanthropist, and Owner of the Oakland Athletics," 1995, 299 pp.

Patterson, Charles, (1925-1994), "Working for Civic Unity in Government, Business, and Philanthropy," 1994, 220 pp.

Peterson, Rudolph A., (b. 1904), "A Career in International Banking with the Bank of America, 1936-1970, and the United Nations Development Program, 1971-1975," 1994, 408 pp.

REVIEWS

BERKELEY! A Literary Tribute

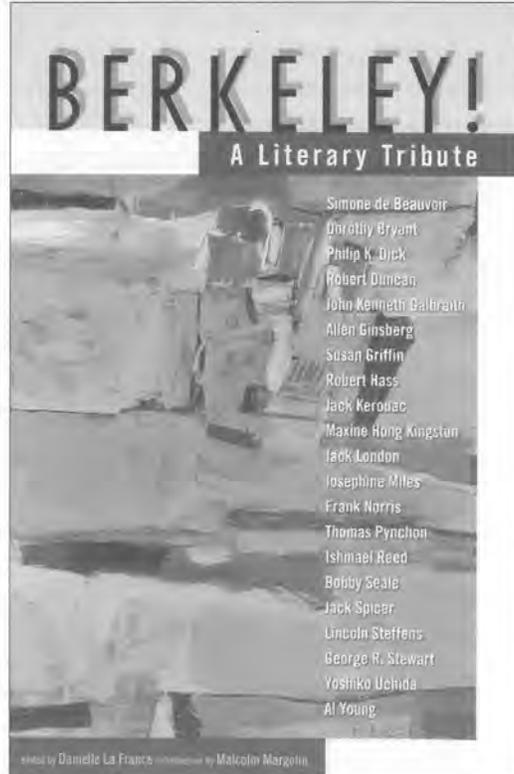
Edited by Danielle La France; introduction by Malcolm Margolin.

Heyday Books, 240 pp., \$14.95

Reviewed by Frances Starn

This engaging anthology opens, of course, with resonant lines from George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, on the westward course of empire. We tend to forget, if we ever knew, that his eloquent verse refers not to cultural and economic growth on the Pacific Rim, much less to higher education on San Francisco Bay, but to the bishop's vision of a missionary college in Bermuda for training young Indians to Christianize the New World's heathen masses. In 1728 the good bishop traveled from Ireland as far as Rhode Island and waited hopefully for three years for grants that never came through. For better and for worse, the excerpted writings in *Berkeley! A Literary Tribute* are not layered or annotated beyond the appendix of brief author biographies. But readers, whether Cal alumni, Berkeley natives, or curious visitors, can still enjoy, on its own terms, Heyday Books' highly eclectic sampler of writers famous and obscure, naïve and cosmopolitan, native and foreign, with something to say about the Athens of the West.

The publisher of the collection, Heyday Books, is one of the happy survivors among Berkeley's changing complement of a hundred-odd local presses. Its founder, Malcolm Margolin, arrived in 1968, a Harvard B.A., in beard and faded overalls, seeking among the mixed attractions of Sixties Berkeley a big public university library to research a book on forests. He also found his niche in an open community of educated readers and friendly booksellers, and used to recount with ironic affection the historic origins of his press in "a spacious, Old-Berkeley bathroom." Among his first sponsors was Fred Cody, who placed his new guide to East Bay parks in the coveted spot next to the bookstore's cash register. Margolin went on to write and publish books focusing mainly on the history and nature of the East Bay and the state, with an emphasis on California Indians. Although his publishing bias is not particularly "literary," he saw a place for a broad selection of prose and poetry about Berkeley town and gown.

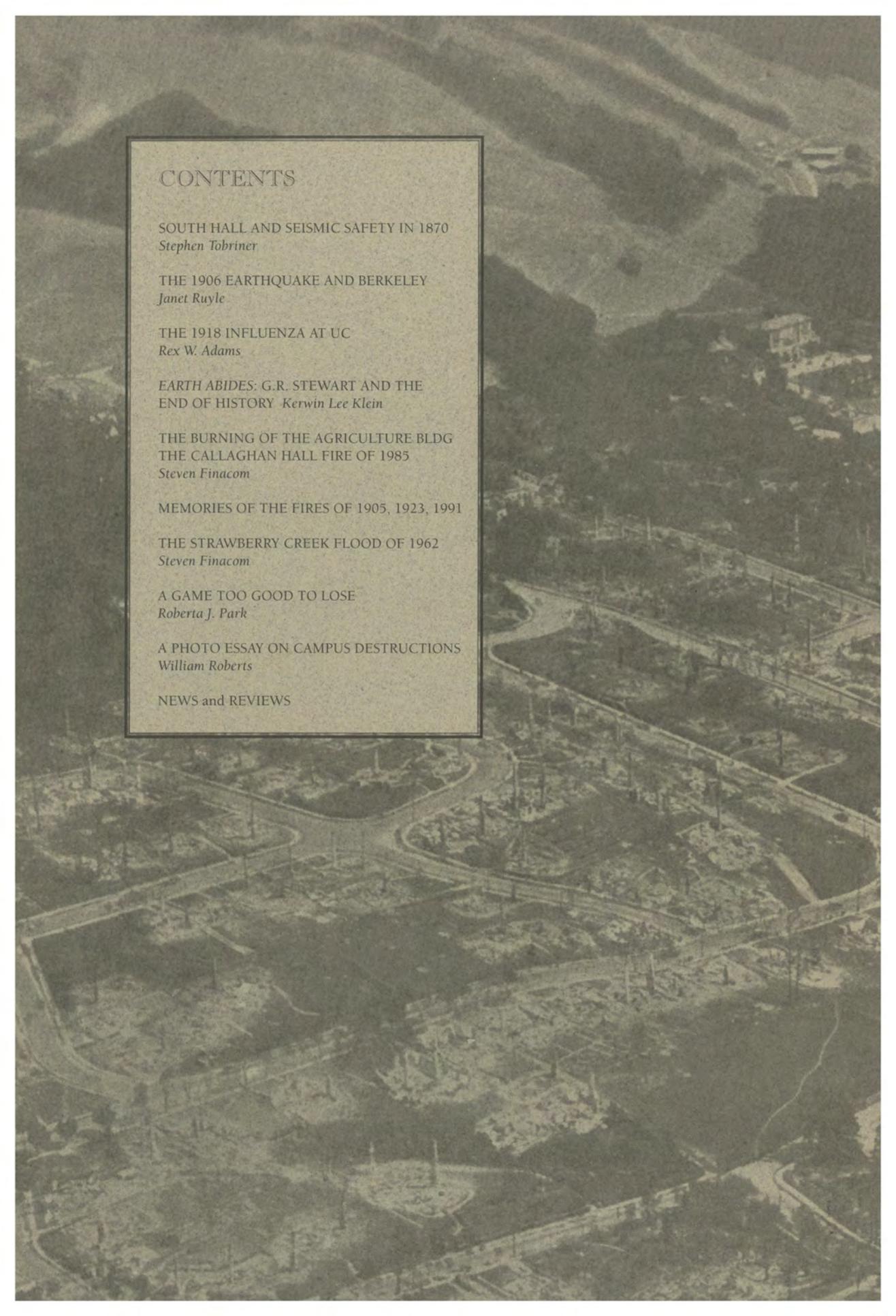


Naturally, I dipped first into writing by familiar figures, moving from a thoughtful meditation by Nobel laureate Czeslaw Milosz on campus evangelist Brother Hubert, to an evocation by emeritus professor Henry May of a well-bred Berkeley boy's life in the early years of the century, and on to a piece of David Lodge's comic *chef d'oeuvre*, *Changing Places*, with its transparent caricatures of various international scholars. Then I pulled up short and dutifully reread Bishop Berkeley and proceeded on through President Benjamin Ide Wheeler, a pair of creaky stories from early student literary magazines, and a pallid fragment of Jack London's *Martin Eden*. At that point, it was no small relief to move into John Kenneth Galbraith's lively memoir of Berkeley in the Thirties. (As he once confessed, "After six drafts, I insert those spontaneous touches that everyone seems to admire.")

Whereas Galbraith writes that he only left Berkeley for a position at Harvard through an awkward misunderstanding involving money rather than affection and esteem, other writers are less forgiving of the young university's limitations. Perusing material for the anthology provided by his student researchers, Margolin was impressed by the high expectations and relentless criticism by both faculty and students—even in the early days when Berkeley was a tiny land-grant college surrounded by ambitious real estate developers. Scholars claimed to crave Socratic dialogue and general enlightenment, rejecting what they saw as categorizing or "drummed-in facts." Lincoln Steffens, the reformer, journalist and autobiographer who came to Berkeley in 1884, had to figure out on his own that history was not a science but a field of research. Famous muckraking novelist Frank Norris complained about the deadening effect of English courses at the university, while in his turn George Stewart, a professor in the much-maligned English department, deplored a state regent's tyranny over professor and university president alike. Not all the criticism of the college or town was internal. In 1953 Simone de Beauvoir weighed in with a few harsh lines about intellectual provincialism and student apathy.

For all the faultfinding, most of the selections are appreciations, from a brief, limpidly joyful poem by beloved professor-poet Josephine Miles, and Jack Kerouac's elegy to his rose-covered cottage on Milvia Street, to hilarious effusions from Thomas Pynchon, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Alice Kahn on fizzled metaphysics, free love, and gourmet excess. There are some surprises—for example, a warm, tactile poem for a famous poet's first wife, and further on, a sad, lovely one written by his second, both infused with strong attachment to place. And after an intensely serious excerpt from *Ella Price's Journal* by Dorothy Bryant, follows an elaborately silly chapter from Anthony Boucher's *The Compleat Werewolf*. The collection closes with street poet Julia Vinograd's nostalgic lament for the late bookseller Moe Moskowitz, in which we are offered the myth and the cigar, if not much of the man.

In any topical anthology, choices must sometimes be made between literary quality and historical content, or art and information. Whether by accident or design, this selection seems admirably balanced—even in its omissions. Lacking are not only literary notes from Bernard Maybeck, Charles Keeler, and the Arts and Crafts Movement which preceded the 1923 Berkeley Fire, but any substantial reference to the historic, divisive Loyalty Oath controversy. The Arts and Crafts builders and chroniclers and the fire were both significant in shaping Berkeley's townscape and its way of life, and decades later the California branch of the anti-Communist witch hunt succeeded in menacing the intellectual integrity of the campus. However, Malcolm Margolin cites, apologetically but cheerfully, "some French poet who remarked that a book is never finished, but only deserted," and says that when the present printing of *Berkeley! A Literary Tribute* sells out, Heyday Press will publish a new, expanded edition.



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