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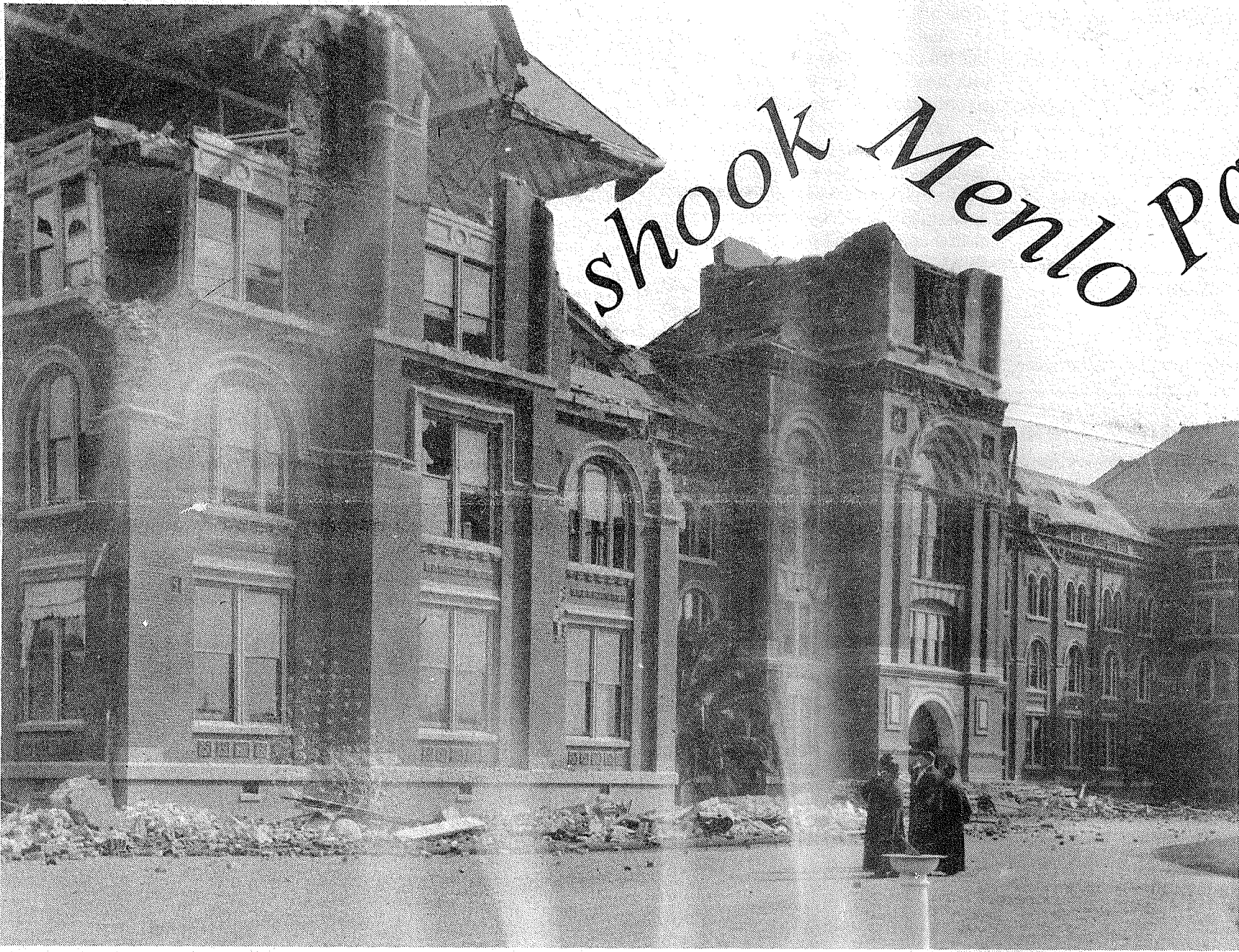
Country

Menlo Park's Almanac



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It was 80 years ago this Friday *when the earth*



ST. PATRICK'S SEMINARY lost several towers and the fourth floor of its nearly completed building when the great earthquake of 1906 shook Menlo Park. The damage was so bad that the building was re-built without the fourth floor and towers. A 1907 book, "The California Earthquake of 1906," edited by David Starr Jordan

reported: "For every brick building that withstood the shock, it is easy to give a number of examples of complete failure. St. Patrick's Seminary, at Menlo Park, is an example of the most excellent brickwork, yet it was decidedly shattered." More on the 'quake: page 13.

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Who's ready for the next quake?

BY MARION SOFTKY

"It's going to happen," says Kent Paxton flatly. "Both Los Angeles and San Francisco are coming due. So is Tokyo."

Just 80 years after one of the world's great earthquakes, Mr. Paxton may well be the man in charge in San Mateo County when the next one hits.

The county's emergency services coordinator is using the 80th anniversary of the 1906 earthquake as an occasion to raise the community's consciousness about earthquakes and to hone the skills of the emergency teams who will be responding.

Mr. Paxton's own consciousness was raised by a visit to Mexico City where he studied the devastation caused by the Sept. 19 earthquake and the responses to it.

That earthquake killed as many as 23,000 people, injured another 30,000, and left 300,000 homeless, according to estimates compiled by the Bay Area Regional Earthquake Preparedness Project (BAREPP.) Damage estimates range from \$4 to \$10 billion.

The center of that earthquake was 250 miles away from Mexico City, Mr. Paxton notes. Any earthquake in the Bay Area is likely to be centered in one of the faults that criss-cross the region.

In the Bay Area a magnitude of 8.3 earthquake—comparable to the 1906 earthquake—would kill between 3,000 and 11,000 people, depending on the time of day, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) estimated in 1981. Fewer people would be killed at 2:30 a.m. when they are in bed, most at 4:30 p.m. during the commute rush. Between 12,000 and 44,000 would be hospitalized, and property loss would be some \$38 billion, according to the FEMA estimates.

People and communities would be isolated. Some might have to function without familiar roads, bridges and utilities. FEMA estimates some of these losses expected for the Bay Area great earthquake: 25 percent damage to hospitals; all radio and television stations down for 24 hours; 50 percent of the telephone system out of operation indefinitely; 25 percent of freeway structures impassable; all major bridges and all rail service out indefinitely; airports out of service for weeks; 50 percent of water pipes and gas transmission lines out for a week; and 50 percent of electricity out for at least 24 hours.

LESSONS OF MEXICO CITY

"The first and biggest lesson of Mexico City is that our earthquake will probably be very different," says Mr. Paxton.

Because of the distance from the center of the earthquake, many of the earthquake waves were attenuated at Mexico City. Most of the damage was done by low frequency vibrations which were amplified in the old lake bed and selectively damaged buildings between five and 15 stories.

"I don't think we can expect that," he says. "We are expecting a close-in earthquake with a full range of frequencies that will attack everything." The greatest danger will be unreinforced masonry, he believes.

Mr. Paxton anticipates two other problems that were not serious in Mexico City: fires and hazardous



PRACTISING FOR the next earthquake are block coordinator Gina Baka and amateur radio operator Dale Dwelley (W6STY.) Both residents of Suburban Park participated in Menlo Park's recent drill responding to a mock 8.3 earthquake centered on the San Andreas Fault in San Mateo County. They reported local problems via ham radio to the emergency center in the basement of City Hall and

materials accidents. Our area is much more susceptible to fires because of our underground gas systems, he explains; Mexicans mostly store gas in tanks on their roofs.

"Our medical problems will be more severe," he says. "Mexicans just didn't go to hospitals with minor injuries. And we can expect damage to the hospitals themselves."

There is one bright spot. In Mexico City there was "a spontaneous flood of volunteers," Mr. Paxton says; the problem is to manage them. Trained forces need to be able to get out into the field and help the volunteers work effectively. In the early period after the Mexico City quake, the volunteers often hurt themselves digging in rubble with bare hands or became sick from dehydration, he says.

WHAT TO DO

"There are simple straight-forward things we can do," says Mr. Paxton.

"The first is to learn first aid. Get a CPR course under your belt.

"Inspect and retrofit your home.

"Food is generally not a concern; water is. If you

received guidance on how to respond to problems and where to seek equipment and expertise nearby. The scenario ranged from failure of the Willow Road overpass and the Dumbarton Bridge to reports of trees down, water mains broken, lost children, fires, fallen chimneys, and a wheelchair patient needing heart medicine. Photo by Marion Softky.

have to store something, store water.

"I recommend people put a paper clip on the Survival pages of the phone book. (pages 47 to 55 in the 1985 editions.)

"Every family should sit down and talk about it and make a plan. How are we going to meet? Have a contact out the area so if family members are separated, they can contact Aunt Tillie in Sacramento.

"It's going to happen."

For all kinds of pamphlets and information about earthquake preparedness contact the county emergency services office at 363-4790. Local city halls and schools should be able to give specific local information.

Want to learn still more?

The College of San Mateo is giving a course in Practical Earthquake Preparedness for seven Tuesday evenings starting April 22. Topics to be covered will be first aid and CPR, home safety inspection and repair, basic search and rescue, basic firefighting, emergency communications, and neighborhood watch. For information call the office of emergency services at 363-4790.

Childhood memories of 1906 quake

Menlo Park historian **JOHN CLEESE** was a little boy in San Francisco when the earth shook on April 18, 1906.

"I slept right through it," he recalls. "I was only four years old."

He remembers evacuating their house on 25th Avenue, and he remembers "a lot of wreckage."

With the distant vision of a small child, he adds, "I wondered why there was meat hanging from the trees."

Portola Valley historian **DOROTHY REGNERY** was amazed that apparently no one was actually killed during the earthquake.

Some of her interviews with survivors reveal telling vignettes.

"It's under the bed. It's under the bed," one man called to his brother.

The son of the superintendent at Searsville Lake says his father found the path to the lake was wet from the splashing of the water as it sloshed back and forth with the shaking of the earth. The Searsville dam shows slight cracks, but "It's still there," noted Mrs. Regnery.

Several homes were destroyed. One father, making coffee in a lean-to, burned his hand when the coffee flew out. The kitchen lean-to separated from the house.

Then there were the people who fearful of God's vengeance, hurried to the Catholic church to pray—only to find the church partially crumbled.

One girl, who opened her eyes as her family prayed, saw some wagons moving alone in circles.

NORMAN McKEE of Woodside was visiting his grandfather's ranch in Woodside—about 1,000 feet from the fault when it jarred loose.

"I remember very vividly," he says. He and his brother were in two narrow adjoining beds which were moving back and forth. He remembers the shaking of the house and the grating noise at the joints. "We recognized it was quite a shake," he says.

Were they frightened? "We weren't old enough to be afraid," he replies. "We let the adults do all the worrying."

There was plenty to worry about. His father was in San Francisco at the Palace Hotel. The Woodside house was not bolted down and slid off its foundations. The dairy walls had fallen in on the milk and cream, and the roof of the dairy house was right on the ground.

"The farmhouse was right next to a grove of redwoods," Mr. McKee recalls. "Those redwoods did a lot of maneuvering around."

The family moved to the orchard and lived in tents for several weeks. His father finally showed up on horseback.

"Within a day or two the sky had a weird-looking color," he says. He was told it was the fire in San Francisco.

He also recalls a maid taking him by the hand to see the rupture caused by the earthquake. Mr. McKee doesn't remember the rupture; he does remember what she said: "Look at this crack; isn't it deep?"

PHYLLIS MOULTON MERRILL lived on Atherton Avenue near the bend when the earthquake struck. Here is her account of the earthquake:

"We were pretty scared. It had a tremendous expanse in the living room. The earthquake took the chandeliers, which were leaded and hung down, swung them back and forth and snapped them right off at the ceiling, and dropped them on the floor. That was something. To come in and find the chandeliers right on the floor. That happened in two rooms. I had a little theory—because we used to have earthquakes quite often and I was very much afraid of them. I thought that maybe if I jumped up and down on the bed, I wouldn't know which was shaking, me or the earthquake. I did this, and the first thing I knew, my bed crashed. I had weakened the bed as I was really jumping and keeping right up with the earthquake. Anyway, I finally managed to get out of there, with everything shaking, myself included. My mother and father, whose bedroom was across the hall, started towards me and I started towards them, and we met at my doorway. You were supposed to stand with the bracing of the door. We all stood there with our arms around each other, wondering when the next thing was going to come. It finally stopped.

From "Atherton Recollections," edited by Barbara S. Norris and Sally L. Bush, and published by the Town of Atherton in 1973. The home where the late Mrs. Merrill grew up was later sold to the legendary Mrs. Sarah Winchester. Most recently it housed the Designers' Showcase.