



THE GUIDEPOST

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The Anniversary Celebration

By Ulla Kaprielian

April 18, 2006 – I finally made it to the anniversary party of the 1906 earthquake. If not this year, when? It did not surprise me to see thousands of people on Market Street at 4:30 in the morning, many in costumes. I never knew how many emperors we have! The surprise was that eleven eyewitnesses were still able to attend the party. One lady said that she was the result of the earthquake – all that snuggling to keep warm in a tent in Golden Gate Park, you know.

It was a wonderful experience; you just had to be there. It was so much fun to hear this young man, Mayor Newsom, talk with each of the survivors, also to hear their answers to some of his questions. At the end he took the time to shake hands, mine being one of them, and pose for pictures with people.

Now that all the parties are over, the question on everyone's mind remains, are we prepared for the next one?

I hope that you had a chance to visit some of the many exhibits around the Bay Area. I went to see "Aftershock" at the Oakland Museum. The only original tent still in existence is on display. It cost \$25 at the time. The wooden shack, to be seen at the Presidio, was \$50.

Sightseers came to view the destruction with their new Brownie cameras by Kodak. This is the reason that we have so many eyewitness account pictures today. Visitors were asked to bring emergency supplies, what a good idea!

It is recorded that a record number of marriage licenses were issued shortly after the earthquake. In 1906 no "snuggling" without a license, I suppose.

It is estimated that 40,000 people came to San Francisco for the rebuilding of the city. There were good wages to be made. The need was so great that discrimination took a back seat. It was the time that San Francisco's Chinatown was rebuilt, this time with tourism in mind.

The effect the earthquake had on San Francisco is well known, but other towns sustained substantial damage as well, such as Santa Rosa, San Jose and Oakland.

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The GUIDEPOST (ISSN 1097-2285) is published quarterly by the San Francisco Tour Guide Guild, a non-profit association established in 1984 to safeguard employment opportunities, promote the integrity of the profession through certification testing and continuing education, and foster a standard of quality, ethics, and professionalism among guides and operators in the San Francisco Bay Area. SFTGG is a member of the San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau and NFTGA.

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Message from the President

I am grateful that the rain has stopped and that our streets are full of visitors to see this wonderful area in its true beauty.

Although it may not please all San Franciscans, we are glad that Golden Gate Park will remain open to vehicle traffic on Saturdays. I think the e-mails sent by the Guild and its members helped the Mayor to see the impact this would have on visitors. God Job!

One of my personal goals for this year is to increase the number of certified guides, speaking to our professional status as guides. *Susan Guerguy* (Board Treasurer), *Andy Hartman* (Board Membership Chairperson) and *Patricia Hunting* have successfully completed their examination process and are now Certified Guides. Congratulations to them! Our next examination will be on July 22, 2006. Send your tour verifications to Nancy McCormick and be eligible to take the examination to become certified.

We honored Ann Meagher at a reception at the new Fior D'Italia restaurant location on May 15th. She will be leaving the San Francisco area. Ann is one of the founders of our Guild. We were honored to have four more founding members at the party as well (Egidia Bolini, Greer Hopkins, Rosary Matteson, and Glenn Salbach).



The event was a tribute to these leaders who in 1983 saw the need to have a professional organization and developed our guild, as we know it today in its self-governing model versus being regulated by a department of the City of San Francisco. We have a lot to be grateful for to this group. We now have almost 300 members and represent many areas of the tour guiding industry and many locations around the Bay Area.

Thank you to our founders and to the current membership who keep our mission alive and well.

Please plan to attend the General Meeting on June 19th at the Farallon Room at the Aquarium at Pier 39. We will conduct our business meeting and will have speakers from the San Francisco Convention and Visitor Bureau and Westfield (Bloomingdale complex) to give us the latest updates in the industry. 2006 membership rosters will be available.

Thank you.

Mary McCloy,
Board President

Oakland to the Rescue

Oakland, with 67,000 citizens, the second largest California city at the time, sustained a substantial amount of damage. Luckily, several small fires could be extinguished since there was water available, unlike San Francisco.

The city was able to lend assistance. Governor Pardee rushed back to Oakland to set up temporary offices. He facilitated distribution of aid and monitored the National Guard, making Oakland the center of the relief effort. San Francisco's newspapers the *Call*, *Chronicle* and *Examiner* collaborated with the Oakland *Herald*, using their presses. F.M. "Borax" Smith, multi-millionaire and local philanthropist, donated warehouse space to serve as a central depot. He was only one of many who generously helped.

200,000 San Franciscans found shelter in Oakland and many stayed permanently. The population grew to 150,000 by 1910; Chinatown's population went from 1,000 to 2,500.

Oakland grew into a city. In 1915 a \$7 million bond measure for civic improvements created City Hall and Lakeside Park at Lake Merritt. To this day the Oakland Fire Department has an Urban Search & Rescue (USAR) team to help in disasters such as 9/11/01, and hurricanes Katrina & Rita. It is one of 26 such teams nationwide.

The Chinatown Story

Sadly, San Francisco's Chinese were not helped until five days after the quake with camps set up in the Presidio, near the ocean, after having been hustled from one location to another. The Chronicle of April 25th reported that Mayor Schmitz informed Police Chief Dinan to put the Chinese into Fontana's warehouse at Ft. Mason. President Roosevelt finally intervened on behalf of the Chinese and ordered authorities to provide them the same facilities as everyone else. However, segregation continued.

A visit to the Chinese Historical Society of America Museum revealed eyewitness accounts of the condition the Chinese found themselves in. At the museum I met Mrs. Silvia Louie who told me about her mother Tom Joe. The family stayed in Golden Gate Park for several months before making their

way to Oakland where they eventually found a shelter at the Snow Mansion near Lake Merritt. Like so many others, the family settled in Oakland.

Another survivors, Lily Sung, described how they had to walk so slowly that they could feel the heat of the fire. The reason was that their little group included a lady with bound feet only three and a half inches long. What pain these women must have endured.

Lily was able to have her birth certificate reissued to prove that she was an American citizen born in San Francisco. But, when she married William Sung, a professor born in China, her citizenship was revoked because of the exclusion law of 1922.

Escaping to Oakland was an ordeal. The wait to board a ferry often took two to three days. Once there, the lucky ones found friends or family to stay with. Others had to camp in an open area at Lake Merritt without shelter from the rain and with only meager provisions. It was no picnic in the park.

A San Francisco Chinese, Lew Hing, came to the rescue by launching his own relief effort. He was a man of means, owner of the Pacific Coast Canning Co. Luckily, he had earlier built a second cannery in Oakland. Although he had lost all of his possessions in San Francisco, he could re-establish himself quickly. When he realized how his kinsmen were being treated, he ordered shelters to be built on the grounds of the cannery and provided food, clothing and medical assistance.

Another tragedy was the unchecked looting of Chinatown, with national guardsmen not only keeping the owners from returning to their homes to salvage belongings but joining in the looting.

A move was underway to relocate San Francisco's Chinatown to an area near Hunters Point. In other words, out of the way. The editor of the East-West Daily, Chung Sai Yat Po, urged in an editorial on April 29th that the Chinese hire architects immediately and start rebuilding Chinatown without involving city officials.

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TIME TO REBUILD!

By Jason Cohen

The refugees are being cared for, streets are rapidly being cleared of debris, and death statistics are conveniently being covered up. Time to rebuild. The Burnham Plan for San Francisco, completed in 1905 by the famous Chicago

architect/urban planner, Daniel Burnham would have rebuilt San Francisco into a pretty good copy of Paris, with buildings radiating out from public plazas, but there's no time to make major changes to the street grid – business might not wait that long!

So rebuilding took place along basically the same lines as the destroyed city, but now with many more buildings in the “modern” style – steel framed, 7 to 10 stories tall (as opposed to the more typical 3 to 5 stories of the destroyed Victorian city, and often in either the fancy Beaux Arts style (e.g., the Civic Center), the restrained Edwardian (the Palace Hotel), or the much more utilitarian Chicago School style (e.g., some of the buildings near the intersection of Sutter & Kearny). In many ways, downtown San Francisco is an outdoors museum of buildings from the early 20th century. A particularly good area to see this is Grant between Geary & Bush and Sutter between Grant & Montgomery – almost all of the buildings are from the same few years after 1906.

The first major building to reopen after the quake was the Fairmont Hotel on Nob Hill. Julia Morgan was responsible for the work – her first major project, which came to her when the famed New York architect Stanford White was murdered by a jealous husband.

George Kelham arrived from New York to oversee the rebuilding of the Palace Hotel. He saw there was a lot of work in San Francisco and stayed for the rest of his life. Like most successful architects, Kelham was happy to

adopt new styles to please his clients. In addition to the Edwardian Palace Hotel he gave this city the neo-classical Main Library (now the Asian Art Museum), the Art Deco Shell Building and the gigantic Russ Building on Montgomery, which easily rivals the canyon building in New York's Wall Street in showing the financial might of the great city. He was the Chief Architect of the 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition and a consultant to the Bay Bridge.

Local favorite Willis Polk is said to have designed about 106 buildings in downtown in the years after the fire! Some of his commissions included the restoration of the 1891 Mills Building (Montgomery & Bush) and the 1903 Merchants Exchange on California. At the time he was running the local office of Daniel Burnham, which had originally designed both of these important commercial structures. The few buildings that did partially survive the fire generally were ones whose modern steel frames were protected with good insulators like concrete.

Other noteworthy practitioners in the period after 1906 include Albert Pissis (Flood Building on Market and the Mechanic's Library on Post), John Bakewell Jr. and Arthur Brown Jr. (City Hall) and John Galen Howard (UC Berkeley campus). Don't confuse Arthur Brown Jr. with the unrelated A. Page Brown, designer of the Ferry Building, who was killed in a traffic accident in 1896. Interestingly, John Galen Howard chaired the committee that recommended Bakewell & Brown for the City Hall commission, and later it was Howard's son Henry, while working for Bakewell & Brown, who designed Coit Tower.

Something most of these architects had in common (Willis Polk being the notable exception) is that they received their education at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Julia Morgan, in fact, was the first woman to be admitted to and graduated from that program. One author offers the opinion that an architect like Albert Pissis, with his Ecole education, brought San Francisco architecture a sense of “educated sophistication,” something that, arguably, the previous generation of homegrown Victorian architects simply did not have.



At one of your next city tours, maybe even a walking tour, you can impress your guests with your knowledge of San Francisco's major buildings and their designers. Jason mentioned several architects responsible for the re-building of the city in his article "Time to Rebuild!" on page 4. Here are a number of architects and some of their achievements:

Albert Pissis (pronounced like crisis) – (1852-1914)

He changed the face of San Francisco more than any other single architect between 1890-1910. Some of his accomplishments are Hibernia Bank at Emporium, James Flood Building at Market & Powell, and the Department Store at Sutter & Grant.



architect between 1 Jones Street, the White House

A. Page Brown (1859-1896) -

moved to San Francisco in 1889 and was responsible for many important buildings, including the Ferry Building, the Crocker Building and Trinity Church.

Bernard Maybeck (1862-1957) -

came to San Francisco and joined the firm of A. Page Brown, established his practice in Berkeley and served as mentor to Julia Morgan and others. His work include numerous residences in the Berkeley Hills, but he is best known as the architect of the Palace of Fine Arts and the First Church of Christian Scientists in Berkeley. He was awarded the American Institute of Architects highest honor, the Gold Medal in 1951.



Willis Polk (1867-1924) -

arrived to San Francisco in 1906 as assistant to A. Page Brown, in charge of Daniel Burnham's office, in 1910 the office was known as Willis Polk & Co. Polk created a wide range of private residences on Russian Hill. Public buildings include Sunol Water Temple (1910), Filoli (1916), Hallidie Building (1917) and the Hobart Building (1914).

George Kelham (1871-1936)

He arrived in San Francisco in 1906 to Palace Hotel and remained here to design a the Old Library (1916), now the Asian Arts (1924), Standard Oil Building (1922), Russ Building (1929). He succeeded John Galen university architect for UC Berkeley.



supervise the rebuilding of the number of landmarks, including Museum, old Federal Reserve Building, (1927), and the Shell Building (1927), and the Shell Howard (1864-1931) as

Julia Morgan (1872-1957)

Perhaps the most extraordinary woman in the history of architecture, she was the first woman with a Degree of Civil Engineering from UC Berkeley, also the first woman to graduate from l'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. She produced more than 700 buildings, her most famous work undoubtedly – Hearst Castle at San Simeon. She was in charge of restoring the gutted Fairmont Hotel, designed numerous YWCA buildings and in Chinatown the Donaldina Cameron House.



Of course, there are many other architects who helped create the San Francisco that we all love and appreciate to this day.

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He suggested that renters convince their white landlords to rebuild since they liked to rent to Chinese who asked for little and didn't make a fuss.

The Rebuilding of Chinatown

According to Philip P. Choy, architectural historian and architect, the early Chinese immigrants came from lower economic level of society. Their native homes were simple and in the new country there was little money to establish a distinctively Chinese architecture. Records show that they lived in imported prefabricated frame houses, but little is known about these structures.

In the 1870s South Park became the new fashionable area for European Americans to live. The installation of the cable car system at the base of Clay & Kearny in 1873 made Nob Hill accessible for residential development.

As white people moved out, Chinese moved in. Soon the Chinese occupied what was once the commercial center of the city. It is now the core area of Chinatown. Chinatown was described as "neither picturesque nor Oriental", the architecture thoroughly American. When the Chinese Consulate moved into the Pioche Mansion at 809 Stockton Street in 1889, a vertical sign was simply placed above the doorway.

It was not until after the earthquake that present-day Chinatown took shape, not by accident but by design.

Look Tin Eli, Tong Bong, and other Chinese merchants planned to build an "Oriental City". Tong Bong started with his building Sing Fat (southeast corner of California & Grant), which was followed by Look Tin Eli's Sing Chong building across the street.

While architects were busy creating Beaux Arts structures at the Civic Center, American architects in Chinatown searched for an Oriental picture. Their exposure to Chinese architecture was limited to images of pagodas and temples with

turned-up eaves and massive curved roofs, centuries old images. Their challenge was to transform these ancient forms into a new Sino architecture using Western methods of construction and local building materials in accordance with local building codes.

The architect and engineer team, Ross & Burgren, chose the most obvious Chinese structure, the pagoda, to make a statement for the Sing Chong and Sing Fat buildings. In China, the pagoda is used only in religious structures, marking the burial site of a Buddhist relic or the tomb of a Buddhist monk. In San Francisco's Chinatown pagodas became decorative elements.



Most buildings in Chinatown occupy 100% of the lot and have narrow frontages. Only the street façade is available for architectural treatment. The need for commercial ground floor space often left only one entrance to the upper floors. Fire escapes became necessary as an additional means of escape. The top floor of the fire escape is often transformed into loggias with a deep overhang

simulating an Oriental roof. Waverly Place has a concentration of this type of building.

This design solution is neither East nor West - it is decidedly San Francisco.

Try to take the time to visit this gem of a museum. The *Chinese Historical Society of America* is located at 965 Clay Street, between Stockton and Powell. It is open Tuesday – Friday from 12 to 5 pm. Phone: 415-391-1188.

"The Earthquake: The Chinatown Story" exhibit will be on display until September 16, 2006.

Local History from “Picture Books”

By Renate Coombs

Sooner or later you will encounter one of the slim volumes bearing the name of a neighborhood or small town dear to your heart. When that happens, it isn't necessarily the title that first catches your attention, but the endearing sepia-colored vintage photo on the cover. What you have discovered is one of the little treasures produced by Arcadia Publishing.

Each volume, exactly 128 pages long, presents an entertaining history mini-lesson. My first encounter was with the volume about *Richmond*. It was exactly what I needed when I prepared for the “‘Second Gold Rush’ Richmond-Oakland Tour,” a 2004 SFTGG program described by Ulla Kaprielian in an article posted on the Guild's website. The *Richmond* book is part of the “Images of America,” one of two series, the other one being the “Postcard History Series.” There are way over 2,000 volumes in the “Images” series alone.

I soon realized that the *Richmond* book is a prime example why these little volumes can be such a treasure trove of local history. Written by a native, Donald Bastin, the volume reflects his affection for his hometown. Having grown up with his subject matter gives the author a special insight and perspective. Moreover, as director of the Richmond Museum of History, he had unique access to its fine collection of photographs. The result is a well-organized booklet that puts an outsider effortlessly into the picture and must be a delight for the local history buff.

As it turns out, the very next volume I saw was even more gratifying. Oakland's Chinatown was truly a labor of love by William Wong, the first Asian American reporter for a mainstream San Francisco newspaper. He has written for, among others, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Oakland Tribune*, the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *San Francisco Examiner*; he is also the author of “Yellow Journalist, Dispatches from Asian America.” After a lifetime of writing about Asian American topics, Mr. Wong was well familiar

with all the institutions likely to have relevant photos in their collections. In addition, he had all the memories, relatives, friends and connections available to one born and raised in the neighborhood. Each picture is worth the proverbial thousand words, particularly to someone like me who, in the service of giving an Oakland Walking Tour in Chinatown, has been studying the subject matter for years.

The Postcard History Series can be a little less accessible, at least to an outsider without any personal or family connection to the localities. Many scenes are not immediately recognizable. Demolition and alterations have wrought enormous changes to the urban landscape. Bigger cities like *Oakland* (by Annalee Allen) with a significant number of large institutional buildings are more fun to look at than a smaller community. Of course, vintage postcards are often the stuff of private collections so that the quality of a book depends largely on the quality of the particular collection. That is not to diminish the part played by the captions. A well-researched and written text not only helps to understand an individual image, but also enhances the value of the overall history lesson.

Nevertheless, in the academic world, a less positive view of the series sometimes emerges. Criticisms such a paucity of text and lack of dates had led to their being dismissed by some as “local history lite.”

Perhaps, professional historians aren't meant to apply their scholarly standards to these books. The rest of us who pursue local history for the fun of it and the occasional relevance to our tour guiding activities can happily enjoy the fact that these little gems exist. In his review of *Emeryville* (by Donald Hausler, Nancy Smith & Seth Lunine) in the *Alameda County Historical Society Quarterly* (Vol. XXXI, No. 4 at 10, 2006), a local history buff and former president of the Society describes it as “virtually perfect,” “an absolute gem of a book.” What more could you ask for?

SFTGG PROGRAMS AND MEETINGS

Information will be issued on the website at sftgg.org

The Guidepost editors are planning to publish reviews of books produced by Arcadia Publishing in the next issue or two. So, if you have one of these books in your possession or have seen one that arouses your interest, read it and write an article and send it to us. This way we will all be able to enjoy the information and will surely learn something new.

The next due date for submitting an article is August 10th.

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