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RECENT SEDIMENTATION ALONG THE BIG RIVER ESTUARY



Understanding California's Geology - Our Resources - Our Hazards



# The 1906 San Francisco Earthquake

By  
MRS. JAMES T. WATKINS

In the week after the great earthquake of April 18, 1906, this letter was written by Mrs. James T. Watkins, wife of a San Francisco physician, to relatives in Virginia. The Watkins residence was near the corner of Bush and Hyde streets, and although the home survived the earthquake, it was destroyed by the following fires that engulfed the city. The personal experience of living through these difficult days is chronicled in this poignant account and appeal for assistance. We thank Dr. James T. Watkins IV, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Stanford University, Mrs. Watkins' son, who brought the letter to the attention of Dr. Dennis Mileti, staff member, Seismic Safety Commission. We thank Dr. Mileti, who suggested it be shared with CALIFORNIA GEOLOGY readers...Editor.

On Wednesday, April 18th, at 5:14 A.M. I was awakened by the crash of falling furniture, and a rocking, heaving house. Jim was sleeping in the next room, but I am used to slight earthquake shocks, so I lay still. The meteorological record has announced later that there were seven shocks in ten minutes, seventeen in the whole day, and numerous slight shocks every day since. I felt very calm, paralyzed perhaps, but I thought, "This is the worst thing I ever knew, and we may be going to be killed, and I want to die together." It was as much as I could do to walk across the floor, because it heaved so, and it made me very sea-sick. Jim always wakes slowly and dazed, and when I opened the door he thought the walls were falling in.

I asked if we ought to get out of the house, but he said that we were in the safest place, under a cross beam in a frame house, which was true, as the streets were full of bricks, and our house was less damaged than most. So I got into bed with Jim, and he held me in his arms till the severe shocks were over. Then I had a nervous chill.

The physical shock was severe, but because our house stood - an old one - we had no conception of the seriousness of the situation, thinking that, as with us, smashed furniture would be the extent of the damage. The servants were out at the front gate, and we dreaded seeing our ruined things downstairs, so Jim began to read the morning paper in bed, and I began to dress. The streets were instantly

full of throngs of people, many in their night clothes. The sun was rising red behind a queer brown cloud. I said "That is the typical sun of earthquakes and cyclones that we read about."

In a few moments I noticed five billowy columns rising in this queer cloud in different directions, and I realized it was smoke. The great fire had begun, though no one realized what it would be. The servants were not much frightened, but they promptly disappeared to go sight-seeing. We met them later down town, watching the fire. So we decided to go down town to a restaurant for breakfast. This was 8 o'clock. You never saw such a sight as our rooms. Over-turned and broken furniture and pictures, the floor black with soot and covered with broken bric-a-brac, and, in the back halls and kitchen, the plaster fallen from walls and ceiling.

We took a hasty survey, and felt thankful that our Buhl furniture, Louis XIV chairs and cabinets, the rarest bric-a-brac and Jim's apparatus were not injured.

The beautiful old Sevres vase, which is three feet high, had rolled on its side on a narrow mantel, and a little brass bowl had kept it from rolling off. So we thought ourselves lucky. We picked up the furniture and largest fragments in office and reception room, and I left written instructions for the girls to sweep when they returned, and we went down town to breakfast. This was less simple than we thought. We had heard people calling, "Look at the Power House!" "Look at the

City Hall!" The Power House was within a square of us - one of three in the city. Its tower had fallen and mashed in the roof.

The City Hall was straight down Hyde Street, about six squares from us. It was granite, and occupied a square - a magnificent building. The dome was standing (this was the Hall of Records which fortunately contained the City's most valuable records and title papers), but the rest was a pile of ruins. The effects of the earthquake were in spots - not universal. We saw whole fronts of office buildings and of assembly halls fallen outward. Sometimes the asphalt pavement had heaved up in a hillock, where gas had exploded.

We heard that the old Valentia Street Hotel, in the Mission, had sunk 20 feet, collapsed and killed 50 people. This was true. It had the severest shock in San Francisco. The handsome residence district on Pacific Heights, overlooking the ocean, was scarcely injured, except fallen chimneys. San Jose and Palo Alto, about 50 miles down the peninsula, were the centre of the earthquake, and were almost destroyed, but had little fire. Stanford University, that wonderful place, was almost completely destroyed by the earthquake. Agnews Insane Asylum collapsed and two hundred people were killed. San Francisco suffered comparatively little from the earthquake, but the fire annihilated us - temporarily.

We tried half a dozen restaurants, only to find them full of debris, and the owners saying, "No breakfast here this morning."





SAN FRANCISCO, AFTER THE 1906 EARTHQUAKE, VIEW FROM NOB HILL



HOWARD STREET



As we crossed Union Square to the Saint Francis Hotel, the crowd came in surges and Union Square was full of poor people, who had fled from the fire south of Market Street, where the poorest people lived. Around them were piled trunks and bundles, parrots and babies. A woman had fainted at the corner and was lying on the grass in the crowd.

Strange to say the Statue of Victory, which is perched on one toe at the top of a column one hundred feet high in Union Square was uninjured. We went into the Saint Francis to find its lobby crowded with dress suit cases and tourists, who were begging for carriages or wagons, to take them to the ferry. The ornate ceiling, the frescoes and carvings were broken at every corner, and the waiters too excited to bring us anything but coffee. We collected rolls, sugar, knives and forks and spoons from other uncleared tables. The coffee braced us up, for I was on the verge of tears over the homeless people in Union Square, little thinking that I should soon be one of them.

We walked down to Market Street, the chief business street of the city. On Mission Street, next south of Market, about six squares were burning. Let me draw a rough sketch of the city, of course inaccurate. It is, you know, at the end of a peninsula. Market Street divides the city diagonally in two. South of it were the residences of the poorer people and wholesale houses, and at the end of it was the ferry building. It was the main business street, and held most of the skyscrapers, the newspaper buildings, office building, large hotels, government buildings, and it began the business section which extended further north, along Kearney, Montgomery, Grant Avenue etc., holding the great shops, importing houses, etc. South of it were the Post Office and the Mint, almost the only large buildings to be saved from the fire, and they only by marvelously heroic fighting.

We saw the flames burst through the windows of the first building to burn on Market. We saw the fight to save the Palace Hotel - a historic landmark. We saw a fire break out on each side of Market, between us and the Ferry. We saw the troops coming, and the first dynamite brought, and still no one thought of the fire spreading to the northern part of the city. The water mains were broken by the earthquake, there was no water and the dynamite gave out.

Dr. Sherman's people were across the bay, and we met him driving to the Ferry, much shaken and nervous; his horse could not get through the crowd, so he gave us his team and coachman to drive out to the Children's Hospital, as no other Surgeon had gone. We stopped at home to see that all was well, but the servants had not returned. At the Hospital we found that the patients had been moved out of the old main building, as it was much shattered inside, but the circular stone buildings were intact, and no one hurt.

Jim treated his patients and drove here to see the Colbys, who are Easterners and good friends of ours. Jim had to go to two other hospitals, and Harriet Colby was afraid to stay alone with her babies, and I was afraid to go home to our empty house, so I staid here to lunch. When Jim came back for me, we stopped to see if the Cousins and the Allens were all right on Pacific Avenue. When we reached Van Ness Avenue, which divides the northern half of the city into two parts, we saw many of the stone churches, which had been wrecked by the earthquake. We live two squares from Van Ness.

We found that the Chinese girls from the Mission Home had been brought to our Church, a frame building on Van Ness; this was four P.M. and the soldiers were dynamiting the buildings along the fire line, so we decided to go home and make sure of our insurance papers and jewelry. Even then our friends laughed at us. It was a strange obsession. No one seemed to realize that there was no water, and each one believed that the fire could not reach *him*. Most people escaped with only the clothes that they wore. When the fire was within two squares of us, a woman in our house declared that our house could not burn and she would not pack her clothes.

The poor people fared better comparatively than those in moderate circumstances, like us, because the very poor could pack their possessions in a trunk, and drag it with a rope along the pavement for miles. I shall never forget that sound of dragging trunks, all night long. Some of the rich people saved their houses, for this one fourth of the city which still stands was one of the richest sections. But they suffered most in the business section. One of my ex-rich friends, with a big house, is already trying to get boarders.

We got our papers, life insurance, fire insurance, burglar insurance, and a few shares in an eastern company, bank books, check books, our jewelry, and what cash we had in the house. All this we concealed on our persons. The money was a strange dispensation. Since Christmas we had been saving for a memorial bed in the Hospital for Watty, and I had almost \$200. This was the only cash in the house. On this money, we and six other families have been living since the earthquake. I have heard of only one other person who saved so much cash. Men who were millionaires had only a dollar or two. I heard one young fellow remark cheerfully that he had lost everything and had 25 cents in his pocket, but that he was young, and did not need money.

The spirit of this people is the most wonderful thing I ever dreamed of, cheerful, happy, laughing while they were fleeing from the flames, saying nothing of what they had lost but rejoicing over their lives. I have seen one woman fainting and one in tears, that is all. I have been in the center of things for a week. Humanity has showed up well. I am proud to call myself a San Franciscan.

We packed three trunks and three hamper. We saved about half of our clothes, most of our solid silver, Sevres vase, Jim's Grandfather's gold-hilted sword, Watty's pictures, my mother's picture, a few of Watty's clothes, a small clock, a little camera, two canvasses which we cut out of the frames, (Susan Watkins' medal picture), and that is about all. We lost the furniture in a sixteen room house, all of Jim's apparatus and instruments, except one piece, X-ray outfit, two electric wall plates, etc, two medical libraries, one good secular library, all our irreplaceable Buhl furniture, our Louis XIV chairs, our French embossed leather dining room set, our Louis XIV cabinet and dresser, the great twisted silver candelabra of Commodore Watkins, all the things he brought from China many years ago. Mr. Watkins' life-size portrait, our pictures, my cutglass, my limoges china. We shall never see their like again, for Mr. Watkins collected them in France, and they cannot be bought again. We did save four Persian rugs. When we gather our trunks around us we feel rich, when we think of the thousands in the camps tonight. We have six hundred dollars in one of the banks that burned, if they do not fail, and our furniture was insured, if the companies are able to pay. We may not know about these for months.



When we had packed the things most valuable and which weighed least (for we had to remember that we might have to drag these trunks ourselves as others were doing), we went out to look for a wagon. Horses or wagons or carriages were almost impossible to get, so great was the fleeing multitude. After walking the streets in vain we went to a livery man whom Jim patronized. He had nothing, but Jim stood in line for an hour and got a small wagon and a tired horse. We were allowed to keep it for only one trip. We had to pay only five dollars; many people had to pay one hundred dollars, but our livery man was humane and kind. We drove out here with the things to see that they came safely, left them with the Colbys and went back to protect our house and the people in it.

We had women in two of our rooms, and Dr. Sumner Hardy and a friend, who were burnt out, spent the night with us. The servants came home and helped us pack, but they wanted to find their sisters, and would not go with us, so we let them go. I gave Watty's big baby carriage to some woman to pack things in. In his little go-cart, we packed the things that we remembered last, two bread boxes full of all the food that was in the house, Jim's diploma, etc. We did not know but that we would spend that night, and many, camping on the beach. We spent the night on the stone front steps, wrapped in blankets. No one slept, except the men took cat naps. We women could not sleep. I lay down for two hours on the couch in the reception room, but could not sleep. Jim and the other men took a nap on the office table. Every few moments there was an explosion of dynamite, or a slight earthquake shock. Across the street was a vacant lot, where a big house was pulled down last summer. It was filled with people sleeping, rolled up in blankets. The streets were filled with trunks.

All night the crowds went by dragging, dragging trunks. It was a horrid sound. A man had a fit on the opposite pavement. A paralytic went by dragging his foot on the pavement, going towards the fire. An invalid was carried past in a big chair. A young mother trundled her baby in a go-cart, with a bundle as big as a bushel hanging to the handle of the go-cart. The baby sat up so straight and interested, watching the fire. He was just about Watty's age. The father was dragging a trunk, with the rope over his shoulder. I shall always wonder if that baby escaped.

Wild rumors reached us constantly. Every half hour two of us walked down the street, to see for ourselves how the flames were. The sky was lit up with the awful glare for three-fourths of the Heavens; on the other side was the black fog from the sea. We could hear the crackle of flames, the crash of falling roofs and walls, the roar of dynamite. Showers of cinders fell over us, and continued to fall for three days and nights. Fortunately the heat was so fierce that the sparks went very far in the air and were cold before they reached the ground. I dragged Watty's movable things, his chair, his hobby horse, etc. into the middle of the back yard, hoping that the flames might miss them. I felt as if they were something alive that was going to burn.

At about 5 A.M. the fire was within two squares of us on the south and west, so we gave it up and started. At the last moment we carried Jim's huge Wullstein's apparatus for scoliosis into the vacant lot and left it there. It cost \$500 and is the only one in America. It was all of steel, so we thought it might be safe from anything but looters and so it proved, as we saved it from the ruins. We could not put anything else there because of looting. Dr. Hardy went with us; the others went on to other friends. I have since heard that all are safe, including my servants. Jim wanted to put his most beautiful tapestry arm chair on his head and carry it. It cost \$150.00. But he had other things to carry; he had to walk two miles at least, and he was sick. So we would not let him. Fortunately, there was no wind and the flames did not travel fast enough to endanger life except to some people who were hemmed in between the water and three lines of fire, on Russian Hill, but everything escaped as a rule. The death rate will never be known, but it is guessed at 2,000. This is comparatively small, when there are 300,000 homeless. If the earthquake had happened two or three hours later, there would have been thousands of deaths in the business buildings and on the streets.

We were so tired that we had to travel the two miles very slowly. Sumner Hardy pushed the go-cart, piled to the handle with his things and ours and roped. When they spilled out we had to stop and rope it over again. Jim and I carried the lighter things, and blankets and overcoats. And we were only three of thousands. I forget what happened after that day and night, except watching the fire, listening to dynamite and feeling little earthquakes. I

had six hours of sleep in 48, in broken naps. I have never yet taken our papers, and what is left of the money out of my dreams.

Thursday night the fire crossed Van Ness in two places. It is the broadest street in the city, has no car lines, and divides this, the upper fourth of the city, from the three fourths that burned. Every one felt that it was the last stand; if the fight was lost at Van Ness, the whole city would go. The military and fire department had started a back fire for two squares below Van Ness, which really saved the rest of the city. When the flames crossed California and Sacramento Streets, we thought that this had failed. I went with Mrs. Colby and Jim to a high hill within a vacant lot, a square above the firing lines. We staid there until after midnight, watching; by this time, the soldiers had adopted the plan of dynamiting every house that caught fire and the houses around it. The concussion of the dynamite explosions was like a slap on one's cheek. We saw the dynamite loaded into the automobiles, and the dynamited houses collapse. I saw a man take up a box of dynamite, run down a hill, and put it into a house next to the flames. I saw four soldiers in an automobile loaded with dynamite; one tire was punctured, and half of the wheel, and the automobile bumped over every stone, but never slackened speed.

The automobiles have done much to save the city and the suffering. Every one in the city was commandeered, and they are still the only means of rapid transit. Jim as a Red Cross Surgeon with a soldier, took Mr. Spreckels, a multi-multi-millionaire, out of his own automobile and went across the city to take a sick Japanese to the Hospital. This was after the fire. No words could describe what we saw from that hill. Flames as far as eye could reach, on three sides a roaring inferno of fire. Where the fire was almost burned out, the squares and houses were outlined by creeping things. The sky was a horrid glare around; round us on the grass were the refugees, mostly asleep, within a square of the flames, trusting to the soldiers to tell them to move on. When we came home, we were still uncertain, and the men engaged a wagon to carry us to the beach, if necessary.

We went to bed about two o'clock without undressing. We were up at five, to find that the fire line was still held at Franklin



Street, one square this side of Van Ness. Since then the fire has burned the rest of the city south of Van Ness to the water front on all sides. Last night (Monday, April 23), it was burning in the big coal bunkers near the Ferry building. It was threatened, but a heavy rain came, and saved it, fortunately, for it is the only means of exit for the multitudes of destitute who are pouring out of San Francisco to the neighboring towns where they can get food. I think the fire must be altogether extinguished now, though I am not sure.

Friday afternoon, Mr. Colby, Dr. Hardy, and I walked to the ruins of our house. I have walked miles every day. It is the only way to get any where. On one side of Van Ness stately buildings were still standing. On the other side were piles of ruins, with here and there a flight of stone steps, gate, a tottering wall. The white marble houses on our side of Van Ness were browned from the heat. Upon Russian Hill we could see the fight with the fire, which then was traveling with the wind in the other direction. As far as the eye could reach south - ruins. We could trace foundations in the localities which we knew. The heat had been so fierce that it had burned out at once, leaving not even a charred timber, only broken stones and twisted steel.

In the distance were the steel skeletons of the sky scrapers. On Nob Hill just above our house were the remains of the palaces of the pioneers - the magnificent buildings of the Bonanza Kings of 49. Some of the queer, wonderful, historic people we knew. The white marble Fairmont Hotel was gutted, and quite black. We walked under the front wall of the West-gate, where our friends had lived. The Maria Antoinette had half the front walls standing, with the name on the stone door. The ruins were old, old, and awe-inspiring. It is a city of tombs. It is like an excavated Babylon, an eternity dead. We climbed over tangled wire, piled-up bricks, split cobble stones, upheaved pavements, to our house. The trunks of the eucalyptus trees were there. The iron fence stood twisted. The stone steps and mosaic porch were piled with rubbish, on top of which lay the iron frames of my fern baskets which had fallen with the upper balcony. The brick foundation, ten feet high, was standing. In the cellar was the holocaust of our home, still smouldering. Nothing could be identified, except the frame of my baby white and gold crib, which still stood in the cellar room where I kept his things since he died. In the

backyard was a heap of ashes where his hobby horse burned. We hung a card on the fence, to tell where Jim could be found and came away. I have not had the courage to go to the ruins again.

The people are wonderful, wonderful. San Francisco is going to rebuild and quickly. Nothing is left except a small residence section on Pacific Heights, a miserable little second-class business street (Fillmore St.), and small residences in the outlying districts. But a newspaper was published the second day - a queer historic thing. The law library of Judge Slack (a friend of ours) is the only one in the city. The Supreme Court meets in his house, and most of the other courts. The large business firms already have temporary headquarters in queer little shacks, and are advertising for their employees. The great American Tea Company, which had occupied ten stores, has its headquarters in Cousin Burney's library. He and his partner thought they were utterly ruined, but, if insurance is paid, they hope they will pull through.

Jim, with two other Doctors, has taken a small flat near Fillmore at \$100.00 a month. They will crowd together, and sublet to pay their rent. The whole building with three flats furnished, would have rented for \$75.00 last month, but so great is the demand that rents will be enormous. One person asked us \$75.00 a month for one room. A week ago Mrs. Watkins' income was \$800.00 a month. Today she has \$65.00 a month from a house on California Street, if the rent is paid. She has some eastern stocks, on which we hope

she can realize enough to support her and Susan. When San Francisco rebuilds, her land in the business section will be profitable again, but that is a long way off.

We are under martial law, and we have a vigilance committee. Sentries are posted on every corner, and it is comforting in the night to hear them call, "Twelve o'clock and all is well." Yesterday ten companies of Cavalry and two of Infantry came in from Vancouver, Washington. I saw them come.

We still have no water, except from a few isolated hydrants, from which it is carried. We are allowed to use it for drinking and cooking only. All cooking is done in the streets, on stoves or improvised brick ovens. No fires are allowed in the houses, and no lights, until last night, when we were permitted to have lights until ten P. M. The city is districted for sanitation and the distribution of food supplies. Sanitary inspectors came around today to seal up water closets, turn off unnecessary faucets, etc. Pits have been dug in the back yards, and temporary closets made, chiefly hung around with sheets. All draperies in the houses have to be taken down. All this is to prevent epidemics, of which there is no sign yet.

The Federal troops are guarding the ruins, the vaults, the post-office, and the mint. Any man caught stealing is shot down at once, or if he disobeys a soldier's first command. Any one can leave San Francisco, but no one can come back, except with a government or Red Cross pass.





We stand in line to get food at the distributing station. The contents of the few grocery stores were seized at once by the troops, nothing can be bought in San Francisco. We have been living for the most part on what was brought from our house, what was in this house, and two suit cases of canned goods, which Dr. Hardy brought from Oakland the first day. I believe there is no scarcity of food at the distributing stations; the only difficulty is transporting it from the receiving stations over such great distances, and distributing it to such vast multitudes.

Yesterday I walked down through the nearest camp. It covers about half a mile, and is a comparatively small one. It is about a mile away from here on the water front, and in full view from our hill. Thousands of tents have been sent and distributed. The parks, the cemeteries and the Presidio, are full of campers, but they are too far for me to go. The cemetery vaults have been broken up, and people are sleeping in them. The city records have been stored in the vaults of the crematory, with soldiers guarding them.

The people in these low, shelter tents are cheerful and uncomplaining. It is wonderful, wonderful. Forty babies were born in the Park in one night. One case was triplets. Many emergency Hospitals have been started, in barns, churches, etc. I spend much of my time at the headquarters of the Red Cross and the Doctors' Daughters. Jim is busy all day with Red Cross work. It is all charity. No Doctor charges anything these days.

I am not strong enough to do any heavy work, but I can help in other ways. We can't see ahead at all. The Allens, Huddlestons, and Cousin Burney, have asked us to stay indefinitely at their house. Dr. Pischel, whose office was burned out, but who saved his town house, has invited us for the summer to his country house in Mill Valley. Mr. Patrick, an army chaplain on Goat Island, has invited us there indefinitely. Harriet Colby has two little children and is nervous and she wants us to stay here. Jim thinks of sending me East. The railroads will take us for one cent per mile. He can not run away from the situation here, while he is needed, and I cannot bear to go so far away from him while the earthquake shocks continue, and San Francisco is so dangerous from looters and tottering walls and possible epidemics. Fortunately, most of the toughs are afraid of martial law and have left San Francisco. In this house there are

a police officer, a deputy-marshal and a Red Cross Surgeon, all of whom were ordinary citizens last week. All today they have been dynamiting the ruins which still stand, so that the burned district will be safe. The concussions shake the house.

I hope that the friends and relatives will send us a box to meet our immediate necessities. Remember that we can not buy anything for some time - not only for lack of money, but because there is nothing within reach. There will be little money for physicians, particularly specialists, for some time. If our insurance is paid, we can live on that till we get started again. If each one sends us one thing that they do not need, it will meet our immediate needs, till we get our breath again. I have sent Aunt Mamie and Aunt Virginia a list of our most pressing necessities, and hope that they will start it. I believe that the railroads send boxes free of charge to us.

One of the ministers in the open air services cried when he said "This is the first time I ever had to take charity." But we shan't need charity long, and San Francisco has been so brave that it deserves help. I am glad I have lived to find that the people are so brave and so generous. I am glad that God took Watty away from this; I could not have borne to have seen him go through it. But I am not sorry that I was here.

Not less wonderful than San Francisco's heroism has been the quick generosity of the country and other countries. I believe the relief fund has reached ten million dollars. This will not last long, feeding three hundred thousand at thirty cents a day, and they must all begin again. Many trains of supplies have come in; if any one has starved, it must surely have been his own fault. Doctors and nurses have come by the train load. Perhaps God sent it to show how good the world is after all - or to develop its goodness.

I am too tired to write more. One could write on indefinitely. But I shall have neither time nor strength to write it again. This has been written hurriedly and at intervals. Will you please have it typewritten or mimeo-graphed or printed in the home newspaper and copies sent to the friends and relatives who are interested and to the following addresses. - - -

We can not know what letter will go through safely, so great is the congestion

and confusion. Yesterday my friends received telegrams sent six days ago. Most of us have received nothing.

April 25 - Wednesday. Jim has been out all day on Red Cross work. We have made application for a permanent position for him under the Red Cross, hoping that it will pay something, however little. I have been working all day at the Red Cross headquarters, helping to care for the sick and destitute. The people are wonderful, wonderful. One woman, seeing my Red Cross badge, stopped me in the street to ask help - not for herself but others. She was camping in the park, and had lost everything except the clothes she wore, including her husband whom she had not been able to locate since the earthquake, a week ago. But she asked me for a pair of shoes for an old lady and underclothes for a child. She had been offered shelter in a friend's house, but would not leave the old lady alone in the tent, though she herself had rheumatism; I took her to the Red Cross distributing station to get clothes for herself as well as for the other two.

The slight earthquakes continue - two last night, and quite a severe shake at noon. They say it is the settling of the earth after the main upheaval.

Two telegrams came today - one from Aunt Virginia for \$500.00 and one from the Bank of Marion telling me to draw on the Bank of California for \$300.00. You are all very very generous. We do not want to tax your generosity any more than we must, and we simply cannot say what we shall need. We do not know anything. Neither of these telegrams is available in cash just now. In the first place, all the banks are burned, and the vaults may not be opened for weeks, lest their contents burst into a blaze. This happened to one vault which was opened today. In the second place, the Governor has declared legal holiday for a month, at least, and no California Bank can pay out any money. This is to prevent a run on the Banks, protesting of notes, and other legal complications, until a little order is brought out of our chaos.

This lack of ready money is one of the people's chief troubles. The others are lack of water, and lack of the necessities of life which cannot be bought here. So long as we are not suffering, we will not apply to the distributing stations, because so many others are worse off than we. Yesterday we "looted" a house. That is, a friend who had left town in the fire, sent





us word to take all the supplies in her house; so, with the policeman's help, Mrs. Colby and I ransacked the house, and got several baskets of canned goods. Except from dirt and lack of water for bathing, we have not suffered. Jim managed to buy two pairs of socks, and I have two. I enclose a list of things we most pressingly need (I sent this to Aunt V.) A box can be sent to this address. - - -

The only way to transmit money, as yet, is to send currency by Wells Fargo, or to send post-office order, which the post-office authorities will pay. This, I believe, is different from a postal note, which is limited to twenty dollars. I wish I could say something more definite but no one can know yet what is ahead of us. Our dear love and thanks go to you all. We can hardly think of anything except the

present situation and not much about our own troubles. This is an unprecedented situation, and there are no rules to go by. Each day has new developments, and no day is like the last.

Lovingly,  
(signed)  
Eleanor.