

A.M. Allison. From San Francisco in Ruins: A Pictorial History

The historians of modern or ancient times have never recorded such a maelstrom of terrified, horror and panic stricken human beings as awoke to the realization of the master seismic tremblor, in the City of San Francisco at 5:13 on the morning of April 18th, 1906. The initial quake, being followed by many of less severity, tumbled chimneys, large and small buildings of poor or faulty construction, broke water mains and ruptured electric light and power conductors, causing many conflagrations in a few moments. Then followed a catastrophe unparalleled in modern times, a disaster beside which, for property losses, the Chicago fire, the Johnstown flood, the Galveston tidal wave, the Mont Pelee eruption, Vesuvius' spoutings and the Baltimore fire, fade into infinitesimal disturbances on the records of Father Time.

In three days, which seemed only as so many hours, there faded out of existence noble business blocks, grand and imposing structures, beautiful and superb residences the homes of the Argonauts, the sea kings, mining barons and merchant princes, together with the marts and dwellings of those who toil and delve and go down to the sea in ships, completely desolating and razing by fire three-fourths of this once beautiful metropolis of the whole Pacific Coast on either the northern or southern continents.

Nor was the City of San Francisco alone in its extremity, for many smaller and populous towns within a radius of seventy-five miles were subjected to the peril of the mighty corkscrew quakings, Santa Rosa being entirely shaken down; Salinas, San Jose, Palo Alto, Santa Cruz, Berkeley, Alameda and Oakland all suffering great property losses and some human lives. The beautiful structures of the Leland Stanford, Jr., University, at Palo Alto, all erected and endowed to a sum in excess of \$40,000,000 by the late Senator Leland Stanford and his philanthropic wife, were almost completely wrecked, including the Memorial Cathedral, which contained the largest and finest collection of mosaic pictures on the Western Hemisphere.

Define Each Word

seismic: _____

rupture: _____

fade: _____

delve: _____

raze: _____

Write the Correct Word from the Vocabulary

1. As Coreen _____ into her study of Australian horticulture, she planted native shrubs along the edge of her property.
2. Geologists have detected minor _____ disturbances along the coast of Newcastle, suggesting the possibility of a fault in the area.
3. The demolition team _____ the old opera house, paving the way for a modern structure with underground parking garages.
4. Lachlan’s baby picture has _____ because it has been exposed to too much sunlight.
5. When the propane transport truck veered off the road and crashed, both large tanks _____ , causing a immediate conflagration that burned the dry grassland and filled the morning sky with fire and smoke.

Comprehension and Discussion: Answer Each Question in Complete Sentences

1. What happened after the initial earthquake and the aftershocks of “less severity” that followed?

2. In paragraph 2, A. M. Allison uses the terms “noble business blocks,” “grand and imposing structures,” and “beautiful, superb residences.” Why? What do you think the author wants to convey by using these terms?

