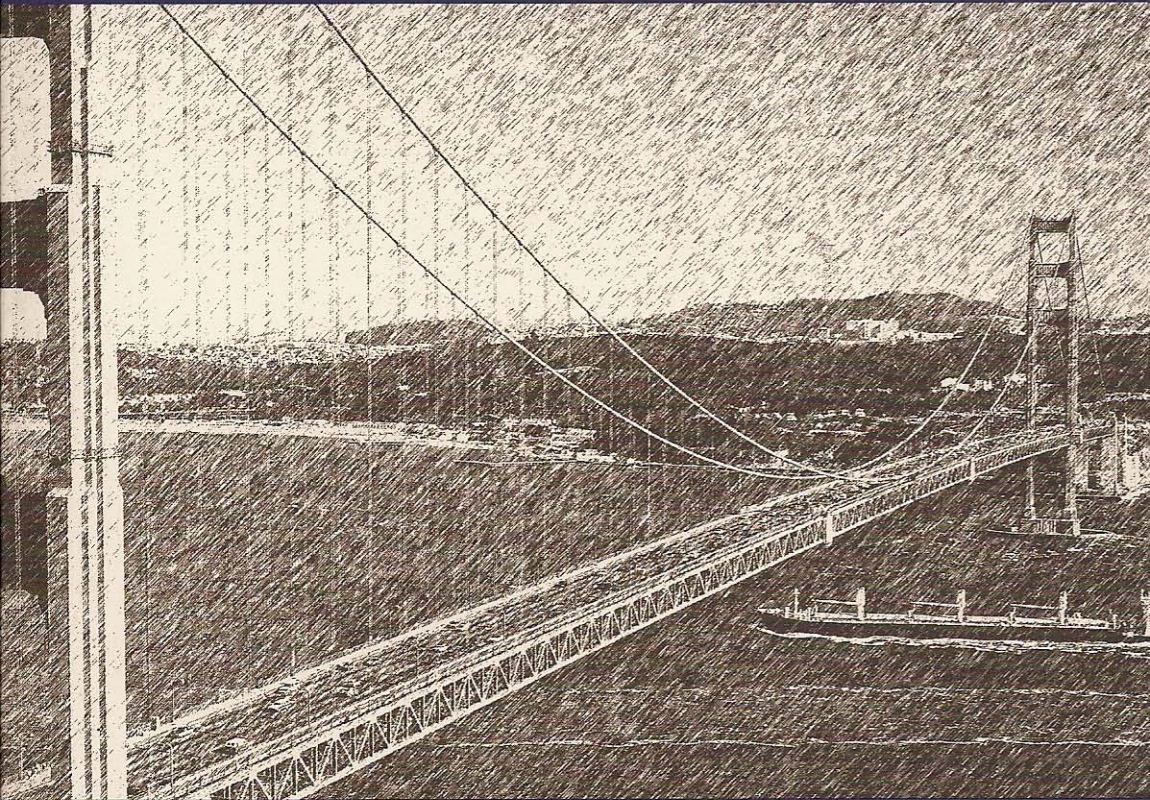


BUILDING  
BRIDGES  
*across* TIME




A History of  
California Pacific  
Medical Center

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HOLDING STEADY *when*  
*the* EARTH GIVES WAY



*"... the nurses had rushed out of their rooms and were coming pell mell down the stairs; when I opened my door someone called, Oh, Miss Brown, what shall we do? I answered rather fiercely—Do? Put something on and come over and see what has happened to the patients! They told me afterward that my voice was better than a dose of bromide for they knew ... they had no more time to think of themselves."*

KATHARINE BROWN, SUPERINTENDENT OF NURSING  
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, MAY 15, 1906

FIRES, CABLE CAR CRASHES, and freeway pile-ups have all brought patients to California Pacific, but nothing touches our collective experience like a major earthquake. In 1906 and again during the Loma Prieta quake of 1989, the injured and frightened turned to all four campuses for comfort and care.

In the days following the 1906 earthquake and fire, German Hospital (the future Davies Campus) welcomed more than 2,000 refugees, charging not a penny for their care. The pharmacy filled thousands of free prescriptions. Double rows of beds lined the halls. Day and night, employees pumped water from the hospital's deep well for firefighters and thirsty households in the neighborhood. Surgeons operated by the glare of a locomotive headlamp. The dead were buried on the hospital grounds.

No known records remain from 1906 on the Pacific Campus, but the scene could not have differed much from what took place at the other sites. At Children's Hospital (the future California Campus), plaster and soot buried children in their beds. A chimney fell through the roof of the maternity cottage, within feet of the women patients.

Later, nurse Katharine Brown (No relation to founder Charlotte Blake Brown) wrote to her family: “The nurses have worked splendidly (and) there was no screaming or crying among the patients.” In half an hour, all 116 patients were safely removed from the damaged main hospital to the round brick buildings on Sacramento Street. Minutes later, word arrived that the City was in flames and that most other hospitals were being evacuated. Nurses swept away the debris and dragged beds out of their own rooms to create emergency wards in the old building.

Across town at St. Luke’s, the earthquake left the brand new Gibbs Pavilion “practically destroyed” and the rest of the buildings shaken. Within an hour, physicians and nurses were tending to the wounded in tents, the Red Cross flag was flying, and refugees were gathering on the grounds to watch the smoke rise out of the north. The firestorm that started downtown quickly reached within seven blocks of the hospital.

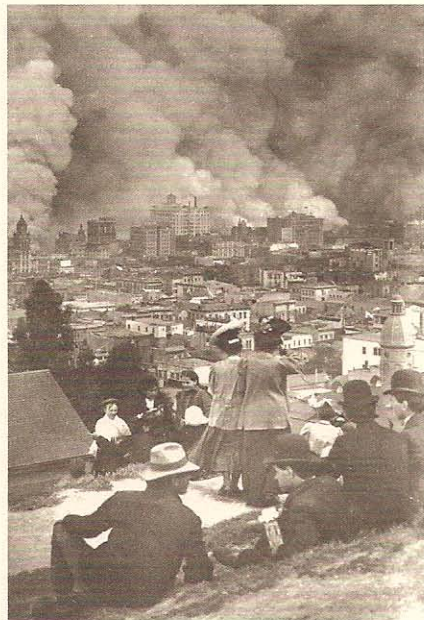
For three days and nights, San Francisco burned. A steady parade of weary refugees tramped out of town toward the safety of the sand dunes and hills. At the California Campus, ninety-nine patients were admitted, most of them near death. All but five were saved.

As the fire drew closer to all the hospitals, patients waited and watched. At the Davies Campus, nurses held up mirrors so nine-year-old William Anderson, just two days out of surgery, could see the distant flames from his bed.

Finally, fire fighters dynamited the mansions along Van Ness Avenue and established a firebreak at Dolores and Twentieth Streets, saving the neighborhoods to the west and south. A collective cheer rose up from all the hospitals that now comprise California Pacific Medical Center.

*“Substantially all of the City west of Van Ness Ave. and 20th St. (was) completely destroyed by fire. The burned district comprised the entire business section of San Francisco, and also the residences of about 250,000 people.”*

ST. LUKE’S BOARD MINUTES, MAY 11, 1906.





*"We were quite badly shaken up and our buildings will most of them be replaced because of weakened foundations, but for the present we are thankful for a place so good....It is wonderful to see the fortitude and cheerfulness of the people."*

E. MYRTLE WELLCOME, M.D.,  
WRITING FROM THE CALIFORNIA  
CAMPUS, APRIL 21, 1906

Aftershocks continued for weeks. Hospital workers at St. Luke's moved the operating tables out of tents and into three flats on San Jose Avenue. The chronically ill were taken to the Jockey Club racetrack near what is now Stonestown; for a year and a half, patients slept under the grandstand.

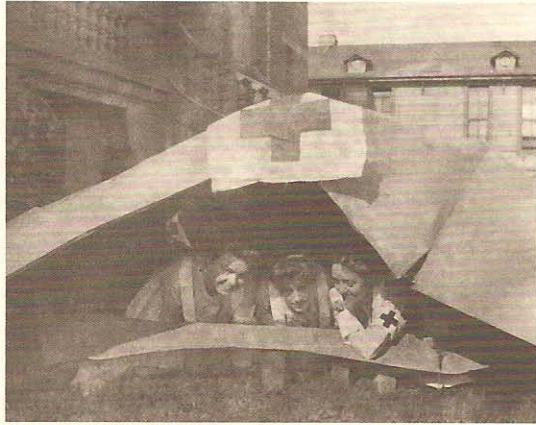
At the California Campus, the heat, lights, toilets, bathtubs, laundry and kitchens were still out of commission a month after the April 18 disaster. In October, the New York Chamber of Commerce sent a half-million dollars to San Francisco for "the rehabilitation of individual sufferers." As time passed and long-term needs came into focus, the New York Chamber agreed that the remainder of its relief funds should be divided between St. Luke's and Children's Hospitals "to share and share alike." Eventually, buildings at both of these campuses had to be torn down, but the soul of these and all the hospitals remained alive to help unite and strengthen the entire community.

Gradually, construction standards toughened, and hospital leaders all around town started coordinating with other emergency agencies for disaster preparedness. After



*"The nurses have no home,  
except temporarily in tents.  
Before the rains come they  
must be housed."*

LEWIS W. ALLEN, M.D.,  
SUPERINTENDENT,  
ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL, JULY 1906



the 7.1 Loma Prieta jolt in 1989, books and bottles fell, but none of the sites suffered any major structural damage. At the Davies Campus, the power blinked off and stayed off for nearly three days, but emergency generators kept the juice flowing while dozens of physicians, nurses, and others voluntarily treated the injured and calmed the fearful. A full report issued just three days after the quake said it all: "The precautions that had been taken...really paid off (and) there was an inspiring response by staff and volunteers."

Now, as then, the caregivers at California Pacific are here to help San Franciscans pull their lives back together after a shock. In fact, the year 2006 marks a time of major progress toward the reconstruction of acute care facilities throughout the medical center, with seismic safety one of the prime motivations. The goal, as always, is to remain the one place you can always count on, whatever big surprises may shake your world. 🌩



*"I was halfway onto the Bay Bridge when Loma Prieta hit. It took me several hours to work my way back to the hospital, but once I got there I didn't leave again for three days. We had 14 earthquake patients (at the Pacific Campus), mostly from the Marina. There was a lot of chaos, but we stayed in control. We have earthquake drills twice a year, and Loma Prieta gave us a chance to see where we needed to make refinements."*

MICHAEL ROKEACH, M.D., CHAIRMAN,  
DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MEDICINE, 1994



CALIFORNIA PACIFIC MEDICAL CENTER

P.O. Box 7999

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94120

(415) 600-6000

[WWW.CPMC.ORG](http://WWW.CPMC.ORG)



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