



The Cupola

Oakland City
Landmark 1975

National Register of
Historic Places 1976

California Historic
Landmark 1998

The Newsletter of the Pardee Home Museum

SPRING 2007



Special double issue: Pardee & the 1906 quake

Governor springs to the rescue of his hometown!

■ Seven weeks of relief efforts based in Oakland following earthquake across the bay

According to California historian Edward Staniford, "On hearing of the San Francisco disaster, Pardee immediately wired Mayor Schmitz of San Francisco pledging all possible state aid to the stricken city. By noon, he had issued orders dispatching units of the California National Guard to San Francisco and Oakland. Later that afternoon, he bid hasty farewell to his family and took the train for San Francisco. In Oakland he

learned that San Francisco was practically cut off and decided that he could do more effective work by remaining in Oakland. He established headquarters in the Oakland City Hall which Mayor Mott had turned over to him for the emergency. For the following six weeks, Oakland City Hall was the unofficial seat of the state government. . . . The multifarious details of relief and reconstruction were so enormous that Pardee was unable to leave City Hall for days at a time."

Governor Pardee could not access his Oakland home during the earthquake crisis because it had been leased out, since September of 1903, to James T. Moran, a prominent Oakland merchant, and his wife Mary. Moran's clothing store at 1017 Broadway (currently the site of the Marriott Hotel) was among the many which advertised in the days immediately after the quake, at the behest of Mayor Mott, that they were not raising prices to take advantage of the disaster. But Moran is best remembered today for serving as the first President of the Pacific Coast Baseball League in 1903, and, before that, during the 1880s, as the co-sponsor,

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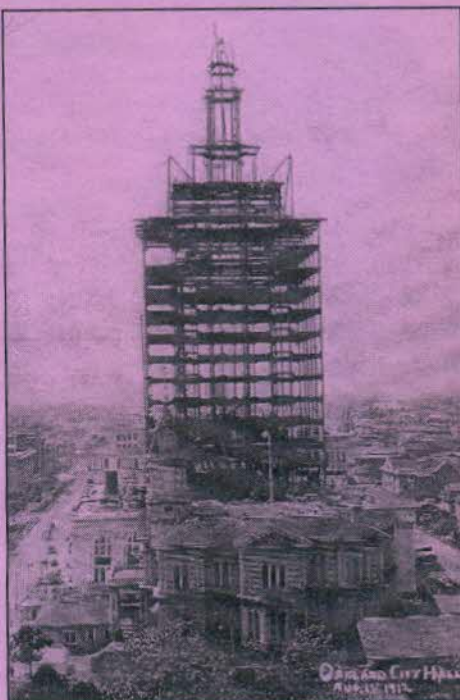


Oakland History Room

VIRTUALLY ALL EMERGENCY coordination for the San Francisco earthquake victims came through Oakland's fourth city hall, where Pardee had served as mayor some years earlier, in 1893 and 1894. The construction of this city hall had been supervised by George's father, Enoch, during his term as mayor (1876-77), because the previous city hall had burned to the ground under suspicious circumstances during anti-Chinese disturbances in Oakland. This view is from Washington Street, then Oakland's premier retail address.

THE 1906 CITY HALL is seen here being supplanted by the fifth and current building, completed in 1914. This represented the crowning achievement of remarkable growth for Oakland following the earthquake. Refugees who never returned to San Francisco were part of the influx of new residents into Oakland, which expanded its borders in all directions, saw vast improvements in infrastructure and transportation, and, under the enlightened leadership of Mayor Frank Mott, celebrated the opening of Lakeside Park, the Oakland Public Museum, and the Civic Auditorium, as well as this, the first skyscraper City Hall in the U.S. and the tallest building west of the Mississippi at the time.

Oakland History Room



Oakland City Hall
ARCH. 1914

Did the earthquake upend Governor Pardee's political agenda?

Too often George Pardee is remembered simply as the "Earthquake Governor," with a quick nod to his heroic efforts in the weeks following the 1906 quake to coordinate emergency relief to San Francisco from his temporary office in Oakland's City Hall. However, very few students of history today are aware of the impact the earthquake had upon Pardee's political agenda for the remaining months of his term in 1907 or the role it played in assuring that he would be only a one-term governor.

In *Governor in the Middle: The Administration of George C. Pardee, Governor of California, 1903-1907*, his 1955 doctoral dissertation at UC-Berkeley, Edward Staniford explored the impact of the earthquake on Pardee's agenda for political reform. Public outrage in California over the strong-arm tactics of the Southern Pacific Railroad was reaching one of its periodic crescendos in early 1906. The "SP" had, during Pardee's first term, strongly resisted the inauguration of a competing railroad, the Western Pacific, and fought to the bitter end for its monopolistic control of the Oakland waterfront—two issues on which the railroad was consistently opposed by the Governor. Additionally, the very public disapproval of railroad monopolies emanating from Washington under President Roosevelt made the anti-SP cause in California bolder than ever before.

Chester H. Rowell and A.J. Pillsbury, editor of the Fresno Republican and Secretary of the State Board of Control, respectively, and two of the leading lights among progressive Republicans, were, in early 1906, actively trying to convince Pardee to issue a public and uncompromising call for warfare on the SP, and Pillsbury submitted a proposed call in writing for the governor's consideration. Staniford wrote, "The document remained on Pardee's desk for a long time. Finally, on April 17, 1906, Pardee decided to issue the proclamation the next day, but an unusual quirk of Nature prevented him from executing the deed."

That "unusual quirk" was, of course, the Great Earthquake, and, for the seven weeks following the quake, Pardee and all other major officials in the state were absorbed in the task of getting San Francisco back on its feet. But with the June 12 adjournment of the special session of the state legislature



THE HOTEL METROPOLE, located at Thirteenth and Jefferson, midway between City Hall and Governor Pardee's home, was where Pardee caught an occasional night of sleep in the weeks after the earthquake. Later it was the birthplace of the progressive movement in California, as Pardee and like-minded Republicans founded the Lincoln-Roosevelt League in a meeting held here in November 1907.

called by Pardee to finalize state efforts to aid San Francisco, the immediate emergency period was over and the state primary campaign season was underway. According to Staniford, Pardee made the decision to put aside the anti-SP agenda which had been strongly urged upon him before the earthquake and, instead, to offer himself as a compromise candidate between the irreconcilable pro-SP and anti-SP factions within the Republican party. Proud of the many positive achievements of his administration and encouraged by the widespread praise he had received for his heroic efforts to aid San Francisco, Pardee decided that the road to electoral success lay in casting himself as "the man in the middle," as he had four years earlier.

Anti-machine Republicans had long lamented Pardee's penchant for compromise and procrastination; as Chester Rowell noted, Pardee could be counted upon "to do the right thing just too late." However, Southern Pacific loyalists were quickly coalescing around U.S. Congressman James N. Gillett of Humboldt County as their choice for governor, and anti-SP forces realized that the incumbent Pardee was probably their

only hope of derailing the SP machine. By the end of the primary season, Pardee had won 359 delegates to 134 for Abe Ruef, the notorious political boss of San Francisco who, hoping to be the leading power broker at the upcoming party convention, had won most the delegates from that city "by colonizing voters in the burned areas and stuffing the ballot boxes in a wholesale manner," according to the leading San Francisco papers. James Gillett was a distant third with only 66 delegates.

After complex machinations by SP operatives leading up to the opening of the Republican convention in Santa Cruz on September 5, the outcome of the gubernatorial nomination was still uncertain, though Ruef clearly held the balance of power between Gillett and Pardee. According to George Lowry, author of the classic 1951 study *The California Progressives*, on the first day of the convention, "As Ruef later testified, he agreed to support the Humboldt congressman for a consideration of \$14,000. After that the show was over. The machine nominated its man for governor on the first ballot by a vote of 591 to Pardee's 233, handpicked nearly every minor office, and

