

Historical Editorial slide layout

RUIN AND RESURRECTION

The San Francisco Calamity of 1906



“The earth seemed like a terrier shaking a rat.” — Professor George Davidson

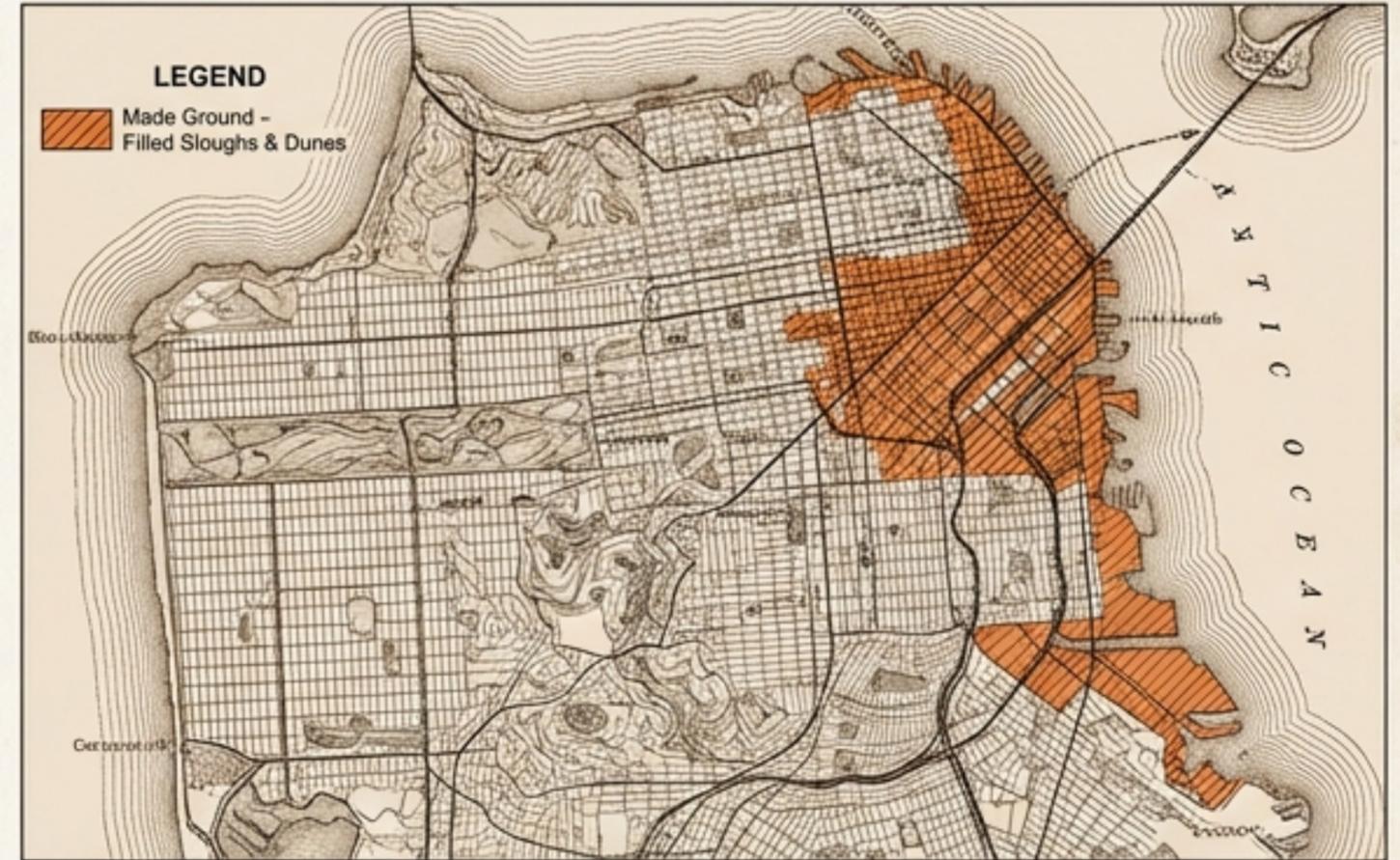
A Chronological Account of the Earthquake, the Fire, and the Unconquerable Spirit of the Golden Gate.

THE QUEEN OF THE WEST

San Francisco on the Eve of Destruction



The Paris of America.



In **April 1906**, San Francisco was a metropolis of 400,000—a city of gaiety and wealth. But beneath the opulence lay a fatal flaw: the business district and the area **South of Market** were built on “made ground”—sand dunes and filled-in sloughs where the bay once reached Montgomery Street.

5:12 A.M. — THE AWAKENING

5:12:00 – The first shock hits.

Duration - 40 to 60 seconds of violent rotary motion.

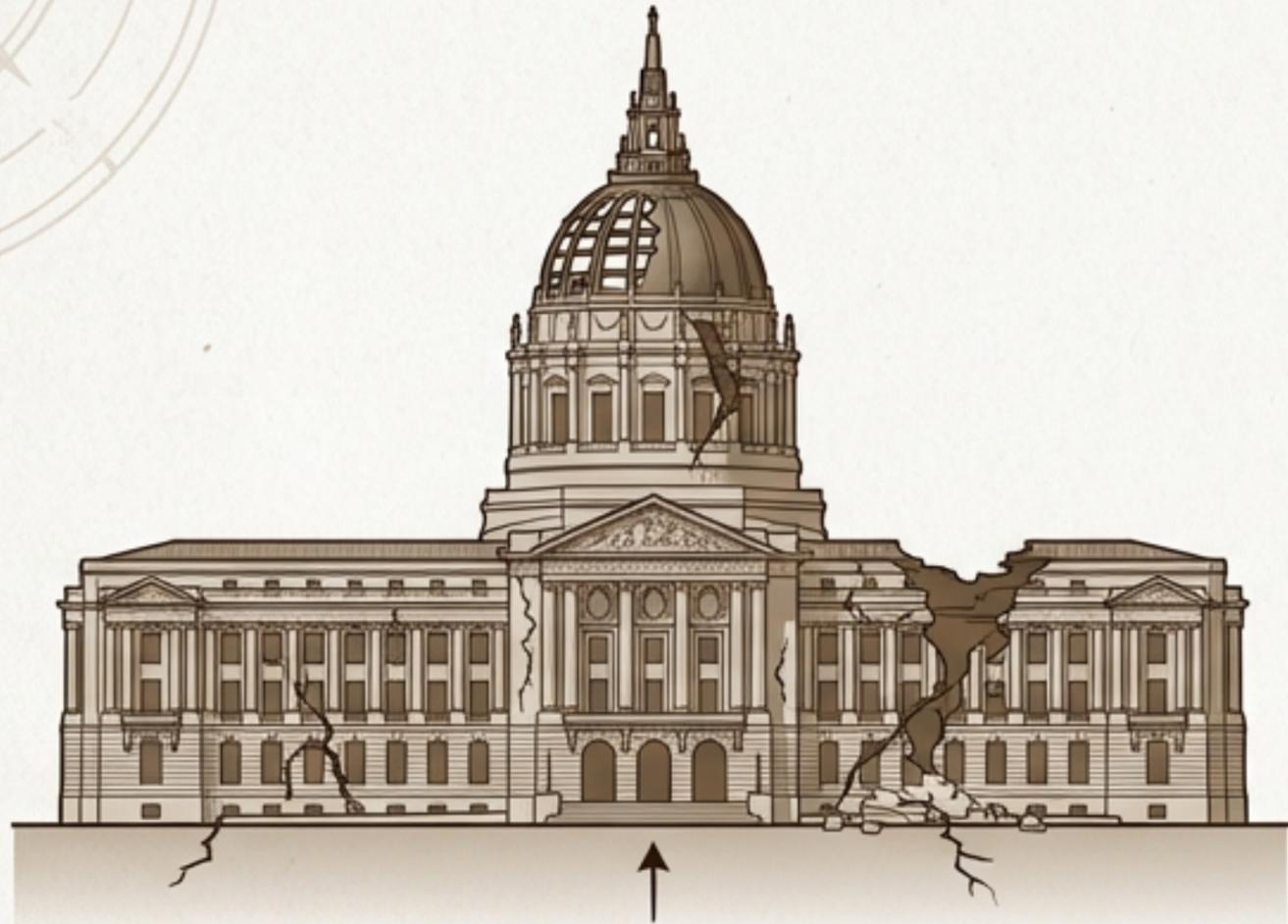
Direction - South-Southeast to North-Northwest.



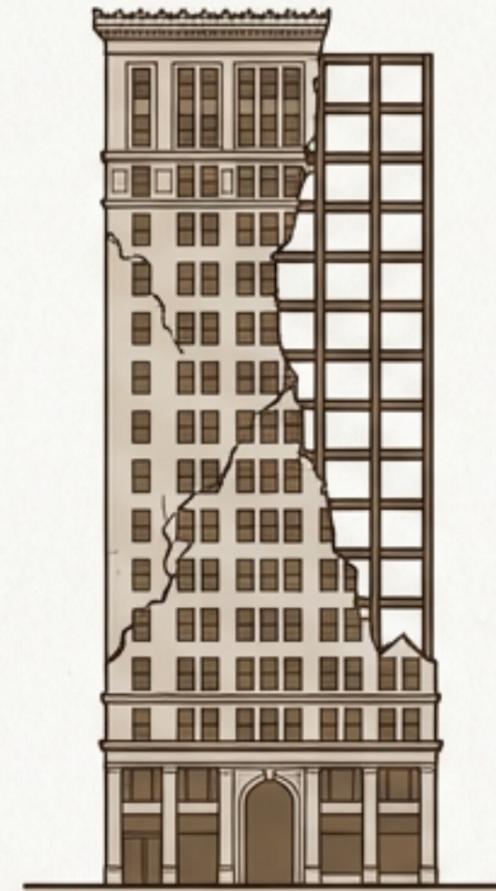
“The earth seemed to slip gently... then came a sickening swaying... big buildings were crumbling as one might crush a biscuit.”

The silence of dawn broken by a roar like a burst of thunder.

HOUSE OF CARDS VS. THE STEEL CAGE



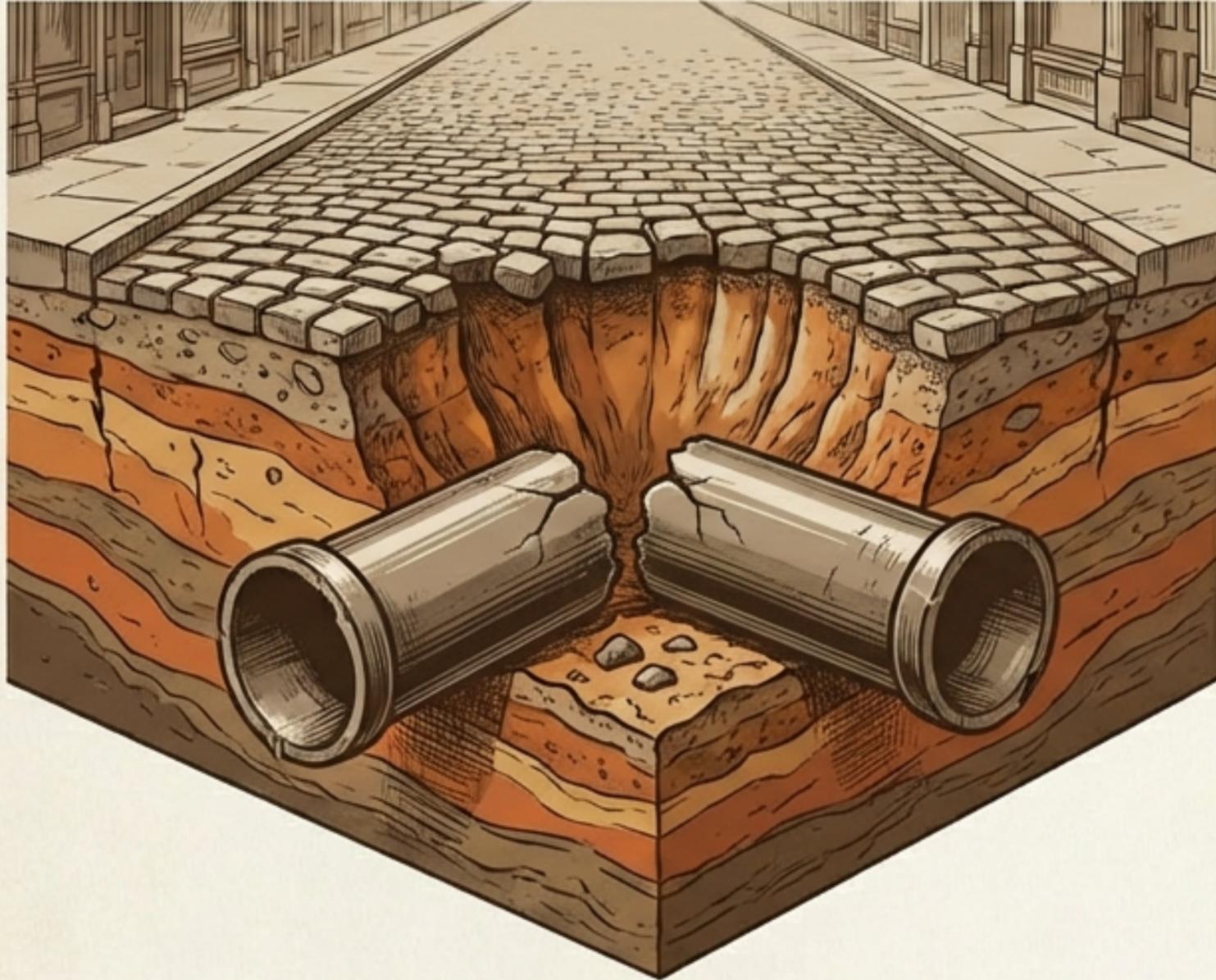
Traditional Masonry on Made Ground



Modern Steel Frame

In the “made ground” south of Market, the earth shook like jelly. The \$7 million City Hall became a wreck. However, modern steel-frame skyscrapers rocked “like a ship in a gale” but remained structurally sound—vindicating the architects, until the fire came.

THE HAMSTRUNG DEFENDERS



- **The Critical Failure:** The earthquake shattered the water mains laid through the unstable made ground.
- **The Leadership Vacuum:** Fire Chief incapacitated at the outset.
- **The Spark:** Fires broke out instantly in the 'South of Market' district, fueled by overturned stoves and gas leaks.

The fire department rushed to the scene, only to find their hoses dry.

MARCH OF THE FIRE DEMON



By Wednesday noon, a wall of flame swept unchecked. The fire created its own weather system, resembling "one vast blazing furnace." It consumed the history of the West—libraries, the Academy of Sciences, and art collections.

FIGHTING WITH FURY



THE STRATEGY

- **Dynamite Squad:** With no water, authorities blew up city blocks to create firebreaks.
- **The Stand at Van Ness:** Captain MacBride and gunners blew up a mile of mansions to stop the westward march.

The Island of Gold: The U.S. Mint, holding \$300 million, was the only building saved in the heart of the fire.

THE EXODUS



A weird procession of 300,000 homeless fleeing to the Ferries and Parks.

The disaster leveled all social castes. Millionaires and laborers marched side-by-side. Trunks were dragged by women in silk dresses; one woman walked with one high-heeled slipper and one laborer's brogan.

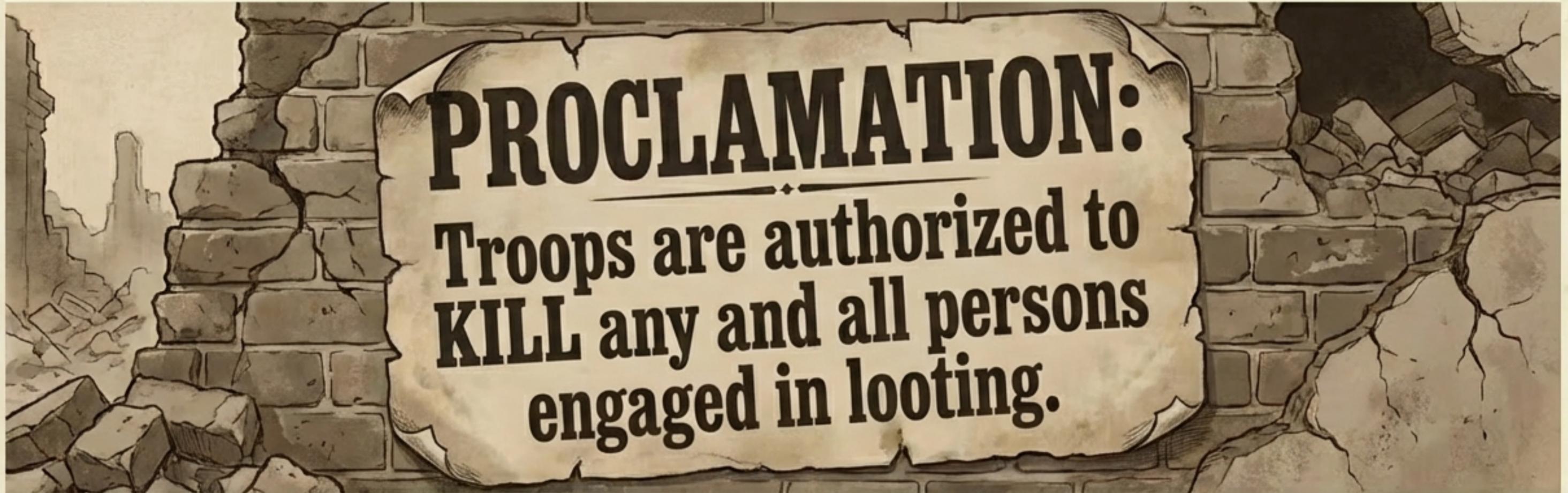
LIFE IN THE TENTED CITY



“I have money... I have property... but I am going to cook this piece of bacon on bricks and be happy.”

The parks became cities of 100,000.
Adaptation became the rule of survival.

LAW, ORDER, AND THE GHOULS



PROCLAMATION:
Troops are authorized to
KILL any and all persons
engaged in looting.

The Protection of the Ruins

Martial law was swift and absolute. Soldiers shot thieves found cutting rings from the fingers of the dead. Even amidst tragedy, the military had to cordon off Chinatown to stop sightseers from looting relics.

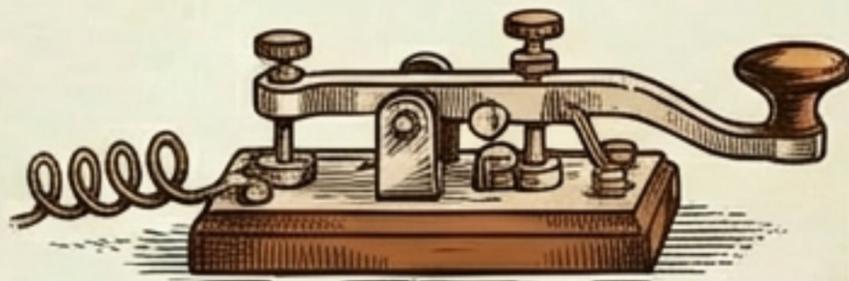
THE LAST WIRE TO THE WORLD

9:00 AM: → 9:00 AM: "Fire all over town... it's me for the simple life."

12:45 PM: → 12:45 PM: "Back of the Palace Hotel is a furnace."

→ Final Message: "We are beginning to pack up our instruments... Good-bye."

Postal Telegraph operators stayed at their posts until dynamite ended the transmission and the city went silent.



THE LEDGER OF LOSS

4 Square Miles



Area Burned
(497 City Blocks).



\$350,000,000

Estimated Financial Loss
in 1906 Currency.

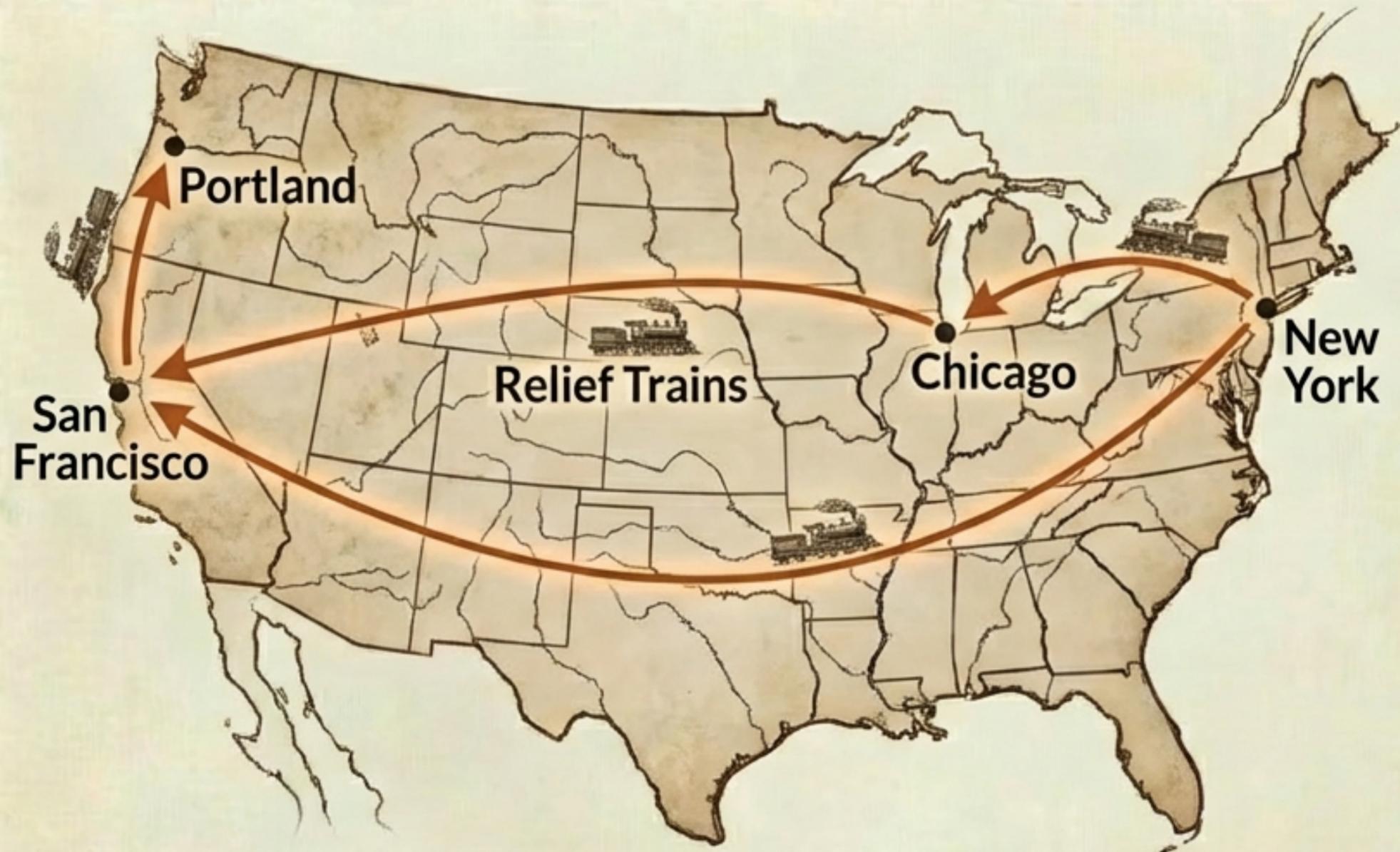
Fire-proof safes failed—40%
contained only ash.



Human Toll

Official counts varied;
hundreds perished.
Unknown numbers in
the South of Market
tenements.

A WORLD UNITED



The U.S. Government appropriated \$2.5 million immediately.

Trains from the East rushed with right-of-way over passenger traffic.

Chicago sent eggs and meat; Portland sent 800,000 lbs of provisions.



National Pride: President Roosevelt declined foreign government aid, asserting the nation could care for its own.

THE SPIRIT OF 1906



***“Mark my words, San Francisco
Francisco will arise from
these ashes a greater and
more beautiful city than
ever.” – William H. Crocker***

Before the ashes cooled,
rebuilding began. Newspapers
printed joint editions. Banks
opened temporary offices.
The ‘Spirit of 49’ was reborn.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE FUTURE



The disaster proved the relative insignificance of man against nature, yet proved the supremacy of human resilience.

The city was not the buildings, but the people. The buildings fell; the people stood.