

# *The California National Guard* in the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906

by James J. Hudson

Most of the historical material published about the National Guard is concerned only with the organization's performance as a military fighting force. Relatedly, nearly all militia or National Guard legislation has concentrated on making the National Guard into a more efficient instrument for "repelling invasion." Yet, as a state force the guard has made its greatest contribution to the community by aiding civil authorities during emergencies. These emergencies may arise out of the "acts of men," as in the case of the Wheatland Riots of 1913, or "acts of God," as exemplified by the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. In California the guard is most frequently called upon to serve in the latter type of emergency. Early in this century one of these natural calamities involved virtually the entire state guard. Hastily called to duty, the guard maintained order and dispensed relief for over forty days before being withdrawn from active service. Heated controversy marked its participation in relief efforts; indeed, many days before the occupation had ended, many San Franciscans questioned the wisdom of calling in the force in the first place and petitioned the governor to withdraw the troops. This article investigates the guard's little explored role in what was long regarded as the disaster of the century.

At 5:13 A.M. on Wednesday, April 18, 1906, San Francisco was rocked by one of the most severe earthquakes of modern times.<sup>1</sup> The principal shock came in two movements of maximum intensity and lasted approximately two minutes. Several other minor quakes were felt during the day.<sup>2</sup> The disturbance rendered inoperative the city's power, heat, light, and communication systems. Water mains cracked, and the proud city of the Argonauts was paralyzed before the ensuing fire which accompanied the earthquake.

Immediately after the quake, no less than a dozen fires broke out in San Francisco's business district.<sup>3</sup> Without water the fire department was helpless to stop the conflagration.<sup>4</sup> Within three hours after the earthquake, the area bounded on the east by San Francisco Bay, on the south by Mission Street, and on the west by Third Street was a mass of seething flames. As the fire spread rapidly to the north and the southwest, thousands of panic-stricken San Franciscans jammed the debris-filled streets in an effort to reach the parks and high

ground to the west of the city. Still other thousands fought their way east to the Ferry Building which had been spared because of the wide Embarcadero. There they crowded onto the ferry boats and crossed to Oakland and other East Bay cities.<sup>5</sup>

Utmost confusion reigned in San Francisco. On every hand were the cries of the injured, the roar of the flames, the crash of falling buildings, and the intermittent blasts of dynamite charges set off by inexperienced fire fighters in a vain effort to stop the fire. Increasing the distress, more tremblors rumbled later in the day. Expressing the wide-spread anxiety, the *Oakland Tribune* predicted in six-inch headlines: "San Francisco Doomed."<sup>6</sup>

It was not until Saturday morning, April 21, three days after the earthquake, that firemen stopped the advance of the fire. With the partial repair of water mains, a small amount of water was brought to play on the fire, but success in stopping the conflagration was in part the result of dynamiting buildings in the fire's path and thereby taking away potential fuel.

As the smoke cleared the people of San Francisco began to take stock of the damage. The flames had swept westward to Van Ness Avenue and Dolores Street, south to Townsend Street, and north and east past Telegraph Hill to the Bay.<sup>7</sup> A few isolated buildings remained standing in the burned district—mute testimony to superior building materials or to gallant fire fighting efforts. (Ingenious Italians on Telegraph Hill, for instance, saved several houses by beating out flames with sacks and bedding soaked in red wine.<sup>8</sup>) A large section of the wholesale district, almost all of the retail and shopping district, leading hotels, the newspapers' offices, the principal financial centers, most of the public buildings, and thousands of small hotels, apartment houses, and private homes were devastated.<sup>9</sup> The burned area covered approximately 4.7 square miles in the heart of the city. Of the 521 city blocks in the burned area only thirteen were saved. No less than 28,188 buildings were destroyed, and 200,000 of San Francisco's 450,000 inhabitants were rendered homeless. The loss in real and personal property has been estimated at \$500,000,000, although about \$200,000,000 was recovered through insurance payments.<sup>10</sup> Original estimates placed the loss of life in the thousands, but a careful investigation by Major-General A. W. Greely, commander of the Pacific Division of the regular army, cut the figure to 498 killed and 415 seriously injured.<sup>11</sup>

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To this list General Greely added another sixty-four dead and fifty-one seriously injured in Santa Rosa, twenty-one dead and ten seriously injured in San Jose, and eighty-one dead at Agnew's Asylum near San Jose.<sup>12</sup>

Within an hour after the first earthquake was felt, and many hours before official orders from Adjutant-General Joseph B. Lauck were received, units of the California National Guard began taking an active part in the effort to alleviate suffering, protect lives and property, and maintain law and order in the stricken city.<sup>13</sup> As might be expected, the San Francisco-based organizations—the First Infantry Regiment, the First Battalion Coast Artillery, Troop A Cavalry, and the Second Company Signal Corps of the National Guard and four divisions of the California Naval Militia—were first on the scene.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, many members of these units left burning homes and terrified families to assemble at their local armories for duty.<sup>15</sup> Guard companies in other California cities damaged by the earthquake acted in much the same way, particularly in Oakland, Alameda, Santa Rosa, San Jose, and Santa Cruz.

San Francisco units continued to act independently during the first twenty-four hours of the calamity.<sup>16</sup> Brigadier-General John A. Koster, whose Second Brigade headquarters was located in San Francisco, and who ordinarily would have been in command of the San Francisco troops, was with General Lauck in Ukiah on the day of the earthquake. Communications with Koster or Lauck proved impossible due to the destruction of the telephone and telegraph systems in San Francisco. Fortunately, the company grade officers proved resourceful, and on Koster's return to the burning city during the evening of the eighteenth, he found practically all his troops already performing patrol duty.<sup>17</sup>

Adjutant-General Lauck moved his headquarters from Sacramento to San Francisco so that he might keep in close touch with the fire fighting and relief operations. He first established himself in the Occidental Hotel at Bush and Montgomery streets, but as the fire advanced he was forced to move to the Union League Club near Post and Stockton streets. A few hours later he was forced to move again, this time to the Fairmont Hotel. On the morning of April 19, he transferred his headquarters to the North End police station on Washington Street, where he remained until the evening of April 20 when he moved to Oakland.<sup>18</sup>

Upon hearing of the disaster Governor George C. Pardee

also hurried to the Bay Area from Sacramento. He set up his headquarters in Oakland, establishing himself in Major Frank K. Mott's office. He probably selected Oakland as his base because that city still had communication service with the outside world. From Oakland Governor Pardee organized a campaign to secure aid for the San Francisco sufferers. Other areas in California were requested to send food, clothing, and medical supplies immediately.<sup>19</sup>

By April 21, all but one unit of the National Guard and Naval Militia of California had been called out. The Fifth Division of the Naval Militia stationed at Eureka was not called because of its isolated position.<sup>20</sup>

On April 23 the National Guard troops in the Bay Area were organized into provisional brigades.<sup>21</sup> The First Provisional Brigade, under the command of Brigadier-General Robert Wankowski, comprised all the troops then on duty in Oakland, Alameda, San Jose, Santa Rosa, Berkeley, and Sacramento. The Second Provisional Brigade, commanded by Brigadier-General John A. Koster, was made up of troops serving in San Francisco.<sup>22</sup>

The activities of the First Battalion of the coast artillery (part of the Second Brigade) during the first few days of the crisis were typical of the units in San Francisco. This battalion assembled without orders early in the morning of April 18 and established a temporary kitchen and hospital at the rear of their partially destroyed armory.<sup>23</sup> At the same time a detachment was sent to aid the fire department in dynamiting buildings along Clay and Mason streets. In the afternoon of that day the battalion moved to Jefferson Square where the guardsmen continued to issue supplies, assist in maintaining order, and guard stores.<sup>24</sup> They improvised a wagon train and removed food and supplies from store buildings in the path of the fire.<sup>25</sup> Elements of the First Battalion transferred prisoners from the Broadway jail to Fort Mason on April 19. The First Battalion next moved to Golden Gate Park, where it was placed in charge of policing the park and distributing supplies to thousands of destitute refugees.<sup>26</sup> A detachment was sent to transfer the patients from St. Luke's Hospital to the Ingleside Race Track where they would be safe from the fire. On April 20 the battalion relinquished command of the Golden Gate Park camp and moved to Haight and Cole streets.<sup>27</sup> They erected frame buildings for hospitals, kitchens, and storehouses, and here, as in the previous locations, a

*Down Market Street the ornate Call Building (left) and the substantial Emporium (center) succumb to flames, while National Guardsmen clear the streets of the few lagging civilians in the fire line who, in their hurry, register only as blurs in the photographer's camera.*

*At Market and Battery streets mounted guardsmen patrol for looters and stragglers while the fire rages two blocks away.*





# PROCLAMATION BY THE MAYOR

The Federal Troops, the members of the Regular Police Force and all Special Police Officers have been authorized by me to KILL any and all persons found engaged in Looting or in the Commission of Any Other Crime.

I have directed all the Gas and Electric Lighting Co.'s not to turn on Gas or Electricity until I order them to do so. You may therefore expect the city to remain in darkness for an indefinite time.

I request all citizens to remain at home from darkness until daylight every night until order is restored.

I WARN all Citizens of the danger of fire from Damaged or Destroyed Chimneys, Broken or Leaking Gas Pipes or Fixtures, or any like cause.

**E. E. SCHMITZ, Mayor**

Dated, April 18, 1906.

ALTYATER PRINT.  MISSION AND 22D STS.

*Fear of social anarchy prompted the mayor's emergency order which authorized the guard to shoot looters and set a civilian curfew.*

*Panorama of destruction from the California Street hill to the Bay.*

distribution system was established. Indeed, many of the guardsmen gave their own tents and blankets to the suffering people.<sup>28</sup> The battalion remained at the Haight and Cole Street headquarters until relieved from active duty on May 21.<sup>29</sup> Throughout this period of active duty the battalion operated as a unit, and little attention was paid to the company organization. Much of the work was done by special detachments responsible directly to the battalion commander.

The National Guard was not the only military organization serving in the city during the disaster. The United States Regular Army, too, was on the scene early on the day of the earthquake. Only minutes after the first shock Brigadier-General Frederick Funston, commander of the California Department and acting commander of the Pacific Division, made a hurried survey of the damage in the business section of the city. To Funston it was immediately apparent that a calamity of unusual proportions was imminent. Without hesitation this veteran of the Philippine campaign ordered all regular troops in the vicinity of San Francisco to report to city authorities for duty in the emergency. He, too, acted without orders from higher headquarters but felt sure the war department would support his actions.<sup>30</sup>

In response to Funston's orders the troops from Fort Mason reported at 7:45 A.M., those from the Presidio at 8:00 A.M., and those from Fort McDowell and Fort Miley before noon of the first day.<sup>31</sup> On April 19 troops from Fort Baker, Angel Island, and Alcatraz Island, plus a detachment of marines from Mare Island, were placed on duty in San Francisco. On the same day the Pacific Squadron of the United States Navy reached San Francisco, and sailors and marines were sent ashore to aid in the fight to save the city.<sup>32</sup> Saturday, April 21, saw troops from the Presidio of Monterey arrive on the scene, and a week later soldiers from distant Vancouver Barracks in Washington joined the San Francisco contingent.<sup>33</sup>

Prompt and direct action by General Funston and the regular army probably prevented much looting and robbery during the first few hours after the earthquake. Detachments of federal troops were sent to guard the United States Mint, the post offices, and other federal buildings. Other detachments removed the records of the Pacific Division of the Department of California from their repositories in the Grant and Phelan buildings when these buildings were threatened by the flames.<sup>34</sup> As martial law had not been proclaimed most





*Guardsmen set sticks of dynamite to bring down dangerously tottering walls. Their seemingly random blastings during the fire did little to control the blaze and brought forth public criticism.*

of the troops were placed under the supervision of city officials; however, General Funston or his superior, General Greely, who had returned to San Francisco on April 23, always sat in on policy making meetings.

Meanwhile, San Francisco Mayor Eugene Schmitz moved quickly to organize civilian efforts in behalf of the city. On the afternoon of April 18 a number of prominent San Franciscans assembled in the Hall of Justice at the mayor's request, and out of this gathering originated the celebrated Citizens' Committee of Fifty.<sup>35</sup> This committee, which included ex-mayor James D. Phelan, M. H. DeYoung, Rudolph Spreckels, and E. H. Harriman, virtually replaced the official city government during the ensuing weeks.<sup>36</sup> Sub-committees were appointed to handle every conceivable problem. There were committees on "Relief of the Hungry," "Housing," "Citizen Police," "Restoration of City Water," "Sanitation," and "Finance," to name only a few. The mayor made the committee members special officers with full power to represent him in the requisitioning of men, supplies, vehicles, and boats for public use.<sup>37</sup>

In answer to Governor Pardee's appeal, volunteer donations began to arrive on April 21, only three days after the

crisis began. To the little town of Hayward went the credit for the first load of supplies landed in San Francisco. Relief trains soon were arriving from all parts of the United States. Over 1700 carloads of supplies of all types were received and distributed among 300,000 needy citizens.<sup>38</sup> The distribution of such a tremendous quantity of goods to nearly a third of a million people was no small problem, and its supervision was turned over to the regular army.<sup>39</sup>

No less than five separate organizations were maintaining order in San Francisco: the municipal police, the National Guard, the United States Navy, the citizens' committees, and the United States Regular Army. The fact that all five, for the most part, acted independently of one another added to the confusion and panic arising out of the fire and earthquake. In the words of General Greely, "Such unprecedented conditions might well have caused casualties by the score."<sup>40</sup>

To solve this problem of administration, a meeting was called at Fort Mason on April 21. At this conference, attended by Governor Pardee, General Funston, Mayor Schmitz, and Chief of Police Dinan, the city was divided into three districts with the police patrolling one, the National Guard a second, and the regulars the third.<sup>41</sup> The district assigned to the Na-

## National Guard

tional Guard embraced the territory bounded by Page, Fillmore, Pine, Van Ness Avenue, Eleventh, Harrison, Sixteenth, and by an irregular line to former K, Eleventh Avenue, former H, and Stanyan streets.<sup>42</sup> To assist in the patrolling of this extremely large area, approximately six square miles, the San Francisco guard units were reinforced by other guard units.<sup>43</sup> This district, with only a minor change, remained under the supervision and control of the National Guard until the whole city was redistricted on May 8.<sup>44</sup> In order to comply with the standards of the other districts General Koster issued the following instructions to his unit commanders:

The responsibility for the maintenance of good order in the district assigned to the National guard rests with the troops. Owing to the peculiarity of the situation, it is imperative that officers of all grades, as well as the enlisted men, assume and maintain a courteous but firm attitude, and deport themselves at all times in a manner that will reflect creditably on the organization as a whole.

All streets will be properly patrolled, suspicious characters will be arrested and brought before the subdistrict commander, who will, if in his judgment the cases warrant, turn them over to the police authorities.

Lights of any kind in residences or buildings and the use of stoves of any description will not be permitted until further orders.

Fires will only be permitted on the streets or roads between the hours of 7 A.M. and 6 P.M., and must be at all times kept under control.

Sanitary measures will be strictly enforced, particularly regarding the use of latrines and disposition of all garbage. Citizens will be required to police in the vicinity of their homes or temporary quarters, and daily inspections by medical officers of the subdistricts will be made and reports made to this office.

The sale or disposition of liquors in any manner is forbidden.

The comfort of the public will at all times receive careful consideration and every assistance rendered to alleviate suffering and relieve distress.

Such features not covered by these instructions will, if considered of sufficient importance, be immediately reported to these Headquarters.<sup>45</sup>

The Second Company, Signal Corps, commanded by Captain G. M. Scott, laid, operated, and maintained military telegraph lines between brigade headquarters in Jefferson

Square and the headquarters of the subdistrict commanders. Captain Scott showed ingenuity in the laying of these lines by dropping them into the temporarily abandoned cable car slots instead of trying to erect an overhead system. Over three miles of wire was laid in this manner.<sup>46</sup>

Without a doubt, the National Guard performed a major service in relieving suffering in the devastated city. According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the National Guard was feeding "25,000 to 30,000 persons daily." At the principal distribution point, Jefferson Square, over 15,000 were being fed; at the Market Street cut at Church and Duboce avenues another 12,000 received subsistence, while lesser numbers were being taken care of at the Mission Park station and the Haight and Cole streets station.<sup>47</sup> A National Guard bakery produced over a thousand loaves of bread per day. Some of the supplies distributed to the destitute were purchased locally with vouchers signed by the adjutant-general, but most provisions came through the regular army quartermaster.<sup>48</sup>

In a move to further facilitate coordination between the California National Guard and the regular army, Governor Pardee asked General Greely to forward copies of his orders to General Koster of the National Guard. Koster thus could issue similar orders to his own men.<sup>49</sup>

By May 8 the situation in San Francisco had improved to such an extent that General Greely relieved all United States Naval forces from duty in the city. The order releasing the sailors also redistricted the city, dividing it into six districts, five of which were to be under the control of the regular troops and one to be controlled by the California National Guard. The fourth district, assigned to the guard, was bounded on the "north by Union Street, on the east by the San Francisco Bay, on the south by Market Street to Castro Street, thence south on Castro Street to Eighteenth Street, thence west on Eighteenth Street to Stanyan Street, thence north on Stanyan Street to Oak Street, thence east on Oak Street to Divisadero Street to Union Street."<sup>50</sup> This district covered the entire business section and a large part of the residential section north of Market Street. In normal times half the population of San Francisco lived in this area.<sup>51</sup>

Early in May a great many of the restrictions which had been imposed on the people during the first two weeks of the disaster were withdrawn. The military duties of the National Guard now consisted only of guarding federal and state

*At temporary camps such as this one in the Presidio, guardsmen dispensed precious drinking water which had been sterilized to prevent spread of disease. At first most water was brought from Oakland on barges, and no control was exercised to insure fair distribution of supplies.*



property and protecting exposed property of great value.<sup>52</sup> Its chief non-military duty continued to be the administration of relief in its district, a function which it carried on conscientiously until released from active duty three weeks later.

The last of the California guard units was relieved from active service on May 31, 1906.<sup>53</sup> The *San Francisco Chronicle* seemed to breathe a sigh of relief as it headlined its report of the event with “National Guardsmen Withdrawn At Last.”<sup>54</sup> Indeed, many believed the recall should have come a month earlier than it did. From the very beginning of the emergency the calling of National Guard had been a controversial subject. On his arrival in the Bay Area, Governor Pardee had offered Mayor Schmitz the “services of the state.” In reply, Schmitz had specified that provisions, tents, and other supplies were needed, but he made no mention of the state-controlled National Guard. Pardee chose to ignore this omission and called the guard to active duty anyway.<sup>55</sup>

The campaign to have the guard withdrawn from the city got under way on April 23, when the mayor and the citizens’ committee unanimously approved the following proclamation:

Resolve that the Governor be requested to withdraw the militia from the City and County of San Francisco, and that a hearty vote of thanks and appreciation be tendered to the militia for their services in maintaining law and order in San Francisco.

The work of relief has been thoroughly systematized and as all

dangers are passed and quiet has been restored, the militia will no longer be needed.<sup>56</sup>

The statement that the guard was no longer needed, however, rang false when it was discovered that the citizens’ committee at the same time was urging the United States War Department to send 3,000 more regulars.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, a citizens’ police recruiting program was being pushed to help guard the city.<sup>58</sup>

In retrospect it seems likely that Schmitz had other reasons for asking for the recall of the state troops. The Abe Ruef-Eugene Schmitz political organization had long been opposed by Pardee, and it is possible that the state’s military establishment was merely caught in the crossfire. Then, too, the mayor may have feared that the presence of the guard might restrict his own powers since the soldiers were ultimately responsible to the governor. In addition, Schmitz was being urged on in his objections by certain members of the citizens’ committee including E. H. Harriman and M. H. DeYoung, who were supporters of the Southern Pacific political machine which Pardee had rebuffed a few months before.<sup>59</sup> Finally, the notable lack of cooperation between the state forces and the city authorities in San Francisco may have prompted the withdrawal proclamation. The mayor took the latter reason as his avenue of attack when, in an open letter to General Koster, he wrote:

A great number of complaints have come in and are coming in to this





office relating to arrests by your National Guard of reputable citizens in the employ of the city and even doctors and officials of the city and county and pressing them into service for work upon the public streets. Such action is absolutely illegal, and I wish to hereby officially notify you that until such time as you are relieved by the Federal troops or the Police Department that you issue an order to your men that these acts stop immediately. There is no martial law, and never has been since the earthquake, and, therefore, in order that there will be no conflict between our officers and your men, I wish you would see to it that they act merely as sentinels and not take the drastic measures that in some cases they are taking.<sup>60</sup>

Pardee, always a stout champion of the citizen soldier, looked with displeasure on the request of the citizens' committee that he withdraw the National Guard. When asked if he had heard of the charges of disorderly conduct, drunkenness, and reckless use of firearms by members of the National Guard he answered angrily:

Such charges are absurd and cowardly. I have been a member of the National Guard, in one capacity or another, almost continuously since 1872, and I know whereof I speak when I say that the members of the National Guard of California compare favorably with any equal number of citizens of this or any other state. These young men give their service to the State from patriotic motives, and, in times like these, take their lives in their hands to protect property and life.

Pardee went on to say he was sure that investigation would prove the charges totally false. He reminded the people that

they had been proud of the First California Regiment's Philippine service only a few years earlier. Then he continued in still more indignant terms:

It is a shame and a cowardly thing for anyone to falsely accuse the young men of our National Guard . . . I would to God that those who are cowardly enough to besmirch the reputation of our citizen soldiery were half as good men and citizens as the soldiers of California.<sup>61</sup>

It soon became obvious to all that Governor Pardee did not intend to remove the guard from San Francisco until the crisis was over. In deference to Schmitz's open letter, however, he did advise Adjutant-General Lauck to direct the soldiers to exercise greater care in choosing civilian labor gangs.<sup>62</sup>

New accusations against the Guard filled the newspapers. One headline screamed, "Blame Militia for Much Looting."<sup>63</sup> Another read, "State Troops on Leave, Capitalist and Society Men Among Chinatown Looters."<sup>64</sup> Concurrently, the *Sacramento Union* featured an article entitled, "Rumors of Military Executions."<sup>65</sup> The guard continued to be the center of a hot controversy for the next few weeks with most of the city newspapers taking an anti-guard stand.<sup>66</sup> M. H. DeYoung's *San Francisco Chronicle* was exceptionally critical. Only the *San Francisco Call* seemed to steer a middle course on the militia matter. Indeed, its reporters found reason for an occasional smile in seeing commandeered city officials and

society people working in the debris-filled streets under a common soldier's supervision. Doubtlessly, some of the accusations were true, but many more were not. Regardless of the import of each charge against the National Guard, it was carefully investigated by the judge advocate's department, and reports were submitted to Adjutant-General Lauck and to Governor Pardee.

In spite of the circulation of wild stories concerning the shooting of citizens by the state troops, the San Francisco coroner's officer found only three cases of death by shooting.<sup>67</sup> General Greely's report lists nine deaths due to violence during the whole period.<sup>68</sup> Two of the nine deaths—Frank Riordan and Joseph Myers—were attributed to the California National Guard, and in both cases a careful investigation by the judge advocate's department found that the circumstances justified the drastic action taken.<sup>69</sup> The two National Guardsmen accused of the shooting were subsequently tried in a civil court and, in both cases, freed.<sup>70</sup>

Considerable truth could be found, however, in the charge of looting by National Guardsmen. On investigation of one charge, the judge advocate was advised by the commanding officer of the army's Twentieth Infantry Regiment that the regulars had arrested

... between fifteen and twenty members of the National Guard of California ... for looting in the burned district, principally Chinatown; that some had been turned loose and others had been sent back to their commanding officers in custody.<sup>71</sup>

Other cases investigated proved less conclusive in determining National Guard guilt. Since the guard and the regular army wore essentially the same uniform, it was not unusual for the former to be accused of crimes and derelictions from duty which should have been laid at the door of the latter.<sup>72</sup>

The poor coordination between the civil government and the militia soldiers caused still other unfortunate incidents and charges. Because the National Guard was seldom notified promptly of changes in orders issued by the mayor's office, for example, state troops prevented Japanese-American Bank officials from opening their own bank safe. Although the bank officials had a permit signed by Police Chief Dinan authorizing them to open the safe, they were informed by the soldiers that Dinan's signature was not enough. It took two calls to General Koster and a letter from the mayor's office before the

safe was opened.<sup>73</sup> Apparently, the guard was still operating under the April 30 order which said no permit was to be recognized unless signed by both Mayor Schmitz and General Greely. It was not until the bank incident that guard officers were informed that the April 30 directive had been superseded.<sup>74</sup>

In another case a National Guard sentry stationed at Broadway and Fourteenth Street refused to allow W. G. Palman-tier, manager of the Central Bank, to enter his bank when he could not properly identify himself. After calling the police department, the bank official was finally able to convince the soldier of his identity. Meanwhile a large crowd had gathered and "hugely enjoyed the discomforture of the banker and cheered the sentry for his strict obedience to orders."<sup>75</sup>

It should not be concluded, however, that all or even a majority of the people of San Francisco desired to recall the National Guard. At the same time that Pardee received the citizens' committee's request to withdraw the state troops, he received a petition bearing 1833 signatures from the Camp Forrest (Fell and Laguna streets) Relief Committee stating:

We herewith desire to express our commendation for the manner which the State Militia have conducted themselves. . . . We have been informed that they are about to be withdrawn, and if so, we feel that the security and peace of mind that now exists in this community may be impaired. . . . We hope that they may be continued in the service.<sup>76</sup>

On the same day Pardee received another petition requesting that the National Guard be retained on active duty:

We the undersigned, citizens of San Francisco, residing in 1st Military District now controlled by the California State Troops respectfully petition Your Excellency that said State Troops be retained in public service of policing the afore mentioned district, and that they be given full charge of distribution of provisions to the destitute families of the citizens of this district.

Many thousands . . . have been promptly and efficiently aided by the ministrations of said state troops. . . .<sup>77</sup>

Perhaps the strongest protest against the withdrawal of the troops can be found in an enormous petition which included the names of 75 per cent of all the people living in districts patrolled by the National Guard.<sup>78</sup> This petition, which contained over 20,000 signatures, read as follows:

*From and After*

Thursday April 26, 1906

*At 12 o'clock noon*

No further FREE transportation

By any Railroad will be granted Except upon Official Order of Major-General Greely  
or the Mayor, to Destitute Women and Children

E. E. Schmitz

Mayor of the City and County of  
San Francisco

*By the end of April commercial operations were returning to normal, although divisions of guardsmen were kept in the city until mid-May, to the dismay of many civilians.*

We, the undersigned property owners and business men of the City of San Francisco, have heard with the deepest regret the proceedings of the so called "Citizens Committee's" requesting the withdrawal of the State troops in the City. We wish in the most emphatic manner to enter our protest against the withdrawal of the National Guard at this time. Their services since the outbreak of the terrible conflagration that destroyed our city have been of the very greatest value. In fact, it is well known that we owe the preservation of a great part of the residence part of the City to their efforts on the first night of the fire, when they checked it on Octavia and Golden Gate Avenues. The Districts that have been patrolled by the National Guard are in perfect order. There have been no disturbances of any kind. We have been able to retire to our houses at night with a feeling of perfect security, in so far as any danger from any outbreak or any thing of that kind is concerned. The very greatest order has been maintained, not only among the citizens, but among the Guard itself. No cases of drunkenness or improper conduct have been seen among any of the men composing the State troops. It is urged that for the present at any rate the Guard be maintained in charge of the districts they are now patrolling.<sup>79</sup>

These petitions were buttressed by dozens of letters from individuals who manifested a real interest in keeping the guard on duty. It would seem that the people who had the closest contact with the guard during the period following the earthquake believed that the organization had rendered a service "of the very greatest value."

Perhaps the best estimate of the California National Guard's performance during the crisis is found in Major-General Greely's official report to the War Department in 1906. Greely

pointed out the youth, inexperience, and occasional rashness of the state troops, but he characterized the men as "intelligent, well-meaning, subordinate, and zealous." He touched briefly upon the delicate situation existing between the city authorities and the citizen soldiers and seemed convinced that the latter had performed a creditable job under the circumstances. Finally, General Greely contradicted the rumor that the guard had not cooperated with the Regular forces when he wrote that the

relations of General Koster (commander of the National Guard in San Francisco) with the commanders of contiguous military district occupied by the Regular Army, with General Funston, the department commander, and with myself, were always of the most courteous and harmonious character.<sup>80</sup>

General Funston similarly expressed his own appreciation of the cooperation between the two military forces in a letter to Governor Pardee on May 26, 1906.<sup>81</sup>

The state legislature on June 12, 1906, expressed the thanks of the whole state to both military organizations when it passed Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 4, which said in part:

Resolve, That the people of the State of California, through its representatives in senate and assembly, hereby makes public recognition of grateful appreciation of the services rendered by the officers and men of the Regular Army and the National Guard in one of the greatest calamities that ever convulsed a brave, a resolute, and a resourceful people.<sup>82</sup>

Judgments on the need for and the effectiveness of the state troops during the San Francisco catastrophe were varied and intense. There can be little doubt that some of the emotional statements made on each side of the controversy were politically motivated. Much of the early confusion was the result of poor coordination between the civil and military leaders. While some of the criticisms aimed at the National Guard were justified, on the whole it performed in a creditable and worthwhile manner during nearly six weeks of the most trying time in San Francisco's history.

The photographs on pages 140 and 142 are courtesy the Bancroft Library; all the others are from the California Historical Society Library.

## Notes

1. David Starr Jordan, ed., *The California Earthquake of 1906* (San Francisco: A. M. Robertson, 1907), p. 81. This book, edited by the president of Stanford University, contains many articles by earthquake experts including C. Branner, vice-president and professor of geology at Stanford; Charles Derleth, Jr., associate professor of structural engineering at the University of California; and F. Omori, member of the Imperial Earthquake Investigation Committee of Japan.
2. *After Earthquake and Fire*, a reprint appearing in the *Mining and Scientific Press* (San Francisco: Mining and Scientific Press, 1906), p. 12.
3. A. Albert Reed, *The San Francisco Conflagration of April, 1906*, Special Report to the National Board of Fire Underwriters (New York, 1906), p. 5.
4. Fire Chief Pat Sullivan was seriously injured and his wife was killed by the first shocks of the quake. *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 25, 1906, p. 1.
5. *Oakland Tribune*, April 19, 1906, p. 1.
6. *Ibid.*, April 18, 1906, p. 1.
7. Charles J. O'Connor and others, *San Francisco Relief Survey* (New York: Survey Associates, Inc., 1913) map opposite page 3.
8. *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 22, 1906.
9. The San Francisco daily newspapers, all of which were burned out, were quick to make an effort to resume operations. On Thursday, the day following the earthquake, the morning journals issued a small combination sheet bearing the heading *Call-Chronicle-Examiner*. This was set up and printed in the office of the *Oakland Tribune*. The San Francisco papers continued to be published in Oakland for some time but under their own headings.
10. O'Connor, *Relief Survey*, pp. 4-5.
11. U.S. War Department, *Annual Report of the War Department, 1906* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), I: 101. General Greely's report is contained in this volume, pp. 92-253. Henceforth referred to as Greely, *Report*.
12. Greely, *Report*, p. 101.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.
14. The Naval Militia of California, having been previously separated from the National Guard, was called to active service during the San Francisco catastrophe under a separate order by Governor George C. Pardee.
15. California Adjutant-General's Office, *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General, 1906* (Sacramento: State Printer, 1906), p. 44. Members assembled despite the fact no disaster plan had been worked out previously.
16. Perhaps the best source for the early action of these troops is the Monthly Returns of the companies. These returns are filed in the adjutant-general's office (hereinafter AGO) in Sacramento.
17. Report of Captain George W. Bauer, Naval Militia, November 6, 1906, 1, in the adjutant-general's files. This gives an account of the Naval Militia's part in the first days activities. See also Company Returns for National Guard activities.
18. Adjutant-General Lauck to Governor George C. Pardee, April 25, 1906, adjutant-general's files.
19. The George C. Pardee Papers in The Bancroft Library on the University of California's Berkeley campus contain much valuable material on the San Francisco earthquake and fire. Possibly the best account of Pardee's activities during the early days of the disaster is the Report of Second-Lieutenant Jacob Alexander, Second Infantry, California National Guard, to Governor Pardee, May 24, 1906, contained in Pardee's papers. Lieutenant Alexander was Pardee's aide and special observer during this crisis.
20. California Adjutant-General's Office, *General and Special Orders and Circulars, 1907* (Sacramento: W. W. Shannon, 1908), p. 63.
21. AGO, *Annual Report, 1906*, 58.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10, 40-41, 45, 58.
23. Report of Major Francis V. Keesling, commander of the First Battalion Coast Artillery, May 25, 1906, p. 1. Adjutant-General's files, Sacramento.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
25. Report of Lieutenant-Colonel M. M. Ogden, National Guard of California, Retired, on the assistance rendered homeless people by the National Guard, Pardee Papers.
26. Keesling, *Report*, p. 6.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
28. These guardsmen lived in San Francisco, and many of the refugees were their own families, relatives, and friends.
29. AGO, *Annual Report, 1906*, p. 64. The order is in Field Order No. 17.
30. Greely, *Report*, pp. 91-92.

## National Guard

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.
32. President Theodore Roosevelt to Governor George C. Pardee, April 21, 1906, telegram in Pardee Papers. The president indicated that the navy would remain as long as needed.
33. Greely, *Report*, pp. 93-95.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-95. These buildings were later consumed by fire.
35. O'Conner, *Relief Survey*, p. 8.
36. Greely, *Report*, p. 107.
37. John P. Young, *History of San Francisco* (2 vols., San Francisco: 1912), II: 838-839.
38. For an example of how one city organized relief for San Francisco, see *Report of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce Citizens' Relief Committee concerning the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire* (Los Angeles, 1907).
39. Major Carroll A. Devol, "How the Army worked to save San Francisco," *Journal United States Infantry Association*, IV (July, 1907): 108-119.
40. Greely, *Report*, p. 98.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
42. AGO, *General and Special Orders*, 1907, p. 65.
43. Reinforcements included the Sixth Infantry Regiment; most of the Second Infantry Regiment (Company H remained at San Jose); Companies D, H and I, Fifth Infantry Regiment; Troops B and C, First Cavalry Squadron; and three Naval Militia divisions.
44. AGO, *General and Special Orders*, 1907, p. 63. See also the returns of these units.
45. AGO, *General and Special Orders*, 1907, p. 65.
46. Return, Company B, Signal Corps, April, 1906, in adjutant-general's files.
47. *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 29, 1906, p. 15.
48. Greely, *Report*, pp. 154-155.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.
51. Young, *San Francisco*, II: 69.
52. The Pacific Division commander specified what was to be considered in this category.
53. AGO, *Annual Report*, pp. 61-64.
54. *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 1, 1906, p. 8.
55. Report, Pardee to C. K. McClatchy of the *Sacramento Bee*, undated, 20 pages, Pardee Papers.
56. Citizens' Committee to Governor Pardee, April 23, 1906, Pardee Papers.
57. *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 29, 1906, p. 2. A telegram from Secretary of War William H. Taft to Governor Pardee, dated April 26, indicates that General Greely had asked for 2500 more men. Pardee on April 27 sent a telegram to Taft asking the latter to hold up the sending of the troops.
58. *Ibid.*, April 24, 1906, p. 4.
59. Most of San Francisco's newspapers were owned or controlled by old line Republican proponents of the Southern Pacific machine. In order to punish Governor Pardee for his defection these newspapers, such as DeYoung's *Chronicle*, may have sought to impugn his pet organization, the National Guard.
60. *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 25, 1906, p. 2.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Pardee to Lauck, April 24, 1906, Pardee Papers.
63. *San Francisco Examiner*, April 26, 1906, p. 3.
64. *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 30, 1906, p. 1.
65. *Sacramento Union*, April 25, 1906, p. 3. Copy in the Pardee Papers.
66. General John A. Koster to Adjutant-General J. B. Lauck, June 11, 1906, Pardee Papers. In this letter Koster complained bitterly against what he considered unfair journalism.
67. *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 6, 1906, p. 32.
68. Greely, *Report*, p. 98.
69. Report, Judge Advocate W. P. Humphreys to Adjutant-General's office, April 30, 1906, Pardee Papers.
70. AGO, *Annual Report*, 1906, pp. 13, 48. Hiram Johnson served as the defense council for one of those accused guardsmen. See *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 10, 1906, p. 5.
71. Judge Advocate W. P. Humphreys to Adjutant-General's office, April 28, 1906, Pardee Papers.
72. Lauck to Pardee, undated, Pardee Papers.
73. *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 8, 1906, p. 5.
74. *Ibid.*, May 9, 1906, p. 5.
75. *San Francisco Call*, May 9, 1906, p. 1.
76. Letter and petition, Camp Forrest Relief Committee to Governor Pardee, April 24, 1906, Pardee Papers.
77. Citizens of First Military District to Governor Pardee, April 24, 1906, Pardee Papers.
78. *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 26, 1906, p. 1. See also Pardee's letter to *Collier's* May 21, 1906, Pardee Papers.
79. Petition in regard to the withdrawal of the National Guard, signed by property owners of San Francisco who object to citizens' committee's request for the Guard to be withdrawn, undated, Pardee Papers.
80. Greely, *Report*, p. 103.
81. Pardee Papers.
82. *Journal of the Senate and Assembly of California*, Extra Session, Thirty-sixth Legislature, 1906 (Sacramento: 1906), 105-106. Also in AGO *General and Special Orders*, 1906, p. 48.