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“An Historical Review of the San Francisco Exchange”

The Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Company

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Quote-

“Before the walls of the gutted 445 Bush Street building had cooled, men were at work night and day rebuilding its interior and constructing a temporary switchboard. This 'board was placed in operation on May 20th, one month after the fire – a remarkable record under any conditions. As matters stood many parts of the switchboard had to be made by hand. When opened this equipment had a capacity of 285 telephones.”



LPI

Note the MDF, back-left of photograph

CHAPTER XIII

The Last of the Century

WHEN the Spanish-American War opened, San Francisco took on a martial air. The streets were thronged with men in khaki and blue. All eyes were turned toward the Pacific, on the other side of which a bitter conflict was being waged in a strange land by men many of whom had had their last glimpses of America when they sailed through the Golden Gate outward bound. A military camp was established in the district bounded by Golden Gate Park, stretching northward toward California Street, and west of Laurel Hill Cemetery. A city of tents covered a tract that since has come to be one of San Francisco's chief residential sections.¹

The concentration of troops in the city, and the provisioning of transports, of course brought a measure of prosperity to farmers, and retail and wholesale dealers, for perishable food supplies to feed the men at arms were taken from the nearest sources. The principal benefit of the war to San Francisco became evident after it had closed, when it was found that a very profitable commerce had been fostered with the Philippines,¹ a trade that has grown consistently to be an important item in the city's great export activities.

Throughout the war years—in fact, from 1897 to 1906—railroads having their terminals at San Francisco promoted a tourist movement toward California by arranging a series of excursions from the east at low rates as a means of advertising the city and state and of recruiting settlers by first hand methods. This practice in time attracted conventions to the city,² and the transient population increased, making San Francisco more than ever a hotel center. Many visitors either stayed in California or were so taken with the country that they returned later to establish their residences.

Before two years of the new century had passed, business depression had completely disappeared. Bank clearings were double

¹Young, J. P.: *History of San Francisco* (1912) Vol. II, pp. 727, 728.

²*Ibid.*: Vol. II, p. 774.

those of 1894; and in 1903 they were even larger. Savings deposits showed remarkable gains clearly demonstrating that the condition of labor had improved; that it was no longer suffering from low wages and inactivity.¹

Building operations were, until 1906, not confined to any particular part or parts of the city. Houses and business structures sprang up everywhere.¹ The telephone company found itself faced with the problem of expanding its system intelligently in advance of this growth, in order that demands for service might be satisfied. The telephone had by this time ceased to be regarded as a luxury and was looked upon as a commercial, industrial and social asset.

One of the most remarkable achievements in electrical communication came in 1903, when the Postal Telegraph Company opened a Trans-Pacific cable to the Philippines, with extensions to Asia.¹ Rates for service over this line were reasonable and its value in Oriental-Occidental trade cannot be over-emphasized.

It is intended that the brief outline given above of highlights in San Francisco's development should give a mental picture of the city immediately prior to the fire. The paragraphs of purposely diversified subjects have, for the most part, a bearing on telephone development, for of all periods since the gold days, this seemed to be the time when San Francisco found herself on the highroad to prosperity of a lasting nature.

As the telephone company expanded and the number of instruments in service increased, additional central offices were established in many parts of the city. By 1906 there were eight central offices in operation; and as each was placed in service, it was assigned a certain range of numbers. For example, *Two-office* was entrusted with the two-thousand numbers in the directory; *Three-office* the three-thousand numbers, and so on. Eventually, however, each office exceeded its range, and it was then that prefixes were adopted in designating telephone numbers.

When one thinks of a telephone subscriber he naturally pictures a person who has subscribed to the service to meet his regularly recurring requirements. There was and continues to be a large body of telephone users who either have not subscribed to the service or find it most convenient and more economical to use coin box telephones or *pay stations* which were, prior to 1902, equipped with a type of coin box that did not require payment in advance for a call.

¹Young, J. P.: *History of San Francisco* (1912), Vol. II, pp. 726, 766, 775.

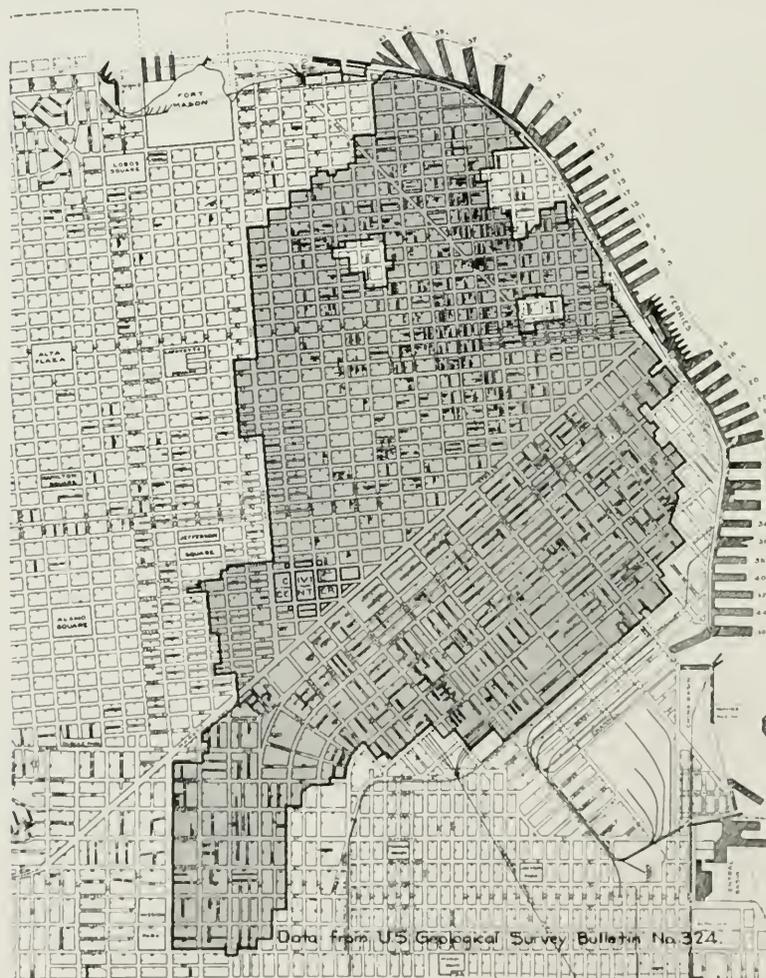
The operator first rang the number called for, then notified the calling party to deposit a nickel, after which the call was completed. This system, it was found, required too much of the operators' time and attention, and it often happened that one party or the other would hang up before connections were made. Another point against this make of coin box was the fact that a telephone user could, if he were so inclined, deceive the operator by tapping the coin box or running a comb across it to simulate the effect of a nickel deposited. An argument between the operator and patron would ensue and perhaps, before this would be over, the called person would hang up. For these reasons, the *pay back* coin box was substituted about 1902. With this type the customer deposits his nickel first; the call is then completed in the usual manner. If the party called is not secured, the operator returns the nickel. Some difficulty was encountered in persuading the public to accept this innovation, as people objected to paying in advance for their calls, and were afraid of not getting their money back if calls were not completed. Here again, education or gradual training was necessary and eventually the pay-back box came to be accepted as a matter of course.

In the thirty years that had passed since 1876, the telephone had become a public utility of the greatest importance in San Francisco. The telephone system of lines and central offices had united comparatively isolated residential districts with the city proper; rather remote industrial areas were brought into communication with the financial and office districts, buyers with sellers, shippers with consignees, at inestimable savings in time and money. The telephone company was forced to solve many problems, many of which were brought upon it by circumstances incident to the natural ramifications of a new invention, an infant system and a young city. By 1905 there were fifty thousand telephones used by San Francisco's population of four hundred thousand.

It must not be imagined that this remarkable growth had obliterated all traces of the romantic and unusual from the telephone's chapter in San Francisco history. By way of diversion, let us recall a well known resort known as the Art Saloon which reached the height of its popularity just before the fire. In this saloon there was some kind of a mechanical music reproducer, on the order of an orchestrion or mechanical piano. Now obviously, it was not possible for all members of a household to pay a visit to the Art Saloon, so arrangements were made with the telephone company whereby a

customer could request an operator to connect his telephone with the saloon line. The connection being made, the customer could sit at home and listen to the music as long as he chose, over the telephone. Very similar, one might say, to the use of telephone lines in radio broadcasting today, except that the audience then was more limited.

With the population of the city and its environs increasing phenomenally, the telephone company foresaw as inevitable an increased demand for its service and prepared for it by erecting a new building at 445 Bush Street. Here a switchboard of the very latest type, costing one hundred thousand dollars, was installed and was about ready to be cut into service *when something happened*.



Map showing devastated area, San Francisco fire, 1906

CHAPTER XIV

The Earthquake and Fire

“THE old San Francisco is dead. The gayest, light-hearted, most pleasure loving city of the western continent, and in many ways the most interesting and romantic, is a horde of refugees living among ruins. It may rebuild; it probably will; but those who have known that peculiar city by the Golden Gate, and have caught its flavor of the Arabian Nights, feel that it can never be the same. It is as though a pretty, frivolous woman had passed through a great tragedy. She survives, but she is sobered and different. If it rises out of the ashes, it must be a modern city, much like other cities and without its old atmosphere.”¹

The story of the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906, one of the world's most famous disasters, is too well known to require detailed description. At fifteen minutes after five o'clock on the morning of April 18th, the first shock occurred, awakening inhabitants of the city and driving them to the streets. Buildings toppled; cracks opened under foot; water mains burst; street cars ceased to run; telephone and electric light service failed. Small fires sprang up in many quarters, spread, united, and rolled over the defenseless city. Like minute-men responding to a call to arms, the man-power of the community assembled to repel the invader. Soldiers appeared, Red Cross stations and bread lines were established, and a long, gruelling battle to save San Francisco was on.

The ensuing conflagration swept over twenty-six hundred acres, or about four hundred and ninety blocks, destroying four square miles of closely built properties.² Eighty million gallons of water were made unavailable by breaks in water mains³ and the consequent property losses amounted to five hundred million dollars, about one-half of which was covered by insurance.⁴ Earthquake

¹ Irwin, Will H.: *The City That Was*, New York Sun, April 21, 1906 (Huebsch Edition 1907), pp. 7, 8.

² Eldredge, Z. S.: *History of California* (1915), Vol. IV, p. 514.; San Francisco Chamber of Commerce Handbook (1914), pp. 16, 17, 18.

³ Eldredge, Z. S.: *History of San Francisco* (1915), Vol. V, p. 507.

⁴ *Ibid.*: Vol. V, p. 514.



Devastation, San Francisco fire, 1906

damage amounted to from three to ten per cent of the total loss;¹ for buildings of proper construction on solid foundations suffered but little. Structures of inferior materials on filled ground, toppled like houses of cards.

Records show that for the first few days 250,000 of the city's population of 440,000 were made homeless by the disaster. Three hundred and fifty thousand people were dependent upon bread lines for sustenance.² The railroads carried two hundred thousand refugees out of town;³ seventy-five thousand of these moved to Oakland and other neighboring cities. One hundred thousand people, remaining in the city, camped out in parks and other open spaces away from danger.⁴

"There was no excitement, no terror, no hysteria, notwithstanding wild press dispatches sent out and the wonderful tales of travelers."⁵ The entire nation and world came to the city's assistance and it was not long before fifteen million dollars' worth of relief supplies were shipped in for distribution.⁶

Subsequent accounts of the disaster have given little space to the destruction of the city's communication systems. San Franciscans found, when the fire burned itself out, just how indispensable the telephone was in their lives. The progress of the fire can be accurately traced through the repeated destruction of telephone company property.

The first telephone building to fall before the flames was the new Executive Building at 140 New Montgomery Street, which had been occupied but a scant three months. By seven o'clock on the first morning of the fire it became evident that the structure was doomed.

As night drew on, the fire dragon, gaining strength from what it fed upon, swept nearer and nearer to the New Main office, and at two o'clock the following morning that building, with its costly new switchboard which was to have been cut into service in a few days, fell prey to the flames. The building was not destroyed, but the interior was completely gutted.

The telephone company, forced to abandon 445 Bush Street, established new headquarters at East office, 827 Hyde Street.

¹Eldredge, Z. S.: *History of San Francisco* (1915), Vol. V, p. 506.

²*Ibid.*: Vol. V, p. 508, 514.

³Chamber of Commerce Handbook (1914), pp. 16, 17, 18.

⁴Eldredge, Z. S.: *History of San Francisco* (1915), Vol. V, p. 515.

⁵*Ibid.*: Vol. V, p. 508.

⁶*Ibid.*: Vol. V, p. 515.

Even there but a brief respite was gained. By noon of the second day it became necessary to evacuate that building also, and fall back to West office, at the corner of Pine and Steiner streets. East office and with it another new switchboard, which had been in operation less than a year, burned during the afternoon.

The fire on the third day jumped Van Ness Avenue in several places, and it seemed for a time that West office too, would go with the remainder of the city. At this juncture, West office, Park office and the one in Butchertown alone remained. Park office had been so badly shaken by the earthquake that it was dangerous to enter the building. Main office at 216 Bush Street, with its great switchboard serving 20,000 stations in the business district, had burned to the ground at midnight on the first day. New South office, which was to have been cut into the system in a few days, was practically demolished. Old South office, old Mission office, and the Chinatown exchange were heaps of ruins.

Just as it seemed inevitable that West office would be destroyed, the flames were brought under control. The width of Van Ness Avenue was too much for the fire dragon. Little by little it was subdued, until on the fourth day of the fight, man triumphed, and the western portion of San Francisco was saved.

It was a dismal day for the telephone company. Practically every improvement the company had made or had under way, to meet the needs of the growing city, was wiped out by the fire. Five years' labor had been undone in four days. Of 50,000 telephones in operation before the catastrophe, not one was in working order after the fire began. The extent of damage to aerial and underground plant could only be guessed at as yet, but it was certain to be great.

The outlook was discouraging, but the telephone company set to work immediately to provide some sort of emergency service for the remaining portion of the city, and to make plans for a greater and better telephone system to take the place of the one destroyed. The first weeks and months after the fire were strenuous ones. Men worked night and day, often without sufficient food and water. Fires were forbidden by city ordinances and there was neither gas nor electricity for artificial light. Tasks were accomplished at night by lantern or candle light. Workmen became separated from their foremen and were constantly being impressed into service by soldiers to help clear the streets, a duty from which they could not escape until the foremen found and identified them.

West was the only central office in operating condition after the fire, except the office at Butchertown which was too far removed from the heart of the city to be of much value. West became therefore, the nucleus of an emergency telephone system and in fact continued for several months to serve the business district that grew up along Van Ness Avenue and Fillmore Street. To it were connected all lines from the unburned western portion of the city, and all toll and emergency lines that could be gathered in. The West office equipment was of common battery type and fortunately the batteries were of sufficient capacity to last until three small gasoline charging sets were received from Los Angeles, Sacramento and Portland.

As soon as it was possible to enter the burned district, a telephone line was run down Bush and Market streets to the Ferry Building and connected with a submarine cable to Oakland. This was entirely an emergency line. It was strung over piles of debris, along the few walls that were still standing, in cable slots of the street railway and at some points, merely dropped along the pavement. The line was patrolled constantly, for it was frequently broken by wagon-wheels, or burned by hot embers falling from smouldering ruins. Simultaneously with the establishment of this makeshift line, wires were run from West office and connected with toll lines to Sausalito, Fort Point, Lime Point, and the Presidio.

Toll lines from Los Angeles and way points were connected with West office by wires strung over houses, stores, fences, poles or whatever supports could be found, and communication with the southern portion of the state was resumed. Telephone lines were provided for the water works, directly connecting the different reservoirs together without passing through a switchboard.¹

An examination of underground cable revealed that while the laterals were practically total losses, the main leads were in almost perfect condition, except at the point where they had entered the Main office at 216 Bush Street, and at one or two manholes where lead sheaths had melted. The underground trunk from West to Main office was joined to one from Main office to the Ferry by shunting a new piece of cable around the damaged part, at a point in front of the Bush Street Building. This, too, was a temporary arrangement, for the cable was laid along the ground. The move however, provided more efficient service between the western

¹The Pacific Telephone Magazine, April, 1911

Telephone Directory of April 28, 1906

The last telephone directory of this Company for the telephones of the Bay Districts included for San Francisco 80,001. In this connection the first telephone directory printed after the fire of 1906, under date of April 28th of that year, is herewith reproduced in full. The contrast between these two directories is its own commentary on the wonderful growth and development of the San Francisco exchange in the period since the disaster.

Pacific States Telephone and Telegraph Co.

SAN FRANCISCO, APRIL 28, 1906

Telephone Directory

West 915	Board of Public Works.....	Stelner and Ellis
West 956	Call Office.....	1651 Fillmore
West 947	Chronicle Business Office.....	1804 Fillmore
West 974	Chronicle Editorial Office.....	1813 Fillmore
West 901	Citizens' Committee.....	Franklin Hall, Bush and Fillmore
West 917	Calif. Gas and Elect. Corp.....	Haight and Fillmore
West 960	Examiner Office.....	1853 Fillmore
West 912	Fire Alarm Office.....	2034 Steiner
West 918	Fire Department.....	847 Fillmore
West 922	Fort Mason.....	
West 901	Franklin Hall.....	Bush and Fillmore
West 925	Hewitt, W. R. (Dept. of Electricity).....	Res. 3008 Sacramento
West 926	Military Hospital.....	2118 Pacific Ave.
West 930	Merchants' Exchange.....	California, nr. Montgomery
West 944	Mission Relief Committee, Secy's Office.....	25th and Guerrero
West 944	Mission Relief Committee (Hospital) Horace Mann School, 22nd and Valencia	
West 906	Noe Valley School.....	24th and Douglass
West 921	Presidio.....	
West 901	Relief Committee (General).....	Franklin Hall, Bush and Fillmore
West 933	Relief Committee (Warehouse).....	Page and Gough
West 902	Red Cross Relief Assoc.....	Grant School, Pacific nr. Broderick
West 967	Red Cross Relief Assoc.....	Golf Club Bldg., 1st Ave. nr. Presidio
West 961	Spring Valley Water Co.....	Devisadero and Waller
West 946	St. Francis Hospital.....	584 Page
West 946	Southern Pacific Hospital.....	584 Page
West 905	Stow Lake.....	Golden Gate Park
West 908	United Railroads.....	Turk and Fillmore
West 945	United Railroads.....	11th and Bryant
West 909	Water Committee.....	1819 Fillmore
West 906	Young Men's Hebrew Association.....	

The first directory after the fire of 1906

section of San Francisco and East Bay cities than did the single line down Bush and Market streets. The West-to-Main cable contained 120 wires, and the one from Main to the waterfront only 100; 20 pairs of wires were therefore left available for connecting hospitals, city offices, relief stations and other public service agencies to West office switchboard.

The underground cable named served as the backbone for a new telephone system, for it was an easy matter to tap into it at any point along the route followed. Wires were in this way run to new buildings as they sprang up in the downtown district—an arrangement that served very well until more permanent equipment could be installed.

The first telephone directory, issued just seven days after the fire, was in card form and bore but thirty names. It was printed for use in connection with relief work, and listed only hospitals, relief and Red Cross committees, newspapers, and various offices of the city government.¹ Less than a month after the disaster a directory containing 2880 names was issued¹ and stands as proof of the efficient work the telephone company had done in rehabilitating its system. Two months after the fire there were about nine thousand instruments in service in the city; three months after, ten thousand; six months, eighteen thousand; and by the end of the year, the number had jumped to nearly twenty-nine thousand.¹

The rebuilding of San Francisco's telephone system was greatly facilitated by the promptness with which orders for equipment were filled by eastern electrical supply houses, for requisitions from the convalescent city were given precedence over all others and production was speeded up to meet the demand. Even before new equipment was received from the East, old apparatus of all kinds for temporary use was imported from surrounding towns and from the company's Washington and Oregon territories. A great deal of valuable material was obtained from the Western Electric Company's San Francisco branch, for its building had escaped the fire.

Before the walls of the gutted 445 Bush Street building had cooled, men were at work night and day rebuilding its interior and constructing a temporary switchboard. This 'board was placed in operation on May 20th, one month after the fire—a remarkable record under any conditions. As matters stood many parts of the switchboard had to be made by hand. When opened this equip-

¹The Pacific Telephone Magazine, December, 1907.

ment had a capacity of 285 telephones. On the same day, May 20th, Market office was re-opened, and Park office followed less than a month later.

The first executive offices established after the fire were located in a small house next door to West office, in Steiner Street. The various departments of the company were scattered over such a wide area that it was very difficult for them to keep in touch with one another, and much time was lost in transacting inter-departmental business. In order to remedy this bad feature, a large corrugated iron shed was erected on a lot at the corner of Fell and Scott streets. In June the company took up its quarters there, except a few departments, such as the engineering and accounting, which continued to occupy separate offices in the neighborhood.

The *chicken-house*, as it was commonly called, served well enough as a make-shift shelter, but owing to the fact that the roof leaked when it rained and that it became unbearably hot under this iron canopy when it didn't rain, better accommodations were secured elsewhere as soon as possible. The executive offices were moved after about a year to the Shreve Building, at the corner of Post and Grant Avenue. Quarters occupied in this structure remained the headquarters of the executive offices until the completion of the new building at 140 New Montgomery in 1925.

So reads the story of the telephone company's first efforts in rebuilding its San Francisco system. The task of re-creating the city was accomplished in due time, but that of providing for constantly increasing demands for telephone service never ceases. It is in the remarkable achievements of the next two decades that we are now interested.



The "Chicken House", Scott and Fell streets, headquarters for 1200 years after the fire

CHAPTER XV

Rehabilitation

WITH every downtown commercial establishment destroyed, merchants looked to unscathed sections of the city for new quarters. Fillmore and Divisadero streets were favored, partly for the reason that they had been used in a small way for business purposes previously, and partly because the Market Street Railway soon had its lines in operation on both thoroughfares.¹ What had been dingy little shops were soon camouflaged as pretentious stores by the use of plate glass, false fronts and other emergency tricks of the architectural craft. Indeed, such success was attained that there were those who believed that San Francisco's main retail business area would stay permanently on Fillmore.¹

Theaters were built on lateral streets, and blocks on either side of Fillmore Street, between Post and Golden Gate Avenue were lined with more or less pretentious restaurants. For a time the leading after-theater resort was situated at the corner of Eddy and Fillmore. The New Orpheum and Alcazar theaters located in the district were more nearly fireproof than any local playhouses previously constructed.¹

This booming new business district was, however, not without rivals. Mission Street before long entered the field with large scale operations. Old stores were transformed, restaurants opened, a splendid theater built in Valencia Street, and a strong bid made for the city's principal retail shopping district.¹ The success of this venture as well as that of Fillmore was lessened greatly by a general migration of the leading retail stores to the west side of Van Ness Avenue, which had been left untouched by the fire. Pretentious residences were converted to commercial uses, and it was not long before the avenue became the leading shopping center and fashionable promenade.¹

Financial and cognate interests moved with less celerity. For

¹Young, J. P.: *History of San Francisco* (1912), Vol. II, pp. 861, 862, 863, 864.



First Multiple Board in San Francisco, after the fire, 1906

several months banks, insurance companies, agencies and corporation offices were widely scattered, many finding quarters in residences, the owners of which, tempted by high rents, had vacated and moved across the bay.¹

Officials in charge of rehabilitation work believed that freedom of action was essential in speeding up reconstruction and allowed property owners to build flimsy shacks in the burned downtown area, thinking of course that more substantial structures would be put up as soon as materials and men were available. The theory did not work out favorably in some cases, for these eyesores were kept in service for many years after the emergency had passed.¹ The rapidity with which permanent buildings were erected in what had been formerly the heart of the city, early indicated that it was recognized this was the logical site for commercial operations because of its propinquity to the harbor. The wharves of the waterfront had escaped destruction, and shipping could therefore go on as before.¹ The opportunism responsible for Fillmore, Divisadero and Mission growth,¹ in the end, went down before essential factors responsible for the pre-fire arrangement of San Francisco's commercial district.

With scores of construction operations going forward simultaneously, the demand for skilled and unskilled labor was exceptional. High wages were a natural outcome, bringing with them high prices.¹ The conditions of workingmen improved and they moved in large numbers to outlying sections of the city where land was cheaper. Many were forced to move from undestroyed areas because of the high rents their quarters came to command.¹ They were not alone in the exodus however, for many persons of comfortable means found it necessary or desirable to move to new tracts farther out, because of a demand for more centrally situated properties for business purposes.¹ Thus there were two forces at work in the making of new San Francisco; the centripetal tendencies of business, guided by factors of known value; and the centrifugal movement of population, made possible by improved transportation facilities.

These varied activities went on from 1906 to 1909 without interruption. A detailed enumeration of their ramifications would however, take unwarranted space and in closing the subject, it is interesting to point out the start of one of San Francisco's distinguishing characteristics—her apartment house development.

A tendency toward apartment houses had been shown before

¹Young, J. P.: *History of San Francisco* (1912), Vol. II, pp. 863, 864, 862-904.



China Office, 745 Washington Street

1906 by San Franciscans and afterward, due to an increasing scarcity of servants and a natural desire to live near the center of town, they became popular.¹ Apartment houses were constructed principally on the south side of Nob Hill, in Pine and Bush streets. Development of this nature in Sutter Street was slower than in streets north and south of it, west of Powell Street, because the price of property in Sutter was very high and precluded building small or cheap structures. It should not be imagined that apartment houses were built only in the area described, for there were many scattered over the city in locations favorable to their purpose.¹

As a result of the fire San Francisco lost about one hundred thousand of her population permanently. Most of these were the gain of Oakland and other neighboring cities. Locally the population movement was marked, as has been said, by movement of approximately sixty-six thousand people from the inner city to the suburbs. From a social and sanitation standpoint this was a good thing, for it prevented the establishment of tenement districts in downtown sectors, such as have been the bane of eastern community development.²

Minor but nevertheless interesting events took place in movements of the foreign elements in San Francisco's population. The Chinese, as might have been expected, set to work immediately to build up their ruined properties. Although the more well-to-do Oriental merchants saw fit to erect buildings conforming more or less to their architectural traditions, others constructed quarters of less spectacular design. As a result Chinatown today differs radically from that of old San Francisco. It is more sanitary, but less picturesque.³

The Japanese on the other hand, left the vicinity of Chinatown and either bought or rented property west of Van Ness Avenue, for the most part, on or in the vicinity of Sutter Street.³

Latin races, primarily Italians, continued to congregate in North Beach, along Broadway and on the slopes of Telegraph Hill. The southern extremity of their colony touches that of the northern boundary of Chinatown, the two blending quite picturesquely and startlingly.

The repeated shifting of business and residential districts; the

¹Young, J. P.: *History of San Francisco* (1912), Vol. II, pp. 903, 904.

²Arnold, Bion J.: *Report on the Improvements and Development of the Transportation Facilities of San Francisco* (1913), p. 16.

³Young, J. P.: *History of San Francisco* (1912) Vol. II, p. 903.

scattering of the population to outlying sections; the growth of apartment house areas with an intense concentration of thousands of people, and the expansion of commercial territory, necessarily made the problem of telephone construction after the fire a diverse and rather baffling affair. To weave together a city totally different physically from that previous to 1906, and to provide service for temporarily located businesses and residences, required great ingenuity on the part of telephone company engineers, if efficient telephone service was to be made possible and maintained.

The first event of importance in the life of the telephone company after the fire was its reorganization in 1907, at which time it took over all holdings of the Sunset Telephone Company not already under its control. The name was changed from Pacific States Telephone and Telegraph Company to *The Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company*. Five years later the Home Telephone Company was purchased. This was a small local organization that had been formed in 1907 to operate in competition to the Pacific Company. Two distinct telephone companies in the same city, with separate lines, different directories, and non-connecting service proved so awkward and unsatisfactory that the people wearied of the arrangement and began to demand a single telephone service. The question was settled by The Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company buying the Home Company's entire plant in 1912.

In the meantime, construction had been progressing in several exchanges that had to be rebuilt after the fire. In December, 1907, temporary switchboards in Kearny office were replaced with permanent 'boards and normal service resumed. Later, Pacific and Mission offices were added to the system and in August, 1909, the new China exchange, housed by a structure built in conformity with pure Chinese architectural traditions, was opened on the site of the old China office in Washington Street.¹ The China office building was constructed with three roofs and inevitable balconies. The interior was finished with rough-cut woodwork and ebony. The walls were panelled with glazed tile, decorated with highly colored frescoes. This office, with a Chinese manager and operators, was given a true Oriental atmosphere. It immediately became and still remains one of the show places of San Francisco.

¹The Pacific Telephone Magazine, April, 1910.