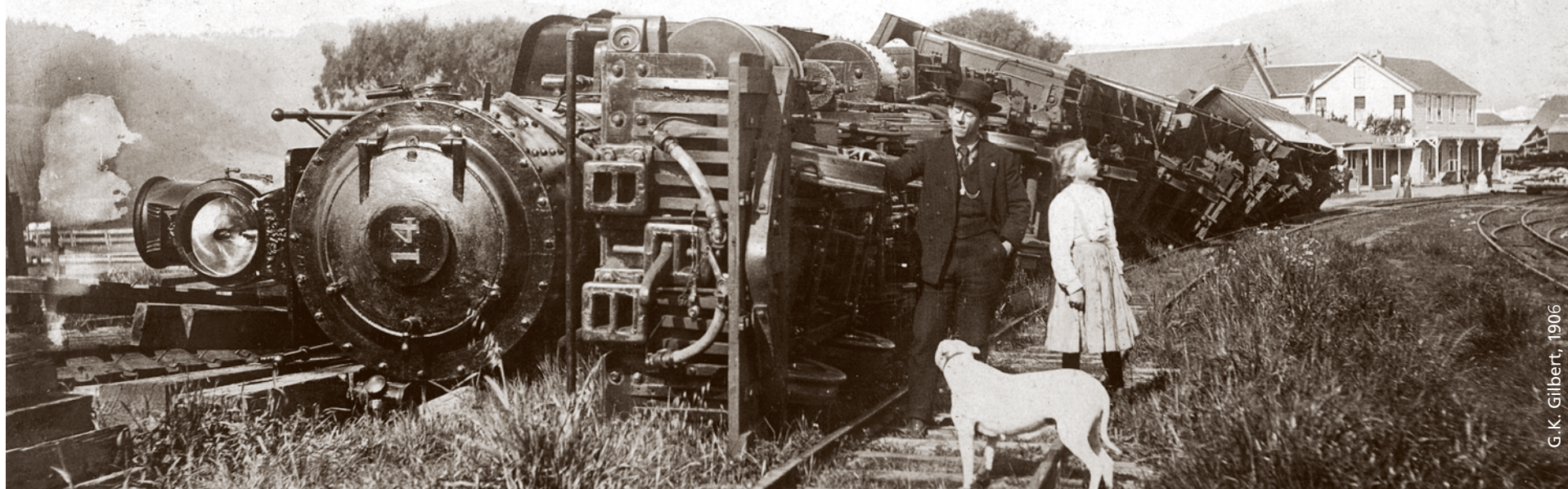




1906 Earthquake Centennial

Point Reyes National Seashore
Resource Newsletter



“At Point Reyes Station at the head of Tomales Bay the 5:15 train for San Francisco was just ready. The conductor had just swung himself on when the train gave a great lurch to the east, followed by another to the west, which threw the whole train on its side.”

—Lawson Report, 1908

At 5:13 a.m. on the morning of April 18, 1906,

a magnitude 7.8 earthquake violently shook Californians from their sleep. Almost immediately, a devastating fire engulfed San Francisco and burned for four days, forever linking the earthquake with the city. However, the 1906 quake was felt beyond the city from Coos Bay, Oregon to Los Angeles and across the state boundary in central Nevada, and the zone of destruction was as much as 400 miles long and 25 miles wide.

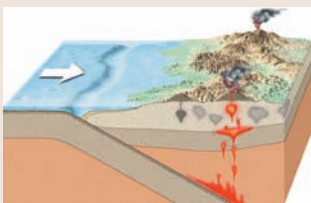
As many as 3,000 people died, although estimates at the time were far lower. The financial cost, in 1906 dollars, is estimated at over \$500,000,000. The survivors were forever altered by the losses they endured, and by the strength of character in those around them. After a century, their stories and photographs captivate us.

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The magnitude of the event is matched by the wealth of knowledge gained in its wake. Contemporary geologists were puzzled by the length of the rupture and the large horizontal displacements along its path. Decades passed before plate-tectonic theory emerged to explain this movement, but the report prepared by Andrew Lawson and others in 1908 led to the recognition of the effect the underlying geology had on the extent of devastation. San Francisco’s Marina district, built largely on fill, collapsed in the earthquake. Development in areas with granite bedrock experienced the least movement.

Join us in exploring what we know about movement along this fault zone, how this rupture has shaped our lives, and why we need to prepare for the inevitable next big quake.



Botanist Alice Eastwood stands at the edge of the fault trace 2 miles north of the old Skinner Ranch at Olema. View is looking north.

G.K. Gilbert, 1906