



News

from the Daughters of Charity

Province of the West

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FOR RELEASE

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This superbly edited and beautifully designed book makes available little known eyewitness accounts of the catastrophic events of April 1906. Reading these reports, one gains new respect for the intelligence and courage of the Daughters of Charity of that era. In the midst of chaos, they continued their compassionate work.

KEVIN STARR
Professor of History
University of Southern California
California State Librarian Emeritus

The DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY, Province of the West, announce a new publication, “Steel Frames, Eyewitness Accounts of the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake & Fire by the Daughters of Charity.”

Especially written and produced for the Centennial of the San Francisco Earthquake & Fire of April 1906, the book is a collection of the telegrams and letters written by the Sisters to their headquarters in Emmitsburg, Maryland. At the time of the disaster, the Sisters ran a hospital in San Jose and a total of seven schools and orphanages in San Francisco, Hollister and Santa Cruz. Seven telegrams and twenty-one letters were written by the Sisters between April 18th and August 25th of 1906. Their letters and telegrams describe their experiences, the chaos in the streets, and the courage they mustered to help those around them. Soon afterwards, they began rebuilding.

Compiled and edited by Sister Margaret Ann Gainey, archivist, and illustrated by Sister Estela Morales, along with photographs of the destruction, the publication brings to light the strength and inspiration the Daughters brought to their communities. One hundred years later the Daughters of Charity continue to run hospitals, schools and social agencies in San Francisco and San Jose. Three of these Works survived the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire: Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory, formerly the demolished St. Vincent’s School, Mission and Third Streets, South of Market; Seton Medical Center (Daly City), formerly the demolished Mary’s Help Hospital on Guerrero Street in the Mission District; Mount St. Joseph-St. Elizabeth, formerly the slightly damaged Mount St. Joseph’s in Silver Terrace, a place of refuge for earthquake-victims. One Work in San Jose survived the disaster: O’Connor Hospital, formerly O’Connor Sanitarium on Race and San Carlos Streets.



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HERE ARE A FEW BRIEF EXCERPTS FROM THE SISTERS ACCOUNTS.

Sister Eugenia Garvey writes about the earthquake and fire in SAN FRANCISCO:

“After many slight shocks of earthquake, we became tranquil and began to think of others. We were safe in [SouthSan Francisco]. . . . But I felt that the Sisters of Charity should be braver than that, so Sister Alexis and I went down and begged a man to bring us to the city, where masses of suffering creatures lay in big halls, etc. He brought us to a car house where the dying lay thick upon the floor. . . . All day we knelt beside the sufferers, washed their faces and hands, fixed their beds and pillows, attended to other wants and proved ourselves acceptable nurses.”

Sister Victorine Fitzgerald writes about the earthquake in SAN JOSE:

“Thank God, all in the Sanitarium escaped uninjured. The patients are all in tents and although the dew is heavy, they all seem cheerful and comfortable. The building is badly damaged and is unsafe. The first dreadful shock nearly swept us into eternity. . . . When we recovered our equilibrium, we found all the inmates unharmed. The roof fell in here and there on the beds which were empty. One of the girls was saved by a miracle when the laundry chimney fell in on her bed.”

Sister Teresa Hill writes about the earthquake in HOLLISTER:

“Our House is demolished. How we came out of the House alive is a mystery, not only to those who see the condition of the place but to ourselves. The Sisters proved themselves most courageous, going to the third floor for the children, plaster falling around them and blinding and smothering them at every step.”

Sister Helena McGhan writes about the earthquake in SANTA CRUZ:

“I shuddered when I looked down into [the children’s] playground; a mass of bricks from the chimneys marked the spot where many would have been killed had the quake come a little later.”

BOOK DETAILS

Steel Frames is a 152-page book comprised of over 100 photographs, newspaper clips, reproductions of original letters and telegrams, and twenty original illustrations — all reproduced as four-color sepia tones. It is available as a hard cover edition only, with book jacket. Graphic design and printing consultation provided by Año Nuevo Island Press of San Francisco.

BOOK SELLING

Books sell for \$14.95 plus tax and shipping/handling. They are available at the Daughters of Charity hospitals: Seton Medical Center Gift Shop **(650) 991-6527**; O’Connor Hospital Gift Shop **(408) 947-2830**; St. Louise Hospital Gift Shop **(408) 848-4938**; St. Vincent’s Medical Center Gift Shop **(213) 484-7434**; and St. Francis Medical Center Gift Shop **(310) 900-8466**. Also, books are available at the California Historical Society Book Store **(415) 357-1860**; San Francisco Fire Department Museum **(415) 563-4630**; History San Jose Gift Shop **(408) 918-1055**; Kaufer’s Religious Supplies **(415) 333-4494**; and the Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco **sfmuseum.org**. New outlets are added each week. For further information, please call **(650) 949-8879**.

Proceeds from sales of Steel Frames will be used for the Daughters of Charity Missions at the service of the poor.