

U.S. Earthquakes (Not) on Stamps

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Philatelic Society of Lancaster County
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Previous PSLC Presentation

The IGY and Me: An introduction to my topical stamp collection and blog

Presentation on 27 April 2022 to:

Philatelic Society of Lancaster County

James Buchanan Chapter #173 of the American Philatelic Society

Chapter #118 of the American Topical Association

Presentation on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LlbcbzIwBs>

Google Slides file

<https://lcps-stamps.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022-04-28-Sternberg-R-International-Geophysical-Stamp.pdf>

Estimated audience of 40.

U.S. Earthquakes (Not) on Stamps

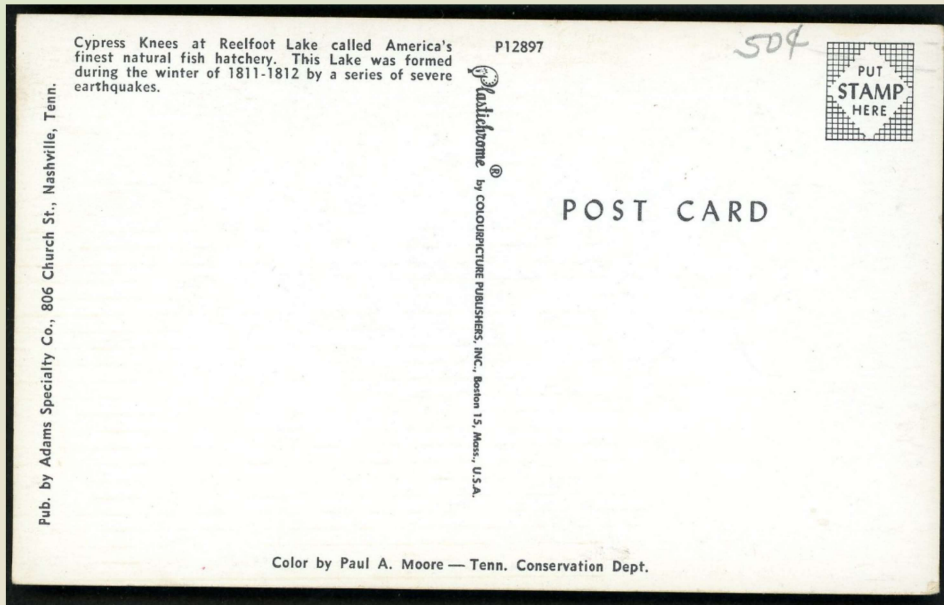
Abstract

I have been collecting on the International Geophysical Year for about 20 years. I started my other topical collection on United States (or sometimes I say North American) earthquakes about 5 years ago, again appealing to my interests resulting from a career in geophysics. But, there is no U.S. stamp commemorating an earthquake! The Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee issued this criterion for stamp topics in 2019: “The stamp program commemorates positive contributions to American life, history, culture and environment; therefore, negative occurrences and disasters will not be commemorated on U.S. postage stamps or stationery.” So the United States part of my collection consists of mostly postcards (RPPCs, picture postcards, and postal cards), a few covers and letters, and a couple of cinderellas. I prefer postcards that were: mailed, with the stamp not removed; postmarked soon after the earthquake, from near the epicenter; including a message about the event; legible with clear markings, and in good condition. At last count, I have items from 19 identified (and a couple of unidentified) U.S. earthquakes, 9 of which were in California. I have about 275 items, with the most (125) from the 1906 San Francisco earthquakes, 50 from the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake, and 35 (mostly unposted, and showing the geographic impact of the earthquake) from the 1959 Hebgen Lake, Montana, event. I will share some examples, including interesting messages that were included on some of the cards and letters.

Outline of this presentation

- Oldest earthquake and postcard
- Earthquake geography
- Earthquakes in my collection
- Earthquake stamps
- San Francisco earthquake, 1906
- Long Beach earthquake, 1933
- Hebgen Lake earthquake, 1959
- Philatelic articles on earthquakes

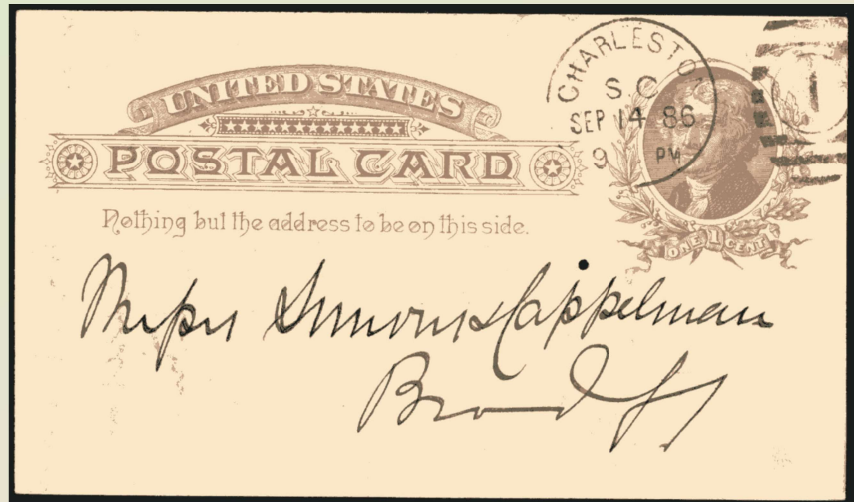
Oldest earthquake and postcard (1) - a tease



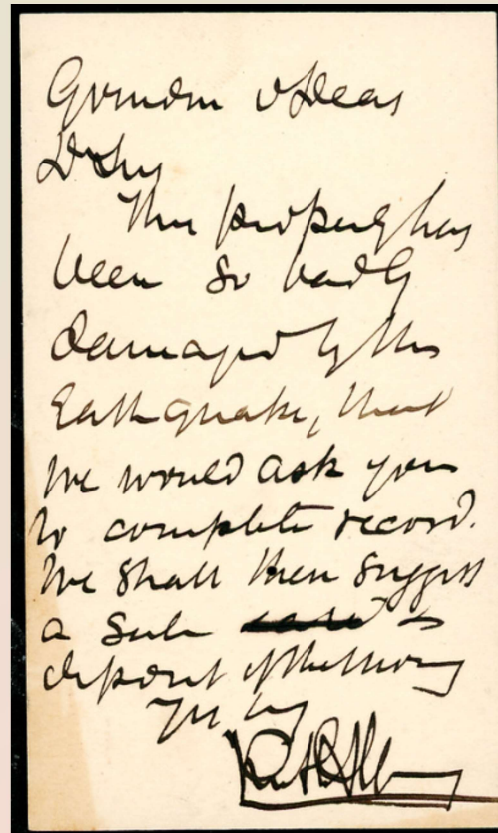
Postcard (unposted, divided, color)
NM001 in my collection

"Cypress Knees at Reelfoot Lake called America's finest natural fish hatchery. This Lake was formed during the winter of **1811-1812** by a series of severe earthquakes [$m=7.5$]" in the New Madrid seismic zone, near St. Louis.

Oldest earthquake and postcard (2) - a tease

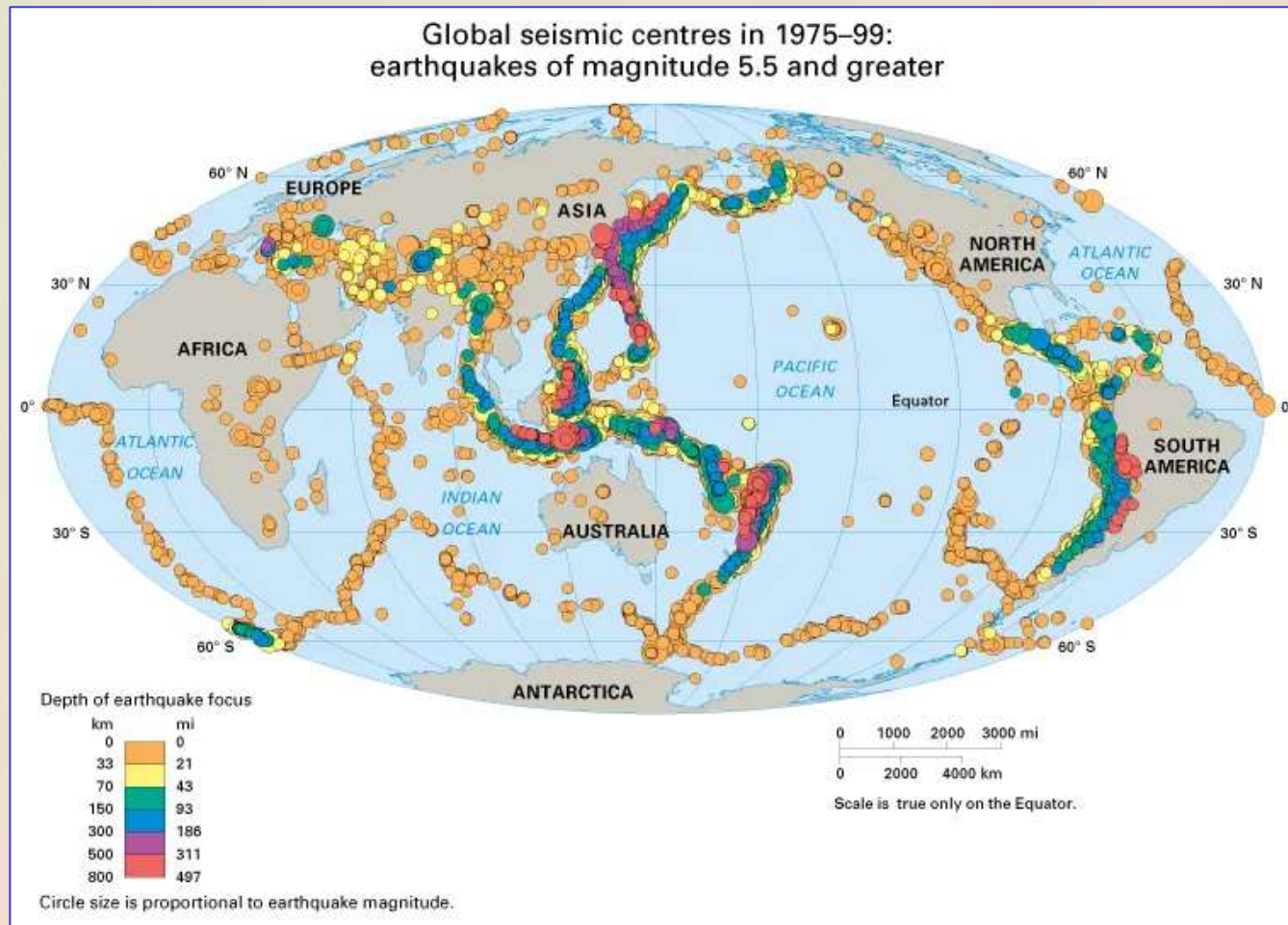


Postal card
Charleston - Br[?], 9/14/1886
CH001 in my collection
Scott UX8c (1885), Jefferson

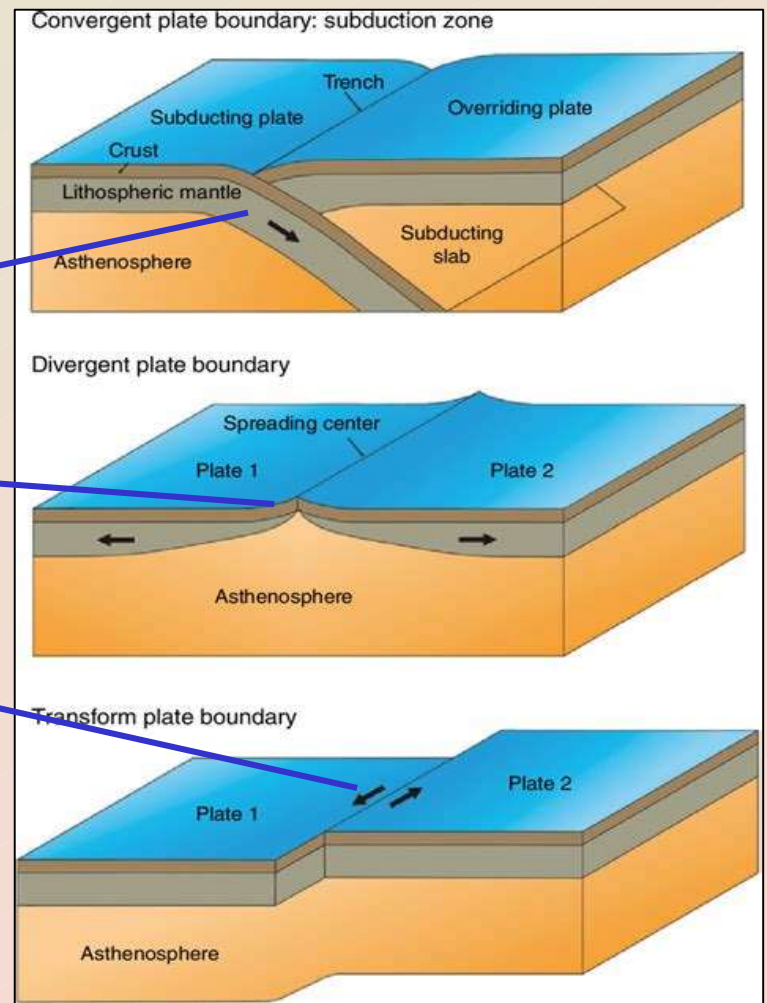
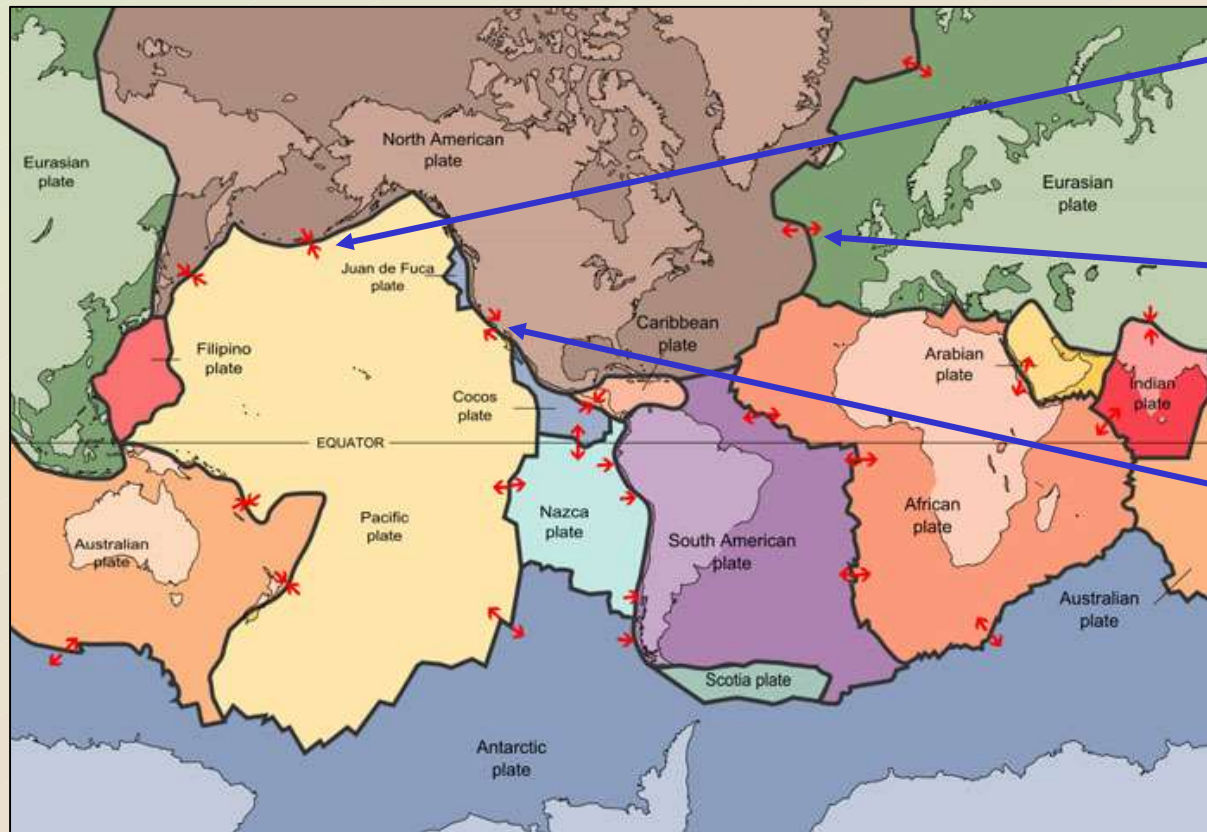


Two weeks after the
1886 Charleston, SC,
m=7 earthquake
"[?] ... The property has
been so badly damaged
by this earthquake. Next
we would ask you to
complete record. We
shall then suggest a ...
[?]"

Earthquake geography (1) - seismicity patterns

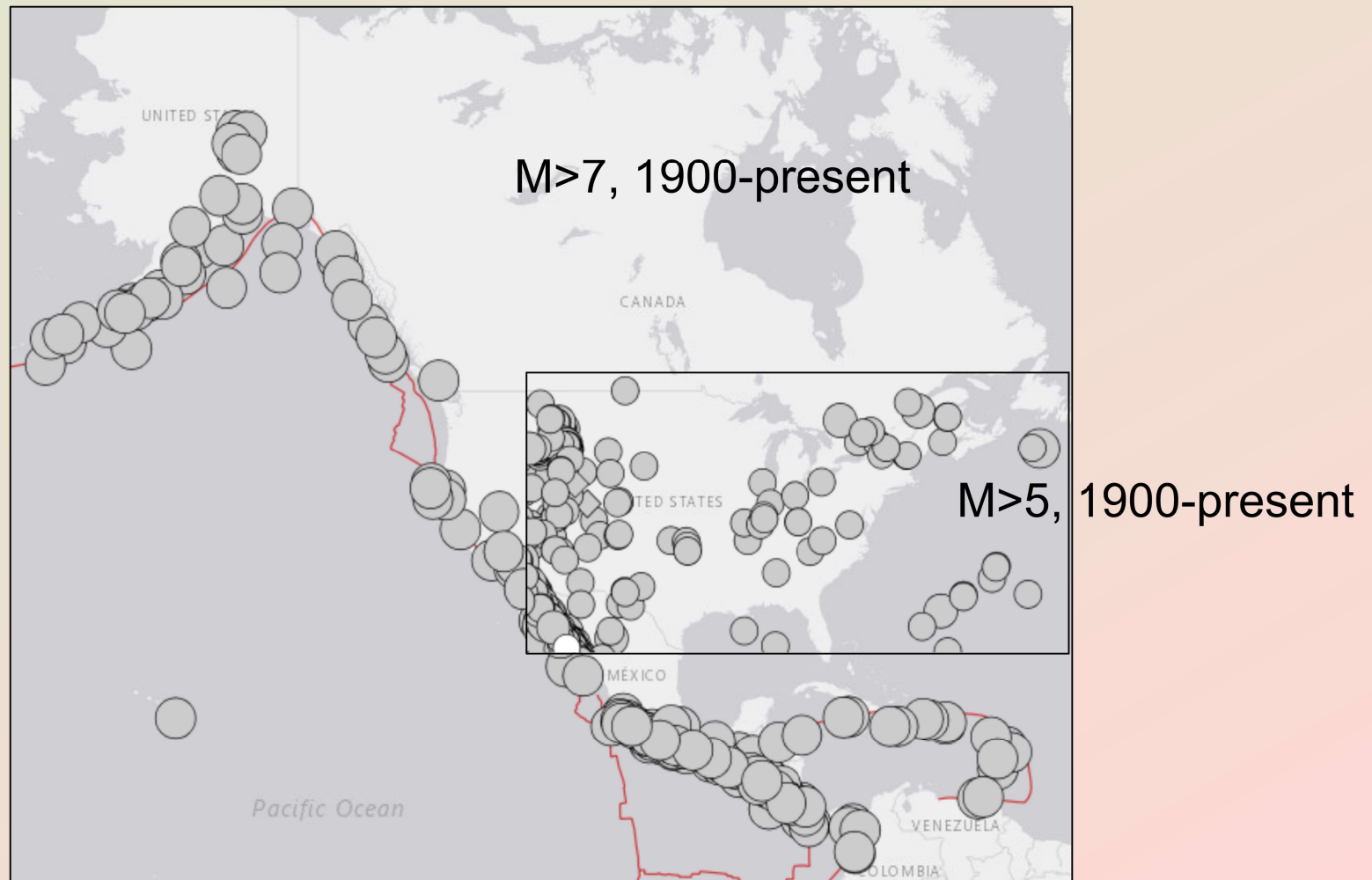


Earthquake geography (2) - plate tectonics



Most earthquakes occur near the boundaries of tectonic plates

Earthquake geography (3) - North American earthquakes



Earthquakes in my collection (1)

Spreadsheet list

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TVzudKaRLIAihXQ28Ujs1_YhFEWjDbuveGUsEq5v_E/edit?usp=sharing

Flickr images

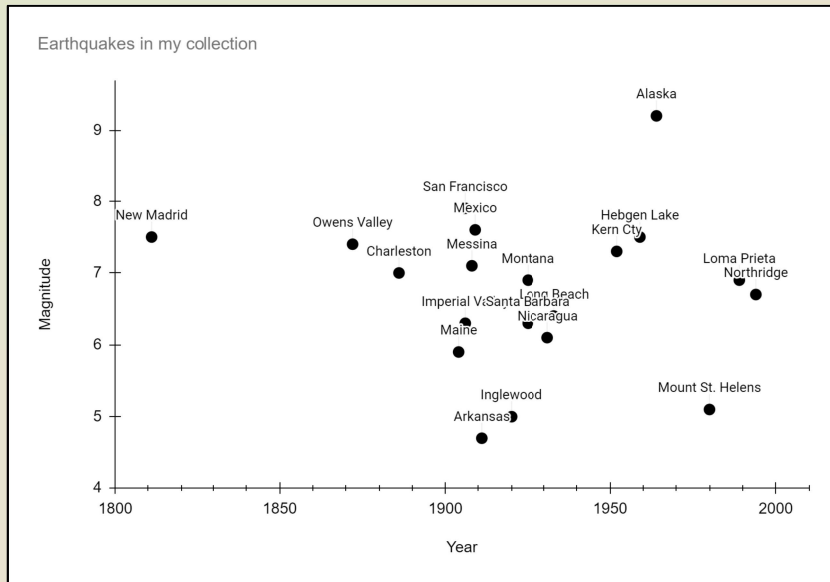
covers and postcards - <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmUGrr3p>

stamps - <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjAneq4>

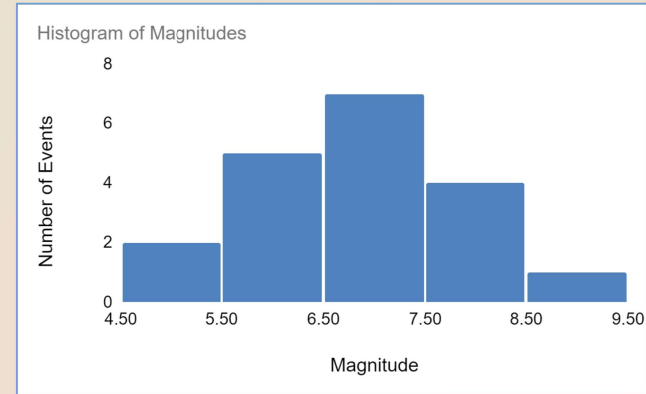


	A	B
1	Earthquake	AK
2	Number	001
3	Item	cover
4	Stamp 1	1145
5	Type/Stamp 2	1209
6	Cachet/postcard maker	U.S. Navy?
7	Cachet theme/postcard caption; bold significant	U.S. Navy
8	Slogan/cancel	"ABCD" mail for better business service
9	Date of postmark/received	1964-03-27
10	Day mailed	
11	Day recd	
12	Place of postmark/incoming	USS Interpreter/San Francisco
13	Addressee/from	Walter E. Atkinson, Jr., P.O. Box 68, Palo Alto, Calif.
14	Cost	
15	Scan front (address side)	https://flic.kr/p/2nBMnH2
16	Scan back	https://flic.kr/p/2nBJYyZ
17	Link	
18	Comment	postmarked date of earthquake
19	text written	postmarked date of earthquake

Earthquakes in my collection (2)



19 identified U.S. earthquakes
9 earthquakes in California



>300 items in my collection
120 San Francisco, 1906
47 Long Beach, 1933 and Old Ironsides
36 Hebgen Lake, 1959
21 Alaska, 1964

Earthquakes in my collection (3)

U.S. earthquakes with >10 Fatalities

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Mag.</u>	<u>Fatalities</u>
April 18, 1906	San Francisco	7.9	3,000+
April 1, 1946	Aleutians	8.6	165
March 27, 1964	Alaska	9.2	143
March 10, 1933	Long Beach, CA	6.4	120
Dec. 16, 1811	New Madrid, MO	7.5	250
April 2, 1868	Hawaii	7.9	77
Oct. 17, 1989	Loma Prieta, CA	6.9	63
Aug. 31, 1886	Charleston, SC	7.0	60
Feb. 9, 1971	San Fernando, CA	6.5	60
Jan. 17, 1994	Northridge, CA	6.7	57
Oct. 21, 1868	Hayward, CA	6.5	30
Aug. 18, 1959	Hebgen Lake, MT	7.2	28+
March 26, 1872	Owens Valley, CA	7.5	27
July 21, 1952	Kern County, CA	7.3	14
June 29, 1925	Santa Barbara, CA	6.5	13

Red - events represented in my collection

Data from [wikipedia](https://www.wikipedia.org/)

Earthquakes stamps (1) - U.S. stamps

No postage stamps

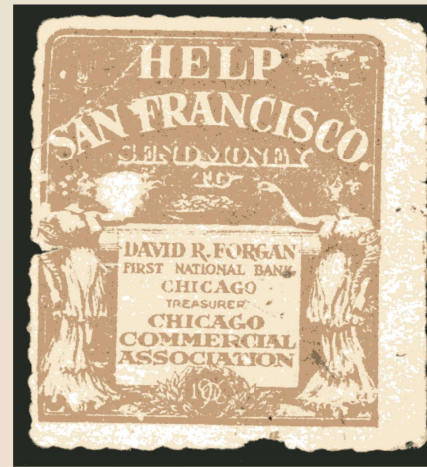
A few covers and letters

Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee

2019 criteria for stamps

<https://about.usps.com/who/csac/#criteria>

“The stamp program commemorates positive contributions to American life, history, culture and environment; therefore, *negative occurrences and disasters will not be commemorated on U.S. postage stamps* or stationery.”



“Help San Francisco; send money; David R. Forgan, First National Bank, Chicago, treasurer, Chicago Commercial Association”



The show theme for WESTPEX 2006 was commemorating the 100th anniversary of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

Earthquake stamps (2) - Central America, Caribbean



BB B1e (1907) -
Kingston relief fund



JM 772 (1992) - 300th anniv. of
destruction of Port Royal



NI C447 (1960) - for the Red
Cross to help earthquake
victims in Chile



NI 2246 (1998) - Managua
Earthquake, 25th anniv.



NI 2247 (1998) - Managua
earthquake, 25th anniv.

Earthquake stamps can

- aid relief work
- honor rescue workers and rebuilding
- commemorate a historical event

Earthquake stamps (3) - “not”

Some of my collection is covers and letters

But a large number are postcards

Preferred criteria:

- mailed, stamp not removed
- postmarked soon after earthquake
- postmarked from near the epicenter
- includes a message about the event
- legible with clear markings
- good condition
- not too expensive

San Francisco earthquake, 1906 (1)

[ATA 1-page exhibits, 2024](#)

San Francisco [earthquake](#), April 18, 1906

Its importance comes more from the wealth of scientific knowledge derived from it than from its sheer size.

Will focus here on relatively early postings.

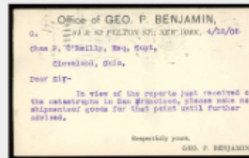
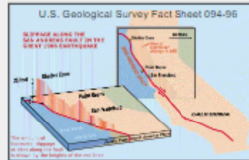
Mail Sent Soon After the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake

Rob Sternberg (rs_sternberg@yahoo.com)

My topical "stamp collection" (mostly postcards) on U.S. earthquakes consists of about 275 items from 25 earthquakes, with the largest number (115) related to the magnitude 7.8 San Francisco earthquake of April 18, 1906. (The figure to the right shows the 1906 slippage along the San Andreas Fault, as much as 25').

I prefer items that were posted, postmarked near the earthquake epicenter not long after the earthquake occurred, and bearing a message related to the earthquake.

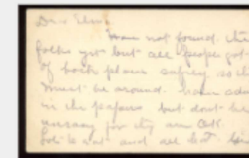
Shown are four items sent within a month of the San Francisco disaster. Scans of all images in the collection can be seen [here](#). The database for the collection is [here](#).



The quake occurred at 5:12 PST. This postcard (Scott UX18) was postmarked in New York less than four hours later.



Postmarked one day after the quake, in Los Angeles, with an unrelated image on the back. Text: "San Francisco, thrown down and burned. Food supplies destroyed." Text also cites a "heavy" earthquake felt in Los Angeles on April 19, 1906, which can be identified as a magnitude 6.3 event with an epicenter in the Imperial Valley.



Another postal card, postmarked one week after the quake, from San Francisco, the earliest post-quake postmark in my collection from that city. Text: "... have not found the folks yet but all people got out of both places safely, so they must be around. Have advertised in the papers but don't be uneasy for they are ok..."

San Francisco earthquake, 1906 (2)



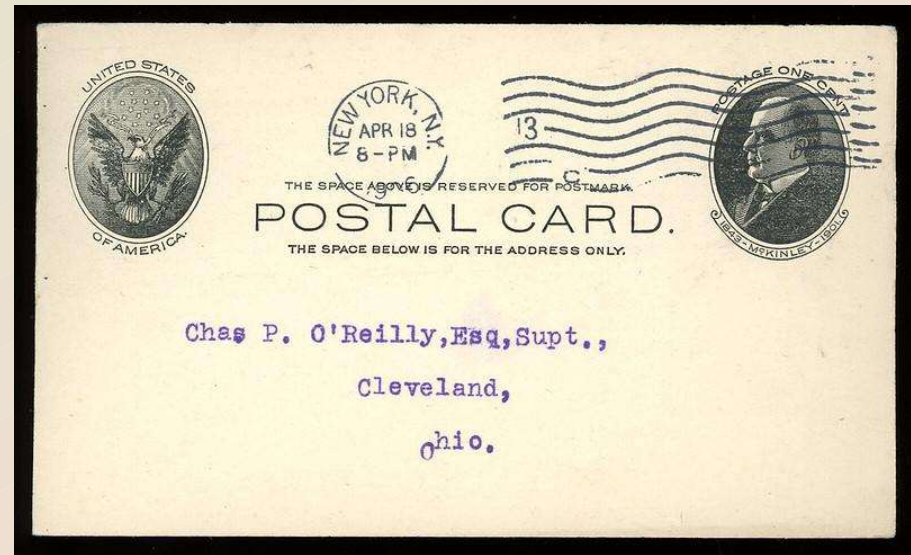
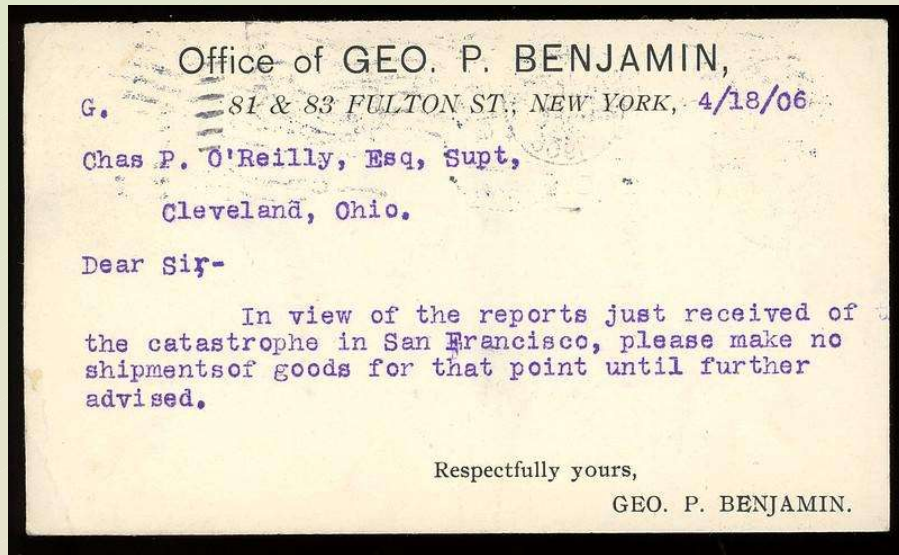
San Francisco - ?, 4/17/1906
(1906 is visible on the paper)
SF002 in my collection
Scott 303 (1903), Grant

SAN FRANCISCO EARTHQUAKE

This piece is from a cover in the last mail clearing San Francisco for the East on the night of the great earthquake which, with the subsequent fire, almost destroyed the city. The quake began at 5.13 a.m. April 18, 1906. The fragment of the cover was saved by Mr. J.R. Sykes of Philadelphia through whom it came to this collection.

Sent out April 17,
the day before the quake!

San Francisco earthquake, 1906 (3)



Postal card

NY - Cleveland, 4/18/1906

SF050 in my collection

Scott UX18 (1902), McKinley

It's typed!

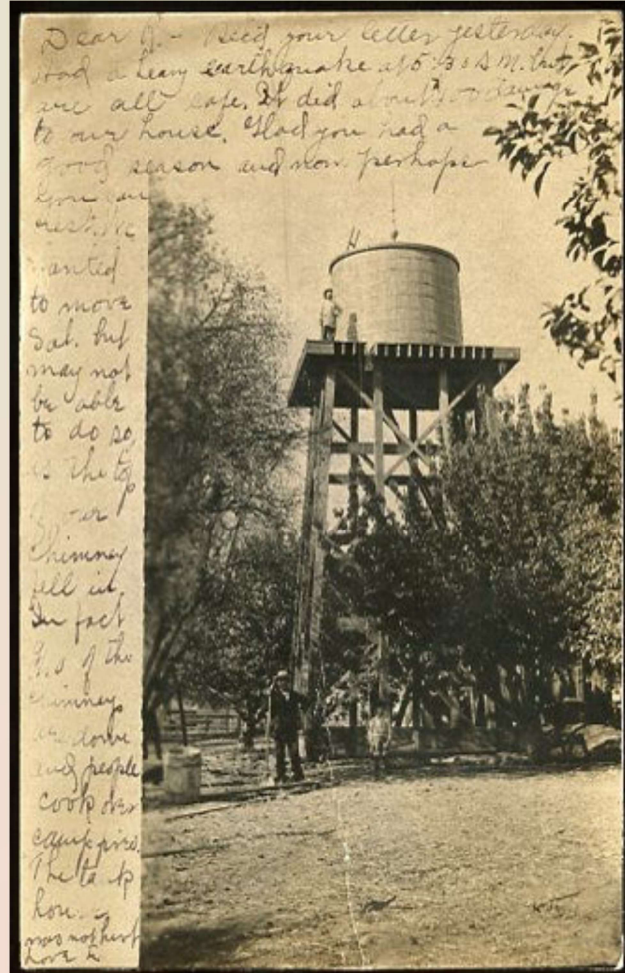
Sent April 18, just 12 hours after the quake.

Contact with the reference staffs of The New York Public Library and the Cleveland Public Library. "O'Reilly might have been the superintendent of a city prison / workhouse."

San Francisco earthquake, 1906 (4)



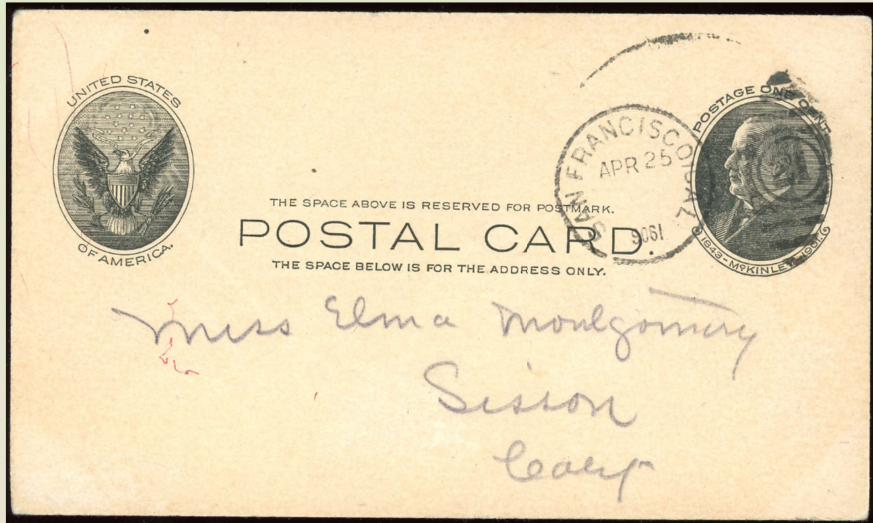
Postcard (undivided)
San Jose - Los Angeles, 4/18/1906
SF080 in my collection
Scott 300 (1903), Franklin



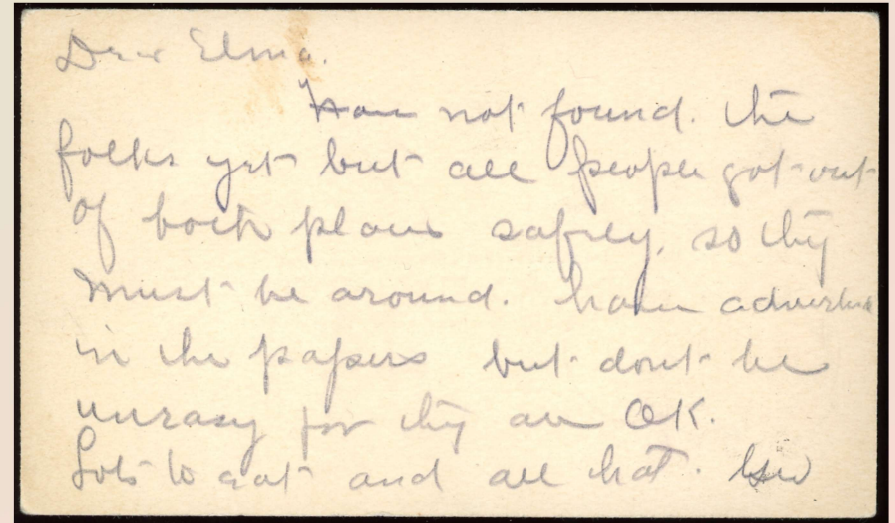
Earliest SF area cancel, 13 hours after quake.
About 80 miles from epicenter.

"... Had a heavy earthquake at 5:30 am, but are all safe. It did [?] damage to our house ... chimney fell in

San Francisco earthquake, 1906 (5)

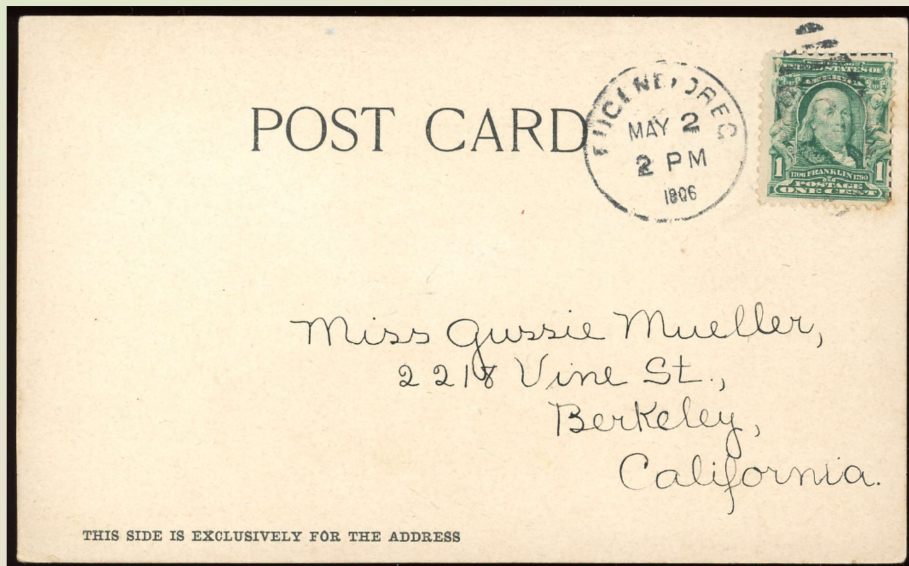


Postal card
SF - Sission (Mt. Shasta), 4/25/1906
SF050 in my collection
Scott UX18 (1902), McKinley



Earliest SF cancel, one week after quake
"Dear Elma, have not found the folks yet but all people got out of both places safely, so they must be around, Have advertised in the papers but don't be uneasy for they are ok. Love to all and all that, bsw[?]"

San Francisco earthquake, 1906 (6)



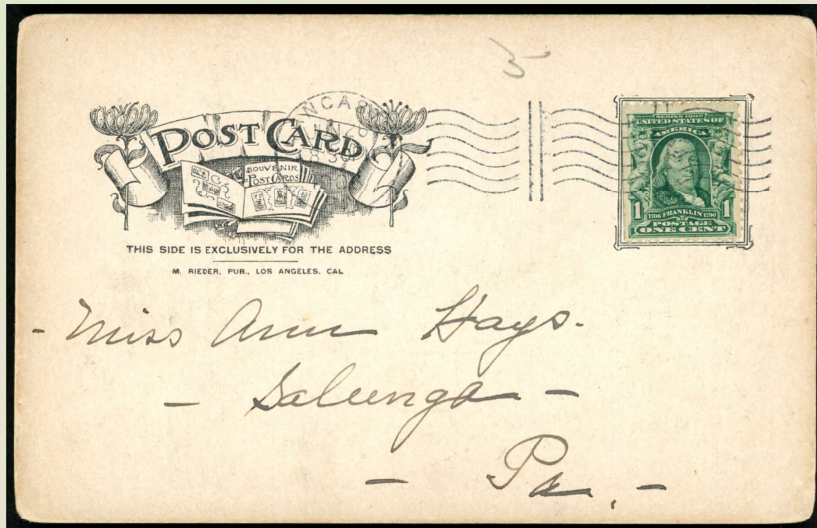
Postcard
Eugene - Berkeley, 5/2/1906
SF019 in my collection
Scott 300 (1903), Franklin



Earliest card to Bay Area, two weeks after quake

"Dear Gussie, Are you safe? Did you lose your home or any of your relatives? Let me know soon. Lovingly, Grace Davis"

San Francisco earthquake, 1906 (7)



Postcard
Lancaster (PA?) - Salunga, 6/26/1906
SF055 in my collection
Scott 300 (1903), Franklin
rounded corners



Local postcard

"Nearly all the city is in this panic(?) state.
E.J. Kofe(?)"

Long Beach earthquake, 1933 (1)

Old Ironsides Encounters the Long Beach Earthquake

Rob Sternberg (rs_sternberg@yahoo.com; <https://internationalgeophysicalyear.blogspot.com/>)

The Long Beach, CA, earthquake of March 10, 1933 (5:54 pm PST), had a Richter magnitude of 6.4, killed 120 people, and caused about \$1 billion damage in current dollars. The USS Constitution, "Old Ironsides," had arrived at the port of Long Beach that day. Philatelic covers prepared onboard were caught up in the chaos of the earthquake.

Old Ironsides, the world's oldest ship still afloat, was first launched in 1797 to fight the Barbary pirates, but is most noted for actions during the War of 1812. She was retired from active service in 1881 and designated a museum ship in 1907. From July 1931 to May 1934, she visited 90 ports on both coasts.

Right: Sesquicentennial cover with Scott #951 (1947), scale = 60%. Insets: left - embossed envelope, Scott U549 (1965); right - War of 1812 bicentennial, Scott 4703 (2012); scale = 100%.



Old Ironsides postmarked covers from the ports it visited.

Left: Ship cancellation/postmark, port of Long Beach, Mar 10 p.m. 1933; cachet image - Old Ironsides; cachet text - Long Beach welcomes U.S. Frigate Constitution March 10-20 1933. Stamp - George Washington. Scott 708 (1932). Scale = 60%.

Inset: transit marking on back of cover, applied by the separating post office in Long Beach. Scale = 75%.



Postcard package of photos showing earthquake damage sent from Long Beach on March 27. Stamp - George Washington. Scott 721 (1932). Scale = 60%.

Inset: One of the postcards; "U.S. Post office carries on in the street." Scale = 55%.



Clipping from *Weekly Philatelic Gossip*, 4/29/33: 2,500 postmarked covers were delivered from Old Ironsides to the Long Beach post office on March 10. The sorting room of the Long Beach post office collapsed during the quake; Two clerks who handled the backstamping died.

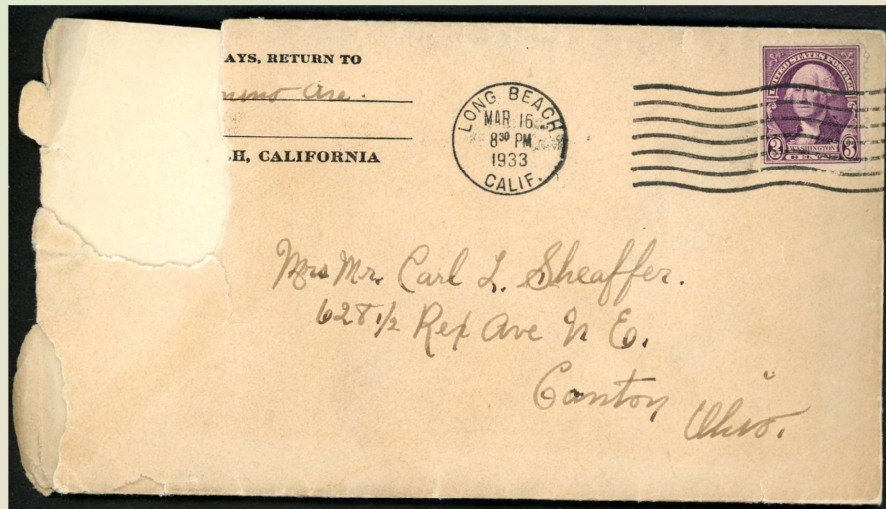
[ATA 1-page exhibits, 2022](#)

[Long Beach earthquake](#), March 10, 1933, m=6.4

[USS Constitution](#) (aka Old Ironsides) - 1931-1934, visits 76 cities along the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts of the United States during the [National Cruise](#)

Docks in Long Beach on March 10, 1933

Long Beach earthquake, 1933 (2)

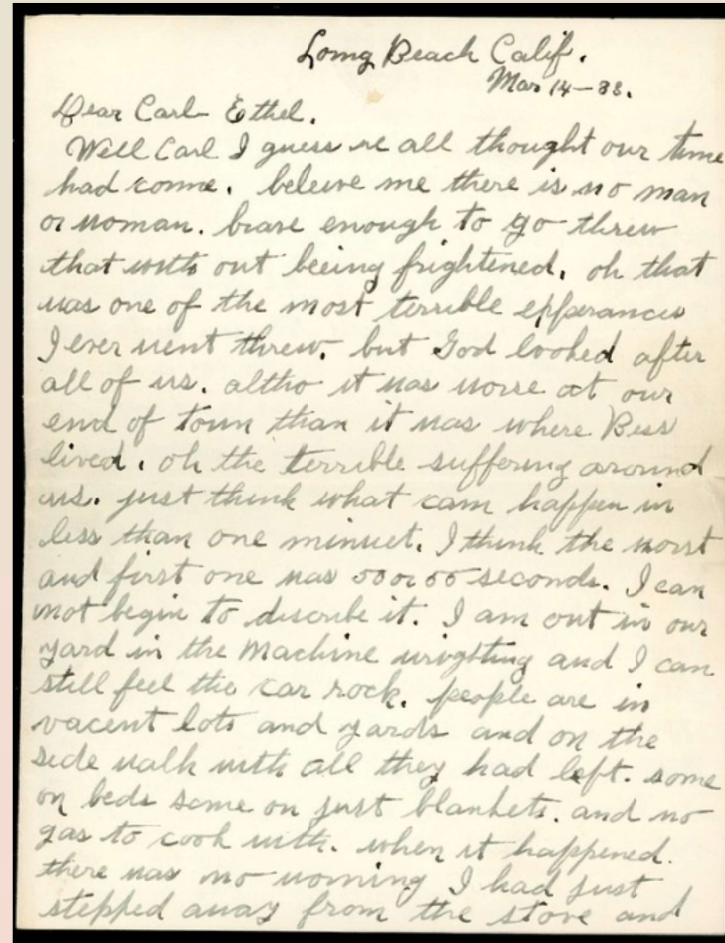


Letter

Long Beach - Canton, OH, 3/16/1933

LB008 in my collection

Scott 720 (1932), Washington



March 14
(letter)
Four days after
quake

p. 1

Long Beach earthquake, 1933 (3)

walked into the bath room. and when I started out I was in the living room across the hall. Carl I hope no one ever experiences what I did by the time I got to the door. Irvin was thrown down before he could get to me. when we got up. we both clung to each other and tried to run out but we were down a couple of times. and the house was bulging in and out and that terrible cracking and groaning of every thing. rite where I left the store every thing piled up on the floor. all the canned goods glass ware and every thing in the cupboard from top to bottom. I had a big pan of mush on the stove but every thing left the stove and was in a pile on the floor. but we are thankful we are all saved. we stayed in our house last night but I only ran out one time. but I think every one ran out the night

p. 2

before about three or four times. Oh it was so terrible. I have a small Electric hot plate to cook on I can not get my nerves steady enough to go in the bed rooms yet we sleep or lay down in the living room near the door. which we never shut very tight or lock it. as I think we had two or three bad ones last night I am now writing this on the 15th the first night it happened as soon as Irvin could he got the car out of the garage and we went to look Bess up. and found that there Apartment house stood it very good. better than out where we are. I dont think that one family in Long Beach went back in the house that night. after we found Bess was all right we drove 20 Miles to another town where Irvin's people lives and it is more open space there. so we sat in the ~~car~~ cars along the curb for two nights. there was six little children all under 7 years old in the two families. they made beds in the cars for them. but the rest lay

p. 3

on the ground. when they got up they were all wet from the heavy fog. most every one is cooking and eating out side the city furnished coke and they make buck stoves on it is a pitiful sight to see. we was lucky the most damage was inside our house I have no dishes left. nothing left in the living room. and only one big black and blue mark on my chest but best of all we have our lives. I went down town yesterday. and every one that are in these houses are setting at the doors wide open. with there tables as close as they can. we are all afraid to stay in any length of time. Well Carl I have not any thing else to write about and I can not say I am well for I am sick as a dog. so excuse writing and please answer as a letter helps a lot. with this mined city all around us. so answer soon tell me how you are getting along are you getting done to all Mom. any work.

p. 4

Long Beach earthquake, 1933 (4)

Long Beach Calif. Mar 14 - 33.

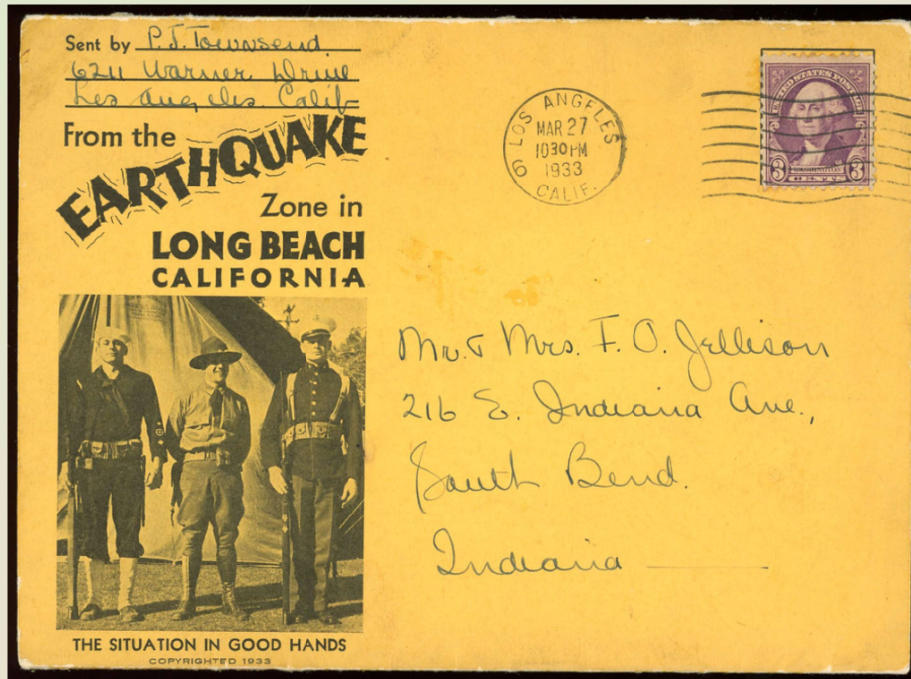
Dear Carl Ethel.

Well Carl I guess we all thought our time had come. believe me there is no man or woman brave enough to go threw [sic] that with out being frightened. oh that was one of the most terrible experiences I ever went threw. but God looked after all of us altho it was worse at our end of town than it was where Bess lived. oh the terrible suffering around us just think what can happen in less than one minuet [sic]. I think the worst and first one was 50 or 55 seconds. I can not begin to describe it. I am out in our yard in the machine (?) and I can still feel the car rock. people are in vacant lots and yards and on the side walk with all they had left. some on beds, some on just blankets. and no gas to cook with. when it happened there was no warning. I had just stepped away from the stove and walked into the bath room. and when I started out I was in the living room across the hall. Carl I hope no one ever experiences what I did. by the time I got to the door, Irvin was thrown down before he could get to me. when he got up we both clung to each other and tried to run out but we were down a cople [sic] of times. and the house was bulging in and out and that terrible cracking and groaning of every thing. rite [sic] where I left the stove every thing piled up on the floor. all the caned [sic] goods glass are and every thing in the cupboard from top to bottom. I had a big pan of mush on the Stove but every thing left the stove and was in a pile on the floor. but we are thankful we are all saved. we stayed in our house last night but I only ran out one time. but I think every one ran out the night before about three or four times. oh it was so terrible. I have a small Electric hot plate to cook on[.] I can not get my nerves steady enough to go in the bed rooms yet we sleep or lay down in the living room near the door which we never shut very tight or lock it, as i think we had two or three bad ones last night[.] I am now writing this on the 15th. the first night it happened as soon as Irwin could he got the car out of the Garage and we went to look Bess up and found that there [sic] apartment [sic] house stood it very good, better than out where we are. I don't think that one family in Long Beach went back in the house that night. after we found Bess was all right we drove 20 miles to another town where Irvins people lives and it is more open space there. so we sat in the cars along the curbing two nights. there was six little children all under 7 years old in the two familys [sic]. they made beds in the cars for them. but the rest lay on the ground. when they got up there were all wet from the heavy fog. most every one is cooking and eating out side[.] the city furnished coke and they make brick stoves. oh it is a pityfull [sic] sight to see. we was lucky the most damage was inside our house. I have no dishes left, nothing left in the living room, and only one big black and blue mark on my chest but best of all we have our lives. I went down town yesterday and every one that are in there [sic] houses are setting at the doors wide open with there [sic] tabels [sic] as close as they can. we are all afraid to stay in any length of time. Well Carl I have not any thing else to write about and I can not say I am well for I am sick as a dog. so excuse writing and please answer as a letter helps a lot with this ruined city all around us. so answer soon tell me how you are getting along. are you getting any work.

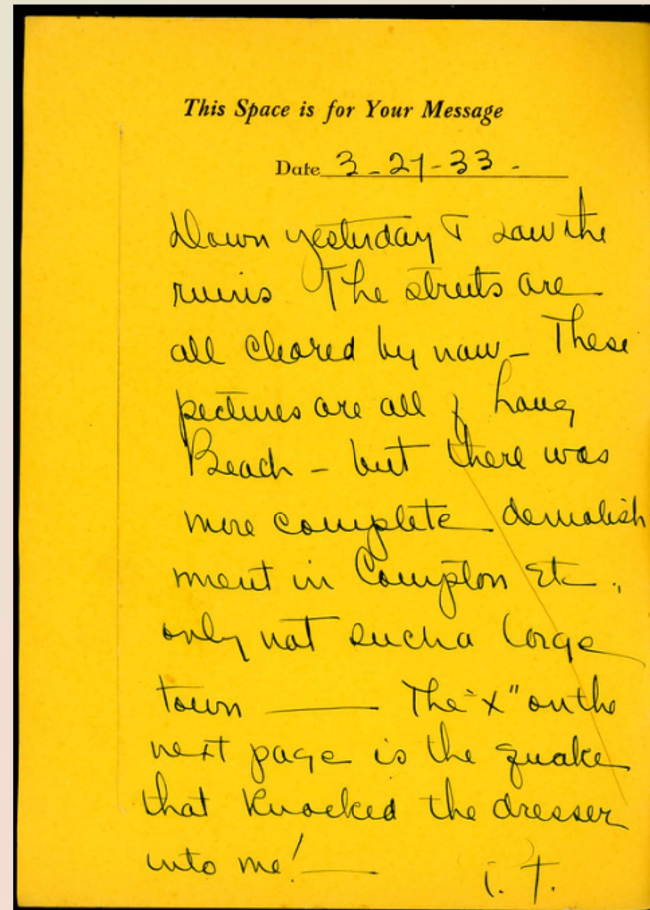
Love to all Mom

LB008 in my collection

Long Beach earthquake, 1933 (6)



Postcard booklet - 17 p.
Los Angeles - South Bend, IN, 3/27/1933
LB011 in my collection
Scott 720 (1932), Washington



"3-27-33 Dawn yesterday I saw the ruins. The streets are all cleared by now. These pictures are all of Long Beach - but there was more complete demolition in Compton etc. only not such a large town. The "x" on the next page is the quake that knocked the dresser into me! i.f."

Long Beach earthquake, 1933 (7)



Above: Polytechnic High School destroyed showing dome collapsed through entrance.
Below: Ruins of the completely demolished Jefferson Junior High School.

Two of seventy schools destroyed and 120 damaged.

Led to passage of the Field Act was mandating quake-resistant schools in California.

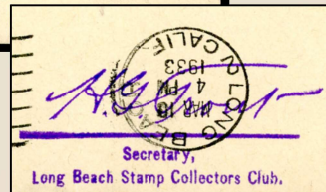


Above: Thirty ton tank containing water crashes through the upper two stories of Press-Telegram building.
Below: U.S. Post office carries on in the street.

Post office destroyed (keep this picture in mind).

LB011 in my collection

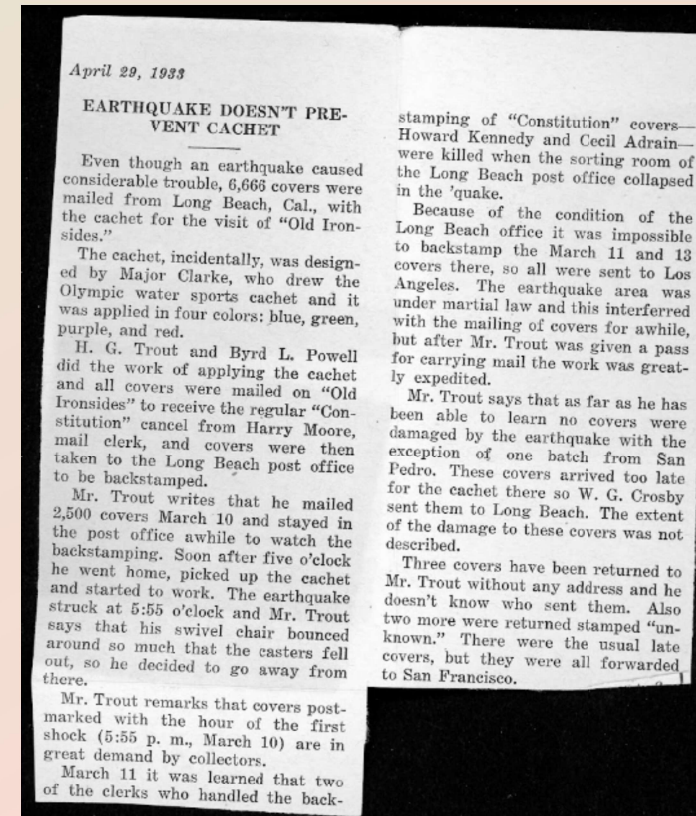
Long Beach earthquake, 1933 (8)



LB026 in my collection
 Long Beach - Long Beach, 3/10/1933
 Front: Ship cancellation/postmark
 Backstamp: Long Beach transit marking
 cachet image - Old Ironsides
 cachet text - Long Beach welcomes U.S. frigate
 Constitution March 10-20 1933
 Stamp - Scott 726 (block), James Oglethorpe
 Postage due - J59 (?)
 Fee Claimed marking

The Long Beach, CA, m=6.4 earthquake was March 10, 1933 (5:54 pm PST). The USS Constitution, "Old Ironsides," arrived at the port of Long Beach that day as part of a three-year tour of 90 ports on both coasts. Old Ironsides processed covers from the ports it visited.

Clipping from Weekly Philatelic Gossip, 4/29/33: 2,500 postmarked covers were delivered from Old Ironsides to the Long Beach post office the afternoon before the earthquake on March 10. The backstamp cancellation was done at the Long Beach post office that afternoon. The sorting room of the Long Beach post office later collapsed during the quake; two clerks who handled the backstamping died.



Long Beach earthquake, 1933 (9)



RPPC - real photo postcard
 Long Beach - Missouri, 3/17/1933
 LB029 in my collection
 Stamp - Scott 705, Washington
 divided fronts since 1907

"Mar 16 - you will remember this picture as the block west of our auto show room in corner, & bakery next to it. We are still in the back yard and getting along ok as the bldg next to us is still dangerous. We expect it to be torn down as soon as they can get it. People are starting to rebuild and the city is like a mad house with working & sight seeing. Love, Curtis & ?"

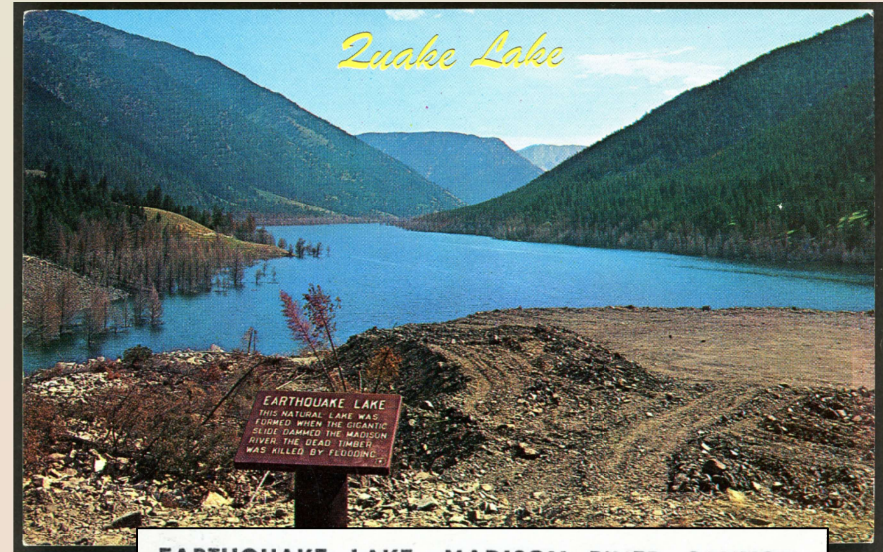
Hebgen Lake, 1959 (1)



Madison Earthquake 1959 — showing mountain which, in split seconds, was sheared off, as if by some giant hand, hurling an estimated ninety million tons of earth and boulders across the canyon, burying everything before it, and creating a new lake. Between West Yellowstone and Ennis, Montana.

© Pub., Dist. & Photographed by Lauretta Studio, Butte, Mont.
(Mr. & Mrs. A. Walkup)

Picture postcard, color, unposted
HL014 in my collection



EARTHQUAKE LAKE, MADISON RIVER CANYON, MONTANA. This beautiful natural lake was formed when a gigantic earthquake sheared off the top of a mountain, spilling millions of tons of earth and boulders to the canyon floor. The great slide created a natural barrier across the valley damming the Madison River to form what is now called "Quake" Lake, 7 miles long and 300 feet deep. Date: Aug. 17, 1959. (Color Photo by Ernst Peterson)

Pub. & Dist. only by BOB ANDERSON POST CARDS, 885 5th Ave., W. N., Kalispell, Mont.

Picture postcard, color, unposted
HL015 in my collection

Philatelic articles on earthquakes (1)



The Author

Raymond Burby is an emeritus professor of city and regional planning at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His career included articles published in several scholarly journals dealing with natural disasters, service on several national research council committees that examined U.S. disaster policy, and invited talks on disaster policy in Australia, England, Italy

FOR FURTHER LEARNING

Recommendations from the APRL research staff:

"Armenian Earthquake on Postage Stamps," *Old World Archeologist* (May 2014).

Brunstrom, Christer. "Earthquake Cinderellas," *Stamp Collector* (November 2, 1991).

Casey, Ron. "Earthquakes – Their Philatelic Connections," *Japanese Philately* (August 2008).

Cone, Richard N. "Nicaragua June 7 1931 – First Earthquake Provisionals," *Aero Philatelist News* (April 15, 1953).

Dehn, Roy A. "Charity Labels for the Calabria- Messina Earthquake of 1908," *Fil-Italia* (Winter 1997-1998).

Rasmussen, Kay. "Earthquake Covers," *Nicarao* (October 1, 1994).

Sienra, Victor. "Earthquake that Changed the Life of Mexico City: The Emergency Postal Service," *Mexicana* (January 2007).

Stehle, Randy. "The 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire – Recent Discoveries," *La Posta* (June-July 2001).

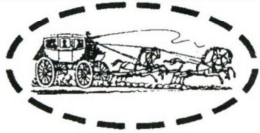
Uwoki, Itsuwo and Moh Tanabe. Kanto Daishinsai, *The Great Earthquake of 1923* (Tokyo: Nihon Yushu Kyoka, 1993). [IP50339]

Philatelic articles on earthquakes (2)

The 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire—Recent Discoveries

Part 1

By Randy Stehle



**LA POSTA: A JOURNAL
OF AMERICAN POSTAL
HISTORY**

**June - July 2001
Volume 32, Number 3
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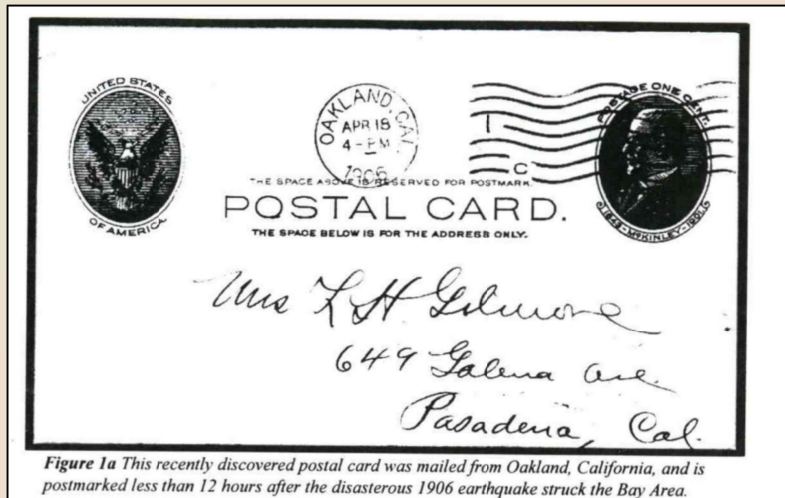


Figure 1a This recently discovered postal card was mailed from Oakland, California, and is postmarked less than 12 hours after the disastrous 1906 earthquake struck the Bay Area.

Seismological Stamp Collecting

by Carl A. Von Hake
NOAA/NGDC
Boulder, Colorado

For most people a major earthquake is also a major event, often unforgettable, and often commemorated in some way. As with centennials and other milestones, postage stamps are the main medium of commemoration, along with medals struck for posterity (and profit).

The use of adhesive-backed postage stamps to indicate prepayment of postage on mail goes back only to 1840, when it began replacing the practice of writing 'Paid' on the envelope, or of sending mail unpaid, the fee to be collected on delivery. As the use of postage stamps increased, the common designs of each denomination gave way to portraits of national leaders, and to renderings of important events, famous buildings, national shrines—and earthquakes.

In the 150 years since stamps have been in general use, a number of important earthquakes have been noted in this way. The earliest of these is a 1907 issue from Barbados. This stamp was the regular 2-pence issue of 1899, overprinted "Kingston Relief Fund 1 d," released January 25, 1907, only 11 days after a disastrous earthquake hit the West Indies island.

Perhaps the most interesting set of stamps related to earthquakes was the Nicaragua issue of 1932, in commemoration of the earthquake at Managua on March 31, 1931. The total number of dead reached 2,000, and the number of injured was in the thousands. 25,000 persons were made homeless.



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