

acc. 598

1862-2-10



U. S. Steamer

PERRY,

Oakland, Cal., May 15, 1906.

SUBJECT:

No. of Inquiries

The Honorable,  
The Secretary of the Treasury,  
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

I respectfully submit the following report of my movements during the interval from April 18th to 27th last covering the period of the recent great calamity which occurred in San Francisco.

I was residing, with my family, at the Occidental Hotel, when on the morning of the 18th, at about a quarter after five o'clock, we were awakened by the sudden and unusual roaring and vibrations to realize that the talk which we had often heard of earthquakes and the possibility of a serious shake-up some day, was verified and felt, at first, that the "real thing" had come at last. The vibrations seemed to be in all directions, circular, vertical and lateral and each second appeared to increase in intensity, so that it was difficult to stand upright. The sensations experienced were indescribable, as each moment it seemed that the building would collapse and carry death and destruction to all within. At the first shock we instantly arose, Mrs. Dunwoody put on her bath robe and went out of our apartments to assist a lady friend take her invalid mother down stairs. I dressed myself completely before going down. There was a comparatively small degree of excitement, after recovering from the first shock, the main characteristic seemed to be one of dazed wonder. Some flocked into the street and gazed at the ruin wrought in sur-

rounding buildings, while others walked or sat about the corridors of the hotel, wondering if the end had come.

I found Mrs. Dunwoody on the sidewalk, in front of the hotel, and induced her to return and dress herself, as fires had already broken out in several places. While she was dressing I drew a sheet from the bed and put into it some wearing apparel, put a few things into a suit case and satchel and took them with us down to the office floor. I then left Mrs. D. for a short time to look about and take some observations. I found fires raging in several quarters and in many places between the hotel and the ferry at the foot of Market street, and was told that the boats were not running to Oakland. I met people driven from the burned district by the flames, who had saved nothing but what they stood in and I realized that we might soon have to join the procession. On returning to the hotel I found that a friend, Mrs. Albert Sutton, had arrived, with her automobile, to take Mrs. D. and the few things we had already got together out to her home near the Presidio. Sometime after they left I secured an expressman and saved out of four trunks and four packing cases which were in the hotel, one trunk and one packing case. My uniforms and equipments, which were stored at S. Foster's, were a total loss. The articles which I saved from the hotel were taken to the home of our friend, Mrs. Sutton.

During the afternoon I went down town as far as the hotel at which Lieut. and Mrs. Carmine were stopping, to ascertain, if possible, their whereabouts, but could only learn that they had gone out early in the day.

The fires were burning fiercely and had reached the magnitude of a conflagration. At night fall of the first day it seem as if the

city could not escape destruction. The resort to dynamite instead of arresting the progress of the flames helped to promote it. The complete ineffectiveness of the efforts of the fire fighters, the knowledge, which seemed to be general, that the water supply was inadequate, and in many cases almost entirely cut off, should have produced a state of panic, but there was no exhibition of anything of the sort, and from first to last people kept their heads.

During the next day we learned that the ferry boats were running to Oakland and other points about the Bay, and that many people were leaving the city. While the fire had not reached our locality no one knew but it might ultimately, and as the supply of food was not great we concluded it would be best to go to Oakland. We experienced no difficulty in reaching the ferry station in an automobile. On the way we passed crowds of humanity dragging all sorts of effects in waggons improvised out of lounges with casters, baby carriages doing duty as express waggons, and trunks being moved by means of a rope or a sheet passed through the handle and used as a hauling line, all trying to keep ahead of the fire and making for Golden Gate Park and the Presidio. We arrived in Oakland about noon. I spent the afternoon in getting together some supplies of food and water which were intended for the relief of the family of Mr. and Mrs. Sutton, and I intended taking them to the city as soon as an opportunity offered. It was not until the 21st when through the courtesy of Captain Hamlet, who had the use of a launch belonging to W.A.Boole & Co., that I was able to get them across the Bay. By this time the fire had burned itself out and we learned that the Sutton home had escaped destruction. After delivering the supplies, Mr. Sutton expressed a desire to turn over his automobile to the use of the military authorities

and asked me if I could arrange the matter. I visited General Funston's headquarters and made the necessary arrangements, and I am informed it rendered valuable assistance to the authorities as long as they required it. Later in the day I returned to Oakland with Captain Hamlet, bringing what few things I had taken from the hotel on the 18th.

When I returned to the THETIS on the 19th, I was informed by Mrs. Carmine, who was a refugee temporarily located on the BEAR, that the force on the THETIS had accompanied 2nd Asst. Engr. McMillan and the available force from the BEAR to the city, to assist in protecting property and doing guard duty.

I visited the city only once in the interval between the 19th and the 24th, on which date I was relieved of duty in connection with the THETIS. On the latter date I secured transportation to Portland, Or., intending to leave on the 26th, to carry out Department orders directing me to assume command of the PERRY at Astoria. Upon my return I found two telegrams from the Department, one dated the 18th, by train from Chicago the 19th, granting me seven days leave of absence, and one dated the 23rd, informing me that I had been directed by telegram of the 20th (received on the 25th) to join the PERRY at San Francisco. I immediately cancelled my transportation and reported to Captain Hamlet, in charge of Revenue Cutter Force, for such duty as he might assign me, informing him of the above facts and also the Department, and stating that I did not wish to avail myself of the leave of absence which had been granted. On the 25th I received an order from Captain Hamlet to take charge of the Revenue Cutter Office, Appraiser's Building, temporarily, and on the 26th was relieved by Lieut. Carmine who had been relieved from other

duties to which he had been assigned by Captain Hamlet, the PERRY  
in the mean time, having arrived I was directed to obey my orders  
from the Department, to assume command of that vessel. I reported  
on board the PERRY on the 27th and assumed command on the 28th all  
of which information has already been forwarded to the Department.

Very respectfully,

F. M. DUNWOODY

Captain, U.S.R.C.S.

1300

1300

No. of Enclosures