

1906 EARTHQUAKE

Characters:

Aaron Levy, proprietor of the Pioneer Store

Charles Hammond, resident south of Upper Lake and clock aficionado

Inez Keeling, 16 year old student home from school in Santa Rosa

Pre-script: Volcanoes, geysers & earthquakes all are a part of Lake County's past and present. The well known earthquake of 1906 had some impact, though clearly not the devastation of San Francisco or even Santa Rosa. Our tale begins with local residents a few days after the quake, catching up with news from around the county at one of the places in town to get all the latest gossip, the Pioneer Store at Main & Third Streets.

The time is, April 1906

Levy:

Well, as proprietor of this mercantile, I have to say, I guess we got off pretty easy. I know the Pioneer here along with most of the storefronts on Main Street, lost their windows. Nobody was hurt though. Having that shaker happen so early in the morning was a blessing in that way. Nobody around then.

Hammond:

That's true, Mr. Levy, but just look over there at the Lakeview Hotel! I just loved that verandah across the front of that beautiful building.

Levy:

Yup. The bricks off that top floor really took that whole verandah out. I heard that they're going to have to take that third floor clear off to stabilize it. And how about the Masonic Hall? They only had some of the walls up, but it's all rubble now!

Hammond:

Well Mr. Levy, you know I live just south of Upper Lake. Woke up with the whole house rocking! Me and the missus jumped right out of bed and got to a doorway. Had to hang on for a couple minutes til it stopped.

Keeling:

It was so loud and the whole place shook like mad!

Hammond:

We heard a terrible roaring sound. (Nods all around). Sounded like a big wind in the trees. As it was fading out, sounded like it was heading to the southwest. That's where most of the damage happened at my place- on the southwest side.

Levy:

Did you lose windows or your chimney like here in Lakeport?

Hammond:

No. China vase fell, and smashed, my telescope had spun clear around to the southwest. Almost like a magnet had pulled everything that way. Of course, it had some effect on my clock collection. You probably know I love clocks so have quite a few! They all stopped, except my most delicate Empire clock. That one just kept right on ticking! Course, I had to reset all of them 3 times, because of all those aftershocks. Last one was at 1040 in the morning. I know that for sure, cuz that's what all the clocks read!

Keeling:

I was home on break from school staying with my grandma.

Levy:

We know you & your family, Inez.

Keeling:

Yes sir. Well, we woke up about quarter after five, I guess it was. I saw Granny across the room, on the floor, & the whole house was shaking. Grandma was hanging onto her bed leg. The whole bed was rolling on its casters across the floor, back and forth. She kept yelling "It's an earthquake!" Over and over. Kinda figured that out. It was real scary! But when it quit moving, everybody came in, and nothing was hurt or even broken! Just granny rolling out of bed and her bed rolling back and forth! Good thing she didn't break a hip or something!

Levy:

Well, I just got the papers this morning. The Clear Lake Press and the Lake County Bee. They've been collecting reports here. (Gives papers to both people, takes one himself)

Hammond: (takes & peruses a paper)

Looks like the brick builders will have a lot of work soon. Lots of brick chimneys fell right down. Wow! Says here that all six of the chimneys at the school here in town twisted round about 20 degrees! Like a corkscrew! And all the same. Really peculiar!

Levy :

There's a report of no big cracks or landslides on the mountain, though. Just a couple of really enormous boulders slid down with no harm to anyone.

Keeling:

Look here! In the Clear Lake Press, it says there's a giant landslide across Cache Creek. It's damming the creek, making the water rise. Looks like it went way up! 90 feet! I've never been out that way, but it must be a sight to see!

Hammond:

There was a landslide at Laurel Dell, too, but not nearly so big.

Levy:

The papers all say that Santa Rosa and San Francisco both were really flattened. The fires in San Francisco were the worst thing though. Took out all the water lines, and no way to fight them. So sad!

Keeling:

Is there anything in the papers about the well water?

Hammond:

No, I haven't heard of any issues.

Keeling:

All I know is that the well at the house here had the water go all milky white! It was so strange. We were afraid to drink it. Papa had to ride to Kelseyville to get them to check it out.

Levy:

What was that from?

Keeling:

They said there were some solids or minerals or who knows what that got all mixed up with the shaking. They told us it was ok to drink, so we went ahead and used it but I have never seen or heard of such a thing before in my life!

Hammond:

Here in the Press, it's talking about the new fine schoolhouse in Lower Lake they built not long ago.

Levy:

Right! They're so proud of their two story school, complete with bell tower. That bell rings for all kinds of activities, not just for school.

Hammond:

Not anymore! That bell tower was knocked right off! That and a bunch of chimneys down all over the county.

Levy:

All I can say is we are so grateful to not have much worse to happen. We can always rebuild the towers, and the chimneys, but thankfully no one was hurt or killed here!

Postscript: And so it's recorded that though the earthquake of 1906 was a great and devastating event for so many, the people of Lake County were indeed very fortunate! And hopefully more prepared now than back in the day for when it will, inevitably happen again.