

# San Francisco



One hundred years  
by the Golden Gate





*San Francisco Y. M. C. A.*  
*1853-1953*



**PORTALS OF CENTRAL Y.M.C.A., HEADQUARTERS,  
Y.M.C.A. OF SAN FRANCISCO**



# San Francisco



100 Years by the Golden Gate  
1853-1953

by  
Clifford M. Drury

The Arthur H. Clark Company, Glendale, California  
1963

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**THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED**

to that great company of volunteer workers, secretaries, and staff members, too numerous for all to be mentioned by name, without whose loyal and self-sacrificing services the San Francisco Metropolitan Y.M.C.A. could not have carried on its magnificent work for young men and boys of San Francisco for over a century

## Contents

<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND SOURCES</b>		13
<b>I</b>	<b>THE BEGINNINGS OF THE Y</b>	17
	<b>MORAL CONDITIONS WITHIN SAN FRANCISCO</b>	18
	<b>THE HISTORY OF THE Y.M.C.A.</b>	20
	<b>BEGINNINGS OF THE Y IN SAN FRANCISCO</b>	22
<b>II</b>	<b>IN RENTED ROOMS, 1853-1864</b>	29
	<b>THE Y AT PORTSMOUTH SQUARE</b>	29
	<b>THE Y AT ARMORY HALL</b>	37
	<b>THE Y AT 629 WASHINGTON STREET</b>	38
	Lost and Unclaimed	41
	The Civil War	42
	Should Women be Permitted to Join	43
	<b>AGITATION FOR A BUILDING</b>	45
<b>III</b>	<b>IN THE Y's FIRST BUILDING, 1864-1868</b>	47
	Concern for Prisoners	50
	Street Preaching	51
	The Post Office Committee	52
	<b>THE ASSOCIATION BUILDS</b>	53
<b>IV</b>	<b>AT SUTTER STREET BEFORE McCOY, 1868-1881</b>	59
	PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES	60
	OTHER PROJECTS	64
	<b>THE CHINESE Y.M.C.A.</b>	65
	TESTIMONY OF AN OBSERVER	67
	MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCES	68
	<b>THE COMING OF DWIGHT L. MOODY</b>	69
<b>V</b>	<b>AT SUTTER STREET AFTER McCOY, 1881-1894</b>	75
	<b>THE LADIES' CENTRAL COMMITTEE</b>	75
	AN EXPANDING PROGRAM	78
	<b>THE STATE CONVENTIONS</b>	85
	<b>THE BEGINNINGS OF ASILOMAR</b>	85
	A SHIFTING EMPHASIS	87
	<b>ORGANIZATION OF THE FIRST BRANCHES</b>	88
	<b>THE DEMAND FOR A NEW BUILDING</b>	92
<b>VI</b>	<b>AT MASON AND ELLIS, 1894-1906</b>	101
	<b>AT WORK IN THE NEW BUILDING</b>	101
	<b>DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE BRANCHES</b>	107
	<b>THE PRESIDIO Y</b>	108



FINANCIAL PROBLEMS . . . . .	111
IN TRIBUTE . . . . .	114
DEDICATION AND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS . . . . .	116
THREE YEARS OF PROSPERITY . . . . .	119
THE EARTHQUAKE AND FIRE . . . . .	121
<b>VII AT GOLDEN GATE AND LEAVENWORTH</b>	
WITH McCOY, 1906-1915 . . . . .	125
McCOY RAISES \$500,000 . . . . .	127
FOUR YEARS IN TEMPORARY QUARTERS . . . . .	131
THE NEW LOCATION AND THE NEW BUILDING . . . . .	133
FIRST FIVE YEARS IN THE NEW BUILDING . . . . .	139
A CAMPAIGN THAT FAILED . . . . .	144
CHANGES ON THE BOARD . . . . .	145
THE NAVY Y.M.C.A. . . . .	149
THE ARMY Y.M.C.A. . . . .	151
THE CHINESE Y.M.C.A. . . . .	151
McCOY RETIRES — SUCESSOR SELECTED . . . . .	151
<b>VIII ADMINISTRATION OF LYMAN L. PIERCE, 1915-1919</b>	153
INTRODUCTION OF THE METROPOLITAN PLAN . . . . .	153
THE ARMY AND NAVY Y.M.C.A. . . . .	155
THE TEN YEAR PLAN . . . . .	157
THE FINANCIAL PROBLEM . . . . .	158
FOUR YEARS OF GROWING ACTIVITIES . . . . .	162
<b>IX UNDER PERKINS DURING YEARS OF EXPANSION,</b>	
1919-1929 . . . . .	165
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS . . . . .	166
DEVELOPMENT IN THE METROPOLITAN ORGANIZATION . . . . .	167
Branches that were Discontinued . . . . .	167
Central and Leavenworth Street Branches . . . . .	168
Chinese Branch . . . . .	169
Japanese Branch . . . . .	172
Mission Branch . . . . .	173
Park-Presidio Branch . . . . .	173
Presidio Branch . . . . .	174
Embarcadero Branch . . . . .	174
Hotel Branch . . . . .	177
San Mateo County Branch . . . . .	178
THE BOOMING TWENTIES . . . . .	179
A SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES . . . . .	180
The Religious . . . . .	180
The Educational — Golden Gate College . . . . .	181
The Physical . . . . .	182
Boys Work . . . . .	183
Other Activities . . . . .	185
THE FINANCIAL SITUATION . . . . .	186

<b>X</b>	<b>UNDER PERKINS DURING THE DEPRESSION,</b>	
	1930-1932 . . . . .	191
	THE EVANGELICAL TEST . . . . .	192
	RELIEF WORK DURING THE DEPRESSION . . . . .	196
	THE FINANCIAL SITUATION DURING THE DEPRESSION . . . . .	197
	NEW DEVELOPMENTS . . . . .	199
	The Jones Gulch Camp . . . . .	199
	The Japanese Branch Building . . . . .	202
	DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE BRANCHES . . . . .	203
	THE Y.M.C.A. HOTEL . . . . .	204
	THE Y AT WORK . . . . .	205
	The Religious . . . . .	206
	The Educational – Golden Gate College . . . . .	207
	The Physical . . . . .	207
	Boys Work . . . . .	209
	Other Activities . . . . .	210
	SOME ASPECTS OF THE FINANCIAL SITUATION . . . . .	212
	REORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD . . . . .	214
	HONORABLE MENTION . . . . .	216
<b>XI</b>	<b>ADMINISTRATION OF HAROLD A. WAGNER,</b>	
	1942-1946 . . . . .	219
	THE WAR YEARS . . . . .	219
	ADMINISTRATIVE AND PERSONNEL CHANGES . . . . .	220
	FINANCES . . . . .	221
	OF GENERAL INTEREST . . . . .	222
	HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANNUAL REPORTS . . . . .	222
<b>XII</b>	<b>THE GUIDING HAND OF ROY SORENSON</b>	225
	THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND SECRETARIAT . . . . .	225
	DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE BRANCHES, 1946-1953 . . . . .	226
	OTHER DEVELOPMENTS – PROPERTY AND FINANCES . . . . .	230
	The Y.M.C.A. Hotel . . . . .	230
	Camps McCoy and Jones Gulch . . . . .	231
	Building for Youth Campaign . . . . .	232
	A RESTATEMENT OF POLICY . . . . .	233
	THE CENTENNIAL YEAR – 1953 . . . . .	234
	DESIGNING EDUCATION IN VALUES . . . . .	234
	THE CHANGES OF A CENTURY . . . . .	235
	APPENDIX A: PRESIDENTS OF THE SAN FRANCISCO Y.M.C.A.	241
	APPENDIX B: STATISTICS FOR THE YEARS 1853-1868 . . . . .	242
	FOOTNOTES . . . . .	243
	BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	246
	INDEX . . . . .	249



## Illustrations

PORTALS OF CENTRAL Y.M.C.A., SAN FRANCISCO . . . . .	<i>frontispiece</i>
PORTRAITS OF W. K. OSBORN, J. J. McCOMB, G. W. GIBBS, AND R. V. WATT . . . . .	23
EARLY BUILDINGS OF THE ASSOCIATION . . . . .	48
PORTRAITS OF HENRY J. MCCOY, LYMAN L. PIERCE, RICHARD R. PERKINS, HAROLD A. WAGNER, AND ROY SORENSON . . . . .	74
Y.M.C.A. BUILDING AT MASON AND ELLIS STREETS . . . . .	109
THE ARMY Y.M.C.A. BUILDING . . . . .	109
PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT AT THE 1903 DEDICATION . . . . .	117
RUINS OF THE MASON-ELLIS BUILDING, 1906 . . . . .	124
TEMPORARY HEADQUARTERS AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE . . . . .	124
DEDICATION CEREMONIES, Y.M.C.A. BUILDING, 1909 . . . . .	134
PRESIDENT TAFT AT THE 1909 DEDICATION . . . . .	135
PORTRAITS OF THOMAS G. CROTHERS, ROBERT DOLLAR, JOHN McCALLUM, AND FRANCIS V. KEESLING . . . . .	146
Y.M.C.A. ACTIVITIES: FOREIGN FRIENDSHIPS, AND GAMES . . . . .	171
INSTITUTIONAL BUILDINGS OF THE Y.M.C.A. . . . .	176
Y.M.C.A. ACTIVITIES: CITIZENSHIP — WORLD SERVICE — EXERCISE . . . . .	184
CAMP SCENES OF THE Y.M.C.A. . . . .	201
Y.M.C.A. ACTIVITIES: HEARTH SCENES, AND YOUTH ENROLLMENT . . . . .	208
Y.M.C.A. ACTIVITIES: VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND GUIDANCE . . . . .	211
COMMUNITY BUILDINGS OF THE Y.M.C.A. . . . .	229

## Acknowledgments and Sources

The author has been working on this history of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. as time has permitted for more than ten years. He has had full access to all of the original manuscript records of the Association dating back to its beginning. This basic source has been supplemented by the Annual Reports; various publications of the National Council of the Y.M.C.A. in New York City; the fifty-year history of the San Francisco Association, *Five Decades*; pamphlets and other incidental items issued by the local Y; together with much material found in contemporary periodical literature especially in the religious press.

Personal interviews have been held with several who have had long association with the San Francisco Association including George Martin, Lester S. Day, John Titsworth, and Robert Simcock. Especially helpful have been Richard R. Perkins and Roy Sorenson. The author wishes to take this opportunity of expressing his deep appreciation to these and to all others who have helped in the compilation and writing of this history.

Many aspects of this story invited a longer treatment that could here be given. The author felt constrained by the limitations of space to do considerable abbreviating. A conscientious effort has been made to maintain a judicious balance in the space that could be devoted to the different activities, branches, and leaders of the Association. This review of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A.'s one hundred years by the Golden Gate is but a chapter in the larger history of Christianity on the Pacific Coast.

CLIFFORD M. DRURY  
California Professor of Church History  
San Francisco Theological Seminary  
San Anselmo, California

*San Francisco Y. M. C. A.*  
*1853-1953*

## The Beginnings of the Y

During the first week of December 1848, a man arrived in New Orleans from California with a small bag containing \$212.00 worth of gold nuggets which he claimed he had picked up from the ground in the foothills of the Sierras. Excited knots of men gathered around him in the saloons and gambling halls and on the streets. He had to tell his story over and over again, each time perhaps with some embellishments as to the ease with which one could find gold in California. Whereas rumors of the discovery of gold had reached New Orleans and other eastern cities as early as August or September of that year, few had taken the reports seriously. They were just rumors, but now one could see the beautiful yellow nuggets and feel them slide through one's fingers. The rumors were true! Here was positive proof!

On December 11th of that year, a ship from New York with twenty-eight passengers aboard bound for California via the Isthmus of Panama dropped anchor in New Orleans. Among the passengers was a young Congregational minister, the Rev. Samuel H. Willey, who had received a commission from the American Home Missionary Society to go to California. Although the flag of the United States had been raised over Monterey in July 1846, Willey became the first Protestant missionary to step ashore in California. As soon as the ship arrived in New Orleans, hundreds of those whose cupidity had been aroused by the sight of gold, clamored for passage. Here was one of the beginnings of the gold-rush. For the most part they who were the first to go came from the ranks of the unemployed and the irresponsible. They had no ties binding them to the city. Willey in a letter sent back to the Secretaries of his Board confessed that as he watched the riff-raff of society, the out-pourings of saloons and gambling halls, crowd aboard, his heart sank within him. Were these the kind of men who could build the institutions of a stable society? "Pretty poor prospects," he wrote, "for the objects we had in view."<sup>1</sup>

Such observations as these reported by Willey together with first-hand accounts coming from California led many New England ministers to issue stern warnings to the young men of their congregations about the dangers of going to California. "The harbor of San Francisco is destined, within a very short period, to become the *great hell of the continent*," declared the Rev. Charles H. Brigham on February 4, 1849, at Taunton, Massachusetts, in a sermon to a company of emigrants who were about to leave for the gold fields. Likewise, the Rev.

G. W. Perkins, in an address delivered at West Meriden, Connecticut, on March 22, 1849, on the eve of the departure of the Pacific Pioneers to California, warned: "You will be in great moral peril," and that life in California "will involve great hazards to your characters."<sup>2</sup> Such dire predictions were repeated over and over again in the sermons of New England ministers as they sought to persuade their young men not to go to California.

The gold-rush inspired a heavy sea trade between eastern ports and San Francisco. Literally hundreds of sailing ships made the dangerous and time-consuming voyage around the Horn during the years 1849 to 1853 inclusive. Many of the California-bound immigrants chose the quicker but more expensive route across the Isthmus of Panama having made the voyage by sea to Chagres and then going across the Isthmus to Panama where the sea voyage to San Francisco would be resumed. Still others went overland with the slow moving covered-wagon trains.

According to a Government census taken at the end of 1852, California had a population of 264,435. About 34,000 immigrants landed in San Francisco by sea during 1853. These came from all over the world, including many of the so-called hoodlum elements from Australia. The population of the city at the end of 1853 was estimated to be about 50,000, or about one-seventh of the entire population of the state.<sup>3</sup> Although the number of men, and especially young men, predominated yet the fact that on May Day, 1853, a procession of a thousand school children marched through the streets of San Francisco indicates that a large number of homes had been established.<sup>4</sup>

In 1853 San Francisco was a booming frontier city. The disastrous series of six incendiary fires which swept sections of the city in 1850 and 1851 proved to be a blessing in disguise. Substantial new buildings arose out of the ashes of the nondescript shacks and inferior structures which had been burned. Hundreds were making fortunes in land speculations. Wages were, according to Eastern standards, fantastically high and so were the prices of everything. California was the land of gold and San Francisco was its pulsating heart.

#### MORAL CONDITIONS WITHIN SAN FRANCISCO

In June 1853, a month before the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. was organized, the *Christian Advocate*, a Methodist paper published in the city, reported that by actual count there were 537 places within the city where liquor was sold. The account reads:

Of these, eighty-three are purely liquor in retail line, and fifty-two wholesale; making one hundred and twenty-five places which do not keep an onion to modify the traffic. Of the four hundred and twelve places where it is sold in connection with other busi-



ness, one hundred and forty-four are tavern restaurants; one hundred and fifty-four groceries; forty-six gambling houses and forty-eight supposed to be kept by bawds. Some of these appear genteel, others are dance-houses and such like, in which Chinese, Mexican, Chilian and other foreign women are assembled.

There are five hundred and fifty-six bartenders present in the various places at the time the memoranda were taken. We think we may safely add one-quarter, if not one-third, as a reserve corps, making, including women, seven hundred and forty-three bartenders in our city.<sup>5</sup>

With the rooming houses and hotels packed with young men, the gambling houses, bars, and brothels had a lucrative source of customers. Where was the lonesome young man to spend his leisure hours if not in the gaudily decorated dance hall or the richly festooned saloon? The city did not have a free public library until June 1879. Motion pictures were then unknown. The whole amusement life of the city was monopolized by men whose primary motive was money and not morality. The authors of *The Annals of San Francisco*, published in 1855, wrote:

San Francisco was, at the times of which we have discoursed, and it still is, in a state of moral ferment. . . . The scum and froth of its strange mixture of peoples, of its many scoundrels, rowdies and great men, loose women, sharpers and few honest folk, are still nearly all that is visible. The current of its daily life is muddied and defiled by the wild effervescence of these unruly spirits. It may be said that nearly all came to the city only as devout worshippers of mammon; scarcely one, to find a home, which might unjustly have been denied him elsewhere.<sup>6</sup>

What was to be said on the other side? In July 1853 San Francisco boasted having eleven evangelical churches divided as follows among the leading five Protestant denominations of that day:

Baptist (2) – First, and Pine Street (sometimes called the Second Church)

Congregational (2) – First, and Second

Methodist (2) – First M. E. North, and First M. E. South

Presbyterian (3) – First and Welsh (both Old School), and Howard (New School). A Chinese Old School Church was organized on November 6th of that year

Protestant Episcopal (2) – Trinity, and Grace

In addition to these churches, San Francisco also had in 1853 a Jewish synagogue, a Unitarian church, and several Roman Catholic churches. For the most part the Protestant churches were weak both in membership and in material resources. With but one exception, all

their buildings were inadequate. The First Presbyterian Church had a building large enough to seat 750 which had been sent in a prefabricated condition from New York by sea around the Horn. It had been dedicated on January 19, 1851, but this had been lost on June 22nd of that year in the sixth and last of the great fires which ravaged the city. For a time the congregation was obliged to meet in a warehouse until "a very plain building" was erected in October 1851 "in eleven working days."<sup>7</sup>

The finest church building of the several Protestant denominations was that of the First Congregational Church located on the southwest corner of Dupont and California Streets. This 60 by 100 foot building was dedicated on July 10, 1853. The account of the dedication, which appeared in the New School Presbyterian-Congregational paper, *The Pacific*, described it as being "a very elegant brick building" large enough to accommodate with comfort a congregation of 1,200 people. The pastor was the New School Presbyterian, the Rev. Timothy Dwight Hunt, who had arrived in San Francisco on October 28, 1848. He was the first ordained Protestant pastor to land in California after the gold-rush, and to engage in full-time religious work.<sup>8</sup> He came entirely upon his own resources without having had an appointment from any missionary board as was the case of Samuel H. Willey who arrived at Monterey the following February.

The sum total of all the religious forces within San Francisco raised but a feeble dam against the flood of moral turpitude which had engulfed the city. Among the few who were concerned for the spiritual welfare of the young men in particular was a young lawyer from Dayton, Ohio, William K. Osborn, who had joined the First Presbyterian Church in November 1850. After a residence of about three years in the city, Osborn felt that something definite should be done to help young men. He found a few kindred spirits who shared his concern. Out of the discussions that followed, some one suggested the possibility of organizing a Young Men's Christian Association for San Francisco.

#### THE HISTORY OF THE Y.M.C.A.

The first Young Men's Christian Association was organized in London on June 6, 1844, through the initiative of a twenty-three year old merchant's apprentice, George Williams. Other religious organizations for young men had been formed prior to this time and were known by such titles as the Young Men's Improvement Society or the Young Men's Missionary Society, but this group formed by Williams was the first to use the title Young Men's Christian Association.

From its very beginning the Association was designed for young men, especially for those who were away from home in some metro-representing four denominations – Anglican, Methodist, Congregational center. The original London Y had twelve charter members

tional, and Baptist. Thus from the very beginning, the interdenominational and non-sectarian emphases were indelibly stamped upon the movement. Also this was a lay movement which majored on ministering to the spiritual and mental needs of its members. Later the Associations added the physical aspect to its program. This three-fold emphasis gave rise to the official symbol, the familiar red triangle, each side of which represents one of these three aspects — the spiritual, the mental, and the physical.

In 1851 the Y leaped the Atlantic and took root on December 9th at Montreal, Canada, and on December 29th at Boston, Massachusetts. The organization of each of these two new Associations was unknown to the other. Each looked to the parent body in London for ideas and each declared its purpose to be minister to the spiritual and mental needs of young men.

The organization of the Y was most timely in Boston. There the major evangelical denominations were fighting to preserve their churches against the inroads of Unitarianism and Roman Catholicism. By 1851, Boston, once the very citadel of Puritanism in the new world, was gradually changing its religious complexion. Beginning with the conversion of the Anglican church, King's Chapel, into a Unitarian church in 1785, Unitarianism had cut deeply into all of the Trinitarian bodies in general and Congregationalism in particular. During the decade, 1831-40, over 207,000 Irish migrated to the United States and in the next decade the number rose to over 780,000. Most of these were from southern Ireland and were Roman Catholics. In addition, about one-third of the 600,000 Germans who entered the United States during the same twenty-year period were also Roman Catholics.<sup>9</sup> The rapidly increasing Catholic element in the country became an ever recurring theme for editorials in the Protestant press. By 1850 there were nine Roman Catholic churches in Boston. These two factors, namely the rise of Unitarianism and the introduction of Roman Catholicism, were the primary reasons why the Trinitarian and evangelical denominations in Boston hailed with joy the new organization founded in their midst in December 1851. Here was a new arm of the church dedicated to the great task of winning and holding young men to the evangelical Protestant faith.

The Boston Association adopted a Constitution in 1852 which stated that active membership in the Y was limited to young men who were members "in regular standing of an Evangelical Church." Associate membership was open to any young man "of good moral character," but such members were not eligible to hold office or to vote. Church membership was not lightly conferred in those days in Boston. Among the young men in the city, when the Y was getting started, was Dwight L. Moody who was barred from active membership for a time because his pastor was not convinced of the sincerity of Moody's conversion.<sup>10</sup>

Once the qualification of church membership was met, Moody became an enthusiastic worker in the Y and throughout his life was a staunch supporter of the movement. This interest, as will be told later, was of great importance to the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. in 1880 and 1881.

An Association was founded in New York City on June 30, 1852, which also stemmed directly from the parent body in London. With this exception, however, all other Associations which sprang up in the United States during these early years looked to the Boston Y as their model. E. D. Sawyer, president of the San Francisco Y in 1859-60, commented as follows in his report to the seventh annual meeting regarding the influence of the Boston Y: "This body made almost immediate use of the press and the post; and no sooner was its constitution published and scattered abroad, than the Boston society became a center of radiation. . . ." <sup>11</sup> So closely was the San Francisco Y modeled after that in Boston that Sawyer called it "the Boston society."

The Y.M.C.A. movement quickly spread throughout the United States. Seven cities including Concord and Portsmouth, New Hampshire; New York; Hartford; Buffalo; Washington, D.C.; and New Orleans all had Associations by the end of 1852. In January 1853 Baltimore, Maryland, and Alexandria, Virginia, each started a Y. Lowell, Massachusetts, joined the movement in June, and Louisville, Kentucky, organized its Association on July 3rd. The fifth Association to be formed in 1853, and the thirteenth in all of the United States, was that of San Francisco. <sup>12</sup> This was the first Association to be established west of New Orleans and Louisville, the first in that great expanse of territory which lies west of the Mississippi River. Thus within nine years after its birth in England, the Y.M.C.A. had surged westward one-third of the way around the globe to the shores of the Pacific.

### BEGINNINGS OF THE Y IN SAN FRANCISCO

According to a statement in *Five Decades*, (the official history of the San Francisco Y which appeared in 1903 and which covered the first fifty years of its existence), William K. Osborn took the initiative in organizing the Association. He is reported to have called a meeting of a few Christian young men in his office sometime during the first part of July 1853 to discuss what should be done for the young men of the city. Since Osborn had arrived in San Francisco before the first Y.M.C.A. had been established in Boston, he could not speak from first-hand experience of the organization. But undoubtedly there were some within his circle of friends who had come from Boston who could speak from direct knowledge. Indeed the close parallel between the constitution of the Boston Y and that which was drawn up for the San Francisco Y proves that some one had taken with him to San Francisco a copy of the form of organization adopted in Boston.

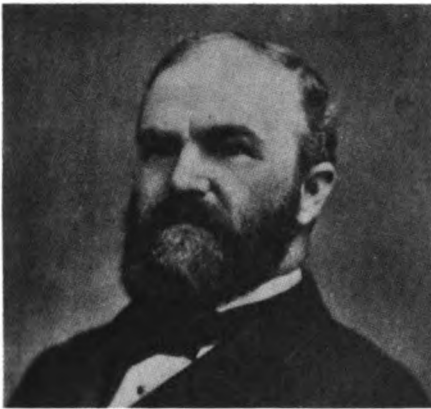
The self-appointed committee which met in Osborn's office decided

**BOARD LEADERSHIP**

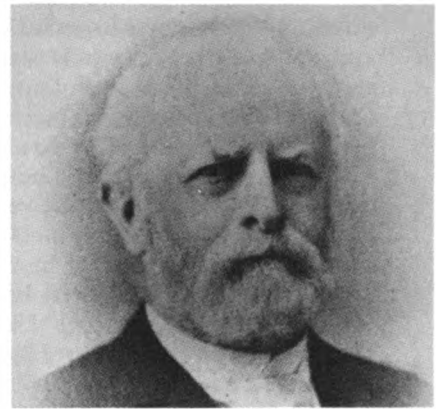
**W. K. OSBORN**



**Founder and President  
1853-1854**



**J. J. McCOMB**  
San Francisco Delegate to the  
First International Y.M.C.A. Convention  
held in Buffalo, N.Y., 1854



**GEORGE W. GIBBS**  
President, 1883-1884, made a gift  
of \$50,000 for the new building  
on Mason Street

**ROLLA V. WATT**



**Director, 1882-1926  
President, 1900-1914**



to proceed with the organization of a local Y.M.C.A. One of the best known religious papers of that day in California was the *Pacific*. The July 15, 1853, issue of this paper under "City News" carried the following announcement:

*Young Men's Christian Association* — We are happy to learn that it is in contemplation to form an Association of this kind in this city, similar to those formed in the Eastern Cities. All interested in this enterprise, especially young men, are requested to meet at the Pine Street Baptist Church, next Monday evening at 9 o'clock at the close of the meeting of the Sabbath School Union.

The initial meeting of charter members of the San Francisco Y, called for the evening of July 18th, was scheduled to follow the meeting of the Sabbath School Union because some of those interested wished to attend both gatherings. The Pine Street Baptist Church, located on Pine Street between Kearny and Montgomery Streets, was also known as the Second Baptist Church and later as the Bush Street Church. It had been organized on September 30, 1851, with ten members and in 1853 had fifty-two members.

The original manuscript record books of the San Francisco Association survived the disastrous earthquake and fire of 1906 because the books were in a large safe. The covers of the books were so badly scorched that they had to be replaced but the pages themselves were undamaged. These volumes have constituted a primary source in the preparation of this history. The first entry of Volume I of the minutes tells the story of the organization meeting. The opening prayer was fittingly offered by the Rev. T. Dwight Hunt, who in point of service was the oldest Protestant pastor in the city. The Minutes continue:

Mr. F. L. Rising then stated the object of the proposed association — to be the moral and mental improvement of young men, and to encourage among them a pleasant and profitable intercourse having also connected with it a Library of religious, moral, and scientific works; and a Reading Room, and moved that the following Preamble be adopted:

We, the undersigned, anxious to advance the cause of Christ and to promote a spirit of religious inquiry, exalted piety, and Christian fellowship among the young men of California, do hereby agree to form themselves into an association for the better furtherance of these objects, and do promise to obey the Constitution which we, in assembly, may hereafter think proper to adopt.

The motion to adopt the preamble was unanimously carried and sixty-four signed it that evening. Thus on July 18, 1853, the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. was born. A second meeting was scheduled for the fol-

lowing Monday evening, July 25th, in the First Presbyterian Church. A committee was appointed consisting of one representative from each of the Protestant denominations of the city to draft a constitution. On this committee was the Rev. Albert Williams, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, who later claimed that "the draft of a Constitution was made by myself."<sup>13</sup>

A comparison of the constitution of the Boston Y and that adopted by the San Francisco Association shows a close similarity. The preamble, adopted July 18th, was unique to the San Francisco Association. Both bodies provided for Active, Associate, and Life memberships. In both instances Active members had to belong to an evangelical church and Associate members were allowed the privileges of the Association but without the right to vote or hold office. The Boston dues were \$1.00 a year for both classes of memberships. In San Francisco, where a degree of inflation was felt, Active members paid \$5.00 a year "in advance" and Associate, \$3.00 (without the stipulation "in advance.") Also, in San Francisco an age limit of forty years was prescribed for Active members. This limit was removed in 1859. All paying \$20.00 in Boston and \$25.00 in San Francisco were made Life members. The San Francisco Y permitted the election of Honorary members by the unanimous vote of the Association.

The San Francisco Association like its Boston prototype had a Board of Managers consisting of representatives of the evangelical churches. Since the number of such churches in San Francisco was few, each of the cooperating church was allowed one representative. In order to insure an impartial denominational participation in the administration of the Y, the San Francisco rules called for a rotation of the office of president among the different cooperating denominations. This provision was soon discovered to be unwise as the Association was sometimes obliged to pass over good and able men simply because they did not happen to belong to a church which was supposed to have one of its members as president for that particular year.

The first Minute Book of the San Francisco Y contains the records both of the meetings of the Association and of the Board of Managers. In general the board acted in a supervisory capacity and exercised authority in the larger matters of policy and finance. Both the Association and the board had their respective set of by-laws. Copies of the proposed constitution were printed and distributed before the meeting held on July 25th. At this second meeting of the Association, the original preamble was read and an additional twenty-four signatures obtained, thus bringing the total of charter members to eighty-eight. At the first annual meeting held in August of the following year, the treasurer reported that only sixty-four of this number had paid their dues. The constitution was adopted by the meeting held on the 25th as printed with only a few minor changes. On July 30, 1853, the newly

organized San Francisco Y.M.C.A. received its Articles of Incorporation from the State of California.

A third meeting of the Association was held on Monday evening, August 1st, for the election of the following officers:

President—William K. Osborn, Presbyterian  
 Vice-Presidents—Joseph L. Roberts, Baptist  
                   Edward P. Flint, Congregational  
                   Albert Miller, Lutheran  
                   Henry B. May, Episcopalian  
                   John H. Stout, Methodist  
                   James B. Roberts, Presbyterian  
 Recording Secretary—John H. Titcomb  
 Corresponding Secretary—Josiah Bacon  
 Treasurer—Edmund B. Benjamin  
 Librarian—Elihu Johnson  
 Board of Managers—Thomas G. Gould, 1st Presbyterian  
                   Joseph G. Armor, 1st Baptist  
                   Frederick S. Hawley, 1st Congregational  
                   James D. Cogswell, 2nd Baptist  
                   Lucius Bell, Howard Street Presbyterian  
                   Franklin S. Rising, Trinity Protestant  
                   Episcopal  
                   Rev. William C. Pond, 2nd Congregational

On August 16th, Richard P. Spier of the Powell Street Methodist Church and C. W. Bond from the Bethel Methodist were added to the board. In September the Association authorized the publication of a pamphlet to contain the constitution, by-laws, and other pertinent information. In this initial statement of the purposes of the Y, we find the following appraisal of the moral conditions of the city: "No where is moral principle more severely tried than in this new country; no where is piety more endangered; no where is physical and moral ruin more often accomplished." One thousand copies of the sixteen-page pamphlet were issued, the first of a series of publications sponsored by the San Francisco Y.<sup>14</sup>

The pamphlet contained the following "Order of Exercises for the Monthly Meetings:"

- I. Reading the Scriptures and Prayer.
- II. Reading the Journal of Preceding Meeting.
- III. Election of Members.
- IV. Proposals for Membership.
- V. An Essay by a member of the Association, on a subject previously assigned to him by the Committee on Essays. The subject of the Essay to be of a moral or religious character, neither sectarian nor political – in length limited to twenty

minutes – and the subject then to be thrown open to the Association for general discussion for thirty minutes – no member to occupy more than ten minutes in the discussion.

- VI. An interval of fifteen minutes, to be devoted to mutual introduction, interchange of feeling and general conversation.
- VII. Miscellaneous business during twenty-five minutes; such as reports, extracts from interesting correspondence with similar Associations by the Corresponding Secretary; general intelligence tending to advance the interests of the Association, and brief statements of the condition of its business affairs, when called for.
- VIII. Singing and prayer.

The whole philosophy of the program activities of the Y was expressed in this "Order of Exercises." One must read the minutes of the regular monthly meetings of the San Francisco Y for the first fifteen years or so to appreciate how strictly the prescribed order was followed. The emphasis was primarily upon the development of the religious and mental aspects of a young man's life with a secondary attention being given to the social and none upon the physical. The sixteen-page pamphlet said that the Y hoped to accomplish its purposes "by providing with suitable employment those young men who come within our reach, by guarding them from temptation, by introducing them into Christian and refined society, by encircling them with religious influences, and by uniting them with ourselves in the effort to do good."

An immediate problem was to secure a suitable meeting place. The first regular meeting was held on August 15th in the new Congregational Church. At that time the Rev. Albert Williams notified the Association that he had secured a donation of 187 books as the nucleus of a library. Books called for library space and a reading room. The Board of Managers met on the 16th and appointed a committee on Library and Rooms, together with committees on Lectures, Publications, and Finance. Suitable meeting places were difficult to find and rents were high. On September 12th the Committee on Rooms reported to the board that "rooms in the new Baptist church could be had at a rent of \$1200 per annum, in advance, or \$125 paid monthly – also a room in Genella's building on Montgomery St. at \$150 per month." Both of these offers were rejected. After some further searching the committee found suitable rooms in the California Exchange Building opposite Portsmouth Square for \$125 a month. Early in November 1853 the suite of rooms consisting of a library and reading room, and an assembly room, were ready for occupancy.

Since the organization had been effected, committees appointed, a meeting place secured, and a beginning made on a library, the San

Francisco Y.M.C.A. was ready for business. The next project undertaken was an advertising campaign to bring to the attention of each of the three thousand young men, then estimated to be living in the city and to the strangers who were arriving daily, the advantages of joining in the fellowship and program of the new Association. Early in December 1853, a committee of young men from the Y roamed through the streets of San Francisco posting the following notice in hotels, boarding houses, on public bulletin boards, and aboard the ships in port:

#### TO YOUNG MEN

The Young Men's Christian Association, established in this city for the moral and mental improvement of young men, have opened their Rooms in the California Exchange, over the Post Office, where may be found a well selected library and leading newspapers and periodicals from every part of the Union & to all residents of San Francisco and strangers arriving in this city, the Association extend a cordial invitation to visit their Rooms trusting they will find it a pleasant and profitable resort.

The San Francisco Y.M.C.A. was on its way to do all that it possibly could to prevent the fulfillment of the prophesy that San Francisco was destined to become "the great hell of the continent."

## In Rented Rooms, 1853-1864

During the first eleven years of its history, from 1853 to 1864, the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. carried on its activities in rented rooms. The first home over the Post Office in the California Exchange Building was located on the corner of Clay and Kearny opposite Portsmouth Square. There the Y remained until June 1856. Three rooms were then secured on the fourth floor of the Armory Building, corner of Sacramento and Montgomery Streets, where the Y remained for another two years. In 1858 the Y made a third move to the second floor of 629 Washington Street. There it stayed until 1864 when a building was purchased on leased ground at 522 California Street. All four of these locations were in the same general area, each of the last three being within two blocks of Portsmouth Square.

One needs but little imagination to realize that any extensive program of activities was most difficult in these limited rented quarters. Again and again the early records refer to the crowded rooms, the restricted activities, and the difficulties of raising money under such conditions to pay even the minimum of necessary expenses.

### THE Y AT PORTSMOUTH SQUARE

Portsmouth Square, where the San Francisco Y was first located, was in the very heart of Old San Francisco. In fact the Square was the old plaza of the original Mexican village of Yerba Buena which antedated San Francisco. On July 7, 1846, the flag of the United States was raised over the Custom House at Monterey by Commodore J. D. Sloat. A messenger was at once dispatched by horseback to notify Captain John Montgomery who was in command of the small force of United States naval vessels riding at anchor in San Francisco Bay. It took the messenger two days to make the journey. In accordance with orders from his superior, Captain Montgomery on Thursday, July 9th, went ashore and raised the flag of the United States over the plaza of Yerba Buena. The plaza was renamed Portsmouth Square after Captain Montgomery's ship, the U.S.S. "Portsmouth," and the waterfront, then one block down from the Square, became Montgomery Street.

Captain Montgomery had no chaplain aboard his ship. An examination of the ship's log, now on deposit in the Naval Records Collection, National Archives, Washington, D.C., shows that Captain Montgomery regularly read Divine Service, Sunday after Sunday for his ship's company. The log for Sunday, July 12th, does not record any



service being held aboard ship on that day. Instead mention is made of Captain Montgomery going ashore. This supports the tradition that on that day Captain Montgomery conducted Divine Service at Portsmouth Square. If this tradition be true, then this was the first Protestant service conducted on California soil after the raising of the United States flag. Captain Montgomery was a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, New York.<sup>1</sup>

On July 31st of that same year, the "Brooklyn" arrived in San Francisco Bay with a colony of 230 Mormons under the leadership of Samuel Brannan. Upon the landing of this party, Yerba Buena suddenly became a predominantly Mormon community. The colony included many families with children. None of this group practised polygamy. The presence of children made a school a necessity and for a year this need was met through a private school. In the fall of 1847 a one-room public schoolhouse was erected on the south-west corner of Portsmouth Square, facing Clay Street. According to the authors of *The Annals of San Francisco*: "Every new enterprise found here a heating oven to warm the egg into successful hatching. Here churches held their first meetings . . ."<sup>2</sup>

In April 1847 two Methodist ministers on their way to Oregon, the Rev. William Roberts and the Rev. James H. Wilbur, stopped off in San Francisco. On April 25th they held the first religious service ever to be conducted by an ordained Protestant minister in Yerba Buena (or San Francisco) in an adobe hotel adjoining Portsmouth Square.<sup>3</sup> The two missionaries started a Methodist class and a Sunday School which were later disbanded because of the excitement attendant upon the gold-rush and the lack of leadership.

The first announcement of the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill on January 24, 1848, appeared in the March 15th issue of the *San Francisco Californian*. Months elapsed before the news was published in eastern newspapers. Naturally the first to respond to the exciting announcement were those who lived closest to California, as in Oregon and in the Hawaiian Islands. In the fall of 1848, the Rev. T. Dwight Hunt, a New School Presbyterian, who was pastor of an inter-denominational church in Honolulu, found that most of his congregation had gone to the gold fields of California. So he decided to move to San Francisco. Hunt arrived during the latter part of October. He found a small group of Protestants in the city who were so pleased with his coming that they banded together and called him to be the chaplain of San Francisco. Hunt began holding services in the schoolhouse on Portsmouth Square on November 5th.

However, with the arrival of missionaries from the various leading Protestant denominations of the country during the spring and summer of 1849, the interdenominational congregation which Hunt had assembled around him began to break up into denominational

churches. The Rev. Albert Williams organized the Old School First Presbyterian Church of San Francisco on May 20, 1849. Asa White, a local Methodist elder, arrived from Oregon on May 10th to reactivate the Methodist work. This led to the establishment of the First Methodist Church, sometimes known as the Powell Street Methodist Church, over which the Rev. William Taylor (afterwards Bishop Taylor) was appointed to be pastor in September of that year. The First Baptist Church of San Francisco was organized by the Rev. O. C. Wheeler on July 6th. The Protestant Episcopal parish of Holy Trinity was organized on July 29th. Each of these denominational churches pulled a few of Hunt's followers away from his congregation which continued to meet in the schoolhouse on Portsmouth Square. Finally on July 29th, Hunt, although still retaining his New School Presbyterian connections, organized the First Congregational Church of San Francisco.

Each of these pioneer churches was intimately connected with the organization of the San Francisco Y and each maintained an active role in its affairs for many years. The fact that the first "home" of the Y was in a building at the south-east corner of Portsmouth Square, less than a block away from the schoolhouse and in the very center of the city, symbolically linked the Y with the pioneer beginnings of organized Protestantism in San Francisco.

During the three months, August to October inclusively, the regular monthly meetings of the Y were held in different churches. A Saturday evening devotional service was inaugurated in the fall of 1853. The members were careful not to schedule any events for Sunday morning which would conflict with the morning services of the city's churches. President Osborn, in his report given before the first annual meeting of the Association on August 7, 1854, said that seventeen meetings had been held during the year. Thirteen essays had been read by members of the Association. The February 24, 1854, issue of the *Pacific* carried the following report of a meeting held on the 20th of that month:

We are always pleased to record the proceedings of the Young Men's Christian Association, and especially to note the continually increasing interest that is felt in it by the young men of our city. At a regular monthly meeting held last Monday evening their rooms were crowded. After the proposal of some forty candidates for membership, an elegantly written and practical essay was read by Ira P. Rankin upon "Reading" . . .

This meeting was the largest the Association has ever held. The attendance at every meeting, however, becomes larger than at the preceding, and it is a possible thing that before long the Association may have to "enlarge its borders."

In addition to the meetings before which original essays by members were read, the Association sponsored a lecture course to which the

public, including the lady friends of members, were invited. During the first year of its history, a series of eight lectures was given by the leading clergymen of San Francisco and vicinity. Among those who spoke were the Right Reverend William I. Kip, first bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church for California; the Rev. Joseph A. Benton, founder and pastor of the First Church of Christ (Congregational) of Sacramento and author of the *California Pilgrim*, the first Protestant book to be published in California; and Dr. William A. Scott, who organized Calvary Presbyterian Church of San Francisco in the summer of 1854. Dr. Scott's lecture on "Responsibility of Young Men for their Influence in Society" was subsequently published both in Philadelphia and in London. Dr. Scott was later requested to give the address before the second annual meeting of the Association on August 6, 1855. Again and again the early records of the Y and the printed lectures of some of the speakers refer to the strategic times in which they were living. With but little need for imagination, they looked into the future and saw the great things that were destined for San Francisco and California. But when one combined inspired imagination with eloquence, the following taken from Dr. Scott's address of August 1855, resulted:

Fellow Citizens: — I think if the cyanometer of meteorologists for measuring the depth of the blueness of the sky, were in use with us, we could "Soar with Plato to the empyreal sphere," and see farther into the azure vault of heaven than they can . . . on the sun-rise side of the mountains. And I think if we had an instrument by which we could measure the prospective influence of this side of our continent upon the millions that are to live upon it, and the influence which this vast Pacific world is to roll back across the continent, and over the Atlantic, upon the old nations of Europe, and the influence which it will at the same time roll forward over the islands and seas and continents that lie still beyond us, stretching westward until they are merged into the great Orient — the influence, *reflexive and progressive, financial, commercial, social and political*, which the great advent upon these shores in our day has exerted, is exerting and will exert upon mankind — that we might then begin to feel something of the privileges and moral responsibilities Providence has laid upon us, by bringing us to these ends of the earth.<sup>4</sup>

This project of sponsoring an annual lecture course was long an important feature of the Association's program. Tickets for these lectures were sold which usually produced sufficient income to pay something to the Association after all expenses were covered.

The enthusiasm of the members was high during that first year. The minutes show that twenty, thirty, and even forty new members were

welcomed into the Association month after month at the regular monthly meetings. Beginning with a charter membership of eighty-eight, the Y grew to 343 by August 7, 1854, when the first annual meeting was held. It was one thing, however, to get a signature on the membership roll and another to collect the modest fee. President Osborn, reporting to that first annual meeting, said that one-fourth of the members had failed to pay their dues. There were others who joined, paid their dues, and took no further interest. The treasurer reported at this meeting that \$1,051.00 had been received from dues but that \$450.00 remained uncollected. Financially the Y closed its first year with a balance of \$6.31 having received a total of \$2,045.97 from all sources. The biggest single item of expense was for rent.<sup>5</sup>

Among the new members received during the first year were two Chinese. In February 1848 the first Chinese to arrive in San Francisco, two men and a woman, disembarked from the brig "Eagle" having been lured by the tales of gold. Others, largely from Canton, soon followed. It is reported that 2,026 arrived in 1852 and that by 1877, at least 150,000 Chinese were in the United States of whom about 30,000 had settled in San Francisco.<sup>6</sup> Gradually they took over the area to the west and north of Portsmouth Square and made this the largest Chinatown in the United States.

In 1852 the Old School Presbyterian Church appointed the Rev. William Speer, D.D., to be its missionary among the Chinese in San Francisco. Speer had spent four years as a missionary at Canton, China, and thus knew the Cantonese dialect. After the death of his wife, he returned to the United States. He began his work in San Francisco in February 1853 and on November 6th of that year organized the First Chinese Presbyterian Church which has the distinction of being the first Protestant church to be formed for Chinese outside of China. Speer became a member of the San Francisco Y in May 1854 and in the following July, the first Chinese joined, Lee Keu and Ah Chong. At the first annual meeting held in August 1854, Ah Chong was elected a member of the Board of Managers as a representative from the Chinese Presbyterian Church. He served for two years. As will be noted later, a Chinese Y.M.C.A. was organized as a separate body in 1870 with no official ties with the main Association.

In summarizing the results of the first year's work, Osborn said:

Our enterprise is fairly started on its way of usefulness. . . . There is a great work to be done here, and we have the means for its execution. More than three thousand young men are living in this city, away from the restraints of early associations and from the influence of godly friends and home circles, exposed to the thousand alluring, and yet soul-destroying temptations peculiar to all large cities.

We must approach them through their social sympathies and instincts as young men to young men, — win their confidence by deeds of kindness to them when strangers, or sick, or holy living among them, and lead them with us to the sanctuary on the Sabbath, and to our social and devotional meetings. Our labors are not opposed to the work of the church, — we work together in the church and with the church to a like end.

During the first year Committees on Employment, Visitation, and Boarding Houses were appointed. Sometimes the duties of these committees overlapped. The Y was active from the very beginning in helping strangers who had just arrived in the city find suitable lodging and “to procure suitable employment, thus removing from them one great cause of dissipation and vice.” Occasionally even in these early years, the Association often assisted in sending a few young men, who had become stranded in San Francisco because of illness or misfortune, back to their homes in the East. The Visiting Committee was charged with the responsibility of calling on “all members of the Association confined by illness and endeavor to procure aid for all such as are in need.”

The library and reading room from the very beginning was popular. Subscriptions were placed for a number of religious and secular periodicals and newspapers including some from the East. Donations of books were solicited for the library. The October 20, 1854, issue of the *Pacific* reported: “The library numbers about four hundred and fifty volumes of valuable standard and religious works, all of them donations to the Society.” For about two years the Association opened the library to the public without having any paid supervision. Books were withdrawn on the honor system simply by the borrower listing the title of the book and his name in a register. As will be noted, so many took unfair advantage of this that the system had to be abandoned.

At the first annual meeting held in August 1854, E. P. Flint, a member of the First Congregational Church, was elected president to succeed Osborn, who continued on the Board of Managers. Osborn died in February 1858 while serving as city attorney. A resolution passed on March 3rd of that year by the Association bore tribute to him as a “sterling and consistent Christian, always ready to contribute to the full extent of his ability.” Five hundred copies of the *First Annual Report* were printed and offered for sale. This custom of printing the annual reports continued to 1903.

The list of activities as outlined by the constitution and by-laws and the events of the first year established a pattern which guided the Association until it was reorganized in 1881. The stated meetings held on the third Monday of each month continued to be the main events in the Association's calendar. An innovation was introduced at the



September 1854 meeting when ladies were invited to attend. At that time a paper was read by E. B. Benjamin on "The Pursuit of Happiness." A news report in the September 29th issue of the *Pacific* commented:

A new era having dawned upon the institution inasmuch as several ladies honored it by their presence at the meeting, it is to be hoped the members will be punctual in their attendance, and strive by a united effort to fulfil its intended mission, that of benefiting the young men of this city.

It is possible that the presence of the ladies and the nature of the subject extended the discussion beyond the usual time. This the minutes of the October meeting reveal when the following was adopted: "Resolved, That the sessions of the Association be hereafter limited to two hours."

Among the new activities sponsored by the Y during 1854-55 was that of organizing and conducting Sunday Schools for the neglected children of the city and especially for the newsboys. Two of these schools were begun. The first was organized during November 1854 under the superintendence of the Y's librarian, H. L. Leffingwell, in an abandoned Presbyterian chapel which stood on the corner of Mason and Geary Streets. In the spring of 1854 the Rev. James Woods, founder of the First Presbyterian Church of Stockton, found it necessary to leave that city because of ill health. He went to San Francisco where he was sponsored by the First Presbyterian Church to establish a mission at Mason and Geary. Here a small building was erected. Woods' health, however, did not improve and after a few months he was obliged to give up this work. There the chapel stood empty in the midst of a booming city with neglected children playing in its very shadow. Here the Y started a Sunday School which had an average attendance of forty for its first six months. According to President Flint's report before the second annual meeting in 1855, the average attendance had then risen to fifty-six.

A second Sunday School, called the Independent Union Sabbath School, was organized on April 8, 1855, for the benefit of newsboys and other children found on the streets on Sunday morning. This met in the Association's rooms. According to Flint, some of these children were so needy that the Y had to furnish them clothing in order to enable them to attend the school. The average attendance by August 1855 was fifty plus ten teachers. The Sunday School conducted in the former Presbyterian chapel continued for another year. The one which met in the rooms of the Association carried on for a longer time. These schools were the beginnings of the Y's work for boys.

During the first year of the existence of the San Francisco Y, the first International Convention of the Young Men's Christian Association was held in Buffalo, New York, June 7-8, 1854. The San Francisco As-



sociation was represented by J. J. McComb. On January 15, 1855, the San Francisco Y ratified the plan of union thus becoming the twenty-second Association to join the confederation. Two years later, the Y at Montreal wrote to the San Francisco Y begging it to join in a protest against the practice of segregation found in some other Associations. On January 27, 1857, the San Francisco Y adopted the following:

Resolved, That although this Association does not see it to be its duty to withdraw from the Confederation on the ground of the exclusion of colored persons from some of the Associations, and the non-recognition by the Confederation of Coloured Young Men's Associations, they nevertheless distinctly condemn the practice as wrong, and recognize in the action of the Montreal Association with respect thereto, not a spirit of disunion, but only a fair exercise of Christian freedom.

For nearly two years the San Francisco Y conducted its affairs on a volunteer basis without any paid supervision of its rooms. However the loss of about 100 volumes from the library by the spring of 1855 induced the Board of Managers to hire someone to give supervision to the library, keep the membership records, and perform other duties as required. George W. Chapin was selected at the June meeting of the board to serve as "Registrar" as the office was designated. He was the first person employed by the San Francisco Y and in his office we see the forerunner of that of the General Secretary. The board voted: "That for the better protection of the library of the Association . . . the room containing the books should be kept closed at all times when the Registrar was not present." The library was to be kept open in the evenings and during certain hours on Sunday. By August 1855 the library reported having 900 volumes.

The enthusiasm that often characterizes a new organization began to lessen during the second year of the history of the San Francisco Y. Whereas 343 had joined the Association by the end of the first year, only 157 new names were added during the second year. So many dropped out that by August 1855, only 287 were counted as members. During the spring of 1855, the ugly ogre of debt cast its shadow for the first time on the life of the infant Association. In February of that year the treasurer reported a debt of \$500. An appeal was made to the audiences attending the lectures for free-will offerings and over \$160 was contributed. At the second annual meeting, the treasurer reported total receipts of \$2,308.22 and a deficit of \$23.22. The members were faced with the fact that the income from the modest annual fee of \$5.00 from Active members and \$3.00 from Associate members was only sufficient to pay about one-half of the expenses. Since the Board

of Managers had obligated the Association to pay an annual salary of \$1,200 for the registrar, the members realized that they would have to raise more money during the coming year than had previously been required.

Aggressive steps were taken in 1855-56 to supplement the Y's income. Under the sponsorship of the Board of Managers, a special fund of \$500 was raised for the library. Tickets were sold for the lecture courses and \$410 was realized from that source. Yet by June 1856 the Association found itself \$400 in debt. During the third year of its history, the membership declined from 287 to 260. A campaign was conducted for donations which was sufficiently successful to permit the payment of all bills and leave a balance of \$35.94 at the end of the fiscal year.

In the spring of 1856 the Board of Managers was informed that they would have to vacate the rooms rented in the California Exchange Building. Summarizing what happened, President W. G. Badger<sup>7</sup> explained to those present at the third annual meeting: "After a thorough search, Armory Hall was fixed upon as the most desirable place that could be had, considering the limited means at the command of the Association. Accordingly three rooms were rented at the moderate price of fifty dollars per month; and Armory Hall is the place now occupied by the Association." Badger felt that the new quarters were more centrally located than the old and "far more pleasant."

### THE Y AT ARMORY HALL

The San Francisco Y moved into its new quarters on the fourth floor of Armory Hall, corner of Sacramento and Montgomery Streets, about the first of June 1856. Opposition to the necessity of trudging up three flights of stairs to get to the rooms developed at once. This may have been the reason why the stated monthly meetings for the next year were held in churches. For eight of these months, beginning in November, the Y met in the German Mission (Methodist) on Dupont Street, between Pine and California, for which a nominal rental was paid. This German Church was represented for the first time on the Board of Managers for the year 1856-57. As will be noted later, a German Branch of the Y was organized in 1883.

In spite of the difficulties imposed by the new location, the Y made steady progress along several lines during its fourth year. A Bible class was organized in November 1856 which met at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings. The Saturday evening prayer meeting and one of the Sunday Schools for newsboys continued to be maintained. A class was organized "for mutual improvement in the arts of Elocution and composition." The Committee on Employment reported at the annual meeting held in August 1857 that "the number of applications for assistance of this Committee has been unusually large." President Bond,

speaking before the 1857 annual meeting, said: "We have been called upon to provide means for sending to their childhood's home, several young men who were sick and in impoverished circumstances." Appreciation was expressed to the officials of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company who evidently provided free transportation. The visitor's book in the reading room carried the names of 7,000 who registered there during the year. "We have no doubt," Bond said in his report, "had it been more generally known that the rooms are open to all, whether members or otherwise, and had a more personal invitation been given, the number might have been greatly increased."

The membership roll during 1856-57 climbed to 370 having been boosted by 110 accessions. Nevertheless, the receipts for the year showed a serious drop of over \$1,000. Even though less rent was being paid, in Armory Hall, still other economies had to be put into effect. Reluctantly the board discontinued having a paid registrar. The supervision of the rooms was again put on a volunteer basis. As early as January 24, 1857, the members were discussing the possibility of securing "more convenient rooms for the use of this Association." Another difficulty with the Armory Hall accommodations was the size of the assembly room which, according to Bond, was "not of sufficient capacity for the uses of the Association." This was, no doubt, an important factor in explaining the decrease of revenues.

The fifth year of the Association's history, 1857-58, was filled with discouragements. The membership dropped from 370 to 209 and receipts totaled only \$1,298.83. Every possible economy was practiced. The brightest aspect of the year's work was the growing popularity of the reading room. In his annual report given in August 1858, President H. J. Wells said that 9,000 had signed the visitor's record and that many had used the room who had failed to sign. In expanding the low ebb to which the fortunes of the Y had declined, Wells commented:

Our Library and Rooms, we regret to say, remain located at the same place we have occupied for over two years past, in Armory Hall. And, as suggested by the last Report, we now repeat, the position is unsuitable for the object and uses of the Association.

We believe that much of the embarrassment and want of vigor which has cramped the workings of the Association for two years past has resulted from the unfavorable location of its rooms.

And Wells added: "Our financial condition is not flattering."

#### THE Y AT 629 WASHINGTON STREET

J. A. Banks was elected the sixth president of the San Francisco Y at the annual meeting held in Calvary Presbyterian Church on August 2, 1858. Eleven San Francisco churches were then represented on the

Board of Managers. Under new leadership the Association began to recover lost ground. The first thing to be done was to find another location. After some search suitable quarters were located on the second floor of a building at 171½ (later 629) Washington Street, described as being "opposite Maguire's Opera House." The Board of Managers approved the move at its October 1858 meeting. In his report before the annual meeting of 1859, Banks described the new location and commented on the favorable response to the move:

Being centrally located, easy of access, well lighted, well ventilated, and conveniently and neatly arranged, they are admirably adapted to our wants. . . . The number of visitors has far exceeded that of any previous year. The number of names on the register is about 13,000 and the librarian informs me that it is safe to estimate that fully one half of those visiting the rooms omit to record their names.

The new accommodations included two large rooms for general purposes and a smaller room for the library. Here the Y remained for six years or until it moved in 1864 into the first building it owned. Being in rented quarters for the third time, the members of the Y were becoming increasingly aware of the importance of having a home of their own. Therefore, on April 25, 1859, the Association voted to sponsor a Floral Festival in the city's Musical Hall from Tuesday to Friday, May 24-27, "for the purpose of raising a fund for the purchase of a lot for the Association."

Every effort was made to make the festival a success. Groups of women from the eleven cooperating churches sponsored booths. The best way to visualize the occasion is to read the account of the event which appeared in the May 26th issue of the *Pacific*.

A more brilliant and beautiful festival was never witnessed in this city than the opening of the Floral Festival in behalf of the Young Men's Christian Association on Tuesday evening. Musical Hall was thronged with interested visitors, and the singing of Mrs. Leach and others swept in its best moods through the vast audience. The weather was propitious; the stars of the evening shone with their loveliest beauty, and the mild summer air so rare in our San Francisco climate at this season, allured the old and young to this great gathering.

The Hall was decorated with evergreen thrown into arches, bowers, columns, and pyramids, richly variegated with a truly California profusion of roses besides many other splendid and beautiful flowers. The whole air seemed loaded down with the rich perfume of such a forest or garden of flowers. The labor expended in beautifying the Hall was only equalled by the true taste and genius that devised the display.

The festival will continue till Friday night, and will be open both day and evening. Those wishing to regale themselves on strawberries and ice cream, will find no pleasanter place to go, than to one of these ten bowers which resemble fairy seats.

A musical concert was given each evening. The members of the Y took heart when the money was counted. The total receipts were over \$2,500. After deducting expenses, the Y had a balance of \$1,167.56 as the nucleus of a building fund. Moreover, the Y had received a great deal of favorable publicity and members of the various Protestant churches had found an opportunity of working together for a common goal.

On July 20, 1858, the Association welcomed E. D. Sawyer, later known as Judge Sawyer into its number as an Active member. He was elected to the Board of Managers as a representative of the First Congregational Church on August 2nd of that year. At the annual meeting held in August 1859, he was made president. The San Francisco Y has through the years been blessed with having many consecrated and devoted Christian laymen serve without compensation on the Board of Managers (now called the Board of Directors) or in some other capacity. Few have excelled Judge Sawyer in his loyal and efficient services to the Association. He was one of the few carried over from the old administration to the new at the time of the reorganization of 1881. For decades he served as the Y's legal advisor.

During Sawyer's term of office as president, 1859-60, the effects of a religious revival, which began in the East in 1858, were felt in San Francisco. Daily prayer meetings were held in the city under the auspices of the Association which continued for years. During Sawyer's administration, the rules governing membership were tightened. The new rule read: "That no one be elected as a member, or be admitted to the privileges of such, until he has paid his initiation fee." And the registrar was called upon to keep "a full and correct roll of the name, residence, and church of each member of the Association." During this year, the membership increased from 261 to 345. By 1863, the total was 381. Without a doubt some of this increase in membership may be traced to the influence of the 1858 revival.

Most of the activities of the Y already noted continued at Washington Street. Judge Sawyer in his report before the 1861 annual meeting mentioned especially the popularity of the Y's reading room. He said: "We have the only free reading room in the city, supplied with the daily papers and magazines of our city, papers from the different parts of our State, the leading journals, magazines and periodicals from the Atlantic States, together with a good library." The room was open without charge to members and non-members alike.

A few new variations in the Y's activities are noted during the years the headquarters were maintained on Washington Street. The 1862



*Annual Report* commented on the good work the Committee of Visitation was doing in "distributing tracts and other reading matter" to the patients in the city and county hospitals. In 1863 the *Report* also referred to the visitations the committee was making to the county jail. As will be noted later, the San Francisco Y developed a strong interest in the establishment of a chaplaincy in the state prison at San Quentin. The work for the prisoners in the county jail was the beginning of that larger interest.

The Y in August 1862 took steps to organize a debating class. In the following year's annual report we read: "A class of young men having exercises in debate, meet every Thursday evening, which is open to the public." The nature of the class was expanded to include "declamation and composition." On the other hand, H. L. Chamberlain, president of the Y for 1863-64, bemoaned the fact that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find any one willing to read an original essay at their monthly meetings. On several occasions that year the Program Committee had to substitute "select readings" for the essay. Times were changing. In his annual report, Chamberlain said:

The reluctance of christian young men to engage in earnest and instructive mental discipline is a matter of profound regret, when it is considered how much time is given to the cultivation of the powers of the body.

Financially, the Association had a difficult time during the early sixties. The income from dues did not pay the current expenses, which ran from about \$1,300 to \$3,000 a year. The chief source of income continued to be from membership fees, sale of tickets for the lecture courses, and individual donations.

#### *Lost and Unclaimed*

One of the sad aspects of life in the early days of the history of California was the large number of men who migrated to the state and disappeared from sight. The San Francisco Y received many letters of inquiry regarding some person who had ceased to write letters back to their relatives in the East. The following item in the minutes of the Association for December 20, 1858, may be accepted as typical of many similar requests: "Mr. Archibald stated that he had received a letter from the father of James Clemson Montgomery, asking the assistance of the Association in finding out his whereabouts." Dr. James Eells, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of San Francisco, in his address before the annual meeting of 1867, referred to this distressing situation of young men going to California and becoming lost to their families. He said:

Their families do not know where they are. Hundreds of young men who have come out here to seek their fortunes, have never

been heard of again. They went first into those saloons abounding in games and gold, and wine, and wickedness, and ruin; and from there they were buried, and nobody knows where they may lie.

Another aspect of this problem was the large number of unclaimed letters which accumulated in the San Francisco Post Office. Many of these letters were addressed to these lost men, but the majority were unclaimed because the addresses were incorrect or incomplete or because of insufficient postage. Letters that had to be forwarded to other countries needed additional postage. The extent of this situation is found in the following quotation of Dr. Sandford Fleming's book, *God's Gold* who in turn was quoting from the *Pacific Banner* for December 18, 1852:

Men who had left home and loved ones with the hope of making life easier for them through work at the mines, dropped out of sight with no record of their fate. An interesting reflection of this is in the fact that within a few weeks, in 1852, 400,000 letters were received in the Dead Letter Office in Washington from California.<sup>8</sup>

More will be said in a following chapter of the action taken by the San Francisco Y in 1868 to help meet this situation.

#### *The Civil War*

The outbreak of the Civil War had little immediate effect upon the work of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. The activities continued very much as before. Dr. William C. Anderson, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of the city, was invited to speak before the annual meeting on August 12, 1861. Dr. Anderson had attended the meeting of the Old School Presbyterian General Assembly which met in Philadelphia the previous May. On April 12th the Confederates had opened fire on Fort Sumter. Five weeks later the Old School Presbyterian Assembly met, the first national body of any denomination to gather after the beginning of hostilities. The newspapers throughout the nation were eager to find out what the Presbyterians would say. The Assembly appointed a committee of nine, which included Dr. Anderson of San Francisco, to make a report. Eight of the committee were in favor of saying nothing which would divide the church. Dr. Anderson brought in a minority report which called upon the church to support the Union. After days of lively debate, which was widely reported through the press, the minority report carried. This action split the Old School Church into the Northern and Southern branches and gave rise to the Presbyterian Church, U.S., often called the Southern Presbyterian Church. No person was more directly responsible for this split than Dr. Anderson, who was widely known for his patriotic zeal and who later became a chaplain in the Union Army. His selec-



tion as the speaker before the 1861 annual meeting was a recognition by the Y of his advocacy of the Northern cause. This no doubt was the sentiment held by the majority of the members of the San Francisco Y.

Dr. Anderson's message was entitled: "The National Crisis." He was an eloquent speaker and rose to the full possibilities of a stirring subject. "War exists," he shouted, "Our peace-loving, happy, prosperous country has dropped the plowshare and has seized the sword." He called it an "unprovoked," and "unholy" war. "The South," he insisted, "desires no compromise; never proposed to receive any." He continued:

Whatever else, then, is dark, one thing is clear, namely that this rebellion must be put down — the Union of the States must be preserved. . . . This is the great work which God has given us to do in the year 1861. . . . These men are traitors — one and all.

The lecture was received with such enthusiasm that the Association voted to publish an edition of 3,000 copies for gratuitous distribution. The Association also adopted a resolution which declared that the lecture "expresses the views of the Association upon the subject of the address." This pamphlet, printed in San Francisco in 1861, is now a collector's item.

The first discovered record of the San Francisco Y undertaking a definite project for military personnel is found in a minute of the meeting of the Board of Managers for December 8, 1864, when "It was moved and carried that 50 copies of Dr. Wadsworth's sermon be donated to the soldiers stationed at the Presidio." The eloquent Dr. Charles Wadsworth, pastor of Calvary Presbyterian Church, spoke before the Association on September 25th of that year on "A Mother's Sorrow." His remarks touched a tender cord in many a listener's heart for requests for printed copies of his address were so numerous that two editions were issued. This too has become a collector's item.

#### *Should Women be Permitted to Join*

The proposal of permitting women to become members of the Association was debated at length during the fall of 1859. At the October 17th meeting, the following resolution was presented: "Resolved, That any lady may become an honorary member of this Association — subject to all the privileges and restrictions of Associate Members, on application and payment of one Dollar, through any member of this Association in good and regular standing." Not all were in favor of the idea. Some thought that the term "lady" should be qualified by the words "of good moral character." After all, some ladies might not be acceptable. Again, since Associate members had certain privileges including the right of discussion at the business and other meetings of

the Association, some hesitated to grant such rights to women. So a substitute motion was offered:

Resolved, that any Lady of good and moral character shall be entitled to the privileges of the Library by payment of one Dollar annually in advance and that the money thus obtained be devoted exclusively to the improvement of the Library.

Even this qualified statement failed to win a majority vote. The whole subject was carried over until the November meeting when the question of permitting ladies library privileges was again discussed. The matter was referred to the Board of Managers with power to act. At its December 8th meeting, the board adopted the following:

That any Lady recommended to the Librarian by any member of the Association be allowed the privileges of the Library and rooms on payment of Three (3) Dollars per annum in advance to the Librarian and that the fund so accruing be devoted to the use of the Library.

President Sawyer, in his report on the year's activities given before the 1860 annual meeting, said: "Never until the past year have ladies been permitted to become members of our Association; the disability having been removed we hope we may have accessions to our members from the gentler sex which will call back to active duty the young men grown old." An examination of the membership roll, however, does not show the names of any women unless such names were listed under initials. Thus it appears that Sawyer in speaking of the presence of women as members was referring only to their use of the library. President Playter in his annual report for 1861 also referred to the women by saying: "The presence of ladies at our monthly meeting has been a pleasant and encouraging feature for many months past." The *Eighth Annual Report* for 1861 includes the name of Mrs. W.E.A. Gray as a Life member.

It appears that the subject of the participation of women in the meetings of the Association was discussed on subsequent occasions. The following is from the minutes for November 18, 1867:

Resolved, that it is expedient for us to invite Ladies to attend and participate in the exercises of our meetings. After some considerable discussion both in the affirmative and negative, Mr. McColliam moved to amend the Resolution by striking out the words "and participate in the exercise of."

No definite action was taken at that meeting. In October 1868 the Board of Managers voted: "That the Board of Managers extend an invitation to the Ladies to form a Branch Association for the benefit of the Young Ladies of this city." At the October meeting of the As-

sociation in the year following, the following action was taken: "That the Assn. hereby tenders its hearty thanks to the 'Womans Christian Assn.' for their generous donation of books lately purchased in New York for our Assn." This may be a beginning of the San Francisco Y.W.C.A. although other records show that the Y.W. in San Francisco commenced its work in 1877 as an auxiliary to the California Evangelical Society.<sup>9</sup> The Y.W.C.A. of San Francisco was incorporated in January 1878. The new Y.M.C.A. building erected in 1868 at 232 Sutter Street included a room known as the "Ladies Parlor." Although the women were welcomed at social gatherings and were permitted to use the library, the doors of the Association were still closed to them as members.

### AGITATION FOR A BUILDING

President Banks, speaking before the 1859 Annual Meeting, emphasized: "We need a 'local habitation and a name,' we must have a building of our own." The success of the floral festival of that year, which put over \$1,100 in a building fund, inspired the Association to appoint a Building Committee with H. L. Chamberlain as chairman. Soon afterwards the committee had the opportunity to buy a choice lot opposite the Lick House for \$6,000. "It was estimated," reminisced Chamberlain in 1869, "that a building suited to the modest wants of the Association could be erected for a like sum." After some consideration, however, the committee rejected the offer because some members felt that the lot was too far removed from the center of business and because it was poor financial policy to burden the Association with a debt of \$12,000 against a credit of only \$1,100. Later Chamberlain saw the lot increase in value many times and publicly expressed his regrets of his hesitancy to make the purchase.

Another floral festival was held in 1861 but the results were disappointing. Only about \$400 was added to the building fund. In November 1861, Caleb Cameron, a member of the Association, met an accidental death. The Y was remembered in his will with a bequest of \$1,000 for the building fund payable as soon as that fund amounted to \$6,000. This spurred the Association to renewed efforts. Those present at the 1862 annual meeting, recognizing the necessity of the Y owning its own home, voted to make the effort to raise \$7,500. The suggestion was made that this sum be allocated among the various co-operating churches of the city. This appeal, however, met with no success. These were the days of the Civil War and other appeals were taking precedence. In the 1863 annual report we read:

During the past year, so urgent have been the claims of the Sanitary Commission, so worthy the cause, and so generous the public response, that we did not seek to divert any of the public munificence from the noble channel in which it was flowing.

The Sanitary Commission was the main relief agency of the North during the Civil War. It combined in one organization that which in World War I was performed by the Red Cross, the Y.M.C.A., the Salvation Army and other agencies.

In the meantime there was growing dissatisfaction with the quarters at 629 Washington Street. President H. L. Chamberlain in his remarks before the 1864 Annual Meeting summed up the feeling as follows:

A growing dissatisfaction with the noisy location of our rooms, opposite a so-called *melodeon*; the cramped condition of our library; a deficiency of gas, producing an intolerable 'dim, religious light,' and casting reflections that none seemed desirous to face, exerted, doubtless, a silent influence in deadening the interest of many who would not willingly own themselves moved by such trivial causes. As a consequence, our monthly meetings have not been crowded — no one has been pressed for room.

In December 1863 the Board of Managers took action to buy a building with its furnishings for \$2,100 which stood on leased land at 522 California Street. The terms of the agreement called for the payment of \$50 a month ground rent until October 1, 1867. Also, according to the contract, the owner of the land was to buy the building at the expiration of the lease at an appraised value of not more than \$2,500. The building had a store on the ground floor which could be rented. The whole arrangement was within the financial possibilities of the Association. The Board of Managers accepted the proposition as a temporary expedient. At least it gave the Association a home of its own for about four years. This was the second Y.M.C.A. building to be owned by any Association in the United States, having been preceded only by the Baltimore Y.

The purchase of the building on California Street came just in time as the owner of the building on Washington Street served notice in February 1864 that the Y would have to vacate their rooms. The new quarters were ready for occupancy in the following July.

## In the Y's First Building, 1864-1868

The first building to be owned by the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. was located at 522 California Street, a few doors west of Montgomery Street. By the early sixties the business section of San Francisco was moving south and south-west away from the old center around Portsmouth Square. In moving from 629 Washington Street, which was also near Montgomery, the Y took a stride of about five blocks closer to Market Street – thus keeping in line with the trend of the times.

After being in three rented quarters, the occupancy of its own building on California Street represented the Y's fourth move. In 1868 the Y moved the fifth time going to 232 Sutter Street. This represented another step in the same general direction toward Market Street. Then the direction of the geographical advance of the Y changed from following Montgomery Street to that of paralleling Market. Move number six in 1894 to a larger building, also owned by the Association, was in a south-westerly direction to the corner of Mason and Ellis. After the great earthquake and fire of 1906, the Y erected its present handsome structure on its seventh location since 1853 at the corner of Golden Gate and Leavenworth. This building was dedicated in 1910.

These seven locations, during the one hundred year span, include the first three in rented quarters, the history of which has already been considered; one in a building owned by the Y but on leased ground, the subject of this chapter; and three at sites where both building and land were the property of the Association. The fourth location at 522 California Street included a period of a little more than three years beginning in 1864. The very fact that the Y owned a building on leased land meant that the location was temporary. But it represented a step forward, and an important step, toward the acquisition of an adequate building on land to which the Association had a clear title.

The new quarters on California Street were opened on July 18, 1864, the eleventh anniversary of the founding of the Y. The unsatisfactory nature of the former quarters had left a depressing effect on the spirit and life of the Association. The membership declined from 381 in 1863 to 313 for 1864. The number reported for 1865 was 274 of whom, according to the annual report of that year, only 180 paid their dues. In 1866 the membership dipped to 262 and after that it began to increase.

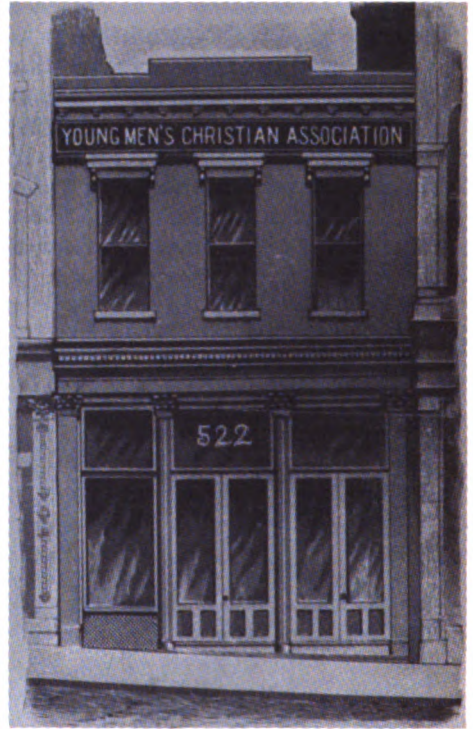
The year 1865-66 was marked by the fact that three different men served as president of the Association during that one year. This was



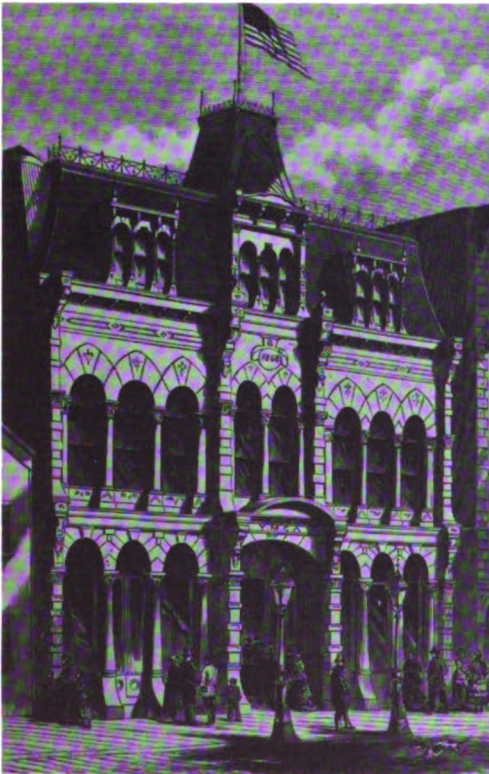
**EARLY BUILDINGS**



**THIRD BUILDING OCCUPIED  
BY THE ASSOCIATION  
On Washington Street**



**FIRST BUILDING OWNED BY  
THE SAN FRANCISCO Y.M.C.A.  
At 522 California Street, in 1864.  
This was the second building owned  
by a Y.M.C.A. in the United States**



**SECOND BUILDING OWNED BY  
THE SAN FRANCISCO Y.M.C.A.  
At 232 Sutter Street, in 1869.**

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the result of the rule calling for the rotation of the office among the cooperating Protestant denominations. Men of ability and of devotion to the Association were passed over because they did not happen to belong to the right church at the time of the election. On July 26, 1869, the Association passed a resolution condemning the rule as being "pernicious and dangerous." The following action was adopted: "Wherefore hereafter it shall be competent for this Association to select for its President the best available man regardless of sect or denomination." Of the first twenty-one presidents, seventeen served for one year each; three held office during 1865-66; and one served for two years, 1868-70. After 1873 the one-year pattern was broken.

The history of any successful institution revolves around the leadership given by certain key personalities. This is true of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. A leading spirit in these discouraging years of the mid-sixties was H. L. Chamberlain who served as librarian three times — 1860-61, 1868-69, and 1870-72. He was president 1863-64 and chairman of the Building Committee. The move the Y made into its new quarters on Sutter Street in 1868 was due more to his efforts than to those of any other individual. Another faithful soul was Robert J. Trumbull who joined the Association as an active member on July 17, 1865. He became at once a recognized leader and was elected librarian for the year 1866-67. The records show that he was long active on a number of committees.

A grim reminder of the frontier conditions still existing in the hinterland is found in a record in the minutes of the Association for August 17, 1867. It is there reported that James A. Banks, who had served as president of the Y in 1858-59, had been killed "by violence at the hands of Indians in the State of Nevada." No date was given.

The tide turned upward beginning with the annual meeting of 1866. During these four years on California Street, the regular program of activities continued. A few changes are noted in the minutes. On April 15, 1867, the Association voted to close its library of about 2,000 volumes "to all persons not regular paying members of the Association over 35 years of age." Week day prayer meetings at noon, which began during the revival of 1858, continued to be held. The Visiting Committee was active in making calls at the city and county hospitals, the jails, and the various boarding houses and hotels. On March 20, 1865, this committee reported that attractive framed signs had been placed aboard "the Panama and Nicaragua steamers as a guide to young men." The Board of Managers suggested that the same might be done on the river and bay steamers as well.

No explanation is given for the following unusual action taken by the Board of Managers at its February 20, 1865 meeting: "It was moved and carried unanimously that chess playing be prohibited in the rooms of the Association." Possibly the length of some chess games



tended to monopolize the use of certain facilities in the reading room. The Chinese of San Francisco looked upon chess as being a gambling game, but so far as is known, other people did not.

#### *Concern for Prisoners*

A growing concern for the spiritual welfare of prisoners, which began in 1863 with visitations to the county jail, is evidenced in the annual reports of the years under review. The attention of the members present at the monthly meeting held on December 19, 1864, to the fact that between five and six hundred prisoners at San Quentin "have been and are deprived of the means of grace, and without any religious teaching whatever." This statement appeared in the current annual report of the State Prison Commissioners of the State of California. Most of the prisoners were young men. Upon learning of this situation, the members adopted the following Resolutions:

Resolved, that the time has come when this disgrace to our state and the church of Christ should cease and believing as we do that the spirit of Christianity is to reach all classes and conditions of men, no matter how low this moral degradation may be,

Therefore, Resolved by the Young Men's Christian Association of the city of San Francisco that as the representatives of the Church of Christ collectively that we will use all laudable means to procure for said prison the services of a man to act as permanent chaplain, who shall give his entire time to the work, and that to pay the expenses of the same, an annual levy be made on all of the churches of the State, the same to be made in proportion to their ability.

The subject was followed up in the March 1865 meeting when a committee of five ministers was appointed to investigate the possibility of getting a chaplain appointed for the state prison. The committee, after discussing the issues involved, recommended that the San Francisco Association "take measures to bring it before the next Legislature." Independent of the steps being taken by the Y.M.C.A. to secure a chaplain for the prison and at first unknown to the Y, was the action of the Methodist Church. It appears that the Methodist Bishop had also read the annual report of the State Prison Commissioners and delegated a "Rev. Mr. Gordon" to conduct services at San Quentin once every alternate Sunday beginning with the first of November 1864. Reporting to a meeting held in the Y on May 2, 1865, Gordon said that a "regular service was held in the prison semi-monthly under the auspices of the Methodist Conference" with an average attendance of 150.

Although the members of the Y were glad to hear of something being done for the spiritual welfare of the men in prison, they still felt that more positive steps should be taken to fill the need. President

Cubery, commenting on this subject in his message to the 1865 annual meeting, said: "It is probable that this disgrace to the State will be wiped out at the next session of the Legislature." On December 18, 1865, the Board of Managers voted "that a Committee of three be appointed to draw up a petition for the creation of a chaplaincy at the State Prison to be presented to the Legislature in session." Sometime that month the California Prison Commission was organized, composed of representatives of the various Protestant denominations in the state. The services of the Rev. James Woodworth were secured as secretary and agent. The *Pacific* for June 14, 1866, carried the following news story under the heading "California Prison Commission:"

This association [i.e., the California Prison Commission] has now been in operation for six months, and seems destined to be a success. The Trustees held their last quarterly meeting a few days ago, when the agent, Mr. Woodworth, presented his report, showing the work performed by him for the three months. He visits the city Prison every morning. . . . The County Jail is visited for a similar purpose; also the State Prison at San Quentin. A Sabbath is usually spent at the latter, and religious services held, at which about one hundred and fifty attend, taking, apparently, great interest in the exercises.

For a number of years the California Prison Commission published annual reports. Copies for 1868, 1871, and 1872 are extant.<sup>1</sup> An examination of these reports show that those most active in this commission were also leaders in the Y.M.C.A. The annual meeting of the commission held on November 23, 1868, met in the rooms of the San Francisco Association. At this time Woodworth, the general agent for the commission, reported that a bill had been introduced into the state legislature calling for the appointment of a chaplain for the state prison. Although the bill was favorably acted upon by the Senate, it failed to pass the House. The governor is reported to have been willing to sign it had the bill come to his desk. Some time later the proposal became a law. The final establishment of the office of chaplain for the state prison by the state may be listed as one of the major achievements of the San Francisco Y.

### *Street Preaching*

Another project faithfully carried on by the Y over many years with considerable success was that of street preaching. President Cubery, reporting before the 1865 annual meeting, explained that at first the project called for some opposition from a few members of the Y "as many so-called preachers, by their irreverent conduct and language, had prejudiced the community against out-of-door services." The majority of the members, however, felt that it would do no harm to try the experiment and, therefore, the Association at its February 1865

meeting appointed a committee of two "to take full charge of street preaching under the auspices of the Assn." The first service was held on February 26th and by August 1st of that year fifteen services had been held in which twelve of the city's clergymen had assisted, representing each of the five major Protestant denominations.

These outdoor meetings were held in front of the What Cheer House on Sacramento Street. President Cubery reported in August 1865 that "The attentive listeners and encouraging incidents occurring at these gatherings have removed all prejudice." And he added: "A woman has never been present at any of these meetings," even though the average attendance was from two to five hundred.

This street preaching project was sponsored by the Y for more than fifteen years. The 1867 annual report commented on the fact that the congregations numbered from 100 to 600 "mostly men," and that "No disturbance has ever occurred."

#### *The Post Office Committee*

The San Francisco Y had a Post Office Committee in 1868 which cooperated with the local post office in forwarding letters which for various reasons would otherwise have been sent to the Dead Letter Office in Washington. In its report before the 1868 annual meeting, this committee said: "It has often been a matter of wonder on the part of residents here, that so many inquiries were constantly being made by their friends at the East in relation to relatives and others in the Pacific States from whom nothing was ever heard." At that time the local post office was sending on the average 150 letters per week to the Dead Letter Office. The Association's Committee felt that a real service could be rendered by trying to find the correct address and also by supplying the extra postage needed for the forwarding of letters, especially to other countries as Canada. The following statement was printed on a small slip of paper which was pasted on each letter for which extra postage had been paid:

The Young Men's Christian Association of San Francisco find this letter in the Postoffice without a stamp, and prepaid the postage to save it from the Dead Letter Office in Washington. Whatever you desire to return for the favor will be devoted to the building we are now erecting for a Free Public Library and Reading Room.

In its first report of its activities, the committee said that "Between the 18th of April and the 1st of August, the Committee posted in this way 1,912 letters. Many interesting answers have been sent to us by the parties receiving them, expressing great thankfulness for the favor done them, and often inclosing money, from three cents to fifty dollars." The committee reported that the whole amount expended was \$73.17 and that \$74.32 had been received in return.

## THE ASSOCIATION BUILDS

The initial need which brought the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. into being in 1853 remained as the primary reason why it should continue in existence. San Francisco was the mecca for thousands of young men who arrived in the city each year seeking their fortunes. President Cubery, in his 1865 report to the annual meeting, drew attention to this when he said:

There is scarcely a vessel that enters your harbor that does not bring with it young men just beginning life's battles alone. The Golden Gate appears to them the magic portal to a region where untold wealth is within their reach, and riches and honor, and fame will be their portion forever. To attain this, they have left home and loved ones; crossed foreign lands and seas; undergone unnumberable perils; dispensed with all the comforts of life, and even entered into the very "jaws of death". They plant their feet on these shores usually destitute of means; entertaining high hopes; confident of success; and never dreaming of defeat. . . .

I have mentioned this, to convince you of the necessity of a Young Men's Christian Association in San Francisco. It gives these strangers a cordial welcome as they land upon these shores; . . . it strives to assist those who have tried in vain to assist themselves; its room is their home where their time can be pleasantly and profitably spent.

In spite of this recognized need for such an organization as the Y.M.C.A., friends were slow to rally to its support during the critical days of the mid-1860s. Discouragement followed discouragement. As has been stated, the rules under which the president was elected each year often brought inferior men to that office. The frequent change of leadership was bad. Because of reasons not fully understood, the churches of the city began to lose faith in the Y.M.C.A. The temporary quarters being occupied on California Street did not inspire confidence. Something positive had to be done to save the Y. On August 21, 1865, the Board of Managers voted to launch a campaign for a \$10,000 building fund. A committee was appointed to study the situation. This committee reported the next month saying that twice that amount would be needed to erect a suitable building and that only \$3,000 was on hand. A call was issued to the public asking all friends of the Association to rally at a designated place to see what could be done. Only about a dozen attended. A second and a more urgent appeal was issued, with a like result. A deadly lethargy seemed to have settled upon the Association. Some were saying that the Y should disband!

A third attempt to rally friends for the support of the Association was tried in the spring of 1866 which resulted in "collecting a fair at-

tendance." The rumor of the possibility of disbanding had reached the ears of the members of the city's Ministerial Union. The Rev. E. G. Beckwith, secretary of the Union, wrote a letter of encouragement to the Y. "Don't think of disbanding," he pled. "We know that you have not had the co-operation of Christians in this city which you had a right to expect, yet there is a work to be done, which can be done by no one else as well as by you."<sup>2</sup> Such words of encouragement were most reassuring. On June 5, 1866, the Association voted "to proceed immediately to call upon the churches, Christians and public generally for subscriptions to a Building Fund." The goal was set for \$40,000.

Among the factors stimulating the members of the Y to action was the knowledge that the lease on which their building stood was to expire in the fall of 1867. They had a little more than a year of grace. Moreover, there was the \$1,000 legacy from the Cameron estate which would be available as soon as \$6,000 had been raised. The court had ruled that unless the Y met the terms of the bequest by January 1, 1867, the legacy would be cancelled. A determined drive for subscriptions was inaugurated during the latter part of 1866 which was successful in raising enough to meet the terms of the will and the legacy was paid.

In February 1867 the Association voted to buy a lot at 232 Sutter Street, between Kearny and Dupont, for \$19,075. The lot measured 54½ feet wide and extended 120 feet in depth through to Berry Street. The Association was able to pay \$6,075 down and to secure a mortgage for \$13,000. The wisdom of the purchase was soon apparent by the rapidly rising real estate values in that vicinity. The Association took on new life with the knowledge that it now owned a site. The mortgage became a challenge. On March 14, 1867, the Association voted to hold a Strawberry Festival in order to raise money for the building fund. Again the ladies of the different churches came to the rescue. The Strawberry Festival became the Ladies' Festival which was held June 4-8 and was successful in raising \$1,539.80.

Even though no funds were in sight to erect a building, architects were consulted about plans. Reporting to the 1867 annual meeting, President Breed summarized what had been decided:

The plan is designed to cover the entire lot, 54½ by 120 feet, by a three story and basement brick edifice. It embraces on the first floor two stores on Sutter Street for renting, a wide entrance, and a gymnasium; on the second floor, large and commodious reading, conversation and library rooms, a parlor for the especial accommodation of ladies, and a hall seating 800 persons for public meetings. The third floor is arranged for committee rooms and offices for renting. The estimated cost of the building is \$40,000; add to this the cost of the lot, and we have \$60,000 as the price of our home.



Two of the leading pastors of the city attended the 1867 annual meeting and spoke. Their remarks were included in the printed *Annual Report* of that year. Dr. A. L. Stone, pastor of the First Congregational Church, said:

Confessedly, the Young Men's Christian Association of this city has languished. Only a year ago, there came abroad a rumor of the possibility of its being disbanded. But it will not be allowed to die. . . . You cannot find the minister in this city who shall consent to preach its funeral sermon. . . .

The Association cannot prosper without a good building, one worthy of its dignity and duty, and expressive thereof to every passer by. This it must have, or it will fall to rust and ruin.

Dr. James Eells, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, emphasized the thought that the real work of the Association could never be done "so long as there are young men." With such timely encouragement, the members of the Y turned to their building project with renewed enthusiasm. Attention first had to be given to their lease to the land on which their building on California Street stood. The lease was due to expire on October 1, 1867. Satisfactory arrangements were made with the owner to extend the lease until July 1868 at the same monthly rental of \$50. Consideration also had to be given to ways and means of getting more money. As one means of securing funds, the Association increased the price of a Life Membership from \$25 to \$100. This brought in several thousand dollars. During the year, 1867-68, three concerts were held in Howard Presbyterian Church and another spring festival was sponsored. "The net result of all these was an addition of \$3,000 gold coin to the Building Fund," reported President George Barstow before the 1868 annual meeting.

Even though the Association had been able to raise only about one-half of the purchase price of their lot on Sutter Street, the Board of Managers at its December 1867 meeting authorized a loan of \$27,000 to start the new building. The Board was obliged to pay ten per cent interest "payable monthly in advance." Ground was broken for the new building on January 3, 1868. Many difficulties arose. In order to satisfy the bank on some legal points, the officers of the Association resigned and were then re-elected in a properly conducted manner on February 17, 1868. A squatter contested title to the land. In the 1868 *Annual Report* we read of this.

When . . . the work of excavating had quietly progressed for some time under a tacit arrangement, a new difficulty arose in the person of a squatter, who disputed our progress, defined his position, staked out his claim and declared that, as this was his last chance, he was determined to lay his bones there rather than give up. Finding that threats had no effect, and that the work still



went on, suit was brought against the Trustees, and by due process of law he was enabled to hinder the work, and for a time seemed likely to gain all he asked for. But strategy in war is better than law, and the committee were soon in quiet possession of the field, and so continued to the completion of the building, with nothing to annoy save the slow progress of the work beyond our expectation.

Just what "strategy" was used to eject the squatter is not known. The value of the land on which the Association was building had doubled by the summer of 1868. The total cost of the new building was \$57,300 to which another \$4,000 had to be added for furnishings. The total cash outlay was \$80,375 but, because of the increased valuation of the land, the property was worth over \$100,000 upon completion of the building. Since the total indebtedness reported at the 1868 annual meeting was \$57,000, this means that the Association had succeeded in raising over \$23,000. Even though the Association then had only about three hundred members to carry this heavy financial obligation, yet it went forward in faith believing that the impossible was possible.

The cornerstone was laid with appropriate ceremonies on April 16, 1868, "in the presence of a large concourse of ladies and gentlemen." In President Barstow's remarks, he said regarding the new building:

It will contain a free library and reading room, a hall for lectures, and apartments for social gatherings and healthful recreation. But it must not be a place of elegant ease, where Christians are to come to a halt in their journey and take a rest. No. Rather let it be a place from which we are to go forth, like the good Samaritan, to deeds of active benevolence. Let it be a banner to show the stranger and the homeless that there is a brotherhood here, ready to welcome him to the privileges and even the labors of this home.

Barstow, imbued with a high optimism regarding the future development of California, drew attention to the fact that the state was destined "to be the triumphant mistress of oriental commerce." He added: "She is largely engaged in building the longest and most wonderful railroad in the world." The golden spike which completed the construction of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads was driven at Promontory Point, Utah, on May 10, 1869, less than a year after the completion of the new Y building in San Francisco. This was part of the background picture which prompted Barstow to say:

Thousands of the young and the strong are coming to explore her [California's] rich mines, to view her wheat fields, her flocks and vineyards, to see if there is anywhere else on earth a land like

this. But material resources alone do not make a State. Good and strong men and women make a State, and happy homes are the bulwarks of a State. . . . Therefore to those who have prospered, I would say, nurture institutions like this, that the State may have moral grandeur as well as physical resources.<sup>3</sup>

A new spirit of optimism was evident at the 1868 annual meeting, a sharp contrast to the dejection and lethargy which had ruled only two years before. In his report, Barstow outlined the "needs" of the Association which included the following:

We want social re-unions, where the young of both sexes can meet and find social companionship, pleasant recreation and innocent amusements. The feet of the young run naturally toward gladsome pleasures, and religion can not prosper if it makes war upon all the instincts which the God of nature has implanted in the heart of youth.

Barstow was an enthusiastic promoter of the proposal that women be admitted to the membership of the Association. On this point he argued:

We want more enthusiasm, earnestness and ardor. To gain these we must seek the aid of women — noble dedicated women — Marys in the Church, Marthas at home. When the Sanitary Commission of the war was organized, to whom did it appeal for aid? To the women of the land. In that field of holy heroic labor, the deeds of women are above all eulogy. . . .

In the Young Men's Christian Association of Brooklyn, New York, almost one-third of the members are women; and it is acknowledged there, that much of the success of the institution is due to the admission of ladies as members. Here is an example in my opinion worthy of imitation.

Perhaps it was due largely to Barstow's insistence that a room designated as the Ladies' Parlor was set aside in the new building then being constructed. Barstow's concluding remarks before the Annual Meeting on this matter of permitting the women to become members of the Y included the following:

When I think what woman was to the religion of the cross in the early ages of Christianity, what she was to it at its birth and has ever been, I consider it a strange anomaly that woman is not in active membership with this Association. How thin and dry our regular meetings are. Month after month the hermits of the Institute meet, look wise, eye each other in mute uncertainty or prattle a while and separate. No woman's voice enlivens the scene. Let us redeem this altogether.

The first recorded meeting in the new building at 232 Sutter Street was held on September 15, 1868, when the Board of Managers assembled in the Ladies Parlor. This marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A.

## At Sutter Street before McCoy, 1868-1881

The Y building at Sutter Street was the home of the Association for twenty-six years, or until 1894, when another new building was opened at the corner of Mason and Ellis. This twenty-six year period was divided midway in 1881 by the coming of Henry James McCoy to be the first General Secretary. Indeed, McCoy's influence was so great in the life of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. that one might date events in its history by the abbreviations B.M. and A.M. — before McCoy and after McCoy.

We of this generation are amazed at the temerity of that small band of young men in the San Francisco Y who in 1868 dared to accept a three-story building with a debt of \$57,000 and with so few assets. The membership of the Association, including the usual transients, numbered about 300. There was no paid leadership except the librarian, H. L. Chamberlain, who received \$200 a month beginning September 1, 1868. He served only until April of the following year. The opening of the new building in September meant an enlarged program but for the most part this was conducted on a volunteer basis. The Y needed desperately a strong guiding hand in the management of its affairs, and this it did not have. The yearly election of a new set of officers meant a periodic shift of leadership and a consequent break in the program of activities.

The contrast between a few rented rooms and a large three-story building, plus a basement seemed too good to be true. For the first time in its fifteen-year history, the San Francisco Association had suitable physical equipment to do the job it had proposed to do. The \$57,000 debt with its ten per cent interest "payable monthly in advance" hung like the sword of Damocles over the institution. However, the rental received from the store room on the ground floor was sufficient to pay all interest charges. According to a letter written to the National Headquarters of the Y.M.C.A. in August 1869 by W. O. Andrews, librarian, the arrangement left the "Library Room, Reading Room, Conversational Room, Manager's Room, large Hall, and Ladies' Parlor rent free."<sup>1</sup> For several years the Y drifted along content with its ability to meet interest payments but doing nothing to reduce the main indebtedness. The day of reckoning, however, was inevitably coming.

The new building was dedicated on November 16, 1869, more than a year after it had first opened its doors. Dr. James Eells, pastor of the

First Presbyterian Church of San Francisco, gave the principal address. The chairman of the Building Committee, H. L. Chamberlain, reviewed the events which led up to the completion of the building. The following is taken from his remarks:

The writer . . . has lived . . . to learn by bitter experience that an association, like an individual, cannot be a power in the land without the means and appliances of power. The soul must have a body if it would walk a giant among men. This building, my brothers, is our material covering, our body, and it behooves us to show that there is a soul within directing, animating and blessing, so that these walls may be made to speak for the honor and glory of God.

After carrying on for nearly four years with several serving as librarian, presumably at the same rate of pay given to Chamberlain, the Board of Managers in August 1872 secured the services of the Rev. H. Cox, D.D., a Methodist minister, to serve as chaplain at \$250 a month. His duties included taking care of the library. Although he was not called a "secretary," he performed many of the duties of such an office for about eight and one-half years or until April 1881 when H. J. McCoy was called to be the first General Secretary.

#### PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

Writing to National Headquarters in New York City on February 3, 1869, a few months after the Association in San Francisco had entered its new building, H. L. Chamberlain reported:

In regard to our Association, I wish I could report great activity, but I cannot. We lack, most of all, workers in the vineyard — men of prayer and holy living and working. We are trying to revive our Saturday evening prayer meeting, with some degree of encouragement. The secondary objects are going along well. We have a free singing school every Monday night. Nearly four hundred of both sexes attend, and seem to enjoy themselves well. Our lecture course is declared a decided success, beyond any heretofore. Lectures have generally been a failure here. Hence the satisfaction at the success of this course and the security of the success of future courses.<sup>2</sup>

The activities of the Y during this thirteen year period, 1868-81, may be reviewed under the symbolism of the three sides of the triangle representing the physical, the mental, and the spiritual.

The new building contained a gymnasium which created all sorts of unexpected problems to the Board of Managers. In October 1868 the board authorized the purchase of seven hundred dollars worth of equipment on borrowed money. In response to a request from some

of the members for a bowling alley, the board voted to install such provided at least 100 would indicate their willingness to pay a monthly fee of fifty cents for members and one dollar for non-members. The bowling alley was installed and in January 1869 the board voted "to lease the bowling alley to such members as will fit it up at their own expense." The gymnasium was a great attraction. President Freeman in his report before the 1872 annual meeting said:

We have improved and continued our gymnasium, free to all members, affording all the appliances necessary to the development of physical strength, to the end that not only moral but that muscular Christianity may prevail among all who come and associate with us, enjoying its privileges and seeking its blessings.

Under the services rendered to the physical needs of men may be listed the dormitory. A note in the minutes of the meeting of the board for February 17, 1873, reads: "Resolved that Dr. Cox be empowered to purchase as many beds and as much clothing as may be necessary to furnish the sleeping rooms." The 1874 *Report* refers to the charitable work the Y was doing in supplying "raiment for the destitute, beds for the weary, food for the hungry, medical attendance and nurses for the sick, Christian burial for those who die under our care and protection."

The major attraction on the intellectual side of the Y's program continued to be the free reading room although the opening of the San Francisco Public Library in 1868 eased some of the demand for this facility. The number of books in the Association's collection increased from about 2,000 in 1868 to 4,000 in 1881. Only July 14, 1870, the Board of Managers authorized the trustees to employ a "lady assistant librarian," if the trustees "deem it expedient." The propriety of having an employed woman in the Y building was questioned by some. As will be noted later, there was even some discussion in 1886 when Secretary McCoy proposed hiring a "young lady stenographer."

The free reading room, according to the 1872 *Report* attracted "from sixty to seventy-five persons (many of them strangers in the city) daily . . . for study, information and improvement." Popular periodicals and local newspapers were made available. A warm welcome was extended to all young men to use the reading room.

The new building had an assembly hall large enough to seat 750 which provided excellent facilities for lectures, concerts, and entertainments. The earlier type of program which called for a member to read an original essay gradually disappeared. President Freeman, reporting to the annual meeting in 1872, said: "We have held monthly social meetings in the Lecture Hall the third Monday evening in every month where literary and musical entertainments were had, and social intercourse and mutual acquaintance cultivated, for the benefit of



strangers and all those who were willing to avail themselves of the advantages conferred by this Association. We have a singing school during five months in the year which has been well attended; a collection only, is taken in the school to compensate the teacher." According to an action taken by the Association in December 1869, the entertainments were "to consist of Debates, Recitations, music, etc., to be given by members or such lady or gentlemen friends of the Association as would be willing to volunteer." Dances were not permitted.

A major emphasis in the Y's program of activities during these years under review continued to be religious, especially during the years Dr. Cox served as chaplain. Even before the new building was dedicated, the Y voted to start a Sabbath School on the "first Sabbath after dedication of the building at 4 o'clock P.M." President Freeman in his report to the 1872 annual meeting summarized the religious activities as follows:

We have held noon-day prayer meetings from 12 $\frac{1}{4}$  to 1 P.M. every day in the year, and every Saturday evening from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 8 to  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 9 o'clock and lately a Bible class, taught by H. L. Chamberlain, at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 2, every Sunday afternoon.

We have maintained every Sabbath throughout the year, through the clergy and lay members of the Association street preaching in front of the "What Cheer House" and an afternoon service at North Beach for six months.

The first reference in the official records of the Association to the famous evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, is found in the minutes of a special meeting of the Association held on May 11, 1871. Moody was present at the time. After some discussion regarding the possibility of having Moody work in some connection with the Association, the following resolution was passed: "That we invite Mr. D. L. Moody of Chicago to labor on the Pacific Coast for the next year in the cause of Christ in such manner as he may deem advisable." Moody made no commitment then, but this was the beginning of a contact with the great evangelist which was to be of vital significance to the San Francisco Y just ten years later.

Dr. Cox was much interested in street preaching and arranged for teams of speakers from the Association and the Ministerial Union to hold meetings Sunday after Sunday. In 1874 Cox reported:

Religious services and street preaching have been held nearly every Sabbath, in different parts of the city, requiring an average of four to five sermons each day, or about 250 sermons every year.

These meetings are attended by thousands; and, in favourable circumstances, one congregation will number from three to six and even seven hundred persons. Many instances of reformation have come to our knowledge.

The churches cooperated in furnishing thousands of copies of religious papers and tracts for free distribution. On October 10, 1878, Cox reported to the Board of Managers that "His proposal for holding the Sabbath Street Services in our Hall during the rainy weather met with universal approval by his congregation."

B. E. Lloyd in his *Lights and Shades of San Francisco*, published in 1876, gives following description of street preaching in that city:

Scarce a Sunday passes in San Francisco, without the regular street preaching. On Sacramento Street near Leidersdorff, in front of the What Cheer House, there is always on Sundays, a large throng of idlers, who either do not care to attend church or have not the courage to enter a fashionable "house of God," in their shabby attire. This, therefore, is a favorite corner for the street preacher, and at the usual hour for religious services on Sunday, he is promptly on the ground.

Here the Y had been conducting street services with commendable consistency ever since the early spring of 1865. Lloyd gives a description of one of the most familiar of the street preachers, which may have been of Dr. Cox, as follows:

Of these, "Old Orthodox," as he is familiarly called by his congregation, usually devotes the hour between ten and eleven to his sermon.

Without a word of warning, he mounts a box in the middle of the street, and begins his lecture. He is a man of fine physique, good voice, and in his talks shows a culture as well as research. . . . He upholds no sect, advocates no creed, nor preaches any doctrine, save that of "Christ, and Him crucified." He appeals to the heart, is profuse in illustrations, and strikes at crime and vice in all its forms.

As many of his hearers are of that class who are disposed to be vicious and intemperate, he dwells at length on the evils resulting from such sins. He does not frighten his audience away by calling upon them for contributions or aid, but makes them feel that not only is "salvation free to you and me," but his lectures also. At the close of his sermon he distributes free, numerous religious papers and tracts, for which there is usually a great rush by the crowd, in the confusion of which he disappears.<sup>3</sup>

Occasionally the San Francisco Y was able to book some outstanding speaker when one of the larger city churches or even the Grand Opera House would be secured in order to accommodate the crowd. Such was the case when the famed Henry Ward Beecher spoke at a special "Divine Service" Sunday morning, September 1, 1878, in the Grand Opera House.

## OTHER PROJECTS

In addition to these major activities which ministered directly to the physical, mental, or spiritual aspects of life, the Y sponsored several other projects which reveal the continued concern of the Association in the practical application of the Gospel to everyday life. The Association continued during these years under review to send its members into prisons, hospitals, boarding clubs, and ships to distribute Christian literature, preach the Gospel, and extend invitations to young men to join the organization. In the president's report for 1872, we read:

We have visited the City and County Hospital, and Jail, and also the U.S. Marine Hospital, Alcatraz Island, and upwards of 300 vessels in the harbor, often giving religious counsel and advice, and gratuitously distributing 22,000 religious papers and periodicals.

The Post Office Committee, first organized in 1868 and to which reference has already been made, reported again to the Board of Managers in February 1870 saying that it had ". . . forwarded during the past five months 3,969 letters at a cost of \$112.66 and received in acknowledgment of such letters sent the sum of \$97.18." In the President's report to the annual meeting of 1872, we find that this project of supplying additional postage when needed and of forwarding these letters was still being carried on. On all such letters the Y was still attaching a statement explaining the project and inviting the receiver to return the cost of the extra postage. About one in thirty responded. "This one-thirtieth in gratefulness," said President Freeman, "for the act performed by us, sends sufficient stamps or money to pay for the delinquent twenty-nine, and almost enough to pay the Post Office bills of the Association." During the preceding year, the Y had forwarded 7,541 letters—a vivid commentary on the transitory nature of the city's population. Freeman added:

We have sometimes been imposed upon by sharp and dishonest advertisers who thought they had discovered a means of reaching the public without the necessary u.s. investment. We have therefore discontinued the delivery of city drop letters. Some persons have ridiculed this branch of our self imposed work affecting to see in it a pious dodge to extort money from the unfortunate victims of others' mistakes. But the good accomplished in restoring lost communication between friends and the benefit accruing often to business men, who express sentiments other than charging us with merely mercenary motives, convince us it is our duty to continue this work.

The Y promoted temperance. On December 11, 1879, Dr. Cox reported to the Association that "the Gospel Temperance meetings held on Saturday afternoons were largely attended and very successful." The minutes of the annual meeting held on August 2, 1880, included the following:

The coffee saloon formerly conducted by the Temperance people had been surrendered to this Association, renovated and otherwise placed in good order and was paying its way and becoming a source of revenue to the Association.

The "coffee saloon" was later known as the coffee shop and continues to be a part of the Y's program.

The San Francisco Y took a leading part in calling the first convention of the Young Men Christian Associations of the Pacific Coast. As early as April 10, 1868, H. L. Chamberlain "gave notice that he should, at the next meeting, move that a Convention of all Young Men's Christian Associations of this State be held in October 1868." Here again California was manifesting the pioneer spirit because the first permanent state organization of this kind to be established in the nation was that in Connecticut in May 1867.<sup>4</sup> Vermont and Ohio formed similar organizations soon afterwards in the same year. Chamberlain's suggestion was broadened to include Associations from other Pacific Coast states. The convention met in San Francisco on May 13-14, 1869. Reports were given by Associations from San Francisco, Sacramento, and San Jose in California, and from Portland, Oregon. The *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention* were published in San Francisco in 1869 in pamphlet form.<sup>5</sup> Before adjourning, the convention voted to meet the following year but there is no record of this having been done. The state committee was organized in 1881 when Secretary McCoy assumed the leadership of the San Francisco Association.

An incidental item of interest may be found in a notation made by Secretary Richard R. Perkins in 1940 to the effect that the Dental School of the University of California was started in the Y building at 232 Sutter Street in 1871.

#### THE CHINESE Y.M.C.A.

One of the actions taken by the first annual convention of Y.M.C.A.s which met in San Francisco in May 1869 was to recommend the establishment of schools to teach English to the Chinese in San Francisco. At the August 1869 meeting of the Board of Managers of the San Francisco Y, a committee was appointed to initiate such a project. The committee reported on the 16th of that month recommending that such a school be held in one of the rooms of the Association on Sunday mornings from 9:30 to 10:30 o'clock. Records fail to tell us how successful or how long this school was conducted.

A Chinese Young Men's Christian Association was organized by the Presbyterian Mission in Chinatown in 1870. The preamble of the constitution adopted at the time of organization contains the following quaint and oriental wording:

As doctrine emanated from Heaven, therefore holy men honor Heaven, and superior men fear Heaven. Emperors and kings are ordained of Heaven. Nothing whatever is able to contradict doctrine or successfully oppose Heaven.

But alas, usages have ruined men's hearts, so that they are not as in olden time; and they now long for power, lust and riches. . . . If it had not been that the true God loved the world, and sent His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to make known the heavenly doctrine, and the Holy Spirit to change men's hearts, the wide world would be living as in a dream, and perish forever.

Therefore we gather ourselves together and organize this Association, that we might inform each other about the true doctrine, establish ourselves to act according to the truth, and not fall into crooked ways; but be loyal to our superiors, dutiful to our parents, and walk in the right path. Though it is not easy to do this, yet, as young men, we ought to learn. For mutual aid, we ought to be joined together as loving friends, so as to exhort each other more earnestly, and polish each other continually by contact. This is what we deeply expect by this Association.

The first rule explained the meaning of the name:

The purpose of this Association being to exhort each other to do good, learn the doctrine of Jesus Christ's Gospel, love one another, and help each other to avoid temptation; therefore we call it *Ki-Tuk Yau Hok Ching To Ui* — "Young Christians Learning Upright Doctrine Society." We ought exceedingly to think upon this name, and reflect on its great meaning.<sup>6</sup>

Since gambling was such a common practice among the Chinese, the newly organized Y.M.C.A. adopted the following rule among others: "No playing of dominoes or chess is allowed, as such games tend to cause trouble." Discipline was strict. If a member was suspended and then repented, he could be restored to membership, but if he were suspended a second time, "he never can become a member again."

According to B. E. Loyd in his *Lights and Shades in San Francisco*, published in 1876, the Chinese Y then had a membership of about 500 and had several branches outside of San Francisco. Lloyd, quoting Dr. A. W. Loomis who was then a Presbyterian missionary serving in San Francisco, wrote:



This association continues to maintain a vigorous life. It has members and branch associations widely scattered over the country. Their constitution contains a very good creed, and their rules are wholesome and well enforced. Their rooms are a pleasant resort, and at least three times each week resound with the voices of devout praise and earnest supplication. During the holidays, they hold meetings in rotation with their brethren of other missions, and also go out upon the street to sing and exhort.<sup>7</sup>

These denominational Y.M.C.A.s, among whom the Presbyterians appear to have been the most active, continued for over forty years.

### THE TESTIMONY OF AN OBSERVER

The Presbyterian weekly, the *Occident*, carried in its January 28, 1871, issue a letter signed "Observer" in which the following account is given regarding the activities of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A.:

We dropped in, one evening last week, to the rooms of the Y.M.C. Association, and found it to be the evening of their monthly social and literary meeting. We were the more rejoiced at this, as our object had been to get an answer, if possible, to a question made not long since by an eminent divine of this city, from his pulpit, "What is the Y.M.C. Association doing? Can anybody tell?" We found about four hundred young men and women — not the "hoary-headed young Christians" sometimes alluded to as constituting the rank and file of this institution, but *young men* and *young women* gathered in the lecture room and ready for anything that promised an evening's entertainment. . . .

I found members who had but recently arrived in the city, many more who had never before visited the rooms of the Association, and were surprised, like myself, to find so pleasant a resort provided, free, for the stranger as well as for those "to the manor born."

The "Observer" was impressed with the nature and extent of the relief work being carried on for the young men newly arrived in the city who were looking for work and who were sometimes stranded and without funds. Of these activities, he wrote:

Many a young man, full of hope and scant of money, fails to find the employment he so fondly expected, and ere long he is "dead broke." To put such in the way of employment, by advice and a helping hand, is the best of all deeds of charity. Thousands of lodgings have been given to such since occupying the new building on Sutter Street; often, this season, I was informed by the librarian, reaching as high as twelve a night. Added to this is the



constant request of anxious parents, far away, to hunt up unheard-from sons, and if need be, give a helping hand. Do the churches attempt to do the work of this Association? No!

According to another report which appeared in the *Occident* for March 2, 1871, "Over seven hundred lodgings have been given to houseless searchers after employment during the last quarter." The Y also during the same time had given fifty-two meals to young men who did not have money for food.

These are but some of the main accomplishments of the San Francisco Y during the years 1868-81. Patterns of activity were established which were followed for decades to come.

### MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCES

As would be expected, the attraction of a new building and the enlarged program of activities resulted in an immediate increase of members. The printed *Annual Report* for 1869 shows that, for the first time since its initial organization, the San Francisco Y made some drastic changes in its constitution. Active membership was still limited to those who belonged to an Evangelical Church. Only Active and Life members could vote or hold office. Non-members of an Evangelical Church could become Associate members. The membership fees of Active and Associate members were set at \$1.50 a quarter "or six dollars annually in advance." Women were permitted to join as auxiliary members upon the payment of an annual fee of \$2.00.

Reporting to the 1869 annual meeting, President Brooks said that during the preceding year 115 new members had been received which had brought the "whole number of members to date to 1441."<sup>8</sup> The 1872 report listed 924 names of whom 338 had joined the preceding year. However, in 1875 the membership declined to 701 and to about 600 in 1881.

Membership dues by no means met the increased costs attached to running a larger program and maintaining a bigger building. The Association entered the new building in the fall of 1868 with an indebtedness of over \$57,000. From time to time temporary loans had to be negotiated to pay necessary running expenses. On June 15, 1871, the Board of Managers reluctantly voted to accept a loan of \$70,000 with interest at nine per cent per annum. From time to time festivals were still held to bring in some extra money, but these were not always successful. The festival held in 1871, for instance, netted \$450 but the expenses were \$550. In 1873 the Y received an inheritance of \$1,500 from the estate of G. C. Johnson. In appreciation the board elected the widow an honorary member of the Association. Appeals were made to the Protestant churches of the city for collections but the response was small.

During the latter part of the 1870s, the minutes of the Board of

Managers show how the heavy indebtedness was worrying them. The annual meeting of 1878 approved the renewal of a mortgage for \$75,000 for five years at 8 per cent interest. The whole program of the Y was restricted and rumors began to circulate that the Y might lose its building. The membership began to decline. The churches became critical of Dr. Cox and some were asking for his resignation. A few who realized the grave danger the Y was facing began to bestir themselves. The following item from the minutes of the Board of Managers for March 13, 1879, tells of what one woman did:

"The President also reported the efforts of a lady, a member of Dr. Stone's Church, to raise the debt of the Association and that she had already secured \$2,000 in subscriptions conditioned in the debt being extinguished." Nothing more was heard of this praiseworthy effort. The \$2,000 was far short of the \$80,000 needed.

A year and more passed with the gloom becoming darker. Something had to be done. On September 9, 1880, the Board of Managers held a meeting with some of the leading Protestant pastors of the city. A committee was appointed consisting of three pastors and two members of the board to study the situation and "ascertain whether the differences between the Association and the churches be real or imaginery." The findings of the committee are not recorded but judging from other contemporary events, the conviction was growing that there had to be a thorough change of administration and of program at the Y before public confidence could be restored.

### THE COMING OF DWIGHT L. MOODY

Into this critical situation stepped the great evangelist, Dwight L. Moody. To him must go the credit of saving the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. during these dark days when its very existence was hanging in the balance. Mention has already been made of Moody's visit to San Francisco in May 1871 at which time he was invited to conduct a series of evangelistic meetings on the Pacific Coast. Again in November 1878 the Board of Managers voted to ask Moody and his singer, Ira Sankey, "to visit this city as soon as possible." The Ministerial Union of the city endorsed the invitation. Finally, arrangements were made for the two to spend the winter of 1880-81 in San Francisco. Moody and Sankey arrived in the city on November 10th.

Shortly after Moody's arrival, he met with a group of men who were deeply concerned about the fate of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. Moody's interest in the whole Y movement was well known. He had served as President of the Chicago Association from 1865-71. The full story of what happened behind the scenes may never be known. Certain assumptions, however, may be drawn from the minutes of a special meeting of the Board of Managers held on April 6, 1881. From these we learn that Moody, after a thorough survey of the situation, called

for a complete replacement of leadership, a rewriting of the constitution, and payment of all indebtedness if the San Francisco Y were to survive. Moody promised to raise the needed funds if his conditions were met. There was no alternative. The friends of the Association either had to accept Moody's aid upon his terms or let the Y close its doors.

If there were any opposition to Moody's drastic demand that all members of the board resign, we have no record. As far as the official records reveal, all cooperated. Moody picked out in advance of the meeting of April 6, 1881, undoubtedly with the advice of local leaders who were deeply concerned over the fate of the Y, a new slate of officers to replace the old. Nine were selected and each consented to serve. Only two of these nine were then members. Before the other seven could be elected to the board, they first had to join the Association.

All of the members of the out-going Board of Managers were present at the April 6th meeting except one, and his resignation was at hand in writing. Dr. Cox, the chaplain, was also present "upon invitation", and the nine who had been selected to take over the new leadership. The first order to business was to vote into the membership of the Association the following: "Prentiss Selby, R. H. McDonald, R. B. Forman, W. B. Parsons, Alex. Guthrie, Geo. W. Gibbs, H. W. Severance, John W. Butler, and H. C. Titcomb." The Minutes read:

Mr. Moody stated that as active measures were about being inaugurated for the liquidation of the debt upon the property, he would advise the present officers to resign and a new Board to be at once elected. This was heartily concurred in by the officers present, and the following members of the Board comprising all those present at once tendered their resignations which were accepted. . . .

Each resignation was acted upon separately and his successor was immediately elected. Thus the new personnel were gradually merged with the old until the transition was complete. Legally there had been no break in the continuity of the Board. A. B. Forbes was chosen as the new president and R. B. Forman, vice-president. All of the new members, listed above, were elected to the board except R. H. McDonald and George W. Gibbs. The name of the latter deserves to be enshrined with special honor in the annals of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. because of his long service and liberal support through many difficult years. Gibbs became president of the board in 1883 and served in this capacity until 1895. He was Senior Warden in Grace Cathedral since 1860. Of the membership of the new board elected at this April 1881 meeting, only Forbes and Benchley were formerly members of the Association.

The newly constituted Board of Managers then turned its attention

to the case of Dr. Cox. His resignation was accepted, and he was allowed compensation of \$25.00 a month to August 1st of that year. On April 8th, two days later, another special meeting of the board was held at which steps were taken to set up a holding corporation known as the Board of Trustees. Moody wanted an extra precaution taken so that the Y could not be plunged again into debt. This Board of Trustees was incorporated for a fifty-year period on April 18, 1881. It was authorized to be "the custodians of all property, real and otherwise, that is at present owned by the Corporation or that may be in any manner acquired in the future." A new constitution was approved which introduced some important changes. The old provision of selecting members of the Board of Managers (later called Board of Directors) from the different Protestant churches was abandoned. The new board was to consist of eighteen members to be elected by the Active members of the Association and a rotation plan for a three-year term was adopted. Active memberships were limited to men, eighteen years or older, who were members in good standing of an Evangelical church. The word "Evangelical" was taken as defined by the International Convention which met at Portland, Maine, in 1869. Mention will be made later of this so-called "Evangelical test." Fees were set at \$12.00 a year for active and associate members. Renewals were given a special rate of \$10.00 a year if paid within thirty days after the expiration of their former membership. Nothing was said about women becoming auxiliary members, so it may be assumed that this provision was dropped. Boys, between the ages of twelve and eighteen, were allowed to become members of the Junior Department. A final provision in the section of the new constitution dealing with membership read: "The Members of the Board of Trustees are not required to be members of the Association."

The new constitution called for a General Secretary to be employed by the Board of Directors. This provision was undoubtedly based upon the experience of other Associations in the East where professional leadership had already proved its worth. An item in the minutes of the directors for April 18th reads: ". . . that they had extended a call to Mr. McCoy of Lowell, Massachusetts, to become General Secretary at a salary of \$200 per month . . . and that he be allowed an assistant secretary." This is the first reference in the official records of the San Francisco Y to Henry James McCoy who arrived on August 5, 1881, and who served the Y in some capacity until his death in 1921. Much will be said about the services of this dynamic and resourceful secretary who served the San Francisco Association for about forty years.

The new constitution changed the date of the annual meeting from August to the second Monday in January. The old system of committees was completely eliminated and a new division of program activ-

ities outlined. A Religious Work Committee, with a number of sub-committees, took charge of all religious activities. A Committee on Boys Work was appointed to head up a new development in the Y's program. A Social Committee was charged with the conducting of "all social functions for the entertainment of members and friends."

Special mention should be made of Judge E. D. Sawyer, a member of the out-going board, who continued serving as the Y's legal advisor entirely without compensation from January 1, 1881, until his death in 1902.

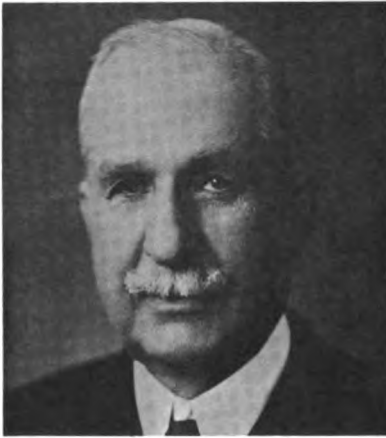
With all of the conditions outlined for the revitalizing of the San Francisco Y fulfilled, Moody was ready to proceed with the financial campaign. The International Committee of the Y.M.C.A., with headquarters in New York, realizing the strategic and desperate needs of the San Francisco Association, made available the services of Thomas K. Cree for the campaign. Moody himself gave \$10,000 and raised an additional \$6,300 from eastern friends, including a \$1,000 gift from Cyrus McCormick of Chicago. The International Committee raised \$10,000 from several wealthy givers in New York City, including Morris K. Jesup, William E. Dodge, and Cornelius Vanderbilt. Four prominent firms of San Francisco donated \$18,160. Eight business men of the city, each giving at least \$1,000 gave a total of \$20,510. This number included R. H. McDonald who contributed \$6,000 and George W. Gibbs, \$2,660. Members and friends of the First Congregational Church responded with \$1,118. Another group of eighty-four people made donations varying from \$100 to \$600. Another group of about 150 contributors made individual contributions of less than \$100. The total amount needed to cancel a debt of \$83,886.21 was raised by June 22nd. On that date the Board of Directors met and passed a resolution of thanks to Moody both for the generous gift that he made and also for the guidance he had given in the reorganization of the Association.

The annual report of 1882 summarizes the accomplishments of this year of transition:

One year ago a debt of over \$83,000 bound us with chains of steel, crushing out the ambitions, the energies – almost the hope of your members, and obstructing most seriously the work of this institution. The days were then dark, the outlook discouraging and hope seemed dead! It was a time in the history of this institution 'that tried the hearts' of its members and well wishers.

The annual meeting of August 1881 marked the end of one era and the beginning of another in the history of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. The Association had been completely reorganized; a new constitution had been adopted; all indebtedness had been paid; and upon Moody's recommendation Henry J. McCoy had been called to be the first General Secretary. A new day had dawned.

**GENERAL SECRETARIES**



**HENRY J. MCCOY**  
1881-1915



**LYMAN L. PIERCE**  
1915-1919

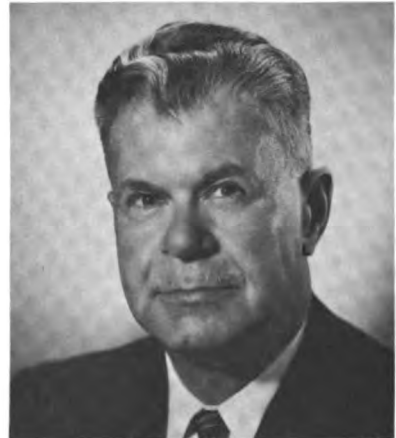


**RICHARD R. PERKINS**

1919-1942



**HAROLD A. WAGNER**  
1942-1946



**ROY SORENSON**  
1946-

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## At Sutter Street after McCoy, 1881-1894

Henry J. McCoy was a big man. He stood over six feet in height and weighed more than two hundred pounds. He loved people and numbered by the hundreds friends who in turn respected and loved him. McCoy was an intensely practical man, especially in his religious convictions. To him Christianity was not just a Sunday exercise but rather a seven-day-a-week concern. As an administrator, he excelled. He magnified his task and threw himself into his work without reserve. A friend said of him: "He was gifted with that type of personality which enabled him to go to rich men and ask for money and make them feel that he was doing them a favor." C. Howard Hopkins, in his *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America*, refers to McCoy as "a dynamic secretary," and "the aggressive San Francisco secretary." This was the man whom the San Francisco Y had the good fortune to have as its General Secretary for over thirty years beginning August 5, 1881.

McCoy's period of service is divided into three parts by two big events. The first was the opening of the new building in 1894 at Mason and Ellis Streets and the second was the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906. This chapter covers the work of the Y at Sutter Street after McCoy's arrival and thus includes the first period of his service.

Two capable men served as president of the Y during these years, 1881-94, A. B. Forbes, who was elected in April 1881 and served until October 1883, and George W. Gibbs, whose term ran from October 1883 to the end of 1894. Among those who served on the Board of Directors during this period was the famous one-armed general, O. O. Howard, of Civil War fame. General Howard conducted the campaign against Chief Joseph of the Nez Perces in 1877. From 1886-88 Howard was in command of the Department of the Pacific with headquarters at the Presidio in San Francisco. His deep interest in Christian work was well known. He was elected to the Y's Board of Directors on September 16, 1886; was made vice-president on January 26th of the following year; and served until November 1888. Upon his resignation the board passed a resolution thanking him for his "active and influential interest in the work of the Association and the cause of Christianity."

### THE LADIES' CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Even before the debt of about \$84,000 had been raised, Thomas K. Cree, who was Moody's right-hand assistant during the financial cam-

paign, took steps to raise additional funds for the renovation and re-furnishing of the building. Since all of the male friends of the Association had been or were to be approached during the campaign, Cree found it advisable to direct his pleas for further aid to the women. Sometime in March 1881, Cree called a meeting of interested women, several of whom were the wives of the directors, and outlined his plan. As a result the Ladies' Central Committee of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. was formed. This organization remained active for about twenty years. On January 15, 1901, another women's group was organized called the Woman's Auxiliary. The records do not clearly indicate whether the new organization was a continuation of the former Ladies' Central Committee or whether it represented an entirely new effort on the part of women to help the Y.

Within a few months after its organization, the Ladies' Central Committee had raised \$2,500 for the renovation and re-furnishing of the Y building. At the time McCoy took over his duties in August 1881, the building was described as being "handsomely furnished." The women organized committees on Rooms, Flowers, Social Gatherings and Receptions, Gospel Work, Hospital Work, and Work among Boys. With the exception of June and July, the women held monthly meetings. All of their activities were under the direction of the Board of Directors in whose minutes we find repeated references to the "invaluable" and "indispensable" services being rendered by the women.

Within a few months after McCoy's arrival, the minutes of the board mentions a request from the women for the installation of a sink adjacent to the library rooms so that they could have facilities to serve refreshments for social events. Later they purchased a piano for the parlor. The women's Committee on Work Among Boys initiated this phase of the present program of the Y which is now such an important part of its work. A Boys Society was organized in May 1881 which had 200 members by the end of the year. Meetings were held on the first Saturday of every month "when an entertainment of some kind is given, while at the same time they are instructed in moral and religious duties." According to McCoy in his report before the annual meeting of 1883, all of this work was under the direction of the women. He said that the members of the Boys Club were asked to sign the following pledge at the time of joining:

I solemnly promise to abstain from the use of all intoxicating liquors, except as medicine, from the use of tobacco in every form, from all profanity and vulgarity, and also promise to honor and obey my parents. By God's help, I will keep the above pledge inviolate.

On Thanksgiving Day 1881 the women gave a dinner to "nearly 300 poor boys," most if not all of whom were newsboys. This proved to be such a successful project that it was repeated in 1882 when some five

hundred were fed. "For two hours previous to the time appointed for the dinner," reported McCoy to the following annual meeting, "the boys gathered in front of the building in such numbers as to completely block the sidewalk." Five hundred boys were served in 1883 and 550 in 1884.

In 1884 the women served a Christmas dinner to the young men members of the Association who were away from home. Mrs. Leland Stanford sent her check for one hundred dollars to help with the expenses. McCoy reported that 130 responded. In the meantime the boys work had become too large for the women to handle so it was turned over to the men. The Thanksgiving Day dinner for boys was given up. Instead such a dinner was held for the young-men members of the Y who were away from home. This became one of the highlights in the Association's year. In 1886 about 150 young men were guests at the Thanksgiving Day dinner.

Speaking before the 1887 annual meeting, McCoy said:

There is no city of its size in the world where there are more young men away from home and living in lodging houses, than are found in this city. It is estimated that there are nearly 60,000 young men in San Francisco between 16 and 40 years of age, a very large per cent of whom are residing here temporarily.

Two years later McCoy, addressing another annual meeting, estimated that there were then 65,000 young men "between sixteen and thirty-five years of age" in San Francisco and repeated his belief that "there are more young men away from home in this city than in any other place of its size in the world." Among the 150 who attended the Thanksgiving Day dinner in 1887 were representatives of sixteen nationalities and twenty-two states. The women continued sponsoring these dinners all through the period under review in this chapter.

The important part played by the women in the program activities of the Y, all on a volunteer basis, makes it difficult for us of this generation to understand why any person should then question the propriety of the Y securing the services of a young woman stenographer. But such was the case. On April 15, 1886, McCoy reported to the board regarding the advisability of hiring "a young lady stenographer." The record reads:

He did not wish to employ her permanently unless the Board sanctioned it. Personally he could see no objection to a young lady being employed in the office, as she was not here in the evenings. . . .

[Also] . . . she was much more proficient in that position than the young man, and that she gave eminent satisfaction and did the work at a very much less expense than the young man.

One member of the Board expressed himself to the effect that ". . . typewriting was the legitimate work of young ladies and

thought they ought to be allowed a chance of making their way in the world as well as young men." The young lady was hired. Incidentally, the San Francisco Y was keeping abreast of modern developments by having a typewriter at such an early date.

### AN EXPANDING PROGRAM

The change in the Y's administration brought new life into the Association. For a time many of the former activities carried on as usual, with an increase of attendance. But when the work of the thirteen years, 1881 to 1894, is reviewed, a gradual shift of emphasis is noted. McCoy himself was too deeply religious to neglect the spiritual aspects of the Y's program. In his report for the year 1892, he said: "Our spiritual work is among the best in the country, and the attendance upon this department alone has been over 47,000 during the year." But even in that department, there came a gradual change of program. Street preaching, as a sponsored activity of the Y, was given up. The last reference to the open-air meetings in front of What Cheer House is found in McCoy's first report given before the 1882 annual meeting. The noon-day prayer meetings, which averaged 160 for twenty-six days during September 1881, gradually declined in numbers. In 1882 the average attendance was 125; in 1883, this fell to 60; and in 1886, the average was around 50. Soon afterwards these meetings were discontinued. The Sunday afternoon preaching service continued to be popular and, under McCoy, added emphasis was given to the Bible classes.

The most noticeable growth came in the field of education and physical activities. In order to appreciate the diversity and extent of the Y's program, McCoy's report for September 1881 is here given. The statistics indicate the number of meetings held, the average and the total attendance.

26 Noon-day Meeting	Average 160	4,160
4 Preaching Services	Average 435	1,740
4 Testimony Meetings	Average 185	740
3 Social Song Services	Average 155	465
5 Gospel Meetings	Average 186	930
4 Bible & Training Classes	Average 16	64
30 Day Reading Room	Average 108	3,240
26 Day Gymnasium	Average 91	2,366
4 Open Dir. Meetings	Average 260	940
1 Book Reception		550
1 Young Men's Prayer Meeting		24
1 Sunday School Institute		225
Strangers visiting building		580
Inquiries to all meetings		180
	Grand total	16,206

Given away – 25 Lodgings – 70 Meals – 8640 pages religious reading matter – 300 books to Seamen's Bethel – 8000 invitations to meetings by Yoke fellows and 16 articles clothing to the needy – 8 calls were made on the sick – employment obtained for 10 young men – 8 pulpit supplies furnished – 54 new members joined during the month – 360 additions to the library were received – 3 anniversaries attended – 1 meeting of the Ladies Central Committee – 1 of Board of Managers – 1 of the Association – 1475 letters and 125 postal cards sent out.

We are happy to state that the Association is successful in its legitimate work of reaching young men, as our books will show that seventy per cent of our Grand Total were men.

A change of policy is noted in regard to memberships. No longer were the names of applicants voted on by the governing board or by the Association. All who wished to join and who qualified simply paid the required fee and a membership card was issued. Sometime shortly after McCoy's arrival the annual dues were fixed at \$5.00. Under his aggressive leadership, the number of members rapidly increased. During the first five months after McCoy's arrival, 389 new members were received bringing the total to 1001 by December 31, 1881. This was more than a fifty per cent increase. The total continued to grow. By January 1, 1885, the Y boasted having 1,200 members and by January 1, 1889, the number had risen to 1,600. By the end of 1894, the crowded conditions existing in the building at 232 Sutter Street automatically kept the membership limited. Many who would have joined refrained from doing so. Throughout this period there continued to be a heavy turn-over. Reporting to the 1883 annual meeting, McCoy said:

There has been a steady increase in membership during the past year, notwithstanding the fact that fully one-half of those who joined last year have left the city. We doubt if there is another city on the continent in which the young men are so constantly changing as they do in this.

One of the projects initiated by McCoy was an Employment Bureau. From time to time in previous years the Y had assisted young men in finding work, but now such endeavors were placed on a systematic basis. The board authorized the new venture at its November 1881 meeting and the "Free Employment Bureau" became an indispensable part of the Y's program. Reporting to the annual meeting of 1882, McCoy said that eighty young men had found employment to that time. He added: "We believe that unemployed young men are more apt to turn their feet in the ways of sin, as they become home-sick and discouraged, and in consequence are easily led astray. We are happy to say this afternoon, that not a few of these young men have been led



to accept the Saviour through the influence of the Employment department."

A year later McCoy reported: "There is not a day when we have not an average of six or twelve young men applying to us, many of whom are competent to enter almost any line of business." In April 1884 the Employment Bureau was made a department of the Association and a secretary, M. M. Meyers, was secured to direct its affairs. Speaking before the annual meeting of 1886, McCoy boasted that the new department "has far exceeded in its legitimate work the most sanguine expectations of its friends." During 1887, nearly 800 applied for work through this department and positions were found for 415. In 1892 the department received 1,489 applications for work and placed 648. Here, in what might be considered by some to be nothing more than cold statistics, may be read the heart-warming story of how the Y reached out the helping hand to hundreds of young men who found themselves in a strange city without employment, and perhaps home-sick and disheartened.

An interesting aspect of the Y's work during these years which affected membership, employment, and finances was the plan of having a business establishment pay the membership fee of all of its employees who wished to join the Association. The most liberal of the business firms of San Francisco which entered into this plan was Wells Fargo & Company which made the necessary contribution from 1882 through 1902. In 1885 this Company paid the membership fee for fifty of its employees, and by 1893 the number had risen to 129. Other business establishments were induced to follow this example. One reason for this happy arrangement lay in the fact that the president of Wells Fargo was J. J. Valentine, an active member of the board and its president from 1895 to 1899. A notation is found in the minutes of the board for November 16, 1903 which reads "that the non-renewal of the Wells Fargo & Co. membership tickets for their employees has lost to us \$2000."

Another activity initiated by McCoy was the night school which began November 1, 1881, and which had a weekly attendance of 355 in the following classes, "Spanish, French, Elocution, Book-keeping, Vocal Music, and Photography," by the end of the year. In each of his subsequent annual reports, McCoy commented on the progress of the school. This was the first night school to be established in San Francisco and was the beginning of the present Golden Gate College. By 1883 the average attendance was about 1,100 per month. Other subjects were added as new needs were recognized as classes in German, shorthand, English, mechanical drawing, and architecture.

The gymnasium and the classes in physical culture continued to be popular with the young men. Basketball, which was first "invented" by the Y.M.C.A. in 1891, was still unknown in San Francisco. There-



fore the gymnasium of the Y at Sutter Street, following the trend of the times, placed great emphasis on exercises designed to build muscles as swinging Indian clubs, lifting weights, using the parallel bars, leaping in mid-air from one swinging ring to another, and hanging from the trapeze. Classes, especially in dumb-bell exercises, were popular and great skill was often developed under a good instructor in coordinated group drills. A young man of the 1880's would be as bewildered in watching a present day basketball game as a lad of this generation would be if he were put on a gymnasium floor of seventy years ago and be given the equipment of that day, once thought so essential but now considered obsolete. And if the young man of today were obliged to wear the tight fitting gym suits of yesterday, which covered most of the body from the feet to the neck, he would indeed feel abused.

McCoy's statistics tell the story of the popularity of this department of the Y's work. In his report for September 1881, he said that the gymnasium had been open twenty-six days of that month with an average attendance of ninety-one, thus giving a total for the month of 2,366. During 1888, a total of 42,312 had used the gym, and by 1890 the number had risen to 55,310.

The Board of Directors voted on February 21, 1882, to employ "a skillful instructor in gymnastics if possible at a salary of seventy dollars per month," but if no one could be secured at such a salary, then McCoy was authorized "to pay up to \$1000 per annum." A record in the minutes of the directors for December 20, 1888, reveals that there was some criticism of the person then serving as gymnasium instructor. The minutes reads: "One gentleman present raised the point that — — influence was not the best on the young men of the Gymnasium; and that he was now conducting a Dancing Academy, and some of the young men had been induced to neglect their religious duties for the purpose of attending the dancing classes."

During the first part of 1883, the bowling alley in the basement was again put into condition. By April of that year, McCoy reported that an average of fifty people were using the alley each day it was open. This report was followed by "an informal discussion . . . in regard to the legitimacy of the bowling alley as an adjunct of association work." The pool and billiard tables were not yet on the accepted list in Associations throughout the country but bowling had been generally approved. The minute in the record book states that after some discussion ". . . it met with the hearty approval of all."

But alas for the art of bowling, the crowded conditions in the Y on Sutter Street, plus the imperative demand for more space for bathing facilities, necessitated the conversion of the bowling alley into a bath hall during the latter part of 1886. The Y on Sutter Street did not have a pool. Many of the young men who lived in boarding houses

found that bathing facilities in those houses were either entirely lacking or most inadequate. In February 1883 the directors of the Y were told that: "Three hot and cold tub baths have been fitted up in the gymnasium." Before the end of the year, as many as twenty a day were using these facilities. A total of 482 baths were reported for December 1883. By April 1886 the need for more bathing facilities was so pressing that McCoy found it necessary to close the bowling alley and use the space for more bath rooms. McCoy, reporting before the annual meeting of 1887, proudly claimed that the Y's bathing facilities were among the finest in the city. Yet within another three years these were inadequate. By 1890 the program of activities scheduled for the gymnasium was being seriously handicapped by the lack of sufficient bathing facilities. By 1892 the records show that an average of a thousand baths were being taken in the Y every month.

Closely linked with the Physical Department of the Y's program was the annual series of medical lectures to boys and men usually given by a well known doctor of the city. McCoy informed the Board at its March 1890 meeting that two such lectures had recently been given, each to an audience of about two hundred. Undoubtedly such lectures dealt with sex education although the word sex does not appear in the advertisements or reports of the gatherings. As will be mentioned later, the large number of houses of prostitution in San Francisco made such lectures all the more important.

The growing importance of boys work meant that some time had to be given to boys in the gymnasium. According to a printed notice of the hours for the different classes using the gymnasium in March 1882, the boys were free to use the room on Saturday afternoons and on Tuesday and Friday evenings. More evidence of the increasing attention being given to boys is to be found in the following action of the board taken on January 15, 1885: ". . . moved that in view of the fact that so many boys were joining the Association; that a room be fitted up expressly for their use on the upper floor of the Building to be known as the Boys Parlor, and to be fitted with games, suitable literature, etc. Unanimously carried."

Even though the Association was beginning to appreciate the importance of a strong boys department, yet no full-time boys secretary was secured until about 1900.

The electric light was introduced into the building in 1886, a feature much appreciated especially in the gymnasium and bath rooms. An interesting item appears in the records of the board for June 14, 1892, when the report was made that "the second Thursday evening of each month had been set aside as Ladies' night, when the young men would be at liberty to bring their lady friends to witness the class drills, etc." On September 22nd of the same year the board was told that "Many of our members having recently joined the Olympic Club,

some of our best athletes having left us for that purpose." The extremely crowded conditions existing in the Sutter Street building and the availability of newer and better facilities in the Olympic Club prompted many prospective members to wait "until the new building is erected."

In the meantime while the Association's program of activities in the Educational and Physical Departments was booming, most of the other aspects of the Y's work were also experiencing a steady growth. The library and reading room continued to be popular. During 1889, a total of sixty thousand had used these facilities. The annual report of 1890 commenting on this activity said: "Our Reading-Room continues to be largely patronized, and is attractive, airy and sunny, but greatly inadequate to the demands of the work."

A Lyceum and a Debating Society met on Saturday evenings. This gave an outlet for those who wished to improve themselves along literary lines. As opportunity provided, a number of well known lecturers were secured. On a few occasions, when the lecture hall at Sutter Street was too small, even though it could seat about 750, a larger place was rented. When the eloquent lecturer from Boston, Joseph Cook, appeared in San Francisco on November 5, 1882, under the auspices of the Y, the event was held in the Grand Opera House. Dr. Cook spoke on "The Religious Signs of the Times." He referred to those assembled as "The Pilgrim Fathers of the Pacific Slope." An example of his grandiloquent style may be seen in the opening part of his address:

Break off the spires of the Cathedral rocks in the Yosemite valley, and give them to me as the graver's tools, if I am to write in letters large and deep enough to express the sense of the truth, which should be said as to the opportunities and responsibilities of California in the family of nations.<sup>1</sup>

After referring to the fact that there were then some two million people in the United States living west of the Rocky Mountains, Dr. Cook stressed the importance of the responsibilities resting upon them as they built for the future. "Upon you," he said, "it rests . . . whether its history shall be a glorious or a shameful one." With a great stretch of his imagination, the lecturer prophesied a West Coast population of "ten million a hundred years hence." An indication of how far short he fell in his estimation of the population growth is to be seen in the U.S. Census returns for 1950. At that time the three coastal states of Washington, Oregon, and California, alone had about 14,500,000 residents. A pamphlet containing the address was published by the San Francisco Y in 1882.<sup>2</sup>

On September 3, 1885, the Y sponsored a lecture by the famous humorist of that day, Josh Billings. Tickets costing twenty-five, fifty,

and seventy-five cents, according to the location of the seats, were sold. The hall was filled and 200 turned away. A New Year's reception was inaugurated on January 1, 1844, when the staff was at home to members and friends of the Y. The resourceful McCoy, who was always dreaming up some new project, reported that the event "was a grand success, over 4,000 young men having visited the building." The attendance for the receptions held on the three following New Year's days continued at about this number.

A semi-monthly paper, called the *Messenger*, began publication in October 1883. This was designed to keep the growing membership informed regarding the program of activities at the Y. The subscription price began at 25c a year. By January 1, 1887, the original two-page folder had become a monthly publication of sixteen pages. Beginning with the October 27, 1898, issue, a new series began as a weekly under the name *Association News*. On February 1, 1913, the name was changed to *Men of San Francisco*. This continued to the end of December 1915. In addition to the above, other publications sponsored by some of the branches appeared from time to time. The best extant file of these periodicals is to be found in the historical library of National Headquarters in New York City.

The Y continued through these years to help strangers arriving in the city to find a suitable boarding house. A Boarding House Register was kept and, according to McCoy's report before the annual meeting of 1882, was in constant use. In his annual report for 1890, McCoy said that the Y had helped 286 young men during the preceding year find suitable boarding houses.

Beginning with 1889 special attention was given to the sailors through a committee of young men who began visiting the ships at the docks every Sunday morning to invite the sailors to attend church and the various Association meetings. Speaking before the 1890 annual meeting, McCoy reported: "Good results have been accomplished in this particular, and at nearly every service on Sabbath afternoon, at the Association Hall, more or less young men representing the seafaring life have been in attendance." A year later McCoy claimed that the work for the sailors had been continued and that some 386 ships had been visited during the year.

During these years under review, the members of the Association continued to call upon the sick. The *Annual Report* for 1886 records 216 such visits for the preceding year and by 1891 this number had risen to 1,200. Thousands of pages of reading matter, much of it supplied by various religious bodies, were given away. The following item from McCoy's report for 1890 is typical of many others which could be given: "500,000 pages of secular and religious reading-matter have been distributed at United States Army Posts, and on ship-board, hospitals, and in other places where such literature has been needed."

## THE STATE CONVENTIONS

The effort to organize the Associations of the Pacific Coast in 1868 into a regional body was premature. Following the arrival of McCoy in 1881, another attempt was made to bring representatives of western Associations together for a convention. This resulted in the holding of a California State Convention of Y.M.C.A.s in San Francisco on October 18-20, 1882. McCoy was elected president. He was re-elected the next year, and again in 1885, 1895, and in 1901 — thus serving five times in this capacity within twenty years. No other person was thus honored.

Six Associations were in existence in California in 1882 and one College Association. Dr. N. W. Lane was employed for six months in 1884 as the first State Secretary. Until the work was strong enough to warrant the employment of a full time secretary, McCoy carried on the work of this office in addition to his San Francisco duties. Beginning with December 30, 1885, the state committee was able to have a full time secretary and, as the work grew, others were added to the staff. By 1894 the number of Associations within the state had increased to thirty-three plus thirteen college Associations. Stiles Hall, costing \$32,000 including land, was presented to the Y.M. and Y.W. of the University of California in 1892 by Mrs. A. J. Stiles. In this rapidly expanding Association work throughout the state, the Y.M.C.A. of San Francisco by reason of its size and influence played an important role. The San Francisco Y was the "mother association" of the Pacific Coast. Much credit for this expanding work in California must be given to Henry J. McCoy whose continued zeal for the ever increasing effectiveness of the Association never lagged.<sup>3</sup>

The 27th Annual Convention of the International Y.M.C.A. was held in San Francisco May 11-15, 1887. The San Francisco Y was host. A unique item on the program was the dedication of a great redwood tree, known as the Y.M.C.A. Tree, in Felton Grove, Santa Cruz County. A bronze plaque was placed to commemorate the event.

## THE BEGINNINGS OF ASILOMAR

Beginning in 1886, the San Francisco Y sponsored an annual one-day excursion to Del Monte, Monterey, and Pacific Grove. An account of the excursion of 1889 is found in the July 31st issue of the *Occident* from which the following is taken:

On Thursday, July 18th, the Fourth Annual excursion of the Young Men's Christian Association, with literary exercises in the Assembly Hall, took place to Del Monte, Monterey, and Pacific Grove. A train of nine cars conveyed the excursionists to this delightful city by the sea, and the exercises of the day were most interesting and profitable.



The excursion train with 700 passengers left San Francisco at 7:00 a.m. The round trip fare was \$3.00. Judging from the report of the program held at Del Monte, the excursion might today be described as a retreat. Among the speakers was the Rev. Ervin S. Chapman, D.D., then pastor of the Brooklyn Presbyterian Church of Oakland, who "discoursed on the authenticity of the Bible." Dr. Chapman passed away at his home in Oakland on March 5, 1955, in his 105th year.

These excursions to the Monterey Peninsula were an attractive feature of the Y's program for many years. In 1890 the Y tried the experiment of having a two-day program. The *Occident* for July 2, 1896, announced plans for the eleventh annual excursion "to Hotel del Monte, Monterey and Pacific Grove." Reservations were limited to five hundred.

McCoy reported to the Board of Directors on May 21, 1891, that Dwight L. Moody had suggested that the San Francisco Y sponsor "a summer school for Bible study in California." Moody pointed out the fact that up to that time no such "institution had been inaugurated yet west of the Rocky Mountains," and assured the San Francisco Y that there would be no expense to the local Association if it would undertake the project. The board unanimously voted to accept the responsibility. Several years passed before a beginning was made. No record has been found of the first conference. In the annual report for 1897 is the following: "The Second Annual Summer School for Students in Bible Study and Training for Christian Work for the Pacific Coast was held at Pacific Grove, May 1897." There is undoubtedly a connection between the annual excursions to Monterey which began in 1886 and the establishment of the Asilomar Conferences which began ten years later.

Dwight L. Moody continued his deep interest in the work of the San Francisco Y. The official minutes contain many references to correspondence with him. In 1882 George W. Gibbs presented portraits of both Moody and Sankey to the San Francisco Association as a token of appreciation for what these men had done for the Y and the people of the city in the great revival of 1880-81 and also as a means of keeping their memories green among the ever-shifting membership. On March 23rd of that year, the board adopted the following:

Resolved, that the thanks of the Board of Directors of the Association be and are hereby tendered to Mr. Geo. W. Gibbs for the donation of Mr. Moody's portrait and that it be accepted with the guarantee on the part of the Board of Directors that it shall never be copied (except by Miss E. Williams) neither photographed, lithographed, nor sketched. . . .

The portrait of Sankey was accepted "on same terms as Mr.



Moody's." It may be assumed that the Miss E. Williams, referred to in the resolution, was the artist. Since her restrictions were strictly observed regarding the making of a copy, we of this generation do not know what the pictures were like as both were lost in the earthquake and fire of 1906.

### A SHIFTING EMPHASIS

Attention has already been drawn to the fact that a gradual shift of emphasis in the program of the San Francisco Association may be discerned during these years under review, 1881-94. When the Y was first founded, the major emphasis was upon the religious — as Bible study, church attendance, and personal conversion. But with the acquisition of buildings, more and more attention was given to the physical, intellectual, and social aspects of life. The changing situation in San Francisco was but typical of what was taking place in other Associations throughout the nation. Speaking before the annual meeting on January 4, 1886, McCoy summarized the statistical report under the three headings, giving the number of meetings held and the total attendance:

Religious	812 meetings	total	44,315
Secular	1,422 meetings	total	144,957
Association	8 meetings	total	3,028

Even though the number of young men attending secular activities was nearly three times that listed under the religious, yet the total of 44,315 for the latter is an impressive figure. These statistics become even more significant when it is remembered that the Y was reaching young men for the most part who were not being touched by the churches of the city. The whole policy of the Y in regard to its religious work was to supplement and not to compete with the activities of the churches.

Reporting to the Board of Directors on January 22, 1882, McCoy told of the receipt of a special gift of \$5,475 to be used "exclusively for legitimate evangelistic work" to be conducted in the city in conjunction with the evangelical churches. In his annual report for 1886, McCoy said: "The attendance upon the religious meetings has been large, and over five hundred have expressed desire to become Christians in our meetings during the past year." And in 1893, McCoy claimed: "Our spiritual work is among the best in the country, and the attendance upon this department alone has been over 47,000 during the year. . . . 250 young men have professed conversion in the meetings." These years mark the peak of the San Francisco Association's emphasis upon personal conversion. The religious climate of the whole nation was gradually changing. Gradually more attention was being given to religious education and less to the importance of having a dramatic conversion experience in a revival meeting.

A vivid commentary on the reasons why young men visited the Y building on Sutter Street is found in some interesting statistics gathered on Thursday, April 10, 1890, by a committee of young men who stood at the entrance of the building and questioned all who were entering as to their reasons. McCoy reported the findings to the board at its subsequent meeting:

From 9 A.M. to 9:30 P.M., 720 young men visited the building; 220 entered the gymnasium. . . . 42 entered the gymnasium for baths. . . .; 15 called to see the Employment Secretary; 32 called to secure letters addressed to them in care of the Association; 15 came to see the General Secretary. . . . The remainder came for the privileges of the reading room, games, library, and to attend the Elocutionary Prize Contest in the evening. In connection with this total number of young men there were 150 young ladies who accompanied them to the exercises in the evening.

In his annual report for 1892 McCoy returned to a theme which he had repeatedly stressed in earlier reports: "No city in the world with equal population has more young men than San Francisco, and fully seventy-five per cent of the number are away from home and its restraining influences. . . . Truly this is a great city for scattering seeds of kindness and offering the helping hand."

In the Buddhist temples of China a visitor may see images of the Goddess of Mercy, Kwan-Yin, with her "1,000 arms" radiating in circles from each shoulder. To the Buddhist this means that Kwan-Yin reaches out in a thousand directions in mercy to help those in need. That Buddhist hope which is thus so symbolically expressed has a counterpart in the Christian religion. We find in Jesus of Nazareth all the elements of love and mercy which can ever stir the depths of the human heart. The visible expression of that Gospel of love and mercy is found not in material images of Jesus but rather in the hands of human beings who have had their hearts warmed by personal fellowship with the Christ. In the multitudinous physical, intellectual, social, as well as in the religious activities of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A., helping hands were being stretched forth in the name of Christ to bring aid, encouragement, and faith to the multitudes of young men who were living in the great metropolitan center.

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE FIRST BRANCHES

Four Branches of the parent Association were organized during the years reviewed by this chapter, 1881-94, which were designed to meet the needs of special groups. These were the German, organized in 1883; the Deaf-Mute, 1884; the 20th Street, 1887; and the Street Car Men, or Park Branch, 1891. The latter two acquired buildings of their own which to some extent relieved pressure on the main building. All

of the branches in their form of organization were modelled after the parent Association. Each branch with the exception of the Deaf-Mute even had its own Ladies' Central Committee. The members of the branches were considered members of the main Association.

The first branch to be organized was the German. According to McCoy's report before the 1884 annual meeting, San Francisco had a German population of nearly 40,000. In 1888 there were seven German churches in San Francisco. Here was a linguistic group large enough to warrant special attention. The branch began with the organization of a German Bible class sometime before March 1883 with about twenty-five young men taking part. The branch was officially organized on March 6th of that year. The Board of Directors set aside two rooms on the third floor of the main building for their use and a little later a third room was made available. The leader of the German group was a young business man, well known for his Christian zeal, J. J. Pfister, who was elected the first president of the branch and served in this capacity for many years. In 1892 Pfister was made a member of the Board of Directors of the parent Association.

The work of the German Branch prospered so that a German General Secretary, J. W. Reidemann, was secured at a salary of \$1,000 a year. The Board of Directors of the main Association soon ruled that the term "general secretary" should be used only by its main secretary and that the different branches should use only the term "secretary." The German Branch undertook to raise the money to pay Reidemann's salary but found it necessary from time to time to appeal to the parent Association for help.

The German Branch reported 160 members at the end of 1889. Most of the work had to be done on a volunteer basis. The rooms were kept open each evening and on Sunday afternoons. Bible classes in German were conducted; a German singing society was sponsored; much calling on German young men was accomplished; and a monthly periodical, *Monatliche Rundschau* began in July 1887.<sup>4</sup> This paper was published until August 1898. On June 1, 1890, the services of F. W. Godtfring were secured as secretary. By that time the work was better established but still the parent Association from time to time had to assist with finances. In 1892 there was some sentiment in favor of a separate building but nothing was done to make this dream a reality.

The organization of the Deaf-Mute Branch dated back to a reception given in the Sutter Street Y in September 1883 for the deaf-mutes of the city. About fifty of these handicapped young men were present. The Y was fortunate in finding one who was a deaf-mute who was a graduate of the state university and an active Christian. His name was Theodore Grady. Under his leadership a branch was organized in February 1884 which used a room on the third floor of the building.

Reporting to the 1885 annual meeting, McCoy said: "A religious work was inaugurated . . . which has grown to be very efficient. Services in the sign language have been regularly held on each alternate Sunday morning." In the 1890 *Annual Report of the Deaf-Mute Branch*, Grady stated that during the preceding year, forty-four religious, social, and other meetings were held by the branch with a total attendance of 1,168.

On September 15, 1887, the Board of Directors voted to organize a branch in the Mission District: ". . . somewhere in the vicinity of Twenty-First St. and that just so far as possible the Committee should undertake to make the Branch self-supporting from the beginning." The Committee appointed to perfect the organization reported on the following October 31st that rooms had been secured in Excelsior Hall at 2319 Mission Street, between Nineteenth and Twentieth Streets. Because of its proximity to the latter, it was called the Twentieth Street Branch. The establishment of this branch marks the beginning of the present day Metropolitan Plan. The German and the Deaf-Mute Branches were housed in the main building. Now for the first time the main Association was reaching out and establishing a new unit of the work in other parts of the city. As far as possible the new branch was supposed to conduct all of the activities which were being carried on in the main Association.

The affairs of the new branch were to be managed by an executive committee which was to be responsible to the Board of Trustees. The membership fee was to be the same as for the parent body. In November 1887 the board learned that a Ladies' Central Committee has been organized "to furnish the new rooms." R. S. Boyns was selected to be the first secretary.

On February 16, 1888, the board took the following action: "Moved that a telephone be put in the Building between the Main Building and the 20th St. Branch." The cost of the two telephones was \$10.00 a month. Telephones and the electric light, which had been introduced in 1886, meant the coming of the new age of industrial efficiency.

The new branch occupied the lower floor of a business building which provided space for the secretary's office, a reading room and library, a parlor or social room, gymnasium, dressing room, and bath rooms with tub and shower baths. By the end of 1888, Boyns reported that the branch had 167 members and that 13,447 visits had been made to the building. The gymnasium, with a total attendance of 6,194, proved to be the most popular activity. The building filled a definite need in that part of the city as on many occasions before the end of the first year the quarters were packed to capacity.

However, the local residents in the vicinity of the Twentieth Street Branch did not support the work with their gifts as expected. An item in the minutes of the board for September 20, 1893, reads: "It

was reported that Mr. Gibbs had given \$100.00 a month to this branch for over a year, and yet they were unable to raise the other \$100 to meet the current expenses." The board voted to close the branch if it could not raise the necessary funds. At the meeting of the board in the following month, the sad state of affairs at the Twentieth Street Branch again came up for discussion and it was voted that the branch be closed at the end of the year if the local people did not come immediately to its assistance. Gibbs had paid \$100 a month for eighteen months, or a total of \$1,800, to keep the branch open.

A mass meeting of the local residents in the vicinity of the Twentieth Street Y was held on November 28th and a sufficient response was received to guarantee the continuance of the work. Another favorable report was received by the directors the following June from this branch which indicated that the work was being placed on a satisfactory financial basis.

The fourth branch to be organized during these years under review was that among the street car men (also called the Car-Men's Branch). This branch was organized on December 3, 1891, and before the end of the year was being known as the Park Branch. The initiation of this work goes back to a discussion held in the meeting of the board on March 18, 1886, when the attention of the members was directed to "the large number of young men engaged on the carlines. . . ." The possibility of establishing a central reading room for this group was considered where ". . . the young men engaged on these lines might be brought under a work of this kind, as nothing was being done for them, and they were obliged to work nearly all day Sunday."

A committee was appointed in 1889 to investigate the possibility of starting a branch for the car-men. This committee reported on October 24th recommending that a branch be opened for the men working on the McAllister, Haight, Hayes and Omnibus lines. The committee reported that "between four and five hundred men engaged on these lines" were living within two or three blocks of Hayes and Baker Streets. It recommended that a branch be opened at this place. A survey was conducted among the men to see if they would welcome such a move. Nearly two hundred signified interest.

On December 19, 1890, Monroe Greenwood, a member of the Board of Directors, announced to the board that he had recently purchased the lot on the north-east corner of Baker and Fell Streets, and that he proposed to erect a building there "to be used mainly for carrying on religious work," and that he would "furnish quarters for the Y.M.C.A. on the first floor free of rent for five years, provided the necessary funds can be secured to pay running expenses." The Board accepted this generous offer with enthusiasm and also agreed to pay a proportionate share of the taxes, insurance, and upkeep of the building.

The response of the car-men who were offered the use of these



premises was not as much as had been expected. Reporting to the board on January 23, 1894, McCoy said that only 75 of the 200 who had indicated a willingness to join the new branch actually did so. A few non car-men had joined. The membership at the end of 1891 was a little over 100. Reporting on June 19, 1894, McCoy said that the necessary funds for current expenses had been subscribed for the Twentieth Street and the Park Branches for another year.

According to a note in the minutes of the board for June 15, 1887, the Chinese made a request for a branch to be organized among them under the auspices of the Association. A committee was appointed to investigate but no action was taken at this time. As has been stated, a Chinese Y.M.C.A. had been organized in 1870 as a part of the Presbyterian mission work.

A Japanese Y.M.C. was organized in 1886 and like its Chinese counterpart, this grew out of a Presbyterian mission. In 1892 the Japanese Y took over the building at 121 Haight Street which was vacated that year by the San Francisco Theological Seminary (Presbyterian) when it moved to its new campus at San Anselmo. The historical library of the Y.M.C.A. in New York contains a file of a monthly paper called the *Japanese Y.M.C.A. Branch Bulletin* which ran from June 1892 to April 1895. This publication contained twenty-eight pages per issue. There is no record of any direct connection at this time between this Japanese Y and the main city Association.

In his report given before the 26th annual meeting held in January 1889, McCoy proudly stated: "The Young Men's Christian Association of San Francisco is the second of its kind in numbers, influence, and practical work done, in the land."

### THE DEMAND FOR A NEW BUILDING

Within five years after McCoy's arrival in San Francisco, the need for a new building was recognized to care for the rapidly expanding work. Reporting to the Board of Directors on the work for September 1881, McCoy said that the total attendance was 16,206 of which number over 8,000 attended religious meetings. Speaking before the 1886 annual meeting, McCoy said that the grand total attendance for 1885 was 162,300. He then explained:

Already this building is becoming too small, and many departments are very much crowded. On several occasions during the year, hundreds of young men have been turned away from the building, unable to gain admittance, so great has been the crowd who have taken an interest in the work.

The Sutter Street building, opened in 1868, was never designed for the multiplicity of activities which flourished under McCoy's aggressive leadership. One of the demands which came with increasing fre-



quency was for lodgings. McCoy told the board on September 8, 1885, that: "A large number of young men are constantly applying to us for lodgings at moderate rates, and there is no city on the continent where a Lodging Home for young men under Christian influences is more needed than in San Francisco."

Any consideration of erecting a new building involved the primary fact of finances. Even though the activities at 232 Sutter Street were booming, the income from membership rents, dues, and donations did not always meet expenses. The figures for 1881 tell the story. The receipts for that year were — from rents, \$1,346.59; membership fees, \$2,109.90; and donations, \$2,729.50. Disbursements, including \$3,105.96 for salaries, amounted to \$6,664.41. The balance at the end of the year was only \$8.23. The estimated budget for 1885 was \$11,245 and estimated receipts from rents and dues, \$8,225. This left a balance of over \$3,000 which had to be raised from individual donations. McCoy's salary was still \$200 per month. This was all part of the background for any consideration of erecting a new building. Where would the Y get the necessary funds?

Something, however, had to be done to care for the expanding work. At its monthly meeting held on January 14, 1886, the board voted to instruct the trustees "to take immediate steps toward the erection of a new building for the business of the Associations." Months slipped by without anything being done. At the September meeting of the board, McCoy again brought up the need for a new building. He reiterated his feeling that the Association "could not possibly grow much beyond our present proportions until enlarged quarters were secured." The board was moved to appoint a special committee to investigate the possibilities of buying a lot. At the December meeting of the board, the report was made that George W. Gibbs, president of the Association and one of the most generous friends the Y ever had, had given ten thousand dollars toward the cost of a lot.

The thrill that followed the announcement of the gift from Gibbs gradually faded as month after month passed without anything more being done. Reporting to the board on October 31, 1887, McCoy said that it would be necessary to refuse admission to young men applying for membership in the Y if the applications were as numerous "in the next five weeks as they were during the corresponding time of 1886." The Building Committee confessed in its report before the 1888 annual meeting that nothing had been done except to collect a few pledges. Some study had been made of a suitable location. Some wanted a location as close to Market Street as possible. In the meantime, the crowded conditions at 232 Sutter Street became worse. The total number of visits made to the building in 1887 reached 180,000. Finances continued to be the discouraging feature. On December 15, 1887, Gibbs contributed \$500 for back taxes. The year closed with a deficit of \$2,200.

An interesting item appears in the minutes of the board for January 19, 1888, when the board voted to join the "Associated Charities . . . to consult together as to what might be done to more thoroughly systematize the matter of giving in this city." Here is the beginning of the present day Community Chest plan.

On May 24, 1888, McCoy appealed to the board that if a new building could not be secured in the near future, "this building should be enlarged by putting on another story and other alterations." In the fall of 1888 William H. Crocker, a well known business man of the city, was put on the Building Committee to replace General O. O. Howard. Crocker was made treasurer of the committee. On December 20th of that year the committee informed the board of the possibility of buying a lot on the north-east corner of Mason and Ellis for \$145,000. The lot measured 187½ feet on Mason and 137½ on Ellis and was but two blocks from Market. The board voted to purchase the land and authorized the option payment of \$7,500 with the understanding that the full amount was due March 15, 1889. An item in the minutes reads: "Mr. C. B. Alexander of New York and Wm. H. Crocker had kindly consented to secure plans for a new building at their own expense." McCoy was elated. A new building now seemed to be a certainty.

A note of optimism pervaded the annual meeting of 1889. A. B. Forbes, chairman of the Board of Trustees, explained: "If the proposed lot can be secured and paid for, we believe that the sale of our present property would bring to the Building Committee a sufficient sum to erect a new building." Several years later, or in 1892, the value of the property at 232 Sutter Street was estimated to be \$160,000. Later still the Board of Trustees discovered to their sorrow how erroneous had been their calculations, but this story belongs to the next chapter.

Inspired by the outlook, the annual meeting of January 1889 approved the following:

Resolved, That we authorize the Building Committee to go ahead, and make every legitimate effort to raise the required funds to purchase the said lot, and that they have full power to act for the Board of Directors in this matter.

McCoy, in his report, said: ". . . never has there been a time since my connection with the San Francisco Young Men's Christian Association when the work was in better condition and accomplishing greater good than today."

To emphasize the great need for an institution like the Y in the city, A. B. Forbes in his report given before the annual meeting pointed out the fact that there were some 2,750 places licensed during the preceding year in San Francisco for the sale of liquor by the glass. In addition, he said, there was a large number of places not licensed where

measure. Forbes told of a census on in August 1888 when on Sunday de of young men between the ages present at some evangelical church 'orbes said, "in all the evangelical men" were present. Forbes contin-

ning, August 26th, the principal alls, and other places of amuse-re counted, (one base-ball match g men) and there were found in saloons, including the base-ball ay, 17,933 young men. And there unhallowed influence which could our committee on that evening, ted. Putting it at the very lowest vening there were on the average f these places, which gives us a s we find that there were at the men in the theaters, drinking musement on that Sunday eve-

of unhallowed influence" referred n. What a contrast — 1,892 young t given Sunday evening and about ment, and houses of prostitution on the Sunday evening of the week following! Could any more forceful argument be given of the need for the Y than that? Forbes but emphasized an old fact, which all Christian people knew but which was overlooked, when he said: "There is no place in all of San Francisco, except the Young Men's Christian Association, doing a definite work for the moral protection of our young men." Since the average weekly attendance at the Y during 1888 was about 3,600, Forbes could have mentioned the fact that the Y was having twice as many young men visiting its building each week as attended all of the Protestant churches of the city on a certain Sunday evening in August.

Following the annual meeting of 1889, Gibbs and McCoy issued a joint appeal to all members and friends of the Y.M.C.A. for contributions. They said in part:

If all the interested friends would do something the burden would be made light, the money readily secured, and the Association enabled to push forward its work unencumbered. Young men during the past year have declined to become members of the Association by reason of our straightened quarters, and the

work cannot possibly grow beyond its present proportions until a larger building is secured.<sup>5</sup>

The attendance statistics showed another increase for the calendar year 1889. Reporting before the annual meeting of 1890, McCoy said that the total visits to the building had climbed to 195,000. With the help of another contribution of \$500 for taxes from George Gibbs, the Y had balanced its unprecedentedly large budget of \$22,894.16 and had a surplus of \$34.76 on hand.

However, the report concerning the purchase of the lot was not so encouraging. When March 15, 1889, arrived, the Building Committee found that it did not have the full payment of \$145,000. Several friends, of whom George W. Gibbs was one, purchased the lot in their own names and held it for the Association. In the meantime an effort was being made to raise the necessary funds. McCoy reported to the 1890 annual meeting that a total of \$76,000 had then been pledged. Of this amount, Gibbs had given \$25,000. Other members of the Board or of the Building Committee had contributed another \$31,000. Only two "outside" gifts were reported – Balfour, Guthrie & Co., and Moses Hopkins, each for \$10,000.

The annual meeting of 1891 was held on January 5th. The crowded condition of the building was by that time an old story. The attendance records for the main building had climbed to 203,000 for 1890, a net increase of 8,000 over that of the previous year. McCoy reported that an additional \$42,549.33 had been raised but that there still was not enough to make full payment on the lot. Interest charges had brought the net cost of the lot to December 31, 1890, to over \$147,500. However, the property had increased in value, some saying that it could be sold for \$200,000. The suggestion was even then being considered of selling one-third of the land in order to complete payment on the balance. McCoy was opposed to this.

Very little progress was made in raising money during 1891. A total of \$118,000 was reported to the Annual Meeting held January 4, 1892. In the meantime interest charges had brought the cost of the lot to over \$150,000. By that time the decision had been made to sell one-third of the land, specifically fifty feet on Ellis Street, in order to complete payment on the remainder and begin building. Gibbs in his report said:

Eighteen months, at least, will be occupied in the construction of the building, and we shall need during this time, in order to meet the current expenses and to complete the building free of debt, at least \$50,000 additional to what has already been subscribed.

McCoy explained:

Complete plans have been adopted, and the building, when

finished, will be one of the largest and most complete in all its appointments of any which has been provided in this or other countries. The cost of the building will be \$220,000, independent of the lot, the latter costing the Association about \$100,000. The increased value of the lot, together with the furnishings of the building, will give the Association a property worth not far from half a million.

The new building was planned to fill the dimensions of the reduced lot, 187½ feet on Mason Street and 87½ on Ellis. It was to be five stories high and would contain an elevator, an artesian well, and have its own steam and electric light plant.

On March 17, 1892, Gibbs reported to the board an offer of \$125,000 for the property on Sutter Street. Gibbs, who believed that the property was worth at least \$150,000, said: "The building would not be sold for any such figure." Many times later did the members of the board wish they had accepted the offer of \$125,000.

During 1892, the attendance at the main building climbed to a new peak — 235,810. Very little additional money was received. Failure to begin building operations had undoubtedly discouraged giving. The chairman of the Building Committee, Robert Balfour, reporting to the fortieth annual meeting held on January 3, 1893, said:

We regret that we are not yet able to report that work has commenced on the new building. It is beyond the power of the committee, however, to make progress until the necessary funds have been subscribed, a further sum of \$35,000 to \$40,000 being required to meet the contemplated expenditures.

The sale of one-third of the lot during April 1893 made it possible for the Building Committee to complete payment on the remainder and to have enough left over to meet the first payments required by the contractor. The committee hoped to make a quick sale of the building at 232 Sutter Street and thus secure sufficient funds to continue the building. So the decision was made to let the contracts. Ground was broken with due ceremonies on Saturday, March 11, 1893. The liberal spirited George W. Gibbs made an additional contribution of \$15,000. Optimism was in the air. The long needed building was at last being brought into reality.

If the directors of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. could have seen a few months into the future, into the spring of 1893, they never would have started building operations on so narrow a margin of finances and on the expectation of realizing about \$150,000 from their property on Sutter Street. A new federal administration, with Grover Cleveland as president, took over in March 1893. A complicated financial situation erupted in an economic depression which hit the country in the summer that followed. Hundreds of firms went bankrupt and hun-



dreds of banks, including 158 national banks, closed their doors. This was the time when Jacob Coxey became the leader of an army of unemployed who marched on Washington in the spring of 1894.

All of this was part of the financial picture faced by the directors of the San Francisco Y as they sought funds to continue the building. The cornerstone was laid by George W. Gibbs on August 5, 1893. It bore the inscription: "The Foundation of God Standeth Sure." A long account of the event is given in *Five Decades*. "This was a day," wrote the authors, "long to be remembered in the history of the San Francisco Young Men's Christian Association." A quotation from their report follows:

Invitations were issued to officers, ex-presidents, contributors, city and State officials, clergymen, members and their friends, and nearly two thousand seats were provided. . . . Fully an hour before the exercises commenced every chair was occupied and an innumerable crowd of people stood throughout the entire ceremonies. It was in all probability the largest religious demonstration which had been witnessed in San Francisco for many years.

The main addresses were delivered by the Hon. W. S. Barnes and the Right Reverend William Ford Nichols, D.D., Protestant Episcopal Bishop of California.

In the meantime the building at Sutter Street was not sold. The attendance for 1893 for all activities was 234,000, a little less than for the preceding year. The financial depression was beginning to affect the current income. McCoy informed the Board of Directors at its September 20, 1893, meeting that at least \$1,500 would be needed to pay expected bills. Upon hearing this, Gibbs offered to assume one-half of the required amount. The board, failing to sell the Sutter Street property by January 1, 1894, found itself unable to pay sixty thousand dollars due the contractor. Some money was raised by putting a mortgage on the lot and the new building but even this did not suffice to raise all that was needed. The contractor was obliged to take a note for the balance.

As the new building neared completion in the summer of 1894, the Board of Directors found it necessary to raise some \$20,000 for furnishings. They turned to the churches of the city for help. A meeting of the pastors was held on July 3rd and suggested quotas were given to the various churches — \$1,200 to the First Congregational; \$1,500 to the First Presbyterian; \$1,000 to Grace Cathedral, and so on through the list. After hearing about the urgency of the need, the pastors voted to do what they could to meet the request.

The board set the date for the opening of the new building on California's Admission Day, September 9th. An item in the minutes of the board for August 21st reads: "Mr. McCoy stated that the closing



service in the old building would take place Sunday, September 2nd and the address would be delivered by Rev. Dr. Hemphill, pastor of Calvary Presbyterian Church."

The total cost of the new building, including lot and furnishings was over \$334,000. The indebtedness amounted to more than \$200,000 against which was the unsold property at 232 Sutter Street. It was with mixed emotions, therefore, that the leaders of the San Francisco Y moved into their new quarters on Mason and Ellis on September 9, 1894. Of course there was rejoicing in having a new building with plenty of room for the on-going activities and with such new facilities as a swimming pool, a hall large enough to seat one thousand, whole floors of dormitory rooms, beautiful offices, an attractive lobby with walls lined with marble, and other modern accommodations.

But they who carried in their hearts the burden of financing the cost of the building and of the inevitable expanded program were worried. Could history so quickly repeat itself in the life-story of the San Francisco Y? Only a brief fourteen years earlier, during the winter of 1880-81, the fate of the Y teetered between bankruptcy and solvency, between life and death. Only the timely assistance rendered by Dwight L. Moody saved the situation. Now by a strange turn of circumstances, over which the very capable men on the Board of Directors had no control, the San Francisco Y was rapidly approaching the same fulcrum which divided disaster from success. Which way would the scales tip?

## At Mason and Ellis, 1894-1906

The new San Francisco Y.M.C.A. building at Mason and Ellis, officially opened on September 9, 1894, was described as being "one of the most handsome and imposing structures in the city," and "among the finest of the kind in the world." Here the Association carried on an ever-expanding work for about eleven and a half years, or until the big earthquake and fire completely demolished the building on the morning of April 18, 1906. These years cover the second period of McCoy's service to the San Francisco Y and include part of the 25th year of his connection with the Association. These were years in which McCoy was at his best.

The new building was supposed to have been dedicated on January 1, 1895, but President Gibbs declared: "That ceremony will not take place until every dollar of indebtedness is raised." The older members of the Association could see some striking parallels between the situation faced by the Y in 1868 and that which existed twenty-six years later with another new building in 1894. In 1868 the Y moved into the new quarters at 232 Sutter Street having just enough money to pay for the lot and furnishings. The increased valuation of the property made it easier then to get a loan to help pay for the building. In 1894 the Y again moved into a new building having just enough cash to pay for the lot and furnishings. And again the increased valuation of the property made it easier to get a loan. Whereas the debt faced by the Association in 1868 was \$57,000, the debt in 1894 was nearly \$200,000.

However, there was one bright factor in the financial picture of 1894. That was the unsold property at 232 Sutter Street for which the directors had once rejected an offer of \$125,000. The financial depression of 1893 had reduced land values so that by 1894, when the new building was occupied, the Directors would have gladly accepted such an offer if it had been repeated. By January 1, 1895, McCoy placed a valuation of \$100,000 on the old property which would have left a net indebtedness of \$100,000. Considering all factors, the Y in 1894 was in a much stronger condition with its new building, its efficient organization, its enlarged membership, and with its well established position in the community than it had been in 1868.

### AT WORK IN THE NEW BUILDING

All of the activities, which were a part of the Y's program in the Sutter Street building, were transferred to the new location. The in-

spiration of moving into the new quarters, plus the many new added facilities then available, meant an immediate and gratifying increase of membership and attendance. Reporting to the annual meeting of 1895, McCoy became eloquent as he summarized the work of the first four months in the new building:

To January 7, 1895, we have just completed the first four months in the new building and really have scarcely more than got settled and the different departments running smoothly; yet, notwithstanding the obstacles to be overcome necessarily connected with the changing of a work so large as ours from the old to the new, the work in every department has been more than doubled and the membership is constantly increasing. The building itself is our ideal of an Association building and the work in it is fast becoming an ideal work. The structure is a pride to our citizens and we have heard naught but favorable comments with everything connected with it, its furnishings and its work.

Under the caption "Objects of the Association," the 1895 *Annual Report* stated: "It is more than a social club; while it combines all the commendable features of such an institution, it contains much more which is of direct benefit to its members." The following paragraph, included under the caption, outlined both the program then being carried on and the new facilities available:

Our new building, which is among the finest of the kind in the world, contains a gymnasium, swimming tank supplied with salt water, marble shower baths, bicycle room, camera section, game and social rooms, news room and library; separate reading room, library, gymnasium and parlors for boys between twelve and sixteen years of age. Is heated by steam. Arrangement for classes in physical culture and in swimming; handsomely furnished parlors; members' music and sitting room; bowling alleys; shooting gallery; hand-ball court; evening college; a course in Commercial Law; University Extension Course conducted by Professors of the University of California; entertainment course, lectures, social receptions for members and their lady friends, employment agency for young men; Bible study, intelligently conducted religious services, and many other special advantages for the development of all-round manhood, and the upbuilding of true, honorable citizenship.

The Evening College, which the Board of Directors voted to establish on June 19th before the building was opened, became a reality when the new quarters were available. According to an item for July 23, 1895, in the minutes of the board, 266 students were enrolled during the first year in the new building. In addition a University Ex-

tension course attracted 500 young men. The night school for men became so popular that President Rolla V. Watt, reporting before the 1899 Meeting, said ". . . some of the classes were obliged to limit the number for want of room and other facilities." Some of the classes had an enrollment of eighty-five or more which taxed the capacity of the largest available rooms. Before the building was a year old, it had outgrown some of its facilities.

Since many of the young men working in mercantile establishments in San Francisco did not have a high school education, the San Francisco Y opened a night school for these youths in the fall of 1899. The initial enrollment of forty showed that there was a real need for such a school. One of the business men of the city connected with a large store, the White House, and who was also a director of the Y.M.C.A., made arrangements for his store to underwrite the cost of a class which was formed for the "cash boys" of his establishment.

The statistical report of the Y for 1899 listed a total attendance of 13,050 men and 2,925 boys in the night school. The school was then under the direction of Professor A. A. Macurda. President Watt, reporting on the activities of the night school before the 1899 annual meeting, boasted of the fact that "one hundred and ten universities, colleges and institutions of higher learning," were accepting the diplomas awarded by the school to students who had completed the prescribed courses. About 1900 the term "night school" was changed to Evening College.

All of the educational activities of the Y flourished under the leadership of Professor Macurda. By 1903 the courses of study for men were divided into three categories, the Commercial Department, the Scientific and Industrial Department, and the Language and Art Department. An evening Law School was established with a four year course in 1901. Instructors were drawn from the faculties of the University of California and of Stanford University. During the first two years of its history, some thirty students were enrolled. This Law School has continued to the present time being an integral part of Golden Gate College.

In order to meet the needs of some young men who were unable to attend the evening classes with regularity, eight correspondence courses were being offered in 1903. For the year ending July 31, 1903, there was a total enrollment of 513 in this department. For the most part the cost of the educational work of the Association was supported by the tuition fees received. In 1902 the Association received from this source \$5,211.20 and paid out in salaries for the professors and instructors, \$4,832.86. The average number of students per day for 1902 in the educational classes and Bible classes was 300.<sup>1</sup>

Under the educational program of the Y must be listed the continued use of the library and the reading room. According to the sta-

tistics published in *Five Decades*, the average number using the reading room and library in 1902 was 200 per day. The average number attending lectures, concerts, and Sunday meetings was 150 per day.

A curious item regarding an effort made to censor reading material which entered the San Francisco Y is found in the minutes of the trustees for October 3, 1901, when one of the members, William C. Crocker, a prominent San Francisco banker, moved that "the Board of Trustees of the Y.M.C.A. of San Francisco . . . do hereby express our condemnation and abhorrence of such vulgar, scandalous, wanton and wicked journalism, and that we bar their admission to the reading room and library of our association."

A few weeks later, or on December 16th, a letter was read to the board from Mrs. Phoebe A. Hearst "relative to the resolutions . . . condemning yellow journalism." The minutes do not contain a text of Mrs. Hearst's letter but evidently she thoroughly approved of the action taken on October 3rd. Just what had stirred the ire of such wealthy folk as William Crocker and Mrs. Hearst is not indicated. It may be that the publication in 1901 of the novel by Frank Norris, *The Octopus*, in which the author delivered a terrific blast against the Southern Pacific Railroad was one of the objectionable items classified as "yellow journalism."

The fourth floor of the new building contained a gymnasium, a reading room, and game rooms for boys. The boys also had access to the salt water swimming tank on stated hours. At that time there was a business concern in San Francisco which furnished salt water to eight different plunges, including the Olympic Club and the Y. The Company later failed in business. When that happened however, the Y was able to manufacture its own salt water by the addition of the proper chemicals.

With the enlarged facilities, the work for boys so expanded that on November 12, 1902, McCoy requested the board to employ a Boys Secretary. This was done with the result that the department expanded to the limits of the available physical accommodations. At the November 1902 meeting of the board, the membership in the Boys Department was limited to 325.

In *Five Decades*, which appeared in 1903, we read of the opening of Camp McCoy.

This has been located for the past two years near Guerneville, where one hundred and thirty boys take up their abode in tents and enjoy to the full all the pleasures afforded by nature. The camp is under the direction of the boys' secretary, assisted by a corps of leaders, who take the best care possible of the boys, surrounding them meanwhile by the very best of influences.<sup>2</sup>

The site of Camp McCoy was changed from time to time in subse-

quent years but the feature of an annual boys camp remained a permanent part of the Y's program for boys.

In the summary of the year's work presented by President Watt before the 1899 annual meeting, reference was made to the continued emphasis on the spiritual aspects of the Y's program. The statistics given include a total attendance of 2,331 in the Bible classes held for men and women and 1,423 in the young men's Bible School. McCoy for many years taught a training class for young men which met every Monday evening from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. In addition to the classes, a total of 1,375 were present at morning prayers.

The summer conferences started for college students at Pacific Grove in May 1896 continued to grow in popularity and effectiveness. Reporting to the board in June 1897, McCoy stated that the conference held the previous month was "a splendid success" and prophesied that these conferences "would become one of the permanent institutions of the Association work on the Coast." He added that the "influence of such a gathering upon the students could not be too highly estimated."

Some activities for women were permitted in the new building. On February 20, 1894, the following action was taken:

It was also decided by the Board that Ladies' Classes be permitted in the new building between the hours of 9:00 and 12:00 o'clock, two forenoons each week. . . . It was also unanimously decided that one dollar per month be charged ladies for such privileges, which would include physical instruction and lessons in swimming. During these hours the ladies would have the exclusive use of the Physical Department and Ladies' Parlors. It was distinctly understood that the ladies would in no sense be considered members.

Most if not all of the traditional events and activities which had been held in the old building on Sutter Street were continued in the new building at Mason and Ellis. The annual Thanksgiving Day dinner for young men away from home was given year after year to an average of about 200. The Employment Department reported that 811 applications for work had been received during 1902 and that 319 positions had been secured. Regarding this service, we read in *Five Decades*: "The average age of the successful applicants was 24, and the average salary was \$38 per month."<sup>3</sup>

The Debating Society, which met on Saturday evenings, was still active in 1903, and a popular religious meeting was still being held at 3:00 o'clock each Sunday afternoon with an average attendance of from two to three hundred. The new building provided more games. The following account comes from *Five Decades*:

Opening out of the main reception hall is the social and game



room where parlor croquet, crokinole, checkers, ping-pong and chess are played. Here also is a constantly used piano.<sup>4</sup>

On December 18, 1902, the Board of Directors was offered a billiard table "in exchange for a life membership in the Association." However, since billiards still had an unsavory reputation, because the game was so closely associated with pool halls, the Board declined the offer with thanks. It is well to remember that in February 1865 the Board of Managers had unanimously voted to prohibit chess playing in the rooms of the Association. By 1902 the tabu against chess had passed. A few more years had to elapse before the Y dared to ignore the prejudices of many conservative Christians and bring the billiard table into the Association building.

The membership of the Y increased about one-third in the decade 1892 to 1902, growing to over 2,000. Among the statistics and facts presented in *Five Decades* is a listing of the different nationalities represented in the membership. Those of American birth led with a total of 1,152. The Germans came next with 90 members; the English had 87; Canadian, 60; French, 40; Irish, 34; Scotch, 22; Italian, 16; Swedish, 14; and Danish, 10. Among the seventeen other nationalities which had less than ten each were the Mexican, Hawaiian, Japanese, Russian, Chinese, and Filipino.

A breakdown of the religious affiliations of the members, including active and associate, shows a greater diversity. It should be remembered that the membership in an evangelical church was still a requirement of active membership. Only active members could vote in the annual meetings. With this exception, associate members were as free to participate in the activities of the Y as active members. The following study, evidently made shortly before *Five Decades* was published in 1903, gives an analysis of only those who had indicated their religious affiliations:<sup>5</sup>

Catholic	204	Latter Day Saints	10
Episcopalian	187	German Protestant	8
Presbyterian	186	Friends	8
Jewish	178	Evangelical	4
Methodist	164	Home of Truth	3
Congregational	161	French Church	2
Baptist	76	Christian Science	2
Lutheran	70	Seventh Day Adventist	2
Christian	60	Salvation Army	1
United Presbyterian	18	Swedenborgian	1

The large number of Roman Catholics is due in part to the fact that San Francisco has always had a large Roman Catholic population and that the Roman Catholic Church then had no comparable institution to serve the needs of its young men in the way the Y was doing. Also,

it should be remembered that throughout the nation there was an era of good feeling between the Roman Catholics and the Y.M.C.A. during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth.<sup>6</sup>

The average daily attendance at the Y, at the time of the publication of *Five Decades*, was about 1,000. This means a total annual attendance of about 365,000. When this figure is compared with the total of 234,000 for 1893, we find that there was a net increase of about fifty per cent in a ten-year period.

### DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE BRANCHES

Of the various branches sponsored by the Association while at 232 Sutter Street, two did not continue. They were the Deaf-Mute Branch and the Car-Men's or Park Branch. The former seems to have been discontinued after the departure from the city of its chief sponsor, Theodore Grady, about 1893. The work among the car-men was never strong for it did not win the expected response from the men concerned. A note in the minutes of the board for October 15, 1894, states that the Park Branch was closed and that all memberships were transferred to the Central Association.

The work among the German-speaking young men continued as a separate activity until 1898. Suitable accommodations were given to the German Branch in the new building and for a time the work flourished. Within the first four months after moving, the membership increased from fifty to 114. However, as the language barrier gradually disappeared, the need for a separate organization for German-speaking young men within the Association also diminished. As a result on September 1, 1899, the members of the German Branch voted to merge their activities with the parent body.

From its very beginning the Twentieth Street Branch had grave financial problems which continually threatened to close its doors. The main Association found itself unable to subsidize the work. In January 1897 McCoy informed the board that the branch had changed its name to the Mission Street Y.M.C.A. and that it had attained a separate legal standing which relieved the main Association of all responsibility. According to a report given by President Watt before the 1899 annual meeting, the Mission Street Y had moved from 2319 Mission Street, where it had been for over ten years, to the corner of Hill and Valencia Streets. Here with F. E. Swanson as secretary the Y fitted up "very commodious quarters." In November 1899 the Mission Street Y petitioned the main Association to become a branch again and in the following March the directors agreed to restore the former relationship with the distinct understanding that "the present Association would assume no financial responsibility in connection with the operation of the Branch."

In March 1901 the Mission Street Branch petitioned the board for the right to conduct a building fund campaign for \$15,000. However, the main Association was then struggling with its own financial problems and was making a strenuous effort to lift the burden of its debt. Therefore, the Board of Directors refused the petition "in protection of the Parent Association." The Mission Street Branch carried on in limited rented quarters until 1911 when it was closed.

In this experience with the Mission Street Branch, the whole philosophy of the Metropolitan Plan of a single city-wide organization was being worked out through experience. The city was growing. No longer could a central building serve the needs of the expanding population and the ever-widening geographical area. McCoy felt that the establishment of branches was one answer to the problem – but, were these branches to be independent of the parent Association or an integral part of it? Was each branch to have its own budget or was there to be an over-all financial plan? Was each branch to work out its own program and have its own separate administration, or was the total work for the city to be coordinated through the parent body? These and kindred questions remained to be answered. At the time of the 50th anniversary celebration in 1903, McCoy said:

I want to make the following suggestion: that within the next twenty-five or thirty years the Mason & Ellis property be sold (it will bring a large price); that a small central building be erected and the balance of the money received from the sale of the property be used for the erection of several buildings at various points in the city.<sup>7</sup>

In November 1903 the Board of Directors appointed a committee to make a study of the Metropolitan Plan.

### THE PRESIDIO Y

When the Spanish-American war broke out in 1898, the Associations in the key port cities on the Atlantic Coast and at San Francisco quickly saw an opportunity for Christian work among the military personnel. On May 9, 1898, the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Y appointed a committee "looking to the organization of a Young Men's Christian Association among the U.S. Volunteers in the city." A meeting was held on June 6th in the San Francisco Y which was attended by many of the leading pastors and laymen of the State. They discussed the possibility of "organizing something like the Christian Commission which was so effective in Christian work in our armies during the Civil War. . . ." As a result on June 13, 1898, the Army Christian Commission of California was duly organized. The name was soon changed to the Army and Navy Christian Commission. This was the second such organization to be formed in the United States, Brooklyn



**THIRD BUILDING OWNED BY THE ASSOCIATION, AT MASON AND ELLIS STREETS**  
Dedicated by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903.



**THE ARMY Y.M.C.A., OPENED IN 1898 DURING THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR**  
**AND MOVED TO THESE QUARTERS ON THE PRESIDIO IN 1915**  
This structure was built by the San Francisco Exposition and turned over by C. C. Moore,  
Exposition president, to the Y.M.C.A. on Y.M.C.A. Day for operation during the Exposition.

being the first. Out of these organizations came the Army and Navy Department of the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A.

The records of the Army and Navy Commission of California are on deposit in the San Francisco Y. The Rev. Henry C. Minton, D.D., then a member of the faculty of San Francisco Theological Seminary, served as chairman of the board. The commission adopted the following three-fold objective:

First, To assist chaplains in the service with needed supplies, tents for meetings, bibles, hymn books and tracts for use among the men.

Second, To supply Christian workers among such soldiers and sailors as are not furnished chaplains according to government regulations. Separate companies, battalions and troops under the number of the regimental standard are not given chaplains and in the navy a chaplain is only assigned to the flagship of the several squadrons and to the large shore stations.

Third, To provide for evangelistic meetings on a large scale where great bodies of troops are assembled, such as recently have been so successfully conducted at Tampa under the care of General O. O. Howard, D. L. Moody and others.<sup>8</sup>

The troops sent out to the Philippines averaged one chaplain for every 1,800 men. Practically nothing was furnished by the Government in the way of chaplain's equipment. The records show that Army chaplains on their way to the Philippines requested of the San Francisco Commission such basic necessities as tents in which to hold meetings.

Reporting to a meeting of the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Y on October 10, 1898, McCoy summarized the work of the commission as follows:

. . . the Association has prosecuted a most vigorous work among the twenty-five thousand troops which have mobilized here from various parts of the country; at one time we had eighteen tents in successful operation, meetings, lectures, entertainments, etc. being held every night in the week; special attention and prominence was given, however, to evangelistic work and something over eighteen hundred young men among the soldiers have expressed a desire in these meetings to lead Christian lives.

McCoy also reported that "a library of good books and other reading matter" was placed on every transport sailing from San Francisco for the Philippines, and that the Association "had distributed over fifteen thousand Bibles, Testaments, and parts of the Bible" to service personnel. Most of the money to support this work was raised by collections taken in interested churches throughout the state and, according to



McCoy, "by three military drills which have been given in this city." Two secretaries, F. A. Jackson and Charles A. Glunz, sailed with u.s. troops from San Francisco for Manila on June 27, 1898. They may have been the first Y.M.C.A. secretaries to serve u.s. military personnel abroad.

The Board of Directors of the Army and Navy Christian Commission, meeting in the Occidental Hotel of San Francisco, October 3, 1898, adopted a resolution praising Henry J. McCoy:

. . . who during the months of its existence has acted not only as Treasurer, but also as the Executive head and Director of most of its helpful activities, devising and by his untiring energy, successfully carrying out the plans for raising as well as for judiciously expending the funds necessary for our work. We gratefully place upon our records this testimony of our recognition and our appreciation of his arduous and painstaking labors and of the high esteem in which we hold him as a Christian worker for young men.

At the close of hostilities, the Y secretaries who had gone with the troops to the Philippines came back to the Presidio in San Francisco where many of the soldiers were being demobilized. Here the secretaries continued their activities during the demobilization period. Since the War Department was planning to keep a contingent of men permanently stationed at the Presidio, the San Francisco Y decided that its program should be continued there as a branch of the main Association. The services of a former Army chaplain, Stephen R. Wood, were secured and his salary was paid by the city Y. A number of different secretaries served the Presidio Branch during the following years. The Army made available to the Y one of the old wooden barracks at the Presidio which was converted into a meeting-room and a reading-room. In this room the secretary had space for his desk.

After the earthquake and fire of 1906, the San Francisco Y was so crippled by the destruction of its property and lack of funds, it was unable to continue the work at the Presidio. The Army and Navy Department at National Headquarters was requested to take over the work which was done in 1908.

### FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

An enlargement of physical equipment invariably brings a corresponding increase of current expenses. This the San Francisco Y found to be true as soon as it had moved into the new building at Mason and Ellis. Recognizing an increase of expenditures, the directors at their meeting in January 1898 authorized higher membership fees. Full membership, which included use of the gymnasium, swimming pool, and bowling alley, was set at \$10 with a limited membership fee of



\$5. The fee for boys, twelve to sixteen years of age, was \$5. These increased dues together with an enlarged membership brought in about \$20,000 annually. Had there been no heavy interest charges to meet, the work could have been self-supporting.

The severe financial depression of 1893 laid a heavy hand upon the fortunes of the San Francisco Y. Shortly after the depression struck, the Board of Directors rejected an offer of \$125,000 for the Sutter Street property in the hope that they could get \$150,000. A mortgage of \$50,000 was placed against the property in order to help finance the new building. This was later raised to \$80,000. The interest charges on these loans rose to \$466.65 a month. Helping to offset this heavy expense was for a short time the income of about \$300 a month from the rental of store space in the old building. However, new difficulties arose over this. The Y was unable to give long-term leases for space in a building it was trying to sell. Tenants moved out when their leases expired which reduced the income the Y so desperately needed. On October 4, 1897, McCoy reported that the rentals had declined to \$100 a month. "I have tried repeatedly to rent," he bemoaned, "but . . . our inability to give a lease for a term of years blocked the way." Store space standing empty made it harder to sell the building.

Shortly after the new building was occupied in the fall of 1894, the Board of Directors began a quiet campaign to raise \$80,000. The main contractor was unpaid by some \$67,000 and other bills were due. An item in the minutes of the board for May 14, 1895, reveals the sad state of the financial condition the Y was then facing. The Pacific Gas Improvement Company was threatening suit for the collection of a bill of \$469.85. The treasury was empty. The members of the board took up a collection to meet this emergency — Mr. George W. Gibbs, the President, contributing \$100. And thus another minor crisis was met.

The good intentions of the board to raise \$80,000 did not materialize. In the meantime the deteriorating financial situation began to snowball into an alarming deficit which threatened to engulf the whole enterprise. By July 1, 1895, the debt stood at \$252,873.68 with a monthly interest rate of \$1,149.17. To offset this was the unsold building on Sutter Street. Something immediate had to be done.

On July 9th the board appointed McCoy "Financial Agent of the Association" and laid on him the responsibility of devising ways and means of removing the indebtedness. A circular dated July 5, 1895, was prepared addressed "To the People of San Francisco" which was signed by the three principal officers of the Board — John J. Valentine, president; Rolla V. Watt, vice-president; and A. B. Forbes, chairman of the Board of Trustees. An explanation was made that the Y was putting forth strenuous efforts to raise \$100,000 with the understand-

ing that "no pledge to be binding until this sum is raised." A letter campaign was begun on July 25th when the circular and a letter written by Valentine were mailed to a list of prospective givers. Valentine stated in his communication that: "Of the twenty-three gentlemen comprising the Board of Trustees and Directors, not one has ever received, nor looked for, any material remuneration for time, work, and benefactions bestowed upon the Association and all have given liberally."

The Board of Directors demonstrated their own faith in the Y by making generous gifts. George W. Gibbs, who had previously given \$50,000 for the new building, made another donation of \$6,000. Three others gave an additional \$15,000, making a total from these four of \$21,000. McCoy organized teams of solicitors who called on prospective givers. By September 30th, the amount pledged was \$41,900; by April 20, 1896, \$90,500; and on June 1st the goal was reached and oversubscribed, \$100,260. This made all the pledges collectible. Eleven had given \$5,000 or more; fourteen had contributed \$1,000; and the balance was in smaller gifts.

Even though the campaign was successful, the debt increased during the year the campaign was being conducted by another \$17,474.62 plus the taxes which became due. The board turned to the members with a plea that they give \$75,000. However, such an appeal brought in but little additional money. Even after all of the \$100,000 had been collected, the indebtedness on January 1, 1897, was over \$176,000, against which was the unsold Sutter Street building.

The sale of the Sutter Street property was finally accomplished in the early spring of 1898 for \$91,000 or \$34,000 less than the offer received in 1892. The proceeds were applied on the indebtedness. However, the inability of the Association to meet interest payments meant that the debt again began to soar. By January 1, 1898, the debt amounted to \$87,538.96 and on April 10, 1899, the total was \$112,312.28.

A second effort to raise the debt was begun in April 1901, when some of the members of the board and a few friends pledged \$20,000. At that time McCoy called attention to the fact that he would complete twenty years of service with the San Francisco Y on August 5th and suggested that that date might be accepted as a goal for the completion of the raising of the debt. Although the board voted to make the effort, actually little was accomplished. The board took note of the anniversary by raising McCoy's salary to \$250 a month.

The growing seriousness of the deficit finally aroused the board to vigorous action. At the January 1902 meeting, the members by unanimous vote resolved to raise another \$100,000 in order to have the dedication service of the new building at the time of the 50th anniversary celebration in 1903. Ever since the new building was first occupied in

1893, it was understood that there would be no dedication until the debt was paid. The approach of the Jubilee Celebration gave an added incentive for renewed effort. Again the board voted that no pledge would be payable until the full amount had been subscribed.

The Protestant clergy of the city in a meeting held on January 29th pledged their full and hearty support. A mass meeting for the public was held in the First Congregational Church on March 9th with 2,000 being present. McCoy again gave himself to the task of directing the canvass. On September 9, 1902, a total of \$39,339 had been pledged. By January 16, 1903, this had been increased to \$66,000 and by April 13th the full indebtedness of \$104,500 plus accrued interest of \$930 had been raised. A group of women, known as the Mothers Tribute Committee, headed by Mrs. John F. Merrill raised \$15,545.55. Undoubtedly the secret of the success of the campaign lay in the self-sacrificing loyalty of the members of the Board of Trustees and Secretary McCoy who met every Monday evening for months to report progress.

Although the heavy indebtedness somewhat limited the activities of the Y, yet we find in the records repeated statements by McCoy of the flourishing condition of the work during these years under review. On October 4, 1897, McCoy told the directors: "There never has been a time since my connection with the work as your Secretary in the past sixteen years when the legitimate work of the Association was better or more encouraging and the outlook brighter than today." President Watt in his remarks before the 1899 annual meeting said:

The parlors and social rooms of the building have been constantly in use, as a very large per cent of our members are young men away from home, and, outside of business hours, are almost constantly at the building, and something for their entertainment and profit is furnished nearly every evening in the week.

And on October 3, 1901, McCoy informed the directors that "the work of the Association was in splendid condition and everything exceedingly encouraging and the outlook bright." The only discouragement was the debt but with the debt fully paid in 1903, the directors and McCoy could face the future with joy. They were ready to celebrate by combining the dedication of their building with the observance of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Y.M.C.A. in San Francisco.

#### IN TRIBUTE

The measure of any institution is the caliber of the men and the women who compose it. Institutions are brought into being by an individual or a group of individuals to meet a need. They expand and flourish or they wither and die in direct proportion as people support or neglect them. The San Francisco Y.M.C.A. could have given up the

ghost a dozen times during the first fifty years of its history had it not been for a few individuals who at the critical time infused new life into the enfeebled organization. The Y has been remarkably fortunate in the fine quality of men who have served on the Board of Directors or as General Secretaries. No history of this institution would be complete without paying tribute to some of the most outstanding of these benefactors.

The minutes of the Board of Directors for the years 1895-02 inclusive carry references to the deaths of three former members and to the passing of Dwight L. Moody. The first was George W. Gibbs who died on November 15, 1895. Gibbs served as president of the board from 1883 to June 1895 when he resigned because of ill health. His gifts to the Association were many and generous. He donated \$50,000 toward the erection of the new building at Mason and Ellis and later added another \$6,000. On several occasions he paid the taxes amounting to hundreds of dollars each time and had contributed \$1,800 for the support of the branch work. He was the largest single contributor to the Y during the first fifty years of its history. More important than his financial contributions was the devoted and efficient leadership he gave the Board of Directors for more than eleven years. At the time of his resignation, his colleagues on the board sent him a letter of appreciation in which they said: "Never can the history of our humane, liberal, and enlightened institution, and of our admirably appointed building for its use, be written or referred to without your name being most prominently and honorably connected herewith." In the notation about his death in the official minutes of the board, the secretary added that there were "not many such men."

Linked with the name of George W. Gibbs as one of the greatest benefactors of the San Francisco Y was that of the famous evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, who died on December 22, 1899. Although Moody was not a San Franciscan, his invaluable services to the Y in 1881 saved the Association from disaster. Under his inspiring leadership, a debt of \$85,000 was raised which made it possible for the Y to continue. He was the one responsible for the reorganization of the Board of Directors and for the calling of professional leadership in the person of Henry J. McCoy to take over the secretaryship. Moody's enthusiasm for Christian work for young men was contagious and many projects, such as the student summer conferences carried on by the San Francisco Y, sprang from the vision Moody gave the local leaders.

Moody paid his last visit to San Francisco in March 1899. He held meetings in the city and in nearby places. The San Francisco Y held a memorial service for him on December 31, 1899. President Watt, in his report before the 1900 annual meeting, declared that: "In no city in the world was the late Dwight L. Moody better known or more beloved than San Francisco."

J. J. Valentine, who succeeded Gibbs as president of the Board of Directors in 1895, served in this capacity until 1899. He died on December 21, 1901. Valentine was president of Wells Fargo & Company and it was largely through his influence that this company began paying for a blanket membership, in whole or in part, for all of its interested employees. This plan began in 1883 and sometimes the amount paid to the Y by the company ran as high as eighteen hundred dollars per year. As president of the Board of Directors, Valentine led in the effort to get the second hundred thousand dollars in 1894.

The fourth old friend and faithful worker to pass away was A. B. Forbes who died on December 7, 1902. Forbes was made the president of the board at the time of the reorganization in April 1881 under the guidance of D. L. Moody. Under the presidency of Forbes the new Articles of Incorporation were drawn up and the services of Henry J. McCoy as the first General Secretary were secured. Forbes served as president for two years.

Rolla V. Watt was elected president at the beginning of 1900 and served through 1914, the longest term in the hundred year history of the San Francisco Y. More will be said later of the services of this outstanding Christian leader.

#### DEDICATION AND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

The new building at Mason and Ellis, officially opened on September 9, 1894, was not dedicated until May 12, 1903. This was because of the stand taken by the Board of Directors who were determined that there would be no dedication service "until every dollar of indebtedness is paid." Since the last campaign to eliminate the debt had been successful, the directors saw their way clear to have the formal dedication service. The big event was scheduled to coincide with President Theodore Roosevelt's visit to San Francisco. He was invited to take part in the service. Combined with the dedication was the ceremony of burning the mortgage.

According to the San Francisco *Examiner* of May 13th, the auditorium of the Y was "packed to the ceiling" at the appointed hour and "there was no getting along the street outside without a scrimmage." When the President was ushered into the hall, he was given a tumultuous welcome. The *Examiner*, in its description of what happened, stated: "The gallery roared out, 'Three cheers for the next President,' whereas Mr. Roosevelt showed his teeth in a smile." After the President had been introduced, Secretary McCoy laid the cancelled mortgage and other notes in a metal dish in full view of the audience and asked the President to apply the match. A tiny flame darted upward, spread, and soon the tokens of the former indebtedness of the Y were nothing more than a handful of flimsy ashes. President Roosevelt then spoke to the assembly. He stressed the good work the Y was doing





**BURNING THE MORTGAGE AND NOTES OF \$115,000 OF THE SAN FRANCISCO YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION, By Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States, in the Association Auditorium, Tuesday, May 12, 1903. 1. His Honor, Eugene E. Schmitz, Mayor of San Francisco. 2. President Roosevelt. 3. Rolla V. Watt, President of the Association. 4. Hon. M. H. de Young, Chairman of Citizens' Reception Committee on the Presidential visit. 5. H. J. McCoy, General Secretary. (This illustration drawn during the exercises.)**

(By courtesy of San Francisco Examiner.)



throughout the country. "There is no patent receipt," he declared, "for getting good citizenship. You get it by applying the old, old rules of decent conduct." In the *Examiner's* account, we read:

He grew earnest as he proceeded, and his eyes and teeth flashed as he ground out his points. He used emphasis, too, and more than once he brought his clenched fist in contact with his palms as he drove a point home.

At the close of the address, Rolla V. Watt presented President Roosevelt with a gold Y.M.C.A. pin and made him a life member of the local Association.

No one can read the records of these days without being impressed with the unbounded joy and relief felt by every member of the Board of Directors. McCoy's reports overflow with gratitude. The property valued at \$450,000 at Mason and Ellis was entirely free of incumbrance. The success of the campaign had indirectly focused the attention of the city on the Association. It was claimed that up to that time no public institution in the history of San Francisco had ever secured so large an amount of money by popular subscription. A total of about eighteen hundred had contributed. The board at its meeting held on May 11th, wishing to show further appreciation of McCoy's services, raised his salary to three-hundred dollars a month.

The mortgage-burning ceremony and dedication was followed by the Jubilee Celebration on July 16-19. A series of special meetings was held to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the organization of the San Francisco Y. A mothers' meeting, "in the interest of the 47,000 boys of San Francisco" was held on Thursday afternoon, July 16th, with Mrs. John F. Merrill as the presiding officer. That evening President Watt addressed an assembly of men that filled the auditorium of the Y. An afternoon service was held on Friday, July 17th, for boys and in the evening the auditorium was again filled by members of the various Protestant churches of the city who met in a union service of praise.

The fiftieth anniversary fell on Saturday, July 18th. A Jubilee Day banquet was held that evening in the California Hotel. All of the old timers who could attend were present. The invocation was offered by the Rev. W. C. Pond, D.D., one of the pioneer Congregational ministers to California who was a member of the first Board of Managers. Former presidents of the Association who attended included H. L. Chamberlain, 1864-65; W. M. Cubery, 1865-66; and Samuel Irving, 1866-67. The highlight of the evening came with the reading of the following cablegram from Sir George Williams of London, England, who in 1844 had organized the first Y.M.C.A.:

I rejoice with you all on your Jubilee and thank God for young men brought to the Saviour through your work. May the Lord en-

courage all your hearts to go forward. With loving greetings.  
George Williams.

A fitting climax to the four-day celebration came on Sunday afternoon, July 19th, when a mass meeting was held in the Y's auditorium, which was again filled to capacity, in the interests of the extension of the Y work among young men in non-Christian lands overseas.

As a part of the celebration, an illustrated book was published in the fall of 1903 under the title *Five Decades*. This was an historical record compiled by the General Secretary, H. J. McCoy; the assistant secretary, F. A. Jackson; and the director of the Educational Department, A. A. Macurda. The book contains not only a summary of the history of the first fifty years but also a good description of the activities being carried on at the time of publication.

The chapter describing the Jubilee Celebration closes with the following paragraph which evidently was written by H. J. McCoy:

The first fifty years of the San Francisco Young Men's Christian Association is now history. Men of sterling worth and stalwart Christian character were the organizers and promoters and it is no small honor for any man to be their successors and to enter into their labors. As we cross the threshold into the next half century may it be with a deep and renewed consecration to the God of young manhood, and with a prayer for divine wisdom and power to go forth to help make grander even the days to come than those number with the past.

### THREE YEARS OF PROSPERITY

With a building dedicated free of debt, McCoy and his associates looked forward with hope and enthusiasm. There followed three quiet, peaceful years of steady growth before the terrible earthquake struck San Francisco on the morning of April 18, 1906. Fires followed the earthquake and raged over the ruined city for several days. Among the buildings completely destroyed was the Y.M.C.A. at Mason and Ellis.

During this three-year interlude between the Jubilee Celebration and the earthquake, the San Francisco Y continued to carry on its usual schedule of activities. McCoy, full of initiative and energy, was always seeing some new possibility of an expanded program or finding some opportunity to give the Y program in other California cities a helping hand. He became the god-father of the whole Y.M.C.A. work throughout the state of California.

The minutes of the Board of Directors throw a spot light on some of the activities and plans of the Association for these three years under review. On November 16, 1903, the board discussed the merits of the Metropolitan Plan, which was then in operation in several of the larger cities. The adoption of the plan meant that all Y work in San Fran-

cisco would be consolidated. Or in other words, the Mission Street Y and the Army Y at the Presidio would become officially a part of the main Association. The committee appointed to study the plan asked for more time.

The success of the Mothers Tribute Committee suggested the re-organization of the former Woman's Auxiliary. This was done in the fall of 1904 and the women took charge of the annual Thanksgiving Day dinner. However, something must have gone amiss because the board on February 13, 1905, voted "to suspend operations in the work of the Women's Auxiliary for the present."

The San Francisco Y took note of the passing of Sir George Williams, the founder of the Y.M.C.A., who died on November 6, 1905. A memorial service was held for him in the San Francisco Y on December 18th. Williams was knighted by his Queen in 1894. This was but one of the many honors bestowed upon him for his great work in starting the Y.M.C.A. Today a picture of Williams hangs in the main Association building in San Francisco at the head of a main stairway.

A new constitution was adopted in June 1905 which, among other provisions, retained the evangelical test for membership. Further mention will be made of this in a subsequent chapter. A new development in the Y's religious activities is revealed in the following extract from the minutes of the board for June 13, 1904:

Mr. H. W. Davis, religious work secretary, spoke of the inauguration of the noon shop meetings at the Union Iron Works and the Pacific Gas Works. He said the men appreciated the meetings and they were largely attended. The meetings at the Union Iron Works are held every Wednesday at 12:20 and at the Pacific Gas Works every Thursday at 12:20.

A snack bar, then called Triangle Tavern, was opened in the building in 1905 which proved to be very popular. The Tavern, for lack of adequate space elsewhere, operated in a room on the second floor. However, by the end of 1905 the directors were told that the room was far too small for the business being handled. A possible change of location was being considered by the directors just before the earthquake.

The Boys Department was overflowing its physical accommodations. A record in the minutes of the board for March 13, 1905; reads: "Mr. McCoy stated that the Boys Department was actually crowded out of the Building and that something ought to be done toward securing accommodations for this important part of the work."

The first graduating class from the Evening Law School was given its diplomas on June 6, 1905. The minutes of the board have repeated references to the need for more room for the educational work of the Association. More than seven hundred were enrolled in the Evening College at the time the earthquake struck.

In the review of the activities of 1905, mention is made of over "two hundred joining in November" which brought the total membership to over two thousand. On December 18th of that year the directors were told: "The reports brought out the fact that the work in all respects during the year had been the most prosperous in the history of the institution."

However, there was one point of continued difficulty — finances! During the time the debt-lifting campaign was being conducted, no attention could be given to raising extra money for current expenses. McCoy reported to the board that at the time of the Jubilee Celebration the current expenses fund was then three thousand dollars in arrears. After the Jubilee, certain additional staff members were hired and some changes made in the building. All this meant added cost. The annual budget for 1904 was over \$46,000, with an estimated income of \$42,756. The indebtedness on January 1, 1904, was \$5,500. Month after month the directors struggled with this annoying factor and often individual members of the board contributed several hundreds of dollars to satisfy some pressing claim. By March 13, 1905, shortly before the earthquake, the deficit had risen to about \$17,500. McCoy talked about the necessity of having an endowment of one hundred thousand dollars. John D. Rockefeller was approached but declined to give. The name of Robert Dollar was mentioned as a possible giver at the meeting of the board held September 27, 1903. No mention of a gift from Dollar is found before the earthquake. Later, Dollar became a staunch supporter of the local Y, serving as president from 1916 to 1921.

On February 12, 1906, McCoy reported to the board that the membership was then 2,190 and "that 1800 were using the privileges regularly and that 50 men were on the waiting list for lockers in the gymnasium."

The last meeting of the board before the earthquake was held on April 9th. The last item in the minutes of the meeting is the following:

Mr. Watt stated that Mr. McCoy would complete twenty-five years as General Secretary of the San Francisco Young Men's Christian Association on August 5, 1906, he having commenced work for the Association on August 5, 1881.

The board then resolved to have some suitable celebration for the occasion, but the great earthquake and fire changed everything.

### THE EARTHQUAKE AND FIRE

The earthquake struck at 5:14 on the morning of Wednesday, April 18, 1906. Within two days, three-fourths of San Francisco was laid in ruins. Hundreds of thousands were left homeless and the property loss was estimated to be about \$350,000,000. On May 7, 1906, McCoy wrote

a vivid letter describing his experiences and his reactions to the editor of *Association Men* in New York City from which the following paragraphs have been taken:

Readers of "Association Men" are already familiar through Associated Press News with the dreadful calamity which has visited San Francisco; no report could possibly have been exaggerated. The destruction of this city is beyond my power to describe. . . . On Wednesday morning, April 18th, at 5:14 o'clock one of the most severe earthquakes recorded in history visited San Francisco; but, notwithstanding the severity of the shock, the damage by earthquake was comparatively small.

The vibration of the earth snapped electric wires and gas pipes, destroying chimneys, and the city caught fire instantaneously in a thousand places. People fled from their homes in terror to the streets clad only in their night clothes and the scene of fainting women and frightened children was heart rending; many of them were unable to return to their homes even to provide themselves with sufficient clothing as the fire swept on with such rapidity.

Within less than two days three-fourths of San Francisco, a city of over five hundred thousand, was laid in ruins. My home, among the fortunate spared, is on Alpine Street, Buena Vista Hill, and from our library windows we command a view of two thirds of the city and that portion swept by the conflagration. The entire wholesale and nearly all of the retail portion of the city was destroyed. Not a bank, commercial or savings, was exempt from the ravages of the fire and scarcely a hotel remains intact. Beautiful homes, libraries, art galleries, public schools, churches, etc., were razed. It is reported that more than two hundred thousand people left the city on the first day of the fire.

The street car system was paralyzed and the electric and gas lighting plants were demolished and the city was left in darkness. The earthquake broke many of the water mains and sewer pipes, and the city supply of water and sewers became connected and the water contaminated, in consequence of which the Board of Health ordered the water shut off so that the city was without anything like an adequate supply of light and water for nearly two weeks. The people who fled went to the hills, parks and ocean beach and such places as they felt they could be safe from the awful onward march of the fire. Massive steel, granite and stone buildings that were supposed to be fire proof crumbled before the flames.

The beautiful building of the San Francisco Young Men's Christian Association at the northeast corner of Mason and Ellis Streets burned on the second day of the fire at 5 o'clock in the morning and nothing except a mass of ruins, represented by the picture which I send you, is left.



McCoy had the painful experience of standing by and watching the building burn. In another report he referred to the building as the result of "the best thought and energy and efforts of twenty-five of the very best years" of his life, and he added that when he saw the building go up in flames, "it nearly broke his heart."

In his May 7th account of the catastrophe, McCoy gives the following personal experience:

The doors of all the jails and city prison had to be thrown open to save the inmates from cremation, in consequence of which a dangerous and disreputable element was let loose many of whom commenced to loot and plunder. Vigilance Committees were appointed and I became a member of the committee in our district and patrolled my beat carrying a Remington rifle for the protection of our homes and families. It was the first time I ever shouldered a rifle and am not sure that I would have known which end to have fired. One night my watch was from 12 to 2 o'clock in the drenching rain. If I had met a looter I do not know which of the three things I should have done, — prayed for him, invited him home to share my bed, or shot him. I had no occasion, however, to exercise my authority as a patrolman.

Within a few hours after the earthquake, the city was put under martial law. The heart-felt sympathy of the entire nation went out to San Francisco as soon as the news was flashed across the country. The response was immediate and generous.

**EARTHQUAKE**



**RUINS OF THE MASON-ELLIS BUILDING**  
Destroyed by the 1906 San Francisco earthquake only three years after its dedication by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903.



**TEMPORARY HEADQUARTERS IN A TENT, SET UP SOON AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE**  
On the site of the Mason-Ellis building's ruins.

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## Chapter VII

### At Golden Gate and Leavenworth with McCoy 1906-1915

The earthquake in San Francisco's history marks the end of one era and the beginning of another. So was it likewise in the history of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. On several occasions, McCoy looked back with nostalgia on the prosperous condition of the Y's work before the earthquake. In his summary of conditions, given to the board on September 18, 1906, McCoy stated:

Up to the time of the dreadful disaster of earthquake and fire, which visited San Francisco April 18-21, 1906, the work of the San Francisco Young Men's Christian Association was in a most prosperous condition. The splendid property, valued at nearly \$600,000, was entirely free of debt having been dedicated on May 12, 1903 by President Roosevelt. The membership, the largest in the history of the institution, numbered nearly twenty three hundred in all departments. The income very nearly met the current expenses.

Nearly one thousand students were enrolled in the night school. The boys' work was large and encouraging and the Religious Work, including the shop meetings, Bible classes, etc., were well organized and exceedingly beneficial and successful. In fact very nearly every department had reached the stage of perfection for which the management had so long and arduously worked. We had nearly outgrown our splendid building and the Trustees were contemplating, in the very near future, adding two more stories to the structure.

In his report before the annual meeting of 1907, McCoy looked on the other side of the era-dating event and said:

Those were dark days — memorable in the history of the city and our lives. We saw the efforts of the best years of our lives melt away before the devouring flames. While the building was yet burning we were planning for the future. As soon as the embers cooled and permission could be secured from the city authorities we erected six tents in which to prosecute our work and were among the very first institutions to open temporary quarters. We immediately devised a plan to raise money to rehabilitate and in four months raised \$500,000 with which to replace our destroyed buildings.

While the ruins were still smoldering, McCoy got what he called "the best tent we could command in California" and erected it on a lot loaned by a friend of the Y at Eleventh and Market. Over this tent was placed a large sign reading: "SAN FRANCISCO Y.M.C.A. HEADQUARTERS." This became the communication center and general headquarters for all homeless and penniless young men who called there for help or encouragement. The promptness with which the Y started functioning again brought much favorable comment.

The Army Department of the Y erected an army tent at Portsmouth Square and the main Association had still another tent at Ellis Street near Jones. The locations of the other three tents are not indicated. Possibly one was erected on the site of the building at Mason and Ellis as a record in the meeting of the board for May 6th reads: "Mr. McDougall said that he had looked over the situation at the request of Mr. Watt to see what could be done in regard to fitting up temporary headquarters on the ruins of the building and he believed it could be done with little expense." Pictures of the ruined building show only the first story walls standing. The main entrance remained almost intact with the exception of the broken pillar on the right hand side. Near the base of this broken pillar was the corner stone with the inscription for all to see

THE FOUNDATION OF GOD  
STANDETH SURE—2 *Tim.* 2:19  
ANNO DOMINI MDCCCXCIII

Fifteen years later a business man told the author of this book how he had climbed over the rubble in the streets shortly after the earthquake and fire and had been struck by the significance of the Bible verse on the old corner-stone: "The Foundation of God Standeth Sure." It is quite possible that that same verse was a comfort and inspiration to McCoy for we find him saying in his report to the editor of *Association Men*: "My large faith in God, my family and splendid health, and the friendship and confidence of the community are my capital to start life anew in this the fifty-ninth year of my age (the 15th of May)."

According to McCoy's report to the 1907 annual meeting, the Y omitted only one Sunday evening service, presumably the Sunday immediately following the catastrophe. "We were able to immediately adapt ourselves to the changed conditions," he said "and a most commendable work was conducted through the dark days of the disaster and up to the present time."

When news of the disaster was flashed across the nation, the hearts of people everywhere were touched and there followed an out-pouring of sympathy and material assistance such as the nation had never seen before. The International Committee in New York sent a representa-



tive, Mr. J. S. Tichenor, to convey its sympathy and greetings and also a contribution of several thousand dollars as an emergency fund. Mr. Arthur Letts, president of the Los Angeles Y.M.C.A., paid a visit to San Francisco with a one thousand dollar gift from his Association. The financial account rendered at the 1907 annual meeting includes the following:

Donations from Various Associations of the country through the International Committee as an Emergency Fund	\$11,261.06
Donations from various Associations of the country and individuals since the fire	\$5,420.98
This makes a total of \$16,682.04.	

A new record book was purchased. All of the former records were later salvaged from the safe and were found to be in fairly good condition. The first entry in the new book is a typewritten copy of McCoy's letter of May 7th to the editor of *Association Men*. Then follows the first post-earthquake account of a meeting of the directors.

Headquarters Tent, Market and 11th Sts.  
San Francisco Young Men's Chr. Ass'n.  
Monday, May 7, 1906

A special joint meeting of the Board of Directors and Trustees of the San Francisco Young Men's Christian Association was held, as above, this Monday morning at 9:30 o'clock.

In his report of existing conditions to the directors, McCoy stated that the Association had carried about ninety thousand dollars' worth of insurance on the building which had been destroyed. After reaffirming his faith in the sovereignty of God, McCoy said that "he was never more hopeful of the future than at the present time." He added that "he believed the money would come [for rebuilding] from the world at large as every friend and contributor to our work had been burned out in business and many of their homes were destroyed. Their losses were enormous."

#### McCoy RAISES \$500,000

Before the joint meeting of the directors and trustees of May 7th adjourned, unanimous action was taken authorizing Secretary McCoy to go East "at the earliest possible date to make an effort to secure funds to assist in the erection of the new building." A committee was then appointed to carry on the work during his absence.

McCoy and his wife made two trips East in 1906 to raise money for the San Francisco Y. This was his second wife as McCoy's first wife passed away in 1899. On their first trip East, the McCoy's left the latter part of May and returned about the middle of August. He carried with him a personal letter from President Theodore Roosevelt written from the White House on May 5th. The President, after referring to



his great regret upon hearing of the destruction of the beautiful building he had helped dedicate, wrote:

There is no work in the interest of young men and boys of more importance than that being done by the Young Men's Christian Associations throughout the world. I am sure that an appeal to the country at large will bring you sufficient funds for the reconstruction of your building; and I hope it will be among the first to rear its walls in your new city. Let me say, in closing how all your countrymen admire, and are proud of, the resolute and undaunted courage with which the men and women of San Francisco have borne themselves through this appalling calamity.

As was expected, McCoy found the wealthy people whom he approached sympathetic to the appeal of the San Francisco Y for assistance. The response was most encouraging. Morris K. Jesup, Chairman of the New York Chamber of Commerce, pledged the first \$50,000 of the half-million needed and gave McCoy invaluable assistance in contacting other wealthy givers. John D. Rockefeller was approached and gave \$250,000. At McCoy's request, Rockefeller gave on the condition that an additional \$250,000 "be subscribed and paid on or before July 13, 1907." With such an incentive, McCoy on his first mission East was able to raise \$420,000.

Shortly after the McCoy's returned to San Francisco, a meeting of the board was held on August 31st in the "Headquarters Tent, Ellis & Jones Sts." to hear the good news. At this time McCoy reported that the following had made subscriptions as indicated:

John D. Rockefeller, N.Y.	\$250,000
Morris K. Jesup, N.Y.	50,000
J. Pierpont Morgan, N.Y.	25,000
Mrs. W. E. Dodge, N.Y.	25,000
Cleveland H. Dodge, N.Y.	10,000
"A Friend" through M.K.J.	10,000
John H. Converse, Phila.	10,000
William H. Rogers, Buffalo	10,000
George W. Perkins, N.Y.	5,000
E. S. Harkness, N.Y.	5,000
D. Willis James, N.Y.	5,000
Miss Grace H. Dodge, N.Y.	2,500
L. H. Severance, Cleveland	2,500
Mrs. S. V. Harkness, N.Y.	1,000
H. K. Porter, Pittsburgh	1,000
F. M. Smith, Oakland, Cal.	1,000
T. S. Lippy, Seattle, Wash.	1,000
John S. Huyler, N.Y.	1,000
	<hr/>
	\$420,000 <sup>1</sup>

At the conclusion of McCoy's report, some one began singing the Doxology. The others joined in quickly and enthusiastically. Reference was again noted in the minutes to the 25th anniversary of McCoy's service with the San Francisco Y. The former plans of a proper recognition of the event had to be laid aside but the board resolved to do something a little later.

Two other matters of importance were considered by the directors at this meeting held on August 21st. The first was regarding the advisability of rebuilding on the same site at Mason and Ellis Streets or moving further west. Some suggested going out to Van Ness Avenue. The record states: "No decision was reached and the whole matter was referred to the new building committee for their consideration and report back to the Trustees." The second action referred to the Army work. McCoy recommended, evidently with the approval of the International Committee in New York, that the Army work in San Francisco be turned over to the International Committee and that this committee be asked to bear all expenses connected with the work after September 1, 1906. This recommendation was unanimously adopted.

The McCoy's were gone about seven weeks on their second trip, returning to San Francisco about November 10th. A meeting of the board was held on November 15th at which time he reported that he had succeeded in raising the last \$80,000 of the \$500,000 needed. Not only that but eastern Associations had contributed enough additional to cover the McCoy's travelling expenses and to pay his salary for four months. The record for the November 15th meeting adds:

The San Francisco Young Men's Christian Association had secured a half million dollars without a cent of expense to itself; in fact had made some money out of the arrangement. On accepting this very interesting and encouraging report, a unanimous vote of thanks was extended Mr. and Mrs. McCoy for their important part in securing the fund.

At the annual meeting of 1907, held on January 14th, the full list of the donors of the \$500,000 was given. From this list the names and amounts of those who gave the last \$80,000 may be secured. Among the second company of contributors were Mrs. Russell Sage, \$30,000; another donation of \$25,000 from Mrs. S. H. Dodge; another gift of \$2,000 from E. S. Harkness; James Stillman, \$2,000; W. K. Vanderbilt, \$2,500; Cyrus H. McCormick, \$2,000; Mrs. Frederic Billings of Chicago, \$2,000; and \$1,000 from each of the following: Clarence H. Mackay, Jacob H. Schiff, R. M. Thompson, J. D. Archbold, Mrs. Cyrus McCormick, Mrs. Flora S. Mather, and J. J. Mitchell. The balance was made up with gifts under \$1,000.

At the 1907 annual meeting a resolution of appreciation for the services of McCoy was adopted which included the following statement:

. . . since that great calamity Henry J. McCoy, without aid from us and beyond our greatest hopes, enlisted the sympathies, good will and help of friends of the Young Men's Christian Association in the Eastern States and raised the enormous cash sum of \$500,000 for the erection for our Association of a building grander and more adapted for our work than that which we lost; during his administration, and mostly through his efforts, over one million dollars has been raised for Association work in this city alone, and at the same time he has been of great assistance to other Associations.

. . . and we believe, that the next ten years will see his greatest work and greatest success; upon his shoulders will rest the burden of planning and constructing our new building; his will be the task of raising a very large sum for equipment; our membership is largely gone, — our General Secretary must build up practically a new Association; we must have adequate branches in the Mission and Richmond districts of San Francisco — we expect him to build them; many of our old friends will not for years be in a position to give us their support, — he must find new friends and supports and bind them to our Association; there never was a time when our work was half so much needed as it is now and will be for the next ten years of rebuilding our City. . . .

After this fine tribute to what he had done, and what must have been to McCoy an over-whelming statement of what was expected, the board voted to raise his salary to five thousand dollars a year beginning January 1, 1907, and provided further that "when the time shall come when Henry J. McCoy shall be unable longer to perform the active duties of his office, he shall be made Honorary General Secretary for the balance of his life at a salary of Twenty-five Hundred Dollars per year."

Following the 1907 annual meeting, the Y published an eighteen-page booklet entitled *Making A Life*. This pamphlet contained an historical statement by McCoy regarding the high-lights of the history of the San Francisco Y since August 5, 1881, when his services first began in the city. In the following paragraphs McCoy summarized the main achievements of his twenty-six years of service:

In addition to the money raised for the buildings in this city an average of ten thousand dollars a year, for the past twenty-six years, has been secured for current expenses, and one hundred thousand dollars for furnishings, equipment and branches. Adding these amounts, raised in cash by popular subscription, and the increased value of the property at the northeast corner of Mason and Ellis Streets, at a conservative figure of two hundred thousand dollars, would make a total of money secured for Association pur-

poses in this city during the past twenty-six years one million five hundred and ten thousand dollars (\$1,510,000).

The more important, however, has been the lives touched and influenced for the Kingdom of Christ. Forty thousand young men and boys have passed through the Association as enrolled members during the past twenty-six years. Thousands, averaging some years over three hundred thousand in a single year, have been brought under the influence of the institution. In every part of the civilized world young men may be found whose lives have been helped and blessed through this valuable religious and moral agency. Nearly twenty thousand men and boys, during the same period, have supplemented their education as students in the night schools of the Association. The far-reaching influence in the making of manhood and christian character of this God-honored work cannot be estimated this side of the Eternal City.

#### FOUR YEARS IN TEMPORARY QUARTERS

A joint meeting of the directors and trustees was held on October 16, 1906, during McCoy's second trip East, to act on the proposal of renting a building at 1220 Geary Street, in a part of San Francisco not affected by the fire, for \$115 a month for a three-year period. The directors voted to accept a lease to begin November 1st. At that time the directors felt that the new building would surely be ready within three years. Actually the building, located at Golden Gate and Leavenworth Streets, was not dedicated until Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1910, so the Y was obliged to remain in the temporary location at 1220 Geary for about four years. This site is now occupied by the First Unitarian Church of San Francisco.

No description of the accommodations afforded in the temporary quarters has been found. The minutes of the board for October 16th include an item regarding the installation of "the necessary plumbing, showers, and improvements." Also: "On motion it was decided to put in a handball court or gymnasium on the space back of the building . . . with the understanding that the cost should not exceed over One Thousand Dollars."

The membership fee for the limited privileges offered was fixed at \$10 per annum, which fee included both the Central Association on Geary Street and the branch located at 2715 Mission Street. The total insurance received by October 16th had amounted to \$72,000 out of which was paid the accumulated deficit on hand at the time of the earthquake and a part of the running expenses for the balance of the year.

Beginning with 1854, the San Francisco Association had published an *Annual Report* each year until and including 1903. The local Association lost its complete library and its file of *Annual Reports* in the

fire which followed the earthquake. An almost complete file of the *Annual Reports* is in the Y.M.C.A. historical library in New York City. Beginning with 1880-81, the International Committee published annually a *Year Book*. This series contains statistical summaries of the work in each of the Associations in the United States and Canada. Some information may be secured from these *Year Books* regarding the work of the San Francisco Y in the years following the earthquake. From the statistics therein printed we learn that the membership of the local Association was decimated by the catastrophe and the program of activities seriously curtailed. Some formerly active projects were never resumed such as the library. Other activities were suspended for the time being for lack of facilities while still others were continued under great difficulties on a limited scale. The following statistics tell the story of these four years of transition:

Year Book	Total Members	Active Members	Avg. attend. at rooms
1906-07	290	100	80
1907-08	550	200	175
1908-09	600	100	150
1909-10	550	150	175

Undoubtedly the figures for the Mission Street Branch were included in the totals given. A religious program for men and boys was continued with Bible classes which had a total enrollment of 124 the first year. Beginning with the second year, the shop meetings were started again which swelled the total of attendance for all Bible classes and religious meetings to 13,710. In 1908-09 this attendance rose to 24,148, and in 1909-10 to 44,729.

Seventeen dormitory rooms were reported in use for the first of these years, and twenty rooms thereafter. The record does not indicate whether some of these rooms were in the building on Geary Street or whether part or all were in the quarters on Mission Street. A Boys Department with fifty members is mentioned in the 1907-08 report. A limited program in physical training was continued with some athletic teams being sponsored. By 1909-10, there were 375 using the physical equipment. A few socials were held each year and after the first year, the lecture program was resumed on a limited scale. On the whole, the statistics show that the San Francisco Y carried on a most commendable program under difficult conditions during these years of transition while a new building was being erected.

A subject of considerable debate concerned the location of the new building. McCoy in a published statement issued about January 1907 assumed that the Y would be rebuilt on the former site. However, the Board of Directors meeting on April 19th of that year voted to sell the Mason and Ellis Street property "at the best figure possible, but not



for less than three hundred and fifty thousand dollars." Fortunately for the Association, the erection of a new building was not dependent upon the sale of the old site. Enough money was at hand to start building as soon as a new site was secured. As will be noted later, history repeated itself in this transaction. The old lot was not sold until April 20, 1914, and then for only \$250,000. In the meantime the board found it necessary to place a mortgage of \$160,000 against the property in order to have funds for current bills.

An item of incidental interest comes within this period under review when reference in the minutes of the board for April 16, 1910, makes the first mention of the use of an automobile in the work of the San Francisco Y. The record states: "A committee . . . was appointed to try to secure automobiles for the use of those soliciting funds."

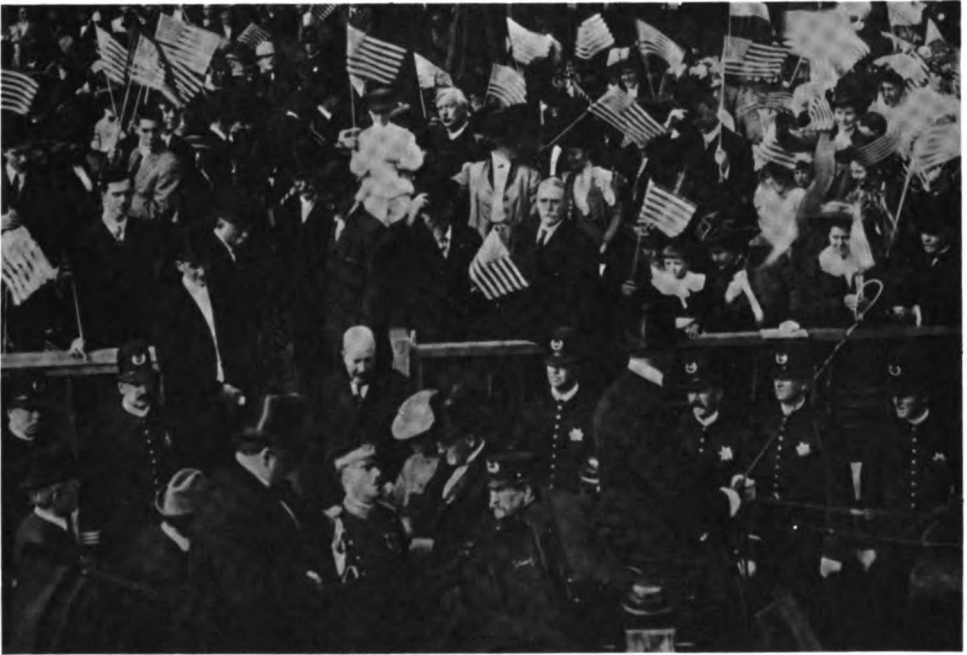
### THE NEW LOCATION AND THE NEW BUILDING

Having decided not to rebuild on the old site, the board after some searching bought, for \$135,000, the land at Golden Gate and Leavenworth, now occupied by the present building. The transaction was completed by February 1908. Thus, for the seventh time, the San Francisco Y was making a move. As has been previously indicated, the Association occupied three different rented quarters during the first eleven years of its history. Beginning in 1853 with the rooms over the post office opposite Portsmouth Square, the Y moved in 1856 to Armory Hall, corner of Sacramento and Montgomery Streets; and in 1858, to 629 Washington Street. These three locations were all in the vicinity of Portsmouth Square, now in the heart of Chinatown. In 1864 the Y moved to its fourth location, and into its first owned building, at 522 California Street. This move represented a stride toward Market Street. The fifth location at 232 Sutter Street, first occupied in 1868, was another step in the same general direction and brought the Association within two blocks of Market Street which by that time had become the principal thoroughfare in the booming city. In 1894 the Association moved to the corner of Mason and Ellis, about six blocks further west and again about two blocks off Market. The seventh location at Golden Gate and Leavenworth also paralleled Market but was about four blocks farther west. The new location was within a couple of blocks of the Civic Center, but was farther removed from the down-town hotel center.

McDougall Brothers were chosen to be the architects of the new building, although in actuality George B. McDougall was the one most responsible for the work. He was also a member of the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Y and one of its most faithful supporters. Contracts for the new building were let on September 30, 1908. According to a news story which appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*

**DEDICATION**





**PRESIDENT TAFT IN HIS TALL SILK HAT IS SEEN HERE IN  
A DETAIL ENLARGED FROM THE PHOTO SHOWN OPPOSITE**

(opposite page)

**THE CENTRAL Y.M.C.A. BUILDING WHICH STANDS TODAY  
AT GOLDEN GATE AND LEAVENWORTH AVENUES WAS  
DEDICATED BY PRESIDENT WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT  
AT GALA CEREMONIES IN 1909**

for October 2nd, the building was to be of the class A type, comprising a steel frame and made fireproof throughout.

Its general arrangement will make it one of the most improved and complete structures of its kind in the country — a great club house with 140 sleeping rooms with hot and cold water, and tele-phones in every room. And there will be two gymnasiums on the sixth floor, arranged so that they may be used together. In the basement will be a swimming tank 30 x 85 feet, with shower baths, Turkish baths, and barber shop and engineer's department. . . .

A lobby or reception hall will be a feature of the building, and from it will open the auditorium with a seating capacity of 1000. . . . A spacious restaurant and a small cafe, with a lunch room for boys where a cup of chocolate or coffee, or a glass of milk may be had for one cent, is provided for.

The educational department is designed on the most approved models taken from other Association buildings by the secretary and architect. A trade school for boys will be established, with a machinery hall, to be known as the craft shop, where men and boys will work, and in this connection there will be a school for teaching the automobile repair business. A camera section is provided. . . .

Ample provision is made for the religious work department, including conference rooms, Bible study branch and other lines of instruction. The boys' department will be separate, with an entrance of its own on Leavenworth street. The secular educational rooms will occupy nearly three whole floors for day and night schools for men and boys. . . .

The new building was to be, as McCoy described it, "more commodious and magnificent than the one which was destroyed." The plans were prepared most carefully. McCoy, out of the richness of his years of experience, had many suggestions to make. The fact that the building is still being used without any major change except the remodeling of the main entrance and lobby effected in 1952, shows how well McCoy and the architect had done their work. The new building, exclusive of furnishings, was to cost about five hundred thousand dollars.

Several hundred attended the ground-breaking ceremonies on October 5, 1908. The corner-stone was laid on October 5, 1909. McCoy, with his usual keen sense of the importance of fine public relations, was able to obtain the consent of President William H. Taft to be present for the ceremonies. Wide publicity was given through the daily press to the event. At least two thousand people were present. The special platform erected around the corner-stone was filled to capacity with distinguished guests. The stone itself bore the same inscription,

with the exception of the date, which was on the corner-stone of the destroyed building. After the usual appropriate introductory speeches, music, and "a hearty cheer for the nation's chief executive" from members of the Grand Army of the Republic, who occupied reserved seats, President Taft took a silver trowel and spread the cement needed to secure the stone. The trowel was the same as that used by the former president of the Association, George Gibbs, at the laying of the corner-stone of the building at Mason and Ellis on August 5, 1893.

President Taft in his remarks commented on the importance of the office of a General Secretary. "The business of being a general secretary," he declared, "is a profession brought out by the needs of the Young Men's Christian Association." He praised the Association's training school at Springfield, Massachusetts, and paid tribute to the fine work the Y was doing with American troops overseas. Taft called the new San Francisco building, which was then in the course of construction, "a character factory."

President Watt of the local Association, in his remarks following the laying of the corner-stone, told of the strength of the Y.M.C.A. throughout North America. "There are now," he declared, "over 1,900 Young Men's Christian Associations in North America, with paid memberships of men and boys exceeding 450,000. There are over 2,500 secretaries and directors of departments regularly employed; 84 new buildings were opened last year." The growth and strength of the work of the Y in San Francisco was but a reflection of what had taken place throughout the nation.

The new building was not ready for dedication until a year later. In the meantime the three-year lease at 1220 Geary Street expired on November 1, 1909. The Directors voted to continue the lease there at a cost of \$80 a month as long as was necessary.

Although there was enough money on hand to pay for the new building, over \$60,000 had to be raised in 1910 to cover cost of furnishings. McCoy was given the responsibility of raising this amount and at the May 16th meeting of the board reported that the fund was then up to \$62,000. Additional sums were needed as the final summary showed over \$75,000 being spent for this purpose.

The Board of Directors and Trustees met on September 6, 1910, to pass on certain policies relating to the opening of the new building. A new scale of membership fees was adopted. A limited membership was set at \$7 per annum with full membership, including the use of the gymnasium and the swimming tank, at \$15. An extra charge was levied for the use of lockers, bowling alleys, and billiards. A special membership of \$25 was planned for business and professional men.

The dedication services extended over a ten-day period beginning with a luncheon for the Protestant pastors of the city on Thursday,



November 17th. The representatives of the city's press were the guests of the Board of Directors for luncheon the next day. An "At Home" and a reception was held Saturday evening. A mass meeting for men was scheduled for Sunday afternoon and a union gathering of all young people's societies was held in the evening. The opening number of the Star Lecture Course was given Monday evening with the Grand Central Concert Company of Chicago rendering the program. Governor Gillett of California and Mayor McCarthy of San Francisco spoke to a gathering of men on Tuesday evening. Wednesday was Athletic Day with a special exhibition in the gymnasium.

The formal dedication came on Thanksgiving Day, November 24th. The annual Thanksgiving Day dinner for young men away from home was held that evening. Friday was Women's Day with Mrs. John F. Merrill, wife of one of the directors and one of the best known women of the city, in charge. All women's clubs of the city were invited. In the evening George B. Hodge, International Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. from New York City, was the featured speaker. Saturday was Boys Day and on Sunday, November 27th, another mass meeting for men was held with the eloquent Dr. Robert J. Burdette as the speaker.

Was there ever such an initiation of a new building as that!

Inserted in the minutes of the Board of Trustees is a statement summarizing the important facts about the new building from which the following is taken:

The raising of \$500,190.00 necessary to erect the building was completed in about four months after the great fire through the efforts of Henry J. McCoy, general secretary, and given entirely by Eastern friends. \$33,548.00 interests accrued, making the total . . . \$533,738.00. . .

The building was opened to the public November 19, 1910 and was dedicated free of indebtedness. . . The \$75,000.00 Fund to furnish and equip the building and to establish the work in the same was completed November 17, 1910.

The cost of the building was as follows: The Lot, \$135,000.00; the building, \$550,000.00; the Furnishings and Equipment, \$65,000.00, making a total of \$750,000.00.

The building is one of the largest and most complete of its kind in the world. Never before had the San Francisco Y been so strong financially. In addition to having a new building, the Association still owned valuable property at Mason and Ellis. Also, there was a balance left over from the insurance received. According to an item in the minutes of the board for October 16, 1906, the Association expected to receive at least \$85,000 out of the \$90,000 worth of insurance which had been placed on the old building.

## FIRST FIVE YEARS IN THE NEW BUILDING

Henry J. McCoy served as General Secretary of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. from August 5, 1881, to November 1, 1915, when he was succeeded in that position by Lyman L. Pierce. The last five years, therefore of McCoy's active service as General Secretary of the San Francisco Association, 1910 to 1915, were spent in the new building at Golden Gate and Leavenworth.

These were years of adjustment and expansion. The minutes of the Board of Directors for these years contain references to some interesting developments in the program and work of the Association. The Y.M.C.A. Law College was incorporated on June 1, 1910. Among the rights conferred was that of granting degrees and literary honors "as are usually granted by any university, college, or seminary of learning in the United States." A self-perpetuating Board of Trustees of five members was established to conduct the affairs of the corporation. All of the trustees had to be members of the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Y.

On January 25, 1911, the San Francisco Labor Council sent a letter to the Board of Directors of the Y calling attention to the fact that a number of employees in the building were "both non-Union and under-paid." The letter stated:

The Firemen employed by your Association receive \$75 per month, (according to the information which reaches us), where they should receive \$90. The Dining Room and Kitchen helpers, work seven days a week, and are paid under the regular scale, receiving \$40 per month, where they should receive \$2 per day.

The board, at its meeting on February 13th, directed McCoy to reply. Undoubtedly the content of McCoy's letter had received the approval of the board before it was sent. The following is an extract:

The Young Men's Christian Association is and ever has been in full sympathy with every movement beneficial to men, but it never has been, and in the nature of the case never can be, a "closed shop" and in order that there may be a clear understanding of the matter, permit me to say that the Association is not in *business*; makes no monetary profits and pays no dividends; on the contrary its ordinary sources of income are insufficient for its support and must be supplemented annually by the voluntary and liberal contributions of our friends, chiefly citizens engaged in business in the community. . . .

There are always men and boys out of employment, often members of the Association and not members of a Labor Union, anxious to work for such wages as we can pay. Our own members

have preference and are often temporarily employed pending the time when they can secure better positions. We do not feel that we would be justified in insisting that they should join Unions or that we should pay the scale of wages you have established for the highest grade of experienced laborers or mechanics.

There the matter rested for the time being, but the day came when the San Francisco Y found it necessary to conform to the trend of the times and employ only Union labor.

A new Protestant emphasis on the observance of Good Friday is found in an item of the minutes for April 10, 1911, when the board passed a motion to cooperate with other churches and agencies "working for a more general observance of Good Friday" and the director of the Religious Department was instructed "to arrange for a noon meeting on that date." Dating from the Reformation itself, the Presbyterians of Scotland and the Puritans of England were strongly inclined to discontinue the observance of all special holy days, including Christmas itself. The majority of the early Protestant settlers in the colonies would never have approved the observance of Good Friday. But, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a new trend was at work in Protestant circles in the United States which is reflected in the above item quoted from the minutes of the board of the San Francisco Association.

The advisability of continuing the branch located at 2715 Mission Street was under discussion during the first part of 1911. The work on Mission Street dated back to 1887. The building rented by the branch was undamaged by the fire and earthquake, so the work there carried on much as had been the case before the calamity of April 1906. In a booklet published by the San Francisco Y summarizing the activities of 1908, the Mission Street Branch is credited with having 325 members, with a total income from membership fees of \$1,214.83. The total receipts of this branch for that year were \$1,982.00 while the expenses amounted to \$4,466.60. Statistics for the following year show a small membership and a larger deficit. The opening of the new building at Golden Gate and Leavenworth, with its superior attractions, drew many from the Mission Street Branch to the main Association. A committee was appointed to investigate the branch and on May 8th made the following report:

The committee on the Mission Street Branch wish to report a thorough investigation of the plant and find a good gymnasium well equipped and two handball courts.

The building proper is dark, damp and cold — not fit for Y.M.C.A. use, either for bible class work, or game or reading rooms. Cannot be put in shape to be a credit to the association

without an expenditure of considerable money, and in as much as the work there is at a standstill, costing a net loss of \$100 per month, the members having been transferred to the main building, — and that as the work under the present condition could only be of a physical nature, we recommend the closing of the Mission Street Branch until such time as a proper building can be provided and the work put on a basis that will be a credit to the association.

The Board of Directors accepted the recommendation and voted to close the branch on June 1st. The work was not reopened until 1922.

The opening of the new building brought, as was expected, an immediate increase in membership. The directors were informed on June 19, 1911, that there were 1,575 members in the Mens Department and 886 in the Boys Department. Paralleling the expanding program was the rapidly increasing cost of maintaining the building and the program. The following statistics, which have been taken from the *Year Book of the Y.M.C.A.s of North America* for the years indicated, tell the story:

<i>Year Book</i>	Total Members	Active Members	Total Expense
1910-11	2,345	808	\$ 38,356
1911-12	3,260	598	no report
1912-13	2,729	588	117,485
1913-14	3,716	1,065	129,382
1914-15	3,997	1,210	139,961
1915-16	4,276	1,173	145,773

The annual reports show that certain activities or departments of the Association were rarely if ever self-supporting. These included Educational, Employment, Religious, Social, Lectures, Immigration, and Cafeteria. A few departments, including the Dormitory, Physical, Billiards, and Gymnasium were more than self-supporting. The rentals of rooms during these years provided an extra income of from \$5,000 to \$8,000 annually. In August 1911, McCoy told the directors that the facilities of the new building were being taxed to capacity: "We have 145 living rooms in this building and there never has been a time that we have had less than 35 or 40 men on the waiting list. We could rent double the rooms, if we had them."

These were the days when Camp McCoy for boys was rapidly growing in popularity. The camp, founded in 1901, had no fixed location for a number of years. For a time it operated in Elim Grove, Cazadero. In 1911 the camp had 185 boys, the largest in its history. From 1916 through 1921, the camp was held at various sites on Clear Lake.

In 1921 it was moved to the Strawberry Lake site, some thirty-five miles out of Sonora. The camp was run on a self-supporting basis.

On April 1, 1912, a joint meeting of the directors and trustees authorized the appointment of a special committee on Scientific Efficiency. This committee, under the chairmanship of James S. Wallace, submitted a detailed study of the administration of the San Francisco Y to a meeting of the two boards on October 14, 1912. The committee recommended that the senior membership fee be raised to \$18.00 a year. This was adopted with the provision that the renewal at the end of the first year would be \$16.00 and \$15.00 at the end of the second year. Every department of the Y was given a searching analysis and many changes were recommended and put into effect which cut down expenses and increased efficiency.

Under the heading of "Dormitories", the committee recommended:

Greater care should be exercised in awarding dormitory privileges to applicants. No one should be selected who is less than 20 years or more than 35 years of age, and all should be given to understand that the dormitory is not an hotel or a club, and that some variety of service is expected from each person.

The dormitory men of each floor should be organized into groups, each having standing committees. These are to carry on Social and Religious Work and also cooperate with the Association's General Secretary.

No smoking should be permitted in the dormitories. Dormitory men should be permitted to use the swimming tank and one or two private exercise rooms on Sundays before 10 A.M. when attendants are not required.

The questions of smoking raised some discussion in the meeting and this section was tabled temporarily. The minutes of the board during the following years do not show that the question of smoking in the rooms was again discussed. Although the prevailing sentiment among the majority of leaders of the Protestant churches of that day was opposed to cigarette smoking, especially by teen-age boys, yet the directors of the Y seemed to have noted that a change was taking place in approved customs and refused to spell out the prohibition in the rules governing residence in the dormitory. During World War I, cigarette smoking by young men became quite general.

New fields of activity were discovered and developed. An information office was opened in the Ferry Building about 1914. This building was located at the very heart of the transportation system of the Bay Area and the city. Here was the terminus of two trans-continental railroads and of several Bay ferry lines. Here came the city's street cars swinging around the big loop in front of the building. Daily



thousands of visitors and commuters hurried through the building from ferry to street car and from street car to ferry. Upon McCoy's suggestion the Y established an Information Office in the Ferry Building in 1914. Reporting to the annual meeting of 1915, McCoy said that "2,316 persons were directed by the Ferry Office to various places. 16 Nationalities per month were aided." He also reported that during the previous year, 149 Chinese students had been met and assisted by an Immigration Secretary.

A printed folder was prepared for the 1915 annual meeting which summarized the principal attainments of the Y during the preceding year. Since this presents a good picture of the condition of the San Francisco Association during the closing months of McCoy's thirty-five year service as General Secretary, some extracts will be in order:

5085 men and 967 boys held a membership during 1914, total 6,052. Total receipts for membership in 1914 were \$40,728.70, a gain for 1914 of \$2,897.05. The net gain for two years is \$10,975.90. . . There are only four Associations in North America receiving a larger amount from membership fees.

The registration of men and boys in the Department of Religious Education was 1020. 526 sessions of classes were held. 190 Religious Meetings were conducted, an average of one every other day. . . 280 employed boys, 121 high school and 566 grammar school boys have been enrolled in the Boys' Division during the year. 69 boys from the 126 attending Camp McCoy expressed a determination to live the Christian life.

1445 men were enrolled in the English and Citizenship Classes conducted in eighteen places in the City. 43 college students did volunteer teaching in English classes.

The Vocational Employment Department received 2128 calls for help and filled 1601 positions. 17,251 interviews were held by the Secretary of this Department. . . 715 members enrolled as students in 37 Educational Department classes under thirty-one instructors.

Let no one think that such statistics are cold and unimportant. Each statement summarizes the work of many and the participation, in some instances, of thousands. Here the whole philosophy of the Y.M.C.A. is illustrated. The religious emphasis is there, McCoy always insisted on that. But educational, physical, social, and welfare activities of many kinds were likewise made an essential part of the Y's program.

In recognition of McCoy's thirtieth anniversary as General Secretary, a testimonial dinner was held in the Palace Hotel on August 28, 1911, when about 200 joined with the directors of the Y to pay tribute to him for his outstanding service. McCoy was then sixty-four years old and served four more years before retiring.

## A CAMPAIGN THAT FAILED

On the occasion of his thirtieth anniversary, McCoy prepared a summary of the accomplishments during his administration and an outline of things to be done which he presented to the August 1911 meeting of the board. McCoy said in part:

First, there should be an endowment for this great building, representing nearly a million dollars in its value. We need to endow the work in this building so as to use it to its utmost capacity. Night and day its doors are never closed.

Second, at the earliest possible day we should have a building for boys as we have already outgrown the large quarters set aside for their special benefit in this great structure. We should have a Men's Hotel where every comfort and the proper moral influences could be given to the thousands of young men who are here and the great numbers who, in the next few years, will take up their abode in our city.

We should have Association buildings, less pretentious of course, than this Central Building, in the Richmond and in the Mission Districts.

When our Mason and Ellis Streets property is sold, we should add to the equity in it by raising an additional half million dollars and with these amounts we would be able to provide all these buildings and have a liberal endowment for the work.

McCoy strongly advised buying the lot immediately adjoining the building to the north, which measured 50 x 137½ feet. "We will regret it all our days if we fail to acquire that property," he declared. McCoy assured the directors that he could find enough wealthy givers to make the dream come true. "One thing is certain," he added optimistically, "there is wealth enough in this city and some men who are looking for a place to dispose of their means where it will bring the largest returns to the largest number. The community will never know our needs except we present them."

McCoy's enthusiasm was contagious. The board approved his idea of conducting a quiet campaign for \$250,000 with the understanding that as soon as this was pledged, a public campaign would be launched for the second \$250,000. It was also understood that any proceeds from the sale of the property at Mason and Ellis remaining after the payment of the mortgage of \$160,000 would become a part of this half-million fund. The majority of the board felt that the old property would bring at least \$350,000. Writing on August 22, 1912, President Watt stated: "We have had a flat offer of \$320,000 for the Ellis and Mason Sts. property, but we will decline it insisting upon our price of \$350,000." The next month the board rejected an offer of \$330,000.

History was repeating itself. Back in 1892 the board had held its old property at 232 Sutter Street for \$150,000. That year it rejected an offer of \$125,000 and continued to pay interest on a mortgage which was increased to \$80,000. Finally the property was sold in 1898 for \$91,000. The story was repeated with the property at Mason and Ellis. The mortgage of \$160,000 was carried for two years. In the meantime the indebtedness on current expenses continued to increase. By April 1914 the combined indebtedness, including \$42,357.49 in unpaid bills for furnishings and current expenses, amounted to the alarming total of \$285,157.49.

Many of the unpaid bills were pressing and were bearing interest at six per cent. The full interest charges were totaling \$1,500 a month. This was the dark background which forced the directors in 1914 to accept an offer of \$250,000 for their old property. After paying the agent's fee of \$5,000 and after taking care of the mortgage of \$160,000, the Association had but \$85,000 to apply on its debts. After certain other financial adjustments had been made, the new indebtedness stood at \$36,500. On the brighter side was the fact that their splendid property at Golden Gate and Leavenworth, valued at \$800,000, was unencumbered. The debt was further reduced by a bequest from the estate of the late Edward Coleman for \$25,000 about 1915.

In order to relieve McCoy of as much of his administrative duties as possible, the Board of Directors secured the services of Ralph C. Goodwin in the summer of 1912 to be the Associate General Secretary. The board at its September meeting clearly indicated that Goodwin was to supervise all activities within the building in order to give McCoy freedom "to take up the major problems of financing the debt, the lot, the erection of a men's hotel, and other matters which it is felt ought to be done." However, McCoy's dream of raising five hundred thousand dollars was too sanguine. The benefactors who were to give fifty thousand dollars each were never found. Undoubtedly the delay in selling the property at Mason and Ellis and the reduced amount that it brought further discouraged McCoy. Also to be remembered is the fact that McCoy passed his sixty-seventh birthday in 1914 and no doubt was losing the dynamic drive of his earlier years. Suffice it to say that by 1915 the board had faced the fact that the proposed campaign was a failure.

### CHANGES ON THE BOARD

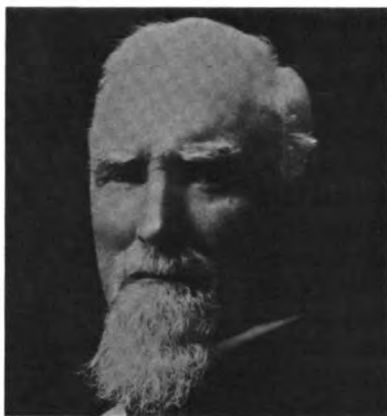
Some important changes took place in the personnel of the Board of Directors during the closing years of McCoy's administration which are worthy of mention. The meeting of the board on April 21, 1913, memorialized the passing of two of its former members, Edward Coleman who passed away on April 12, 1912, and John F. Merrill who died on October 14th of that year. Both men had rendered long and

**BOARD LEADERSHIP**

**THOMAS G. CROTHERS**  
Trustee, 1902-1957



**Volunteer Legal Counsel**  
1897-1957



**ROBERT DOLLAR**  
Director, 1912-22. President, 1916-22.  
Major contributor to Y.M.C.A. buildings  
in Wachang and Shanghai, China.



**JOHN MCCALLUM**  
Director, 1918-1933  
President, 1922-1933

**FRANCIS V. KEESLING**



**Director, 1930-1955**  
**President, 1936-1941**

faithful service to the Y and both had been generous supporters. Coleman was chairman of the Board of Trustees during the time the new building was erected. For years Merrill served as treasurer resigning this position in 1896 but remaining active on the board until 1910.

New workers were found to take the places of the old and among these additions was Captain Robert Dollar, the well-known shipping magnate, who was made a member of the Board of Directors at the December 1912 annual meeting. He was one of the incorporators of the Y.M.C.A. when it was reorganized on December 31st of that year. In February 1916, Captain Dollar was elected president of the board and served as such until he resigned in April 1922. He made his home in San Rafael where he was active as an elder in the First Presbyterian Church of that city.

Captain Dollar was one of the most colorful figures ever to walk the streets of San Francisco. He was the first to inaugurate a fleet of around-the-world ships. He had discovered that the best paying freight follows the course of the sun moving from east to west. So the Dollar ships were following this course in their globe-encircling voyages. Captain Dollar was a generous supporter of the Y work both in San Francisco and in China where he had extensive shipping interests. The sum total of his gifts to the San Francisco Association ran into many thousands of dollars. He gave \$20,000 to the local work in 1917 and for years contributed \$4,000 annually. In 1920 he gave \$7,250 to buy the twenty-five foot frontage lot adjoining the main building on Leavenworth Street which McCoy had so long wanted. In 1922 he gave \$25,000 toward the cost of erecting the Chinese Y building and also during that same year contributed \$5,000 toward the proposed building for the Japanese Y. Just before his retirement as president of the board, Captain Dollar gave \$1,000 to the retirement fund which the National Y.M.C.A. was then raising.

Among the interesting stories that cluster about his memory is that which deals with the erection of a Y.M.C.A. building at Changsha, China. It so happened that another also interested in assisting the Y program in that land was Cecil H. Gamble of Cincinnati. The two men gave the funds for the erection of the building but only Captain Dollar was present at the time it was dedicated. As he approached the site, he noted an elaborate sign placed to pay honor to the two benefactors and to inform the local populace of the generosity of their American friends. The sign read: "The Gamble Dollar YMCA." Captain Dollar feeling that the juxtaposition of the two unusual names might suggest giving approval to a certain well known Chinese failing, which the Y certainly did not wish to encourage, quietly proposed that the wording be changed. He suggested that inasmuch as Mr. Gamble was not able to be present for the dedication that the sign be changed to honor him alone while he, Captain Dollar, took honors-in-presence.



One of the greatest names in a long list of faithful and devoted workers for the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. is that of Rolla V. Watt who served as a director for over forty-four years and as president for fifteen. Never in the history of the century-old history of the Association has such a record been equalled. Watt arrived in San Francisco in 1876 as a young man of nineteen and soon afterwards became a member of the Y. In 1882, when only twenty-five years of age, he was made a director and served as such continuously until his death on May 15, 1926. During those years, he served on many committees and in various capacities. Few if any were more faithful than he in attendance at the stated meetings of the board. Watt was elected vice-president in 1892 and served as such until his election as president in 1900. He was active as a layman in one of San Francisco's Methodist churches; was well known in many community enterprises; and was successful as a business man in the insurance field.

At the time of Watt's retirement as president of the board, a testimonial dinner was held in his honor on January 18, 1915, when some 250 members of the Association were present. At this time an album containing the signatures of nearly two thousand members of the Y was presented to him as a token of the esteem in which he was held. His fellow-associates on the board gave him a beautiful mahogany grandfather's clock. Following the death of her husband in 1930, Mrs. Watt presented the clock to the Y. It now stands in the office of the General Secretary.

James S. Webster, a prominent Presbyterian layman, was selected to succeed Watt as president of the board. Webster had long been a staunch friend of the Association having served as a director since 1878. Webster took his duties very seriously. He asked for a desk at the Y and tried to spend some time there every day. During half of the year, 1915, he served as president, the Y had no General Secretary so his duties were more demanding than usually fell upon the shoulders of a president of the board. Webster was primarily responsible for the observance of Y.M.C.A. Day at the Panama Pacific International Exposition which was held in San Francisco in 1915. John R. Mott was the chief speaker for this occasion. No one was more responsible in getting Lyman L. Pierce to become General Secretary in 1915 than Webster. The Webster-Pierce combination really set the San Francisco Y on the march after nine difficult years following the earthquake and fire of 1906. Upon the advice of his physician, Webster submitted his resignation both as president and as a member of the board at the February 1916 meeting. Although he did not serve on the board as long as his friend Rolla V. Watt, Webster did retain his membership in the Y until his death in 1934, making a total membership period of fifty-six years. Few if any have equalled such a record.

## THE NAVY Y.M.C.A.

A revival of interest in Y work for military personnel came in the early months of 1908 in anticipation of the scheduled visit of the United States Fleet to San Francisco in May of that year while on its world-encircling cruise. In December 1907, shortly before the Fleet began its voyage, Admiral Dewey wrote to the Army and Navy Department of the Y.M.C.A. in New York City saying:

It occurs to me as the departure of the Fleet for the Pacific approaches, that a grand work lies ready for the YMCA to inaugurate for the aid of the enlisted men. Could not some place be secured in San Francisco where our men would find friends to look after their welfare, lodging, etc.? In short, to do the same estimable work that is now being done in the Brooklyn Navy YMCA?<sup>2</sup>

The appeal was laid on the desk of F. A. McCarl, International Secretary of the Army and Navy Department of the International Committee, who, with Walter MacArthur, chairman of the Committee for Entertainment of Enlisted Men, set about at once to meet the need. National headquarters stood ready to subsidize the project. Two things were necessary to guarantee an efficient and successful center, namely a qualified man as secretary and a suitable, well equipped building. The first need was answered when George S. Martin was appointed executive secretary of the newly established San Francisco Navy Y. Martin had served for three and a half years as the assistant secretary of the Navy Y at Vallejo and prior to that, he was the assistant secretary at the Brooklyn Navy Y for a year. Martin's connection with the San Francisco Navy Y began in April 1908 and continued until April 1941, a period of thirty-three years. Out of this long service came a special assignment with the War Work Council, April 1, 1917, to April 1, 1920.

A three-story building at 52-58 Beale Street, between Market and Mission, was rented for three months beginning in April 1908 at five hundred dollars a month. The first floor was turned into a lobby with pool tables, reading materials, writing facilities, checking and storage privileges, lunch counter, and an information center. The two upper floors became dormitories with two hundred beds which were to be rented out for twenty-five cents per night. An annex consisting of two store rooms across the street was also secured which contained an additional forty beds. All of this was made possible by a \$10,000 grant from national headquarters.

The "Naval Club House," as it was called by the *San Francisco Chronicle* of contemporary dates, was formally opened on April 22nd. All was in readiness for the arrival of the Fleet on May 6th and for the eleven days to follow when sailors by the thousands would swarm

ashore seeing the sights of the city. The enthusiastic response of the naval personnel to the accommodations provided by the Navy Y during the visit of the Fleet was so manifest and so encouraging that strong sentiment was at once expressed for the continuance of the center. A change of schedule of the Fleet provided a return visit of a number of the ships to the city. Newspaper editorials, letters of officers and men of the Fleet, and the hearty endorsement of many local citizens all supported the idea of a permanent center in San Francisco for naval personnel. The *San Francisco Chronicle*, in an editorial in its May 29th issue, said in part:

In the nature of things, naval men cannot provide such accommodations for themselves. They are here today and there tomorrow. The Government could provide them, but that is not what is wanted. If these resorts were Government institutions, they would be official institutions, and the one thing that Jack desires when on shore is to get away from everything having the semblance of officialdom. It is rest to get away from it. And if he knows himself he will not go where there is any chance that he will be reminded of it. It is, therefore, one of the duties which the people of every seaport owe to their defenders to provide for them a resort where they will be perfectly comfortable, out of the way of even a shadow of authority, and where they may rendezvous when on shore in a respectable environment and in a club house of their own.

The committee in charge of the center for the three-month period offered to turn over all of the equipment, provided a branch of the Navy Y.M.C.A. be officially established in San Francisco. The offer was accepted. A Board of Directors was appointed. An entire upper floor of a large building at 84 Market Street, containing about ten thousand square feet, was rented for \$250 a month, and on August 6, 1908, the San Francisco Branch of the Navy Y.M.C.A. was officially opened. The front part of the space was used for offices, lobby, and storage, while the rest of the area was turned into a dormitory large enough to accommodate seventy-four beds. The branch proved so popular that within eighteen months the capacity was doubled by the rental of adjoining buildings which were turned into additional dormitories. The annex was formally opened by a public reception held on February 14, 1910. In 1915 additional space was secured when the Y rented the lower floor of the main building.

Although opened as a Navy Branch of the Y.M.C.A., the center ministered to Army personnel as well. Hence the name was changed to the Army and Navy Y.M.C.A. soon after the branch was officially established. The branch continued in the two buildings at 82 and 84 Market Street until February 1, 1917, when it moved into much better quarters at 226 Embarcadero.

### THE ARMY Y.M.C.A.

A new era of Y work at the Presidio came with the opening of the Panama Pacific Exposition in 1915. The exposition authorities erected a beautiful building on the grounds for the exclusive use of men in uniform which was called "The Service Men's Club." The secretary of the Presidio Y, then Ralph Wilson, was invited to take charge of the activities within the building. At the close of the exposition, this building was offered for sale to the Army and Navy Department of the Y.M.C.A. for one dollar. Of course, this token amount was gladly paid. The War Department set aside a choice site of land directly opposite Letterman General Hospital within the Presidio and gave permission for the building to be moved to that location. Before this was done, a gymnasium was constructed in the basement. Much of the work was by volunteer labor by the soldiers. The cost of moving the building was covered by private subscriptions. This Presidio Y had the unique distinction of being the only Y in the entire west operating on Government property. This arrangement continued until 1954 when the Army took over the building.

### THE CHINESE Y.M.C.A.

The roots of the Chinese Y.M.C.A. go back to 1870 when an Association was started in Chinatown under Presbyterian auspices. This existed as an independent body entirely separate from the main San Francisco Y. According to the Rev. Ira M. Condit, a Presbyterian missionary to San Francisco's Chinatown from 1870 to 1915 and author of *The Chinaman as we see him*, the Chinese Y.M.C.A. broke up into denominational groups, each being sponsored by its own mission. Branch denominational Y.M.C.A.s were organized at various places where colonies of Chinese had settled. Condit reports that by 1900 the Presbyterian Church was sponsoring thirty Chinese Y groups throughout the country.

On July 11, 1911, an interdenominational Y.M.C.A. was organized in Chinatown. Quarters were leased at 1028 Stockton Street and a secretary was engaged. However, this Association did not affiliate with the Metropolitan Association until 1916.

### McCOY RETIRES – SUCCESSOR SELECTED

As has been stated, the Board of Directors in the summer of 1912 secured the services of Ralph C. Goodwin to be Associate General Secretary thus relieving McCoy of some of his administrative duties. After about two and a half years, Goodwin suffered a physical breakdown and was obliged in February 1915 to submit his resignation. Assistant Secretary R. M. Sommerville assumed some of the duties which Goodwin had been carrying. On July 1st of that year the Board called Ly-

man L. Pierce to be General Secretary at a salary of \$6,000 a year. McCoy's title was changed to Senior General Secretary and on November 8th the board voted to continue his five thousand dollar salary to August 5, 1916, which date was then fixed as the time for retirement. At that time McCoy would have completed his thirty-fifth year of service with the San Francisco Y. However, by a later action, this terminal date was advanced to May 15, 1917, which marked the forty-fifth anniversary of his services as a Y.M.C.A. secretary. Pierce arrived in time to begin his duties on November 1, 1915, which time may be taken as marking the end of McCoy's active service as General Secretary of the San Francisco Association.

Since the Y did not have any pension plan at that time, the board felt that some provision had to be made for retirement pay for McCoy. As early as November 17, 1910, the board had taken out a \$10,000 insurance policy on McCoy's life, the premiums of which were thereafter included in the annual budget. At its November 1915 meeting, the board voted to pay \$2,500 a year as retirement compensation after May 15, 1917. However, beginning with July 1, 1919, the board restored the full \$5,000 amount until his death two years later.

August 5, 1921, was the fortieth anniversary of McCoy's connection with the San Francisco Y. The Board of Directors remembered the date by sending a beautiful bouquet of forty roses to Mr. and Mrs. McCoy at their Berkeley home. A few days later, the end came. On August 19, 1921, Henry J. McCoy, then in his seventy-fourth year, passed away.

Statistics alone can never tell the full story of any great man's influence. But if they are read with some imagination, statistics can give some idea of accomplishments. Based on some figures McCoy gave in 1907, when he looked back on twenty-six years of service as General Secretary, and estimating for the last eight years of his administration, we find that over two million dollars was raised for Association purposes in San Francisco during this time and some fifty thousand had been enrolled as members. His influence extended far beyond the city limits of San Francisco. He was the father of the Y.M.C.A. movement throughout the state and indeed was the father-advisor of Y secretaries along the whole Pacific Coast. McCoy was largely responsible for the beginning of the Y in Honolulu where he visited in 1885. In recognition of his wide-spread influence, the University of Southern California honored him with the LL.D. degree in 1913. Since memories often pass with the generations which first received them, histories like this are necessary to keep alive the memory of one whose services should not be forgotten.



## Chapter VIII

# The Administration of Lyman L. Pierce 1915-1919

Lyman L. Pierce, who began his duties as General Secretary of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. on November 1, 1915, was a man of wide experience in the administrative work of the Association. His first duty as a Y secretary began in 1893. In 1905 he became General Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. in Washington, D.C., where he made a reputation as a money-raiser by getting \$85,000 in one month in a public campaign. This was the first time the Y in any city had ever raised so much money in a single effort. Pierce developed considerable ability in conducting financial campaigns and his services were in great demand by Associations in various cities. For a number of years before going to San Francisco, he had been somewhat of a trouble-shooter for the International Committee, holding nine positions in twenty-seven years, including General Secretaryships in Washington and Pittsburgh. He spent two years in Australia and New Zealand doing for the Associations there what he later did for the Y in San Francisco. Pierce served as General Secretary of the San Francisco Y for about four years, a longer period than he had been with any other Association.

Pierce came to San Francisco when the Y was still feeling the effects of the 1906 earthquake and fire. This catastrophe had a shattering effect upon the religious, the social, and the economic life of the city. The Y.M.C.A. lost not only its new building but also suffered by the removal from the city of many of its friends and supporters. These people moved out to the suburbs or across the Bay to Oakland and Berkeley. When Pierce began his duties, he found the life of the Y at a low ebb. The financial outlook especially was bleak. Pierce was hand-picked by the International Committee to save the San Francisco Y.M.C.A.

### INTRODUCTION OF THE METROPOLITAN PLAN

Pierce accepted the challenge with courage and enthusiasm. One of his first major steps forward was to reorganize all of the Association work of the city on the Metropolitan Plan. This plan had already been introduced in a number of eastern cities with a population of a half million or more with success. It was first tried in New York in 1887 when six independent Associations combined under a single board of directors. Such a union was imperative to avoid unpleasant competition and to coordinate the work. The Associations of other cities as Philadelphia, Brooklyn, St. Louis, and Chicago soon followed

New York's example. By 1901 there were ten Metropolitan Y.M.C.A.s in the country. When Pierce began his work in San Francisco, four other Associations were at work in the city in addition to the Central Y. These were the Chinese, the Japanese, and the two Army and Navy Y.M.C.A.s. Pierce looked upon the amalgamation of these Associations into one central organization as being of immediate and primary importance.

On February 26, 1916, Pierce submitted to the Board of Directors his ideas for the Metropolitan Plan for San Francisco. In his presentation he referred to a famous test case of the Y.M.C.A. in Chicago where the parent organization was given absolute control by the courts of its name and work in that city. The board adopted his recommendations. This meant that all Associations within the city would be brought under the control of one central administration. Each branch would have its own board or Committee of Management. The Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Y and the General Secretary would have supervision over budgets, finances, personnel, and program of each and every branch. This plan permitted the development of a city-wide strategy and the pooling of personnel and resources for the common good.

The Chinese and Japanese Branches willingly came into the plan at once. The Army and Navy work, largely because of the need for subsidy from national headquarters, remained for the time being under the direction of the Army and Navy Department of the International Committee. However, some time later they too came under the Metropolitan Plan.

The beginnings of both the Chinese and the Japanese Branches go back respectively to 1870 and 1886 when Presbyterian missionaries working with these nationals in San Francisco organized Y.M.C.A.s as church-sponsored activities. According to the *Historical Sketch, Fiftieth Anniversary Chinese YMCA, San Francisco, 1911-1961*, the present Chinese Branch dates its beginning from July 11, 1911. Evidence is lacking as to how long the denominational Chinese Y.M.C.A. continued. Judging from the account in the *Historical Sketch*, the organization which took form in 1911 was entirely independent of the earlier group. The response from Chinese young men in 1911 to the newly organized Y was so encouraging that by May 29, 1912, quarters were leased at 1028 Stockton Street and a secretary was engaged. The multiplying activities soon demanded larger quarters so in 1915 a "double store at 830 Stockton Street" was rented.

Even before the Metropolitan Plan had been put into effect, the Central Y in San Francisco was helping the Chinese Y in a financial way. Pierce, in his report to the directors on February 26, 1916, said: "Their rooms are now, through our initiative, attractive and well located. These Chinese young men, until we made this improvement,

were turning gradually against our movement because the Association was not a credit to us." On November 25, 1916, the members of the Chinese Y petitioned to be taken into the Metropolitan Plan. The board granted their request.

A Chinese Committee of Management was appointed and C. S. Lee was made the executive secretary of the new branch. Some time was spent at the January 1918 meeting of the board discussing the best location for a building for the Chinese Y. The Chinese themselves had launched a campaign for \$10,000 to buy a lot. The board approved a recommendation from the Chinese Committee of Management to purchase a site on Sacramento Street for \$13,000.

The Japanese Y was in a weak condition when taken over by the main Association. Pierce in his report of February 26, 1916, had this to say:

There is a Japanese Young Men's Christian Association independent and entirely separate and distinct, with its own appeal to the community, and yet it is following denominational lines very largely. Again and again, under similar circumstances our Movement has been discredited. The Japanese themselves desire a real Association under our patronage.

The minutes of the board are not clear as to exactly when the Japanese work became officially a part of the Metropolitan Plan. A reference is found in the minutes for June 17, 1918, to the appointment of six Japanese to be a Committee of Management for the Japanese Branch. Richard Perkins, in a letter to the author dated August 16, 1954, wrote: "I am sure that during Mr. Pierce's regime the Japanese branch was set up afresh, as I was responsible for it, and Mr. Tomizawa, who had been in one of my Bible classes, was made executive." The Board of Directors on June 28, 1918, authorized the signing of a lease for a building at 1409 Sutter Street for the use of the Japanese Branch.

An interesting development took place in March 1918 when the board voted to divide the work in the main building for the boys and the men, by assigning separate entrances to the building to each group. The action taken read: "Motion prevailed that our present Boys' Dept., 220 Golden Gate Avenue, with entrance on Leavenworth Street be designated as the Leavenworth Street Branch, and the rest of the building be designated as the Golden Gate Branch." This distinction continued for nearly ten years.

#### THE ARMY AND NAVY Y.M.C.A.

Although the Army and Navy work in San Francisco remained under the direction of the International Committee during World War I and down until 1922, when supervision was given to the San

Francisco Association, a brief review of its history during these years properly belongs to this chapter.

At the outbreak of World War I, the Army and Navy Y found itself with a splendid building located in the very heart of the Presidio, one of the most important military reservations on the Pacific Coast. The building had a fine lobby, an auditorium large enough to seat seven or eight hundred, gymnasium, grill room, parlor, and other facilities with a possible valuation of from forty to fifty thousand dollars apart from the value of the site. The work at the Presidio became so heavy that two temporary buildings were constructed, one on the Presidio grounds and the other at nearby Fort Scott. R. H. Gossom was appointed General Secretary of the Presidio Y and at the peak of the work had from twenty-five to thirty assistant secretaries. Thousands of soldiers used the facilities every day. The Physical Director of the Y, working with the Athletic Officer of the Post, directed an extensive athletic program which included all kinds of sports then popular. A strong education program was sponsored. Entertainments, lectures, motion pictures, and religious services were a part of each week's program.

During 1919, there were some 2,500 patients in Letterman General Hospital. Although the Red Cross was carrying on its own welfare program, yet the Y was privileged to render its specialized services to these men. The work of the Y continued heavy on through 1920. Statistics show that the education work, for instance, during that year involved a corps of four teachers, eight thousand class sessions with a total attendance of 54,830.

The work being done by the Y for the Navy men was on a similar scale. At the outbreak of the war the Army and Navy Y had just moved into a building at 226 Embarcadero. A five-year lease had been taken at a cost of \$700 a month. The building measured about 45 x 138 feet, was seven stories high and had a basement. The six upper floors offered sleeping accommodations for three hundred men. The Y moved into these quarters on February 1, 1917, and the formal opening was held on March 2nd. Thus the new quarters were ready for occupancy when the great emergency arose. On April 6, 1917, a little more than a month after the dedication service, the United States declared war on Germany. The strategic location of the Navy Y on the Embarcadero near the Naval Landing insured its success.

San Francisco was then the main training center for naval personnel for the whole Pacific Coast. The Naval Training Station was not transferred from Goat Island to San Diego until 1923. The rapid increase of naval personnel in San Francisco following the declaration of war brought a corresponding increase of men using the facilities of the Navy Y. So great was the demand for beds that the old buildings once occupied on 82-84 Market Street were again rented early in 1918

and continued to be used as an annex until September 1919. These quarters were given up when a building at 172 Embarcadero, just across the street from the Naval Landing was rented as an annex. This provided some three hundred beds.

### THE TEN-YEAR PLAN

At the meeting of the board held on February 26, 1916, Pierce presented his outline for a ten-year program of advance and expansion. The report filled ten-and-a-half legal-size pages, single spaced. In his introduction, he said: "The whole trend of my thinking has been and will be to discover the urgent unfinished task of the Young Men's Christian Association in San Francisco. . . ." That was his theme.

Under the section entitled: "Our Ultimate Purpose," Pierce stated:

The ultimate object is to secure spiritual results. Our impulses out into the field must needs be spiritual impulses. We must find the source of spiritual power.

The worth while values with which we are concerned are not financial values, but spiritual values. . . . Our methods must be means to spiritual ends. These ends are sometimes immediate, sometimes more remote. . . . Our organization must be the massing of spiritual leaders.

By none of this do I mean that we must talk religion always and everywhere, but if we are to measure up to the immensity of the unfinished task it must be done through spiritual forces and by spiritual men.

After this restatement of the basic philosophy underlying the objectives and work of the Y.M.C.A., Pierce dealt with some specific recommendations. He emphasized the importance of the San Francisco Y doing more in the over-seas work of the National Association. "For the sake of the reflex blessing, we need it," he urged. "For the sake of our standing among the Associations of the nation we need such a program." He urged that the members of the San Francisco Y underwrite the cost of maintaining a Y secretary abroad. In view of the desperate financial situation which the local Y was facing, such a proposal was indeed bold.

Regarding the local Association's responsibility to the community, Pierce listed six areas in which branch work should be initiated. The after effects of the fire of 1906 combined with the outbreak of World War I delayed the beginning of this part of his program. The full realization of this had to wait until after World War I. This story will be told in the chapter dealing with the administration of Pierce's successor, Richard R. Perkins.

Pierce referred to the Life Work Conferences for undergraduates of the colleges and universities which were being sponsored by the San



Francisco Y. One of these conferences was scheduled for the San Francisco Y on March 4-5 of that year. Pierce felt that such a gathering "will enable San Francisco to begin the process of producing its own men." He optimistically prophesied that out of such a group would come some young men who were fitted for "the Association vocation." And he added: "We will then establish thoroughly a training center in the San Francisco Association."

Pierce emphasized especially the importance of work with boys. "If we are to win the next generation to service and unselfishness and to the Church," he wrote, "we must address ourselves to the boys." And again: "There is no more important statement that I will ever make to this Board than this — *we must begin to close in on the boys.*" He felt that the high school movement was the greatest work the Y was then doing throughout the nation. Another aspect of boys' work was that with the employed youth.

Pierce drew the attention of the board to the need of doing something for the students in such professional schools as the University of California Medical College, Stanford University Medical College, and the College of Physicians and Surgeons — all in San Francisco. He stated that he had been in touch with the Student Secretary of the State Committee and that they proposed to initiate a plan soon by which support would be secured from the friends of these schools for a student secretary who would be on the staff of the San Francisco Y. This phase of his ten-year expansion program was never realized.

On the whole, Pierce's program constituted a blue-print of what the San Francisco Y should be doing. The fulfillment of such a program called for a deeper devotion to the ideal and a greater sacrifice on the part of all connected with the local Y than had ever been realized before. The minutes of the Board of Directors for the following ten years bear frequent reference to this ten-year program presented by Pierce. The goals that Pierce set forth were not forgotten.

### THE FINANCIAL PROBLEM

One of the first big problems that Pierce tackled was that of finance, a field in which he had had considerable experience. On the positive side, the financial report as of December 31, 1915, showed that the Y building at 220 Golden Gate was valued at \$574,382; real estate at \$135,000; and furnishings and equipment at \$92,485 — making a total of \$801,867. On the negative side was the fact that the San Francisco Y had not been balancing its budget for years. Pierce inherited an accumulated deficit of about \$93,000. The current expenses for the fiscal year immediately preceding Pierce's coming, i.e., closing on April 30, 1915, had amounted to \$139,961. The chief sources of income were membership fees, room rent, rental of first-floor rooms for stores, etc. But the combined income from all sources failed to pay the expenses.

The board sponsored a financial campaign for \$30,000 which began January 20, 1916. By February 26th, some \$22,000 had been secured. At the same time, Pierce was expanding the program of the Y which called for increased expenditures. The budget for the year ending April 30, 1916, was \$145,773, and for the following year, \$172,781. On August 14, 1916, the board learned that the operating deficit for the first six months of 1916 was \$3,866 as compared with \$12,608 for the same period in the previous year. Although the outlook had improved, yet the fact that there was still a deficit was most disturbing. At the end of the first nine months of 1916, the deficit had been increased by \$8,998. Something drastic had to be done.

The board at its November meeting voted to launch a campaign for \$500,000 in the spring of 1917. This would clear up all indebtedness, then about \$100,000; provide a \$200,000 endowment fund; and make possible the expanding program. The campaign was to be called the McCoy Commemoration and Forward Movement. During the winter of 1916-17, plans were quietly being formulated for the big effort. Captain Dollar, then president of the board, disliked debt. Pierce and Dollar worked together to make sure that everything possible was done to guarantee the success of the campaign. A special "campaigner" from national headquarters was called to San Francisco to assist in the drive. Promotional materials were printed; workers were enlisted; and the first campaign meetings were held. And then came WAR.

On April 6, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany. President Wilson called it a war to make the world safe for democracy. "We have no selfish ends to serve," the President declared. "We desire no conquest, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall make." For the most part the citizens of the United States had no conception of the terrible consequences of war. With the exception of the Spanish-American War, which by today's standards would be called a mere skirmish, the people of this country had lived in peace since the close of the Civil War. The war against the Central Powers in 1917 loomed up somewhat as a crusade. Young men rushed to the colors by the thousands without waiting to be drafted. People became vocal about their patriotism. They who stayed home and continued at their usual occupations responded with enthusiasm and liberality to the various war fund appeals which fell upon the public in succession.

The Y.M.C.A. was the first of the various welfare agencies to receive official permission from the United States Government to work with service personnel. The need was immediate and urgent. The national headquarters of the Y in New York City set up a War Work Council which issued a call in April for three million dollars and for a thousand secretaries. The financial goal was broken down into quotas for states and cities. On April 23rd, the directors of the San Francisco Y were notified that the quota for San Francisco was thirty

thousand dollars. The directors had already realized that the war situation made their own campaign for half-a-million dollars impossible. The over-all national war needs would have to take precedence. The directors voted to give "hearty support and full cooperation" in the raising of the thirty thousand dollars.

The appeal of the War Work Council for three million dollars was dwarfed a few weeks later by the call of the American Red Cross for a war fund of one hundred million dollars. Never before had such a tremendous sum been raised in the United States by volunteer gifts. The Red Cross turned to the Y.M.C.A. for help and asked for the assistance of some of its trained personnel. Among those whose services were requested was Lyman L. Pierce of San Francisco whose long experience in raising money for the Y gave him unusual qualifications for the big job the Red Cross was facing. At a meeting of the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Y held on August 9, 1917, Captain Dollar, president of the board, read a letter of appreciation from the Red Cross for the services Pierce had rendered. Pierce was praised "for the great work he has done in organizing the whole western half of our country, and making it produce so large a portion of the \$100,000,000 war fund."

With the big Red Cross drive out of the way, the directors of the San Francisco Y felt that they could begin work on their long delayed campaign. On September 11th, Pierce submitted a recommendation that they adopt a goal of half a million dollars, divided as follows:

1. Retirement of Debt	\$100,000
2. Current Expenses — 2 years	75,000
3. Building Improvements	25,000
4. McCoy Memorial or Commemoration Fund	300,000
	<u>\$500,000</u>

The McCoy Commemoration Fund was divided as follows:

Camp McCoy, Purchase & Equipment	\$ 25,000
McCoy Commemoration Building, Lot and Furnishings	200,000
McCoy Commemoration Efficiency Fund (Endowment)	75,000
	<u>\$300,000</u>

The board heard Pierce's report and voted to launch the campaign that fall. A disturbing note entered this meeting of the board when a letter from John R. Mott was read requesting the presence of Pierce at an important meeting of the National War Work Council to be held in New York City on September 21st. Signs were multiplying that the national headquarters of the Y.M.C.A. was getting ready for another big nation-wide drive for funds. Such was the case. Pierce reported on his trip East at the October meeting of the board. The following excerpt from the minutes of that meeting gives the background of the dilemma which the directors in San Francisco were facing:

Mr. Pierce reported that the demands upon the National War Work Council of the Association to furnish service among the Russian, French and Italian armies, in addition to the American army at home and abroad, had grown to such proportions that it had been the unanimous judgment of the War Work Council to carry on a campaign from November 11th to 18th, 1917, on a nation-wide basis for \$35,000,000. It was the unanimous judgment of the War Work Council that it was not desirable for any local campaigns to be merged with this attempt.

Captain Dollar had foreseen such a possible request from the War Work Council and in a letter dated September 25 to the directors of the San Francisco Y wrote:

We are requested by the War Work Council . . . to defer our attempt to collect sufficient money to pay our debts, allowing them to make their collections first, we to attempt to make ours afterwards. This I consider very impracticable. I don't consider it fair to our organization here and therefore, personally would not advise it. We must collect money and get out of debt, irrespective of any other scheme that may come up.

Captain Dollar was in New York at the time the directors met on October 5th. The directors were faced with two urgent appeals — the first was to give exclusive support to the national campaign for \$35,000,000, the second was to raise their own contemplated \$500,000 in order to cancel their debt, guarantee running expenses for two years, and provide a modest endowment. They finally voted to compromise. John R. Mott had foreseen this possibility and in a telegram to Pierce dated October 5th urged: "With all my heart I plead with you not to attempt merger [in] San Francisco." Mott promised that if San Francisco would set the example of not merging national with local demands, he would personally help San Francisco later. However, after serious deliberation, the board voted to adopt a goal of \$350,000 "to be divided equally between war work and the San Francisco Association." Dollar was notified by wire of the action taken. In New York, Captain Dollar and John R. Mott had a conference. Evidently the stern insistence of the dour Scotsman prevailed for a compromise was worked out.

Final approval of the compromise on a fifty-fifty basis was adopted by the Board of Directors on November 1st. Of the \$175,000 which the local Y was to receive if the full objectives were realized, \$100,000 would go for the retirement of the debt, and the balance to pay necessary running expenses for 1917 and 1918. These figures were printed on the pledge cards.

Richard R. Perkins, who began his twenty-three-year period of service as General Secretary of the San Francisco Y in 1919 and who had

served previously as an associate secretary with Pierce, recalls an incident which took place during the campaign which reveals Captain Dollar's loyalty to the local Association and also throws light upon his insistence that something had to be done to get the Y out of debt. When one of the largest donors was asked how he wanted his \$15,000 gift to be used, he answered: "War work." When Captain Dollar heard of this, he promptly and emphatically snapped: "All right, allocate my \$20,000 for local work."

The campaign for \$350,000 was held in November 1917. The psychology of the times was such that people gave as never before. The campaign netted over \$360,000! The funds were divided as advertised and for the first time in years the San Francisco Y was out of debt and actually had some money laid by for running expenses for at least a year in advance. However, the fact that a generous proportion of the funds received in the campaign went to pay debts was the basis for ugly rumors that were circulated for years afterwards to the embarrassment of the local Y. Some critics of the Y whispered that the San Francisco Association had raised money for war work and then spent the contributions for past debts, thus implying that the Y had not been altogether honest in its publicity or in its stewardship of funds received. The calumny persisted for some ten years. The Community Chest of San Francisco later carefully investigated the criticisms, reviewed the publicity and the pledge cards used in the campaign, and noted the final allocation of the money received. The Y was completely vindicated. Under Pierce's efficient management, the finances of the San Francisco Y continued to be in good condition during the remainder of his administration.

#### FOUR YEARS OF GROWING ACTIVITIES

The four years of the administration of General Secretary Lyman L. Pierce — November 1, 1915, to September 10, 1919 — were years of steadily growing activities and of an ever-broadening program for the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. Meetings of the Board of Directors were held once a month, with the exception of July and sometimes several special meetings were held during a single month in addition. The very fact that such busy business and professional men as Captain Robert Dollar, Rolla V. Watt, Frank I. Turner, and John H. McCallum took time to attend such meetings and to accept responsibilities connected with the work is eloquent testimony regarding the high esteem in which the Y was held in the city.

The minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors for these years deal largely with policies, financial matters, and issues connected with the World War. However, enough detail can be gleaned from the minutes and supplemental reports to give a picture of what was happening in the routine, every-day life of the San Francisco Y.



A good picture of what was being done is found in the report for the work of the Y for the month of January 1919. According to this report, 2,278 soldiers and sailors used the Physical Department of the Y during that month and that "Two men entered the Physical Department every three minutes from 9:30 A.M. to 9:30 P.M." Also to stress the numbers using the building, the report stated: "A man enters the building on the average of every fourteen seconds twelve hours of the day."

The presence of service men brought new problems. One was the rapid turnover of membership. Pierce reported a total of 7,213 members for 1918, which was about twenty per cent more than had been reported for 1914. However, there were more lapses. About forty-three per cent of the lapsed memberships was due to removals from the city. In other words, the constant shifting of military personnel brought a more transient clientele to the Y than ever before. Even though the Army and Navy Branches of the Y were majoring on work for men in uniform, the Central Branch was also busy in this regard. The report for January 1919 contains the following:

Service men in numbers are being fed and "slept" in the building free. Many are by arrangement sent and paid for by the Red Cross. Relief cases are usually referred to the Red Cross.

During 1918, thousands of service men after discharge turned to the Y.M.C.A. for help in getting a job. During this year between ten and twelve thousand men were interviewed by the Employment Secretary in the San Francisco Y and of the 3,100 positions which opened, over 2,000 were filled. "This," commented the author of the report to the board, "is an average of six a day for every working day in the entire year. One hundred and forty boys were placed." The secretaries carried on a vast amount of counselling.

The central lobby of the building at 220 Golden Gate Avenue was being used each evening from seven o'clock to closing time for social gatherings. There would be free movies, music, lectures, games, and refreshments. Religious meetings were held throughout the year until stopped by the flu epidemic. "These meetings," according to the report, "have been the largest in our recent history."

Some incidental items of interest appear in the minutes of the board or in some of the current publications. For instance, a pamphlet entitled *Man Power in Wartime*, published at the time of the campaign for funds in the latter part of 1917, listed nine Associations in as many metropolitan centers throughout the nation together with the amount of endowment funds each had. Chicago led with \$2,000,000 and San Francisco came last with only \$24,000. Another item of interest is found in the minutes of the board for July 30, 1919, when Secretary Pierce reported that "the Japanese Branch . . . had secured the

appointment of three Japanese young men as fraternal members of the Golden Gate Branch." This effort to develop good feeling between the races was a harbinger of what became increasingly a major emphasis in the program of the San Francisco Association.

After the War, Pierce decided to sever his connection with the Y and enter private business. Following his resignation in September 1919, Pierce set up the firm of Pierce-Hendrick Company which specialized in raising funds for colleges and churches. He served as president of this firm until his death in 1940. However, Pierce continued his deep interest in the San Francisco Y and became a member of its Board of Directors in October following his resignation. He continued serving as a director, often accepting special assignments, until his death.

Although his term of service was relatively short — only four years — yet Pierce rendered a tremendous service to the local Association during the difficult years of World War I. He solved the financial problem. He revitalized all departments of the Y. He outlined a ten-year program of expansion. He left a good heritage.

## Under Perkins during Years of Expansion 1919-1929

The third General Secretary to stand at the helm of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. was Richard R. Perkins who was called to this position at the meeting of the Board of Directors held on September 10, 1919. He continued in this office until September 30, 1942. Thus his administration stretches from the close of World War I through the beginning of World War II.

Perkins received his A.B. degree from Brown University in 1899. He attended Harvard in 1901-02 and received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1905. He began his Y work in 1906 when he joined the staff of the Toledo, Ohio, Association. After spending three years with the Portland, Oregon, Y, 1909-12, Perkins became associate secretary of the San Francisco Y. Thus he had six years service with the San Francisco Y before being called to the office of General Secretary. These were important years of training for Perkins, as during much of this time the General Secretary, Lyman L. Pierce, was absent on national Y.M.C.A. business. Upon the shoulders of Perkins, therefore, fell the main responsibility of directing the work of the San Francisco Y during the years of World War I. When the board found it necessary to accept the resignation of Lyman L. Pierce, the most logical and natural choice of a successor was Richard R. Perkins.

The twenty-three years of the administration of Perkins may arbitrarily be divided into two periods. The first period of ten years, 1919-29, were years of great expansion. This was the heyday in the history of the San Francisco Y when the "Ten Year Plan" drawn up by Pierce in 1916 was being fulfilled. Three major new buildings were erected; new branches were started; the finances were placed on a more stable basis through the affiliation of the Y with the Community Chest; and the whole intricate and many faceted program was expanded and strengthened. The annual budget grew to over half-a-million dollars! Then came the depression. The second period of twelve years, 1929-42, were difficult when income was severely curtailed. Staff members were dismissed; salaries were cut; much attention had to be given to direct relief work to thousands of destitute men and boys. Looking back upon those years, Perkins in a letter to the author, wrote: "I don't know how we made it." On the whole, though, these twenty-three years of the administration of Richard R. Perkins were highly significant years in the history of the San Francisco Y.

## THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

One of the great sources of strength of the whole Y.M.C.A. movement throughout the United States is to be found in the high quality of the men who have served for varying periods of time without financial compensation on the various boards of directors. The San Francisco Y has through the years been exceptionally favored in the men who have been members of its board. When the recognition dinner was held on June 30, 1942, in honor of Richard R. Perkins who was then about to retire, the program for the occasion listed the names of 140 directors who had served the Association for varying lengths of time during the years 1913-42 inclusive. This list included some of the most prominent business and professional men of the city as Fred W. Bradley, W. H. Crocker, Robert Dollar, Francis V. Keesling, John L. McNab, John H. McCallum, John A. MacGregor, J. W. Maillard Jr., Fred D. Parr, Guy Shoup, Paul Shoup, Frank I. Turner, and Curtis D. Wilbur. Several high ranking Army and Navy officers were also mentioned. These men represented all the leading Protestant denominations of the city and several nationalities. Upon the shoulders of these men rested the main responsibility for seeing that the Y remained solvent and effective in its appointed tasks.

Perkins served under five different presidents of the Board of Directors during the twenty-three years of his secretaryship. The first was Captain Robert Dollar of shipping fame. The second was John H. McCallum who became president on April 12, 1922, and served as such for eleven years. This was the second longest period of service as president of the board in the history of the San Francisco Y and ranks second only to the record set by Rolla V. Watt who was president from 1900 to 1914. McCallum was the third Scotsman in a row to sit in the president's chair for both Webster and Dollar hailed by direct importation from Scotland. McCallum came via Canada.

McCallum was an active Methodist layman and for a time served as chairman of the Methodist Extension Society of San Francisco. His community interests were many. He took an active part in such organizations as the Council of Christians and Jews, Boy Scouts, Salvation Army, Goodwill Industries, and the Community Chest. His connection with the San Francisco Y began in 1909 and continued for thirty-three consecutive years or until his death on May 26, 1942. He was president of the board from 1922-32. It was during this period that San Francisco Y had its greatest material growth. Developments long delayed, first by the fire of 1906 and then by World War I were realized. A detailed account will be given under a subsequent heading of the erection of the buildings for the Chinese Branch in 1925 and for the Embarcadero Army and Navy Y in 1926, and the Y.M.C.A. Hotel in 1928. These were major undertakings. The *Y.M.C.A. Year Book* for the year

ending April 30, 1925, listed the fifteen largest North American Associations in order of their achievements. San Francisco stood first on the list! Richard R. Perkins, looking back upon those years, wrote to the author: "All the advances were made with utmost harmony." The Association was, in navy terms, 'a happy ship,' during his incumbency.

### DEVELOPMENTS IN THE METROPOLITAN ORGANIZATION

Mention was made in the preceding chapter of the adoption of the Metropolitan Plan by the San Francisco Association in 1916. When Perkins assumed his secretaryship, the San Francisco Y had five branches — Central and Leavenworth in the main building for men and boys; the Chinese, sometimes referred to as the Stockton Street Branch; the Japanese or Sutter Street Branch; and a new branch for South San Francisco which had been initiated in the closing days of Pierce's administration. The Y work for the Army at the Presidio and for the Navy on the Embarcadero was still under the direction of the National Headquarters.

Perkins inherited also an ambitious ten-year program of expansion which Pierce had outlined to the board on February 16, 1916. Pierce then listed six communities in San Francisco which looked to the main Association for leadership in solving their problems with young men and boys. These were the Mission District, Richmond and Sunset Districts, and South San Francisco. Outside of the city were Alameda, the Peninsula (especially San Mateo County), and Marin County. The ten-year expansion plan of Secretary Pierce, made in 1916, was realized under Perkins to a remarkable extent.

#### *Branches that were Discontinued*

Before reviewing the history of the different branches that were successful, a brief reference should be made to those which for various reasons were not so fortunate. One was the work started in 1919 in the industrial section of South San Francisco. A Committee of Management was authorized for this work by the board at its meeting held on July 30, 1919. Several of the local industrial firms made contributions for a short time but these ceased when the business world suffered an economic slump following World War I. On March 29, 1921, Perkins recommended the closing of this branch which was done in April of that year.

On April 20, 1920, Perkins informed the board that the Congregational and Presbyterian National Mission Boards had invited the Y.M.C.A. to cooperate with them in the conduct of a joint project for the Spanish and Italian young men in the North Beach District of San Francisco. The board accepted the invitation and provided the services of John Titsworth, who had been serving as the Americanization



secretary at the main Y, to be the supervisor or executive secretary of the work. Quarters were leased on Green Street. The project was referred to in the minutes of the board as the Green Street Center or the Latin Branch.

For a time the work thrived. By 1922 a lot had been purchased and some \$22,000 were pledged towards the erection of a building to cost about \$70,000. However, when the board met on May 14, 1923, it learned that the Methodist Church planned to conduct its own work in that area. The Congregational and Presbyterian representatives felt it best to withdraw under these circumstances and the Y decided to do likewise. As a result the North Beach Center was closed on May 31, 1923.

Although this branch operated for only two years, its influence reached much further than its brief history would indicate. From an office located at the Green Street Center, a city-wide program for work with boys of foreign parentage was launched. The clubs and athletic activities for Japanese boys were organized and supervised by John Titsworth and Robert Simcock in cooperation with Kiyoshi Tomizawa at the Sutter Street building. Many of the activities for the boys of Japanese, Italian, and other foreign parentage were carried on at playgrounds, parks, and vacant lots. The gymnasium and swimming pool at the Central Branch were used on special occasions. The work for boys on Potrero Hill was centered in a church.

Robert Simcock, who will have served forty-two years with the Y.M.C.A. by the end of 1962, began his connection with the San Francisco Y during these years at the Green Street Center as secretary for Foreign Boys Work.

A "provisional Filipino Association" with about 125 members was reported to the board at its November 1921 meeting. Perkins explained that it was hoped room could be found for the social activities of twenty or thirty members of this group in the Y at 220 Golden Gate. A reference in the minutes of the board for April 1923 states that this group was meeting "after 10 P.M."

#### *Central and Leavenworth Street Branches*

For nearly ten years the San Francisco Y tried the experiment of having two branches, each with its own administrative committee, in the main building at Golden Gate and Leavenworth. The boys used the Leavenworth Street entrance and the men entered on Golden Gate. The dividing line was drawn at age eighteen. The Golden Gate Branch was called Central after April 1926 and both branches were merged under this name on October 10, 1927.

Some idea of the relative size of the two branches is to be seen in the reports that Perkins submitted to the board. On September 19, 1921, he said that the Golden Gate Branch had 800 members, "the largest since 1916." In 1925 he reported that the Leavenworth Street

Branch had 548 members. For a number of years, R. W. Blosser served in the double capacity of executive secretary of the Golden Gate Branch and business secretary of the Metropolitan Association. On January 14, 1924, his title was changed to comptroller.

The rental of the dormitory rooms in the main building was always an important source of revenue. The administration of this phase of the work came under the jurisdiction of the Golden Gate Branch. In 1920 the rentals brought in \$39,000. This rose to \$58,201 in 1925 during which year there was a 98.1 per cent occupancy of the rooms. This heavy demand for rooms was one of the chief reasons why the board erected the Y.M.C.A. Hotel in 1928. The average length of residence of some 552 men in 1928, who were listed as "permanent," was three and a half months. The transients, those who stayed for three days or less, numbered 2,546. By 1927 the income from room rentals had increased to \$60,000.

One of McCoy's special interests before his retirement was the acquisition by the Y of the vacant lot immediately adjoining the main building on Leavenworth Street. On October 25, 1920, the Board voted to get an option if possible on the first twenty-five foot lot. This was offered for sale at \$7,250 which Captain Dollar paid and gave to the Association. On April 13, 1925, the Association paid \$12,500 for the second twenty-five foot frontage which adjoined the lot previously purchased. This gave the Y a fifty-foot frontage on Leavenworth Street. Several projected buildings were planned for this space during the 1920s but nothing materialized. This space is now being used for a parking lot.

#### *Chinese Branch*

As has been stated, the Chinese Y.M.C.A. at 830 Stockton Street became a part of the Metropolitan Plan in 1916. In May 1926 the name was changed to the Chinese Branch. The Chinese community of San Francisco was larger than the Japanese and was more concentrated. Most of the Chinese lived in that section of the city near Portsmouth Square known as Chinatown. Certainly more glamor was attached to this work than to that for the Japanese. This no doubt accounts for the fact that it was easier to get outside money for the Chinese Y than it was for the Japanese. The Chinese aspired to have a building for their work. The minutes of the board for November 21, 1921, tell of how John R. Mott, speaking for the International Committee, offered \$100,000 for the erection of a building provided another \$100,000 was raised locally. Mott himself offered to give \$25,000 of the sum pledged by the International Committee. Captain Dollar promised \$25,000 toward the sum which was to be raised in San Francisco. The Chinese were asked to raise \$50,000 and the board assumed the responsibility for the remaining \$25,000.

The Chinese accepted the challenge with enthusiasm. By March 27,

1922, they reported \$9,000 on hand and by April this had increased to \$13,000. The following interesting item in the minutes of the board for April 17 reveals some of the difficulties the Christian Chinese were facing:

The Chinese Branch reports \$13,000 pledged from 45 contributors but no general campaign has been conducted as yet toward the funds for their new buildings. This campaign is delayed because of a test case which is being made by certain non-Christian Chinese who are attempting to extort a small payment from each Christian Chinese who returns to China. Heretofore the Christian Chinese have been exempt from this contribution since the money is used for the up-keep of old Chinese religious customs. Recently a Chinese from Sacramento was taken from the boat as he was about to sail for China on a trumped-up charge of embezzlement. In this test the Protestant Missions are taking an interest.

The minutes do not record the outcome of the test, but in the light of later developments it may be assumed that the Christians won out in their refusal to make enforced contributions for non-Christian objects. The Chinese continued their efforts to raise their quota and by April 1923 had over \$29,500 on hand. An appeal was made to other Chinese communities throughout the country. The grand total of all contributions from Chinese givers was \$57,000.

The Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Association conducted a campaign and by February 1925 had raised \$41,167 in addition to Captain Dollar's gift. A lot was purchased at 855 Sacramento Street for \$13,000 and contracts let for a building sometime before April 1925. The total cost of building and land was about \$208,000. The corner-stone was laid on July 16, 1925, by the Hon. Curtis D. Wilbur and the formal opening took place on February 22, 1926.

At the time of the dedication, the Chinese Y had a membership of 400. The new building was planned with accommodations for 300 boys. It contained a gymnasium, 40 x 70; shower room and locker room with 300 baskets; a pool, 20 x 60; game rooms, billiard room, social rooms, a few classrooms, some bedrooms, and a fine lobby. The Chinese motif was tastefully worked into the attractive Oriental gateway and throughout the lobby. The facilities provided by the new building naturally quickened interest in the Y's program. Perkins reported at the February 1929 meeting of the board that the Chinese Y had an average daily attendance of 800 during 1928.

In the spring and summer of 1929 the Chinese Branch inaugurated a unique tourist service project. Visitors had been attracted by some of the unsavory phases of Chinatown which had received wide publicity. The Chinese Christians felt that this was harmful and that the

ACTIVITIES



The San Francisco Y.M.C.A. sponsored its first youth tour to Japan in 1928. The group is shown here aboard ship, in company with the Honorable Matsudaira, Japan's ambassador to the United States.

Close ties with Japanese youth groups continue through the years. Here a group of boys from the Osaka Y.M.C.A. express appreciation of hospitality in American "Y" homes.



Informal games and singing have replaced billiards in Y.M.C.A. activities for youth.



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Chinese suffered in the estimate of the tourists. Why not show them some of the better aspects of Chinatown? In a report to the trustees dated April 8, 1929, we read: "Visitors had always been shown the back door, with much insinuation and 'bunk' crudely laid on." So the young men of the Chinese Y decided to do something about it. Guides were offered to the various groups meeting in conventions in San Francisco as the American Hospital Association with five hundred delegates; the Boy Scouts National Association, two hundred delegates; the National Livestock Association, two hundred delegates; and several smaller groups. The report continues:

The San Francisco Hotel Greeters caught the new idea and we now have the Gray Line Motor Trip Company and the Tanner Motor Trip Company, both having entirely revised their Chinatown sightseeing policy. New pamphlets are put out with a far higher romantic and education value based on facts. The Chinese people enjoy the new interpretation which includes a story of their pioneering struggles, their present achievements and aspirations.

Mark up to the credit of the Y another victory in the cultivation of good human relations!

#### *Japanese Branch*

In June 1918 an old residence at 1409 Sutter Street was purchased for the use of the Japanese Y for \$35,000 on which only \$15,000 had been paid by March 27, 1922. The balance was covered by a mortgage. This work was referred to both as the Sutter Street Branch and as the Japanese Branch, but in May 1926 the latter title was officially adopted.

The old residence, although providing club rooms for the use of about one hundred young men and boys, was far from adequate. After the North Beach Center was closed in 1923, the Japanese boys work which had centered there was moved to the Sutter Street building. This further emphasized the need for larger quarters. The minutes of the board for June 16, 1924, tell of an offer of John R. Mott to provide \$75,000 from the International Committee provided a like amount could be raised locally. This presented a real challenge for the number of Christians among the Japanese was not as large as among the Chinese. Yet by April 8, 1928, the Japanese had raised \$25,000. On December 10th of that year, the board was informed that K. K. Kawakami, formerly chairman of the Japanese Branch and then living in Japan, had raised 30,000 yen (about \$15,000) from interested Japanese in the homeland for the work in San Francisco. But after raising these \$40,000, the friends of the Japanese Y seemed to have exhausted their possibilities. There still remained another \$35,000 that had to be secured before they could qualify for Mott's offer.



A new site at 1530 Buchanan Street, between O'Farrell and Geary, with a 106 foot frontage and a depth of 137½ feet, was purchased in March 1929 for \$29,650. The board at its December meeting of that year gave considerable time to a discussion of the financial problem which the Japanese Branch faced. Even with the equity in the Sutter Street property, another \$15,000 was needed before contracts could be let for the construction of a new building. In the hope that such would be forthcoming, the board authorized the appointment of a building committee and the selection of an architect. A year passed and still there was not enough money to proceed. At its November 1930 meeting, the board considered the possibility of placing a mortgage on the proposed new building for \$18,000, subject to Mott's consent. Mott, however, adhering to the rigid policy of the International Committee, regretfully informed the San Francisco Y that the contribution of the committee could not be granted unless the new building could be erected without a debt.

And there the matter rested for the time being.

#### *The Mission Branch*

The first Branches opened during the administration of Richard R. Perkins were in the Mission and Richmond Districts. Both were approved by the board at its May 1922 meeting. A branch of the Y had operated in the Mission District from 1887 to 1911. Now after an interlude of over ten years, it was to be reopened. The new work began with the appointment of a Committee of Management and the assignment of a secretary. Boys clubs were organized which met in homes and churches. Even though the Y had no property, ten clubs were functioning before the close of the year. On March 12, 1923, the board authorized the purchase of a two-story frame building which had once been the residence of John D. Spreckels. This was located on a lot which measured 127½ feet on Howard, (later called South Van Ness), and 245 feet on 21st Street. The cost was \$32,575. The old mansion was converted into a club house. A playground, 100 x 100, was laid out on the grounds which was large enough for indoor baseball and basketball. An outdoor handball court was also built. Altogether the facilities were sufficient for a membership of 150. Perkins in his report to the Board said that twenty-seven men were residing in the building and that one hundred memberships at \$100 each had been sold and the proceeds turned into the building fund. Within six years after the purchase of the residence, the members and friends of this branch were agitating for a new and larger building.

#### *Park-Presidio Branch*

That part of San Francisco lying north of Golden Gate Park and south of the Presidio is called the Richmond District. Following the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906, many moved from the

down-town area which was destroyed to this western section. As a result the Richmond District experienced a building boom. Although the branch which the board voted to open in this area at its May 1922 meeting was first known as the Richmond Branch, within a year the name had been changed to the Park-Presidio Branch. Until a building could be secured, an office for the secretary assigned to the development of this work was opened at 4526 Geary Street. The first activities centered about the organization of boys clubs.

On September 8, 1924, George McLean, the secretary of this branch, informed the board that a site containing 200 foot frontage on 18th Avenue just north of Geary could be purchased for \$54,000. A bank was willing to take a mortgage for \$30,000. McLean felt that the balance could be secured as loans from interested business men of the district. The board, not wishing to go so far into debt, authorized the purchase of only 125 foot of the frontage and expressed the hope that the balance of the site could be secured at a later time. A building already on the lot was renovated. This provided a game room, library, two club rooms, and a gymnasium, 30 x 60, but with a ceiling too low for basketball. The building was open only in the evenings. In May 1929 the Park-Presidio Branch petitioned the board for the privilege of conducting a financial campaign for funds for a new building.

#### *Presidio Branch*

As has been stated, the Y work for the soldiers at the Presidio grew out of activities which were started during the Spanish-American War. At first the work was under the direction of the local Y but supervision passed to the Army and Navy Department at National Headquarters in 1908. In 1922 the administration of all Army and Navy work in San Francisco was transferred back to the local Association. There was but one reservation in this arrangement and that referred to the retaining of the title to the Y building on the Presidio grounds by the International Committee. Undoubtedly this reflected the unusual situation existing where the Y owned a building on a Government military reservation.

Perkins in his report for the year 1922 drew the attention of the board to the fact that the building at the Presidio was not large enough to meet the need. The International Committee, from funds left over from World War I, appropriated \$50,000 for an addition to the building, including a swimming pool. The improvements were completed by November 1924.

#### *The Embarcadero Branch*

When Perkins became General Secretary, the Navy Y.M.C.A., also known as the Army and Navy Y.M.C.A., was located in rented quarters at 226 Embarcadero with an annex across Howard Street at 172 Embarcadero. The name of this work was changed to the Embarcadero

Branch in order to indicate a welcome to civilians as well as to service personnel. The transfer of all work at the Presidio and at the Embarcadero to the local Association was consummated on March 13, 1922.

Because of the national significance of the work at the Embarcadero, the National Headquarters of the Y.M.C.A. made a grant of \$650,000 for the purchase of a suitable lot and the erection of a new building on condition that San Francisco raise \$250,000. The board of the San Francisco Association accepted the offer. At its December 1922 stated meeting, the Board was informed that the site occupied by the annex at 172 Embarcadero, which had a 137½ foot frontage, had been purchased for \$170,000. A local campaign was conducted under the direction of Lyman L. Pierce and by May 1924 over \$257,000 had been raised in cash and pledges. A number of San Francisco firms made large contributions.

The corner-stone of the new building, to cost about \$730,000, was laid on August 21, 1926, by the Hon. Curtis D. Wilbur, secretary of the Navy. The building contained the usual features found in most of the larger Y buildings as a gymnasium, swimming pool, restaurant, club and social rooms, and those special features needed by military personnel. The new building, which was given the number 166 Embarcadero, consisted of eight floors and a basement. The two dormitory wings provided sleeping accommodations for about four hundred men. The building was dedicated on December 14, 1926, with John H. McCallum, president of the board, in charge of the ceremony. George S. Martin, who had been with the San Francisco Navy Y since 1908, continued as executive secretary.

The work of the Navy Y fluctuated with the presence or absence of naval vessels in port. When the Fleet was in, the demand for services, especially sleeping accommodations, was overwhelming. Shortly after the visitation of the U.S. Fleet April 5-15, 1925, a four-page folder entitled *When the Fleet Is In* was issued which contained the following impressive statistics:

Attendance at the building . . . . .	118,000
(By actual count 7,900 entered the building in one 12 hour period)	
Beds occupied . . . . .	3,059
Slept on the floor for lack of beds . . . . .	4,379
Checks cashed . . . . .	\$11,086
Money Orders issued . . . . .	\$7,231
Articles checked . . . . .	16,108
Attendance at entertainments in the building	6,903
Attendance at Easter service . . . . .	2,254

These figures tell an eloquent story of a far-reaching ministry to the

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**INSTITUTIONAL BUILDINGS**



**EMBARCADERO ARMED SERVICES Y.M.C.A.**  
Operated during World War I as the Army and Navy Y.M.C.A. in leased headquarters near present location, 166 Embarcadero. This building was dedicated Dec. 14, 1926.



**THE CENTRAL Y.M.C.A. LOBBY**  
With its neo-Classic lines, its grandeur typified the elegance of another era, and reflected the civic pride of its builders.



**THE Y.M.C.A. HOTEL AT 351 TURK STREET**  
Charles P. Taft, son of President Taft, sealed its cornerstone on Jan. 17, 1929, twenty years after the Y.M.C.A. building at 220 Golden Gate Avenue had been dedicated by his father.

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men in uniform. In addition to those accommodated at night, the folder stated that thousands of sailors were turned away because of lack of space. The large number attending the Easter service reflects the fact that the Y sponsored a number of church parties where sailors were encouraged to go in a group to the church of their choice. In between the visits of the Fleet, the work was naturally on a much reduced scale.

On March 12, 1928, Perkins reported that the Army and Navy Association was 89.4 per cent self-supporting during 1927. Indeed, if the receipts from the restaurant and tailor shop had been included, the percentage of self-support would have been 92.7 per cent. Reporting again to the board on September 12, 1930, Perkins made mention of another visit of the Fleet to San Francisco during which time some ninety thousand enlisted men used the facilities of the Embarcadero Branch. After all beds had been rented, 645 sailors spent the nights sleeping the best they could either on chairs or stretched out on the floor.

#### *Hotel Branch*

One of the most ambitious undertakings of the San Francisco Y during the expansion program of the 1920s was the erection of a twelve-story hotel, which contained 376 single rooms, thirty-six doubles, and two triples. Thus the new hotel was able to house 454 guests.

The continuous and heavy demand for rooms in the Y building at Golden Gate and Leavenworth suggested the idea of building a Y.M.C.A. hotel. The proposal was discussed by the board as early as October 25, 1920. By good fortune the board was able to purchase two lots on Turk Street with a combined frontage of 137½ feet in January 1921 for \$65,000. The land adjoined the north-west corner of the lot on which the main Y building stood. A \$10,000 legacy, a mortgage at the bank, and some short-term loans totaling \$9,000 from members of the board and the secretarial staff made possible the purchase of the land.

Several years passed before the board was able to proceed with the erection of the building. Plans had to be approved and more important still, the necessary funds had to be raised. The board had on hand about \$100,000 in securities which represented the accumulation of bequests received over a number of years. This fund, the board decided, could be used toward the cost of building the hotel. On April 12, 1926, the board learned that the cost of erecting the proposed building would be \$414,000 exclusive of furnishings. Since the Board was engaged in other important building projects at that time, no campaign could be conducted for contributions for this project. Financing had to be done on borrowed money with the expectation that the income from room rentals would in time amortize the loans. One of the San Francisco banks offered to take the first mortgage on sixty per cent of



the value of the property. The balance would have to be raised by a second mortgage and by the sale of preferred stock or bonds at seven per cent interest.

By September 1926, the board was able to announce that the final plans for the building had been approved. Construction began on March 8, 1928, even though all of the necessary financing had not been arranged. The board went ahead in faith. On April 9th it learned that another \$40,000 was needed. After a campaign was conducted throughout all of the branches to promote the sale of stocks, Perkins was able on May 14 to report that nearly all of the needed funds were on hand.

The hotel was formally opened on December 6th. The Board took advantage of this occasion to commemorate the Association's seventy-five years of service in San Francisco. Captain Robert Dollar presented a Bible to each room which contained the following message printed on a 2 x 3 card pasted under the cover:

Presented by  
**ROBERT DOLLAR**  
 To the Y.M.C.A. Hotel  
 San Francisco  
 With the request that a chapter  
 be read every day, as I have done  
 for the past Fifty Years

Reporting to the board in September 1930, Perkins said that the average occupancy of the hotel for the preceding month was 285 as compared with 259 for the same month in 1929. This was about sixty per cent of capacity. The fact that the hotel was opened just on the eve of the great depression meant that it did not enjoy the patronage which the board had so confidently expected.

#### *San Mateo County Branch*

The San Francisco Association took the initiative in organizing branches in some of the suburban areas beginning in San Mateo County. On May 12, 1924, Perkins informed the board that a survey had been taken in that county which showed that the time was ripe for the establishment of a Y there. The board authorized the payment of a secretary's salary for two months beginning August 1st. The San Mateo County Branch was formally organized in October following. Although this work was considered to be one of the branches of the San Francisco Y, yet there was the distinct understanding that the San Mateo work would be completely independent of the parent Association in matters of finance. This was necessary in order to avoid complications with the San Francisco Community Chest.

A thriving work soon developed in San Mateo County. Robert Simcock began his ten-year service as executive secretary of this Branch

in 1927 during which time he conducted activities from an office at 1204 Burlingame Avenue, San Mateo. Here in San Mateo County the Hi-Y was first introduced into the San Francisco area. The Hi-Y movement, initiated in 1889 by D. F. Shirk of Chapman, Kansas, majored on club activities for high school boys. Later a similar work was started for high school girls which took the name of Tri-Y. An indication of Simcock's success in his club work is found in a note in the minutes of the San Francisco Association for January 9, 1928, when it was noted that the San Mateo Branch then had thirty clubs in operation and also that the branch had raised \$8,000 towards its 1928 budget. The clubs, which averaged from ten to fifteen in membership, met in homes, schools, and sometimes churches. The Y pioneered in the organization of softball teams throughout the county. This recreational activity is still being continued there but under other auspices.

THE BOOMING TWENTIES

If it had been possible back in 1920 for the members of the Board of Directors and for Secretary Perkins to gaze into some crystal ball and see the ominous developments of ten years later, surely they would have moved forward with caution. No one could foretell the stock market crash of 1929 or of the long years of the depression of the 1930s or of World War II. The San Francisco Association had only nine years, 1921-28 inclusive, for completion of its ambitious program of expansion. But of this the directors and Perkins were unaware.

A recapitulation of the building accomplishments of those years gives the following:

	Raised locally	Grant from Hdqs.	Total cost
Chinese Branch . .	\$108,000	\$100,000	\$208,000
Presidio Branch . .		50,000	50,000
Embarcadero Branch	275,000	650,000	925,000
Hotel . . . . .	100,000		479,000
	<u>\$483,000</u>	<u>\$800,000</u>	<u>\$1,662,000</u>

In addition to the above mentioned projects which were completed within the years indicated, over \$102,000 had been raised locally for proposed buildings for the Japanese, Mission, and Park-Presidio branches. There was a debt of \$379,000 on the hotel. Over and above the funds secured for new buildings, and several millions secured during this time from several sources, including the Community Chest, for current expenses, was another significant item of \$585,000 which the Metropolitan Y had raised for material improvements. The subsequent history of the San Francisco Association would have been far different had it not been for these forward steps taken in bold faith and indefatigable zeal during those years of opportunity.

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However, the major emphasis that had to be placed during those years on building campaigns, finances, and renovations had some negative aspects. The board at its November 1928 meeting took note of some of the adverse effects the "Building Era" had on other aspects of its work. It frankly faced the question as to how the on-going work of the Y for boys and men had fared during the years when it had the distracting dual task of "program activities" within and "scaffold" work without. Here are some quotations from the findings:

Diversion of much of the best leadership, in a degree, from the chief function — Christian Character building.

Unevenness in program. Unifying comes from the top of an organization. The top has, largely, been busy with many necessary things.

There have been many volunteers in sub-committees, leaders' groups, teams, clubs, classes, camps, who have never broken step.

A review of the program activities of these years under review shows that in spite of the diversion of time and energy on the part of many of the staff members to the building effort, much was accomplished in the on-going work for boys and men. Much credit for this is due to the volunteer assistants.

#### A SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

When the Y.M.C.A. was first established in San Francisco, it majored on ministering to the spiritual and mental needs of its members. At that time no attention was given to the physical. By 1920 less emphasis was being given to the evangelistic and religious work than had been the case during the early years of the Y's history. The presence of well equipped gymnasiums in the larger branches meant that much attention was being given to physical training and athletics. However, the spiritual emphasis was not being neglected. The introduction of many character-building projects meant that the Association was striving for the same objective by new and modern approaches.

##### *The Religious*

Richard R. Perkins came into the Association work as a minister and a sociologist. He had taken a full three-year theological course at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, following which he was ordained as a Baptist minister. He then secured an earned doctorate from the University of Chicago in sociology. This basic training that he received is indicative of his special interests. During his three years service in the Portland, Oregon, Y.M.C.A., Perkins met with outstanding success in the Association's program of religious education and in directing young men into the local churches. However, when he took up his work in San Francisco, he found an entirely different

situation. Here the atmosphere at that time was not so favorable for the religious emphasis. For one thing, Perkins found it more difficult in San Francisco to secure the same degree of cooperation from the ministers and the local churches that he had received in Portland. At the end of his first year's service in San Francisco, Perkins told his colleagues at a staff-conference: "Don't ask or expect too much from the pastors; they are much over-worked; but give them everything you've got."

In his report to the board summarizing his activities for 1920, Perkins said that over thirty Bible classes were operating, about eighty per cent of which were for boys. Religious meetings were held each Sunday in the main building. On March 14, 1921, Perkins told the board about special services which had been held for the men living in the dormitory rooms of the Y. "Out of one of these meetings with 75 men present," said Perkins, "there were 16 decisions for a forward step in the Christian life. In two other small meetings during the month, there were 19 decisions." During a series of evangelistic meetings held in the fall of 1921 under the sponsorship of the Y, about three hundred made public confession of their faith in Christ.

Perkins in his report for the year ending in April 1922 said that the Y had conducted forty-six Bible classes with a total attendance of 18,726 and that 47,124 had attended 448 religious meetings. Christian decisions had numbered 722 of whom 203 had joined churches. In his report for the following year, Perkins mentioned the Thursday evening prayer meetings and the late Sunday afternoon vesper services which were being held at the Y. The Week of Prayer in November was observed with sixty-five separate meetings. These Week of Prayer observances continued over several years. All such statistics reflect the deep personal interest that Perkins took in the spiritual aspects of the Y's program. However, after 1921 a gradual shift in the Association's program of religious activities is noted. Less and less attention was being given to the methods once so effective and popular as evangelistic services, public decisions for Christ, weekly prayer meetings, and the like. More attention was paid to group activities and character building projects.

#### *The Educational — Golden Gate College*

In the early days of the history of the Y in San Francisco, the young men were attracted by a library and by literary societies in which individuals took turns reading an original essay. By 1920 such an approach had entirely disappeared. With the coming of the public library, there was no longer any need for a Y.M.C.A. library. When the new building was erected following the earthquake and fire of 1906, no space was allotted for a library. Only some newspapers and current magazines were taken for use in the main lobby or in one of the social rooms.

However, the Y did sponsor educational work in special fields for the benefit of young men who had not been able to complete their education in high school or in college. As has been stated, a night school dating back to 1895 was a feature of the Y's program at Mason and Ellis Streets. There was then a definite need to help employed teen-age boys complete their high school training. Before the turn of the century, the Y was offering specialized courses in mechanical drawing, Americanization, some engineering subjects, and a variety of vocational subjects as bookkeeping, typing, and commercial art. An evening law school was launched in 1901 which was incorporated in 1910 and given the right to confer degrees.

In 1908 the Y established a four-year evening course in accountancy which became the School of Accountancy, the first of its kind in the West. In the report of activities for 1920, we learn that 1,320 different students had been enrolled in various courses conducted in the Y, exclusive of those taking the citizenship and English courses. Gradually the work below college level was discontinued. The technical schools expanded their programs and by 1923 all work offered was of college grade.

On April 9, 1923, the board was told that the various schools had been incorporated under the name of Golden Gate College with authority under California law to confer collegiate degrees. The School of Traffic, also the first of its kind on the Pacific Coast, was established in 1923. And in 1927 the School of Insurance, another pioneering undertaking, was started. The Law School remained one of the strong departments of the college. The report made to the directors in May 1923 claimed: "In the 22 years of the Law School, of all the students taking the California Bar Examination, all have passed but one." The Law School is on the approved list of the American Bar Association. Graduates of the school are qualified to apply for admission to practice in any state of the United States.

A statistical study of 419 students enrolled in the college in February 1926 showed that 75 per cent were 20-29 years of age; 60 per cent were single; 20 per cent had had a partial high school course; 40 per cent were high school graduates; 14 per cent had taken some college work; and 13 per cent were college graduates. The majority of the students were single men in their early twenties who, for various reasons, had not been able to get the education they wanted elsewhere. The college was often called "The College of the Second Chance." The religious affiliations of the 419 showed that 290 were Protestants; 62 Roman Catholics; 26 Jewish; 8 Christian Scientists; and 33 gave no affiliation.

### *The Physical*

A review of the athletic program of the Metropolitan Y shows that most of the recognized sports of the day were being sponsored including basketball, indoor baseball, volley ball, swimming, handball, ten-



nis, bowling, track and field. The only major sport not listed was football. Competition between teams was encouraged through the organization of athletic associations. On November 21, 1921, Wiley Winsor, physical director of the Metropolitan Association, reported that the Retail Athletic Association had twelve basket ball teams with sixty-six games scheduled; the Industrial Athletic Association had twenty-two teams playing one hundred and ten games; the Business Men's Basketball League were to play forty-six games with ten teams; and the Protestant Church Athletic Association had scheduled two hundred thirty games for fifty-three teams. According to a report given on August 28, 1922, to the board, over seventy-six thousand young men and boys were competing in some form of athletic activity in a city-wide program sponsored by the Y. Seven gymnasiums outside of those in Association buildings were being used by the Physical Committee and there was pressing demand for more space. This is indicative of the extent of the activities which marked this aspect of the Y's program during those booming years of the 1920s.

### *Boys Work*

Beginning about 1900 during the administration of Secretary McCoy, the San Francisco Y began to give increasing attention to work with boys. In 1901 a summer camp for boys, called Camp McCoy, was started. After occupying several temporary locations, a splendid twenty-three acre site was found in the Stanislaus National Forest near Pinecrest in Tuolumne County, about one mile from Strawberry Lake. The site was leased from the Government in 1921 during the summer of which year the first camp was held there. In the fall of 1922 the Boys Work Committee secured an appropriation from the Metropolitan budget for two thousand dollars for equipment for the camp. Each year thereafter additional improvements were made. By 1930 a folder describing the facilities offered by the camp listed a corral for riding horses, a baseball field, cinder track, tennis courts, swimming pool (given as a memorial for her husband by Mrs. Rolla Watt), horseshoe pits, and a croquet lawn. The camp also had a store, central lodge, dining room and kitchen, cabins, and cabin tents.

Camp McCoy was used to capacity year after year. In 1928 another site was secured in San Mateo Memorial Park south of San Francisco. This was called Camp YuMiCiA. The syllables in the name had no special significance but were devised to fit into a jingle rhyme which was sung. The nearness of this camp to San Francisco made possible week-end camping trips for the boys. By 1929 more boys were able to go to this camp than to Camp McCoy in the Sierras. According to a report given to the board in September 1930, the total attendance of boys at the two locations during the preceding summer totaled 536 in addition to the leaders.

Boys work included the sponsorship of boys clubs. According to a

## ACTIVITIES



During the era of World War I, this 13-year-old girl helped her father, a Russian immigrant who had arrived here 16 years earlier, to enroll in a Y.M.C.A. citizenship class.

When President Sukarno of Indonesia visited San Francisco, these Y.M.C.A. young people told him about the World Service campaign fund which they had earmarked for Indonesia.



Regimented exercise was a familiar routine at the turn of the century.

Y.M.C.A. young people exercise in more informal fashion today.



report given to the board in May 1923, the Y was sponsoring forty Pioneer Clubs for boys 10-13 years of age with an average of fifteen to a club. By April 1927, there were 107 such clubs in operation in San Francisco and San Mateo County with a total enrollment of 2,200. Most of these groups met in the evenings.

A project of unusual interest and with great popular appeal was launched in 1927 when a "Boys Night" program was given on March 4th in the Civic Auditorium of San Francisco. Ben Dixon, chairman of the Boys Work Committee of the Metropolitan Association was in charge. The following item from the minutes of the board for March 14th tells the story:

Mr. Dixon reported on the Boys Nite at the Auditorium. He stated that there were about 6,700 present besides 1,200 boys participating. Hundreds of people were turned away because there was not room enough inside and the doors were closed. He stated that in his 25 years connection with the Y.M.C.A. it was the finest publicity he had seen in connection with the Association, and it was also a splendid thing for the boys of the city.

A similar program was given on March 9, 1928, also in the Civic Auditorium with another capacity crowd of six thousand. This time about three thousand boys participated. The minutes of the board contain no record of the continuance of this project after 1928.

Another unique project called "Hands Across the Pacific" was launched in 1928 when the Y sponsored the sending of a group of boys to Japan. This tour not only gave the boys participating a wonderful experience but also helped to cultivate good-will between the Japanese and the Americans. A party of twenty-two boys with E. P. Hunt as their advisor sailed from San Francisco on June 11th. Each boy paid five hundred dollars for the round-trip. The tour extended over sixty-four days. Similar tours were conducted in 1929 and 1930. The project had to be discontinued during the depression but was renewed after World War II. R. W. Simcock took a party to Japan in 1952. In turn the Japanese have sponsored two tours to the United States.

#### *Other Activities*

A variety of other activities were also being carried on during these years under review at the Central Y and at the other branches. A record in the minutes of the board for October 1920 reads as follows: "Golden Gate Branch has a full social program three nights per week — a program FOR and BY young people. All six branches together present a surprising amount of clean, interesting, social life quite unique in the city." Young women were invited to such gatherings.

One of the continuing projects, which dates back to the very beginning of the San Francisco Y, was the employment desk. Perkins in his report for 1920 referred to the assistance rendered by the Metropolitan

Y to the unemployed among the Japanese, the Chinese, and the Latin populations. Also, following World War I, many ex-service men turned to the Y for help in finding jobs. Perkins said: "Nearly 3,000 ex-service men have secured employment in the eighteen months closing July 1, 1921, free of cost to themselves." Although the Y's employment service, for many valid reasons, was supposed to be in behalf of Y members, yet Perkins reported in April 1923 that of 2,560 men placed in 1922, there were 523 non-members. Here was a service rendered to the needy which went the second mile. Before the May 24, 1923, meeting of the board, Perkins stated that the average monthly wage of those placed was \$97.50 and the average age was twenty-four. Much of the service rendered to utter strangers who turned to the Y for help was not to the so-called "dead beats," but rather to young men who were "broke but decent."

As in the early days of the history of the Y, many young men became stranded in San Francisco and the Y helped to return them to their homes. In November 1921 Perkins told the board that arrangements had been made with the Southern Pacific and Western Pacific Railroads whereby stranded men who might become a burden on charitable agencies in San Francisco were returned to their homes at one-half fare. Perkins said: "Two or three per month have thus been sent away during 1921." The Y paid the one-half fare. In April 1923 Perkins again mentioned this need when he informed the board: "A large number of men . . . are each year sent to their homes who otherwise would be dependent in San Francisco."

One of the most needy and at the same time most confidential services rendered by the Y during these years under review was to ex-prisoners on parole from San Quentin prison. In the minutes of the board for November 21, 1921: we read:

Mr. Green of the Golden Gate Branch has added to his work for ex-prisoners from San Quentin (whom he has placed largely in two firms) a work for men stranded away from home. . . .

And again in the minutes for April 1923:

Confidential — about 100 men per year are paroled from prisons to Mr. Green, . . . [who] secures positions necessary to their release, enlists the interest of the employers and receives reports concerning occupation, use of money, friends, personal programs, etc., from each man so long as he is under parole.

Who can measure the good that followed such a service?

### THE FINANCIAL SITUATION

The history of the early years of the San Francisco Y might be summed up as being a series of financial crises. Since the Y was entirely dependent upon current receipts for funds to cover expenses, it never



was free from this concern regarding income. As the program expanded, so likewise did the need for more money. There was always the struggle to make ends meet. Throughout the first sixty-six years of its history, or until the beginning of Perkins' administration in 1919, deficits and debts were common. Campaigns and membership drives were annual affairs even after 1915. Even mortgages were not unknown. The inclusion of the Metropolitan Y in the San Francisco Community Chest beginning in 1923 greatly eased this continuing and sometimes most distressing financial problem.

When Perkins became General Secretary in the fall of 1919, he resolved that he would do everything possible to avoid a deficit in the current expense budget. In this determination he had the hearty support of Captain Dollar. On January 10, 1921, Perkins informed the board that "the Association had passed through the year without borrowing money and without withholding payment of bills." The last clause is rather suggestive of what sometimes happened in order to balance the books for the year.

For years a major source of income was membership dues. The annual report for 1920 shows that there were 3,764 paid members. By 1929 this number had increased to 7,500. At \$10 each, this brought in an income for that year of \$75,000. The main building at Golden Gate and Leavenworth had office space for rent on the street level and also had its 140 residential rooms. These rentals made a substantial contribution each year to the Y's income. But after all such income was added together, there still remained need for additional funds in order to meet expenses.

On March 14, 1921, Lyman Pierce, then chairman of the Finance Committee of the board, suggested that a campaign be held in June of that year for \$120,000 to cover a \$70,000 budget and to make alterations in the building. The campaign was held and over \$54,000 was raised from 2,048 contributors. The budget adopted in the March 29, 1921, meeting of the board for 1921 was \$119,780. As the work expanded, the need for a financial secretary became imperative. The first to be secured for this position was Alfred O. Booth whose services were secured at the August 17, 1921, meeting of the board with an annual salary of \$4,000.

When the board met in January 1922, it learned that the deficit for 1921 was \$10,500. Although the situation had improved, there was still need for a campaign for contributions. The Y was not self-supporting. A campaign goal of \$90,000 was set with plans for an intensive effort of solicitation to be made in February. At the March 27th meeting of the board, Perkins reported that \$68,928 had been raised from 1,963 individuals and firms.

On October 9, 1922, the Board of Directors voted to enter the Community Chest and support it "heartily." By entering this combined



community appeal, the Y had to accept certain limitations on its promotion program. It was no longer free to launch special campaigns without the consent of the Chest officials. A typical illustration of this is found in a report given to the board on November 19, 1923: "The Community Chest has asked that the Boys' Committee do not solicit further in the community on account of the Boys' Camp equipment fund without placing the case before the Budget Committee of the Community Chest."

On November 7, 1922, the directors met to consider the budget for 1923. The combined budget for all of the branches amounted to \$306,365, exclusive of \$22,465 for such items as assessments due for State Y work, the employee's retirement fund, and equipment. Nor did it include \$54,490 which represented the combined deficits of the various branches and \$29,300 which the local Association was supposed to contribute to the International Committee and for Foreign Y work. The total needs for 1923 were \$500,135. Over half-a-million dollars! The administration of the Metropolitan Y had become big business! The estimated income to meet this budget was placed at \$231,315. There was still a balance needed of over \$268,000. Toward this amount the Community Chest paid \$171,305 to the Y in 1923.

R. W. Blosser succeeded Booth as financial secretary and on January 14, 1924, his title was changed to comptroller. At this meeting of the board, Blosser reported that the Y had closed the year 1923 with a balance of \$16.01. Evidently some adjustments had been made in the budget or some unexpected monies had been received. There was no special drive for funds in 1923. What a relief!

The Community Chest contributed the following amounts to the Y for the years indicated: 1924—\$180,830; 1925—\$180,830; 1926—\$177,000; 1927—\$165,690; 1928—\$165,690; and 1929—\$163,751. These annual payments were deeply appreciated. But it meant that the expenditures had to be limited to these sums plus such receipts as normally came in from membership dues, rentals, etc. There was still a struggle to make the accounts balance. Sometimes members of the board and of the secretarial staff dipped into their own pockets to make the books balance. The balance on hand at the end of 1928 was only seven cents. The total income from sources other than the Community Chest ranged from \$238,489 in 1924 to \$325,689 in 1927. The total expense for the same years was \$419,307 and \$497,978 respectively.

The directors at their meeting held on December 15, 1924, became aware of the inevitable contest for the favored attention of the Community Chest of the "charity agencies" and the "welfare agencies." The Chest officials had ruled that the former were to have first consideration. The Y entered a protest.

On February 11, 1929, Perkins reported to the board: "The present employed staff of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. includes 178 full time

employees and 73 part time, or a total of 251, and that more than 1,400 volunteers are regularly serving in some capacity." As early as 1920 the board approved the invitation of the National Headquarters to participate in a Retirement Plan. Retirement was made compulsory for secretaries on the headquarters staff at age sixty but local Associations were allowed to make this optional. John D. Rockefeller gave one million dollars to help get the plan started. California was given a quota of \$56,000 of which amount the San Francisco Association was expected to contribute \$13,750. By April 12, 1922, San Francisco had raised \$3,630 of which amount Captain Dollar had given \$1,000. By 1923 payments to the Retirement Plan were included in the annual budget and in time the full amount was paid. The plan provided 1½ per cent of the average salary for the last ten years of service multiplied by the number of years of accredited service upon retirement.

The participation of the San Francisco Association in the overseas work of the International Committee also called for money. The World Service program of the YMCA began in 1889. In that year the International Committee appointed its first overseas secretaries. John T. Swift was sent to Japan and David Conaughy to India. In 1925 the San Francisco Association was given a quota of \$15,500 for its share of the overseas work and the next year the quota was set at \$17,280. In addition the San Francisco Association was asked to contribute \$4,500 for the national work of the Y in 1925 and \$6,720 in 1926. These figures are indicative of the quotas given for the following years. Such items could not be placed in the budget submitted to the Community Chest. President McCallum in speaking to his fellow board members in January 1926 indicated the intention of the San Francisco Y "to exert itself to the fullest to meet these quotas."

The stock market crash of October 1929 had nation-wide repercussions. Everybody, rich and poor alike, was sooner or later affected. The *New York Times* for October 29, 1929, appeared with great black headlines: STOCK PRICES SLUMP \$14,000,000,000. It took some time before the full effect of the crash was felt throughout the nation. Unemployment began to be apparent in 1930 and was more so in 1931. The full effect of the depression was not felt until about 1933-35.

The minutes of the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Association say nothing about the shattering events taking place in the financial work in the fall of 1929. Things were going very much as usual. The board at its November meeting was still planning to ask the Community Chest to make a contribution of \$198,000 for its work in 1930. Plans were being discussed for the erection of the proposed building for the Japanese Branch. But the financial tide had already turned. The boom days were over.

But the story of the San Francisco Y during the depression years of the 1930s belongs to the next chapter.

## Under Perkins during the Depression 1930-1942

The second half of the administration of Richard R. Perkins as General Secretary of the San Francisco Metropolitan Y.M.C.A. covers the years of the depression and the first nine months of World War II. Financially, the years during the early 1930s were the most difficult as the sharp reduction of income meant fewer on the staff, a cut in salaries, and some limitation of program. After 1935 the Metropolitan Y began to feel an easing of the financial restrictions. The latter years of this decade show a gradual recovery from the effects of the depression. Structurally the San Francisco Association was reorganized through the adoption of a new constitution and a set of by-laws. Adjustments were being made to new conditions. Fortunately these adjustments had been completed before the United States was so precipitously sucked into the maelstrom of World War II by the events of Pearl Harbor Sunday, December 7, 1941.

The San Francisco Y was most favored during these years in having as its chief administrative officer Richard R. Perkins whose many years of experience admirably fitted him for this testing time. Likewise the San Francisco Y was highly favored during these years in having such capable and devoted men serving on the Board of Directors. Mention has been made of John H. McCallum who was president of the board from April 12, 1922, to February 20, 1933. McCallum first became a director in 1909. He was a member of the State Y.M.C.A. Committee from 1917-32 and a member of the National Council of Y.M.C.A.s in the United States 1923-29. During his administration as president of the board, the number of branches grew from five to ten; the volunteer committee men increased from 600 to more than 1200; and the membership expanded from 6,000 to 13,000. At its meeting held on March 13, 1933, the board paid high tribute to McCallum "for the undramatic, serious and constant application he has given of his powers to this task." Perkins emphasized that his spirit and ability were "priceless during these years."

Upon the capable shoulders of Guy V. Shoup, chief counsel of the Southern Pacific Railroad, fell the lot of being president of the board during the darkest years of the depression, 1933-35. Shoup was first elected to the Board of Directors in 1924. He served as vice-president from 1924-32. Following his service as president, he remained a member of the board until April 1939. The Y was obliged to make many readjustments during Shoup's administration because of the serious

curtailment of income. But even so, there were some important material advances during these years. The Jones Gulch property in San Mateo was purchased for \$15,000 and dedicated as a camp site on June 24, 1934. The Japanese Branch building was completed in 1936, which means that the final arrangements for financing its construction were made during Shoup's presidency. Perkins wrote regarding Shoup's contribution: "He handed over to his successor not a greatly weakened Association, but a 'heads-up' one, alerted once again for new advances."

Francis V. Keesling was elected president of the Board of Directors at the January 20, 1936, meeting, and served until January 19, 1942. Keesling was first made a director in 1930. He remained a member of the board for ten years after the completion of his six-year term as president.

These were years of re-evaluation. Keesling was constantly asking such questions as: "Why is this done? Why is this done this way? Is there not a better way?" For years many on the board had felt that the constitution of the Association needed rewriting. Reference to this appears, for instance, in the minutes of the board for February 14, 1921. Keesling's inquisitive approach to the administration of the Y's program brought this feeling to a focus. The board at its meeting held in December 1937 appointed a committee to draw up a new constitution. This was adopted at the December 1940 meeting. During Keesling's term of office the San Francisco Association maintained a high rank of efficiency among the nineteen Metropolitan Associations of the United States and Canada. In one respect, however, it was at the bottom of the list and that was in regard to income from endowment. Keesling's administration left an indelible impression upon the San Francisco Y.

The minutes of the Board of Directors for December 15, 1941, which Keesling moderated, indirectly refer to the outbreak of war. Already the Association was having "blackout" problems. Programs for service men had to be given in darkness or by the dim light of candles. As many as 450 men were sleeping on the floor of the Presidio Branch building. A new president of the board, Dr. George H. Becker, was elected in January 1942. Upon him fell the main responsibility of guiding the activities of the Board of Directors during the strenuous days of World War II.

### THE EVANGELICAL TEST

In the early history of the Y.M.C.A. both in England and in America, there was a strong evangelical emphasis. The Y was the hand-maiden of the church. It was dedicated to the great task of winning young men to Christ and of training them in Christian leadership. A vital part of the Y's program in the early years of its history was to provide whole-

some surroundings and activities for young men in Metropolitan centers who were away from home.

The first Y.M.C.A. on American soil was established in Montreal, Canada, on November 25, 1851. Here no membership in an evangelical church was required to become a member of the Y. An Association was organized at Boston, Massachusetts, on December 29th of the same year. Here the theological climate was radically different from that which existed in Montreal. Theological lines in Boston in 1851 were being tightly drawn between the evangelicals and the liberals, between the Trinitarians and the Unitarians and/or the Universalists. The rise of Unitarianism beginning about 1800 had through the years following swept hundreds of churches, including some of the most historic as that at Plymouth, out of the Congregational fold into the liberal movement. The Trinitarian ministers and laymen of Boston looked upon the Y.M.C.A. as a possible strong arm of the church to safeguard the evangelical faith for young men. Thus from the very beginning, the Boston Y was allied with the Trinitarian or evangelical churches. Only members of such churches could become active members of the Y.M.C.A. Since the constitution of the Boston Y was used so widely as the model in the establishment of other Associations throughout the United States, this "evangelical test," as it came to be known, became a standard requirement for membership in most of the Associations. Even the Montreal Association in 1854 adopted the Boston requirement for membership. However, within the United States there were a few Associations organized before the Civil War which did not adopt this provision.

This exclusiveness of membership so general in the United States was not a provision of the parent Association in London. Moreover, when the Y movement spread to certain European countries where the state church was predominant, the evangelical test could not be applied. The World Alliance of the Y.M.C.A. was organized in Paris in 1855 at which time the American requirement of membership in an evangelical church as a prerequisite for membership in the Y came up for discussion. As a result the following was adopted:

The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those young men who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of His kingdom among young men.<sup>1</sup>

This became known as the "Paris basis" for membership. By this standard a Roman Catholic could become an active member of a Y.M.C.A. Following the Paris meeting, a considerable sentiment developed in the United States to accept the Paris basis for membership in place of the evangelical test. By 1868 when the International Con-



vention met in Detroit, about 60 per cent of the Associations reporting to the Executive Committee still had the evangelical test; 8 per cent required church membership without indicating denomination; and 30 per cent required a "good character" test.<sup>2</sup> The Detroit meeting adopted a recommendation to the effect that Associations should restrict membership and office-holding to those "who testify their faith by becoming and remaining members of churches held to be Evangelical." No definition was given of "Evangelical."

When the International Convention met in Portland, Maine, in 1869, an effort was made to outline what was meant by evangelical. A committee of five, four of whom were ministers, drew up a statement which spelled out the meaning in specific theological terms.<sup>3</sup> This involved theological statement, which is really a creed, became known as the "Portland test" and reads as follows:

And we hold those churches to be Evangelical which, maintaining the Holy Scriptures to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice, do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (the only begotten of the Father, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, in whom dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and who was made sin for us, though knowing no sin, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree), as the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved from everlasting punishment.<sup>4</sup>

This Portland Convention voted that all new Associations being formed after that date should restrict membership and the right to hold office to that conception of what membership in an evangelical church meant. Hopkins in his *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America*, states that by 1885 the test had been almost unanimously adopted.<sup>5</sup>

A new ferment, however, was moving in the theological world of the United States during the latter part of the 19th century. The social gospel was being stressed. Higher criticism was being taught in some theological seminaries. New versions of the English Bible appeared in England in 1881 and in the United States in 1901. These revisions were most disturbing to those who believed in the verbal inspiration of the King James version. Many Y leaders began to feel that the Portland test was too inflexible and too theological. A strict application of the test was increasingly restricting the Y's ministry. How could the Y.M.C.A. reach young men of every faith and of no faith if this test were to be applied literally? In many Associations, including that of San Francisco, the number of Roman Catholics active in the Y's program outnumbered those of any other single denomination. By 1890 a movement toward a more liberal interpretation of the requirements for membership was noticeable among Y.M.C.A. leaders. The writings of such men as Washington Gladden began to be used as

study books in many Associations. Yet at the same time other Associations were using the fundamentalist Bible lessons of Dr. C. I. Scofield together with his annotated version of the King James Bible.

Tribute must be paid to the dynamic drive of evangelical Protestantism on the part of the majority of the Y leaders during the first fifty years of its history in the United States. The influences of the great evangelist Dwight L. Moody in Y circles is well known. Most of the leaders of the Association were not theologically minded. As Hopkins points out, they came for the most part from Bible-reading and Sunday-observing middle-class homes.<sup>6</sup> They had been reared in a conservative church atmosphere but with a decided bent to emphasize the practical side of the Christian faith.

The first important modification of the Portland test came through the student Associations. The International Convention of 1907 permitted these Associations to accept as members those who might not be members of an evangelical church but who accepted "Jesus Christ as He is offered in the Holy Scriptures as their God and Saviour."<sup>7</sup> At the 1925 meeting of the International Convention held in Washington, D.C., the evangelical test was made optional. And in 1933 the National Council voted: "that each Association might determine the qualifications of its voting members and boards of control, provided only that such members 'be in accord with the purposes, ideals and spirit of the Y.M.C.A.'"<sup>8</sup>

In general the San Francisco Association followed the common practice. The new constitution adopted by the local Y on June 29, 1905, retained the evangelical test for active members. The article read:

Any man, a member in good standing of an evangelical church, who has reached the age of eighteen years, may become an active member by the payment of twelve dollars, annually in advance, and shall have all the privileges of the Association specified in the Manual of Information. Active members who have reached the age of twenty-one shall have the right to vote and hold office.

An analysis of the religious affiliations of 3,764 paid members of the San Francisco Association for 1920 shows the following: Protestants — 1,101 of whom 727 were members of a church; Roman Catholics — 331; Jewish — 36; Christian Scientists — 86; no affiliation — 438; unknown — 1,726; and the balance was scattered among the smaller religious bodies. In general the San Francisco Y during these years under review proceeded on the assumption that only members of an evangelical church could vote and hold office but there is no evidence that any special effort was made to enforce such a rule. The gradual lessening of emphasis on the evangelical test for membership in the Y.M.C.A. which came after World War I throughout the nation was characteristic of the attitude existing in San Francisco.

Richard Perkins in a letter to the author dated September 18, 1959, wrote:

When I arrived in 1913 and for many years thereafter Board members were all evangelicals. Somewhere in the 30s, I would think, this policy was broken by the election of a Director who at the age of ten had, with his family, left the Catholic Church in San Jose. . . . He was much interested in religion.

At the time of his election to the board, this particular individual was not a member of any church although he expressed an interest in the Protestant Episcopal. Sometime in the mid 1930s, the San Francisco Y eliminated the question regarding church membership on the application forms to be filled out by those wishing to join. In 1947 the San Francisco Association adopted a statement of religious philosophy which stressed the inter-faith aspect of religion. Of this more will be said later.

#### RELIEF WORK DURING THE DEPRESSION

There was widespread unemployment throughout the nation even before the stock market crash of October 1929. This unemployment brought hunger, destitution, and despair to thousands of young men and boys who for various reasons had become stranded in San Francisco. During 1929, the San Francisco Y rendered direct aid to 3,059 young men and boys at a cost of \$7,482 when lodging was figured at twenty-five cents a night and meals at fifty cents a day. In addition \$8,632 was given in temporary loans. Perkins reported on January 19, 1930, that 1,921 had at that time failed to repay loans amounting to \$3,221 but that 848 had returned \$5,411. The time spent by the secretaries in consultation was in itself a considerable item. Figuring ten minutes each for the 3,059 who were helped, a total of eleven forty-eight hour weeks of one secretary's time was involved.

Secretary Perkins informed the board at its September 1930 meeting of the increasing demands for assistance. The Y was not listed as a relief agency by the Community Chest and hence did not then qualify for funds from this source for this work. As the relief needs grew, the Chest recognized the imperative necessity of helping those agencies which dealt directly with the problem of meeting immediate human needs at the expense of the so called "character-building" agencies which included the Y.M.C.A. Several years had to pass before the Community Chest recognized the relief aspects of the Y's work and granted financial assistance. Perkins, reporting to the board at its January 1932 meeting, said that the Y had expended \$16,417 for relief work during the last four months of 1930. Finally recognizing the nature of this work, the Community Chest reimbursed the Y to the extent of \$10,319 but the Y had to absorb the balance out of its budget.

During 1931 the Y provided lodgings for 16,237 and meals for 5,162. In addition loans were granted to 918 and over four hundred telegrams were sent. Baths, haircuts, clothing, and medicine were also given to the needy. D. E. Patterson, director of the Relief Program, informed the board at its meeting held on February 8, 1932, that 2,442 had been housed during the first twenty-four days of January of that year of which number 624 were boys between the ages of fifteen and twenty. On March 14th the board was told that the Y was then taking care of about one hundred boys and young men each night. During 1932 the relief load began to lessen. By February 1933 the number of homeless boys under eighteen housed by the Y was about twenty per night. The last mention of the extent of relief work noted in the minutes of the board is for February 18, 1935, when the relief cases were reported at about two hundred per month.

From its very beginning, the San Francisco Y was active in helping young men find work. This activity was especially important during the years of the depression. During 1934, the Y averaged about two hundred requests for work per month and was able to place about one-half of that number. The report of activities for 1939 indicates that during that year the Y succeeded in finding employment for 2,331. These figures reflect one of the most successful aspects of the Y's ministry to young men. The whole employment program was by its very nature closely linked with the relief program. Locating a job for the unemployed was far better than handing out a dole.

### THE FINANCIAL SITUATION DURING THE DEPRESSION

By an ironic turn of circumstances, the very combination of events arising out of the depression, which demanded more from the San Francisco Association in the form of services, at the same time conspired to reduce the income needed to pay for those services. The Y was completely dependent upon three main sources for money to pay its bills — (a) membership fees, (b) income from services rendered as room rent, etc., and (c) contributions including the allotment from the Community Chest. The effects of the depression, especially during the early years of the 1930s, were merciless in constricting each and all of these sources of income. Exclusive of the contributions received from the Community Chest, the Y suffered a forty per cent reduction of income from all other sources from 1928 to 1933.

The San Francisco Y survived these critical years because of the loyal response of thousands of volunteers and also because of the devotion and sacrifice of the members of the staff. Of course every possible economy was practiced. Some members of the staff had to be dismissed and wages and salaries were cut. By June 1932, Perkins informed the board that a total of forty-seven employees had been dismissed since October 31, 1930. This number included twenty-seven full-time,

trained personnel, some with as much as twenty-five years of experience. Perkins told the board that those still on duty had "to run faster to stay back of where we were." Salary cuts ranging from 2½ per cent of the lowest paid employees to 10 per cent of those in the highest brackets began on October 19, 1931. On April 11, 1932, the board learned that the janitors and elevator men were getting \$85.00 a month while the highest paid secretary was receiving only \$215.00. Even on such low incomes, the members of the staff gave as high as ten per cent of their wages or salaries at the end of each fiscal year during the worst of the depression in order to wipe out a threatened deficit. At the end of 1932 the employees contributed \$12,437 in order to balance the books and in 1933 they gave \$19,877. Vacations were largely eliminated.

Membership revenues decreased from 1930 to June 1932 by 30.4 per cent and room rentals for the same period went down 25 per cent. In 1924 and 1925 the Y had received \$180,830 each year from the Community Chest. The following table shows the allotments made, but not always paid if the over-all goal was not subscribed, for the years indicated:

1930 — \$163,751	1937 — \$156,000
1931 — 161,748	1938 — 150,000
1932 — 161,748	1939 — 150,000
1933 — 174,570	1940 — 145,000
1934 — 146,981	1941 — 145,000
1935 — 139,746	1942 — 145,000
1936 — 149,042	

The slight increase in the amount allotted in 1933 over that of the preceding year included an extra sum granted to help the Y take care of its relief work. The low point was reached in 1935 which was about twenty-three per cent less than what had been given in 1924 and 1925. Whenever the Community Chest failed to realize its goal, each of the participating agencies had to take a proportionate reduction.

The relative merits of being in or out of the Chest were frequently debated by the members of the Board of Directors during these years. As the effects of the depression were increasingly felt in the city, the Chest officials felt that primary consideration had to be given to those agencies which were ministering directly to immediate human needs. This meant that some of the character-building agencies, of which the Y.M.C.A. was the most prominent, had to take reduced allotments. Some of the Y leaders felt that the Association was the victim of "some prejudice and favoritism." At their meeting held on February 21, 1938, the directors seriously discussed the advisability of withdrawing from the Chest. A committee was appointed to wait upon the Chest officials "in an attempt to right the situation." As a result of this intercession,



the Chest secured the services of a professional surveyor of social institutions to make a detailed study of the Y's program. This study was completed by August 31st of that year. The differences of opinion were satisfactorily resolved so that nothing more was said by the directors of the Y of withdrawing from the Chest.

The financial situation began to improve with the closing years of the 1930s. In 1938 the Chest asked the public for \$1,877,000 and in 1939 the goal was \$2,100,000. During these years, the degree of self-support attained by the Y grew from 52.06 per cent in 1933, to 68.3 per cent in 1939. Since most of the agencies cooperating in the Community Chest had little or no self-support, the directors of the Y were quick to draw attention to their accomplishments.

After the difficult year of 1933, conditions began to improve. On July 1, 1934, the Board restored fifty per cent of the pay cuts. In 1936 the receipts, apart from the Community Chest, amounted to \$286,924 which was the largest since 1931. During the early years of the depression, the directors were obliged to neglect the upkeep of the buildings and equipment. Of course nothing could be laid aside for depreciation. On the whole, though, the San Francisco Y came through the depression better than most of the metropolitan Associations of the nation.

### NEW DEVELOPMENTS

In spite of all of the financial problems of the depression years, the San Francisco Y was able to make two significant forward steps during the 1930s. The first was the acquisition and initial development of a 927 acre camping-site known as Jones Gulch and the second was the erection of a new building for the Japanese Branch.

#### *The Jones Gulch Camp*

Although camps for boys and girls had been established in 1928 in San Mateo Memorial Park, about fifty-two miles south of San Francisco, it was soon apparent that such an arrangement did not offer a permanent solution to the Y's camping program. No one was more aware of this than Richard Perkins. The Y camps needed more privacy and more space for recreational activities than was available in a public park. Camp McCoy in the Sierras was too remote for effective use, especially over week-ends. In his search for a suitable location for a camp which the Y would own near San Francisco, Perkins claimed that he examined "dozens of sites" before he found the ideal location in Jones Gulch about two and a half miles from the San Mateo Memorial Park.

On his many trips to and from Camp YuMiCiA, Perkins passed a pleasant wooded valley known as Jones Gulch, named after a pioneer who secured title to the site in 1857 for lumbering purposes. From

time to time through the years since that date lumbering operations had been carried on in the valley. One could stand at the head of the ravine and look southward for nearly a mile and see the valley broadening out into a flat on which stood an abandoned saw mill and some loggers cabins. There was a stream, some meadows, and much timber of commercial value. Before the end of 1931 Perkins learned that the property included nearly a thousand acres and was owned by Mrs. S. M. Black of Red Bluff who expressed a willingness to sell for \$25,000. Although the price was reasonable, those were the days of the depression, and Perkins could not then see how such a sum could be raised.

In November 1933 Perkins reopened negotiations with Mrs. Black who expressed a hope that the property could be acquired by the Y for a camping site for boys and girls. She reduced her price to \$15,000. Perkins then interested two good friends of the Y, Miss Jean A. MacCallum and Mrs. Elsie A. Drexler, who contributed the full amount. The final papers were signed on May 28, 1934. The San Francisco Association thus became the owner of a choice property which was almost square in shape with about a mile and a half boundary on each side. The purchase was most timely as today the property is worth several hundreds of thousands of dollars. Indeed it is hard to visualize how the San Francisco Y could ever today be able to secure so choice and so large a camping property so near to San Francisco.

As quickly as money was available permanent improvements were made on the property. The old saw mill was turned into an attractive dining room large enough to seat three hundred. A twenty-thousand-gallon water-storage tank was installed. In 1937 Mrs. Drexler gave an additional \$6,000 for the construction of a swimming pool. By February 9, 1939, eighteen cabins had been moved from the old Camp YuMiCiA to the new location and twenty-three new structures had been erected. A few of the loggers cabins had been converted into suitable quarters for campers. All kinds of facilities for recreation were developed making Jones Gulch one of the best equipped camps for young people in the state.

The first organized group to occupy Jones Gulch were girls. Camp Wasiata, with an enrollment of sixty-three, initiated the new grounds during July 1936. Separate facilities had been developed for the girls including a dining room. At first these accommodations were designed to take care of one hundred girls but these were later enlarged. Also the dining facilities for the girls and the boys were combined. Wasiata, in 1938, had 108 campers for 2,277 camper days. The boys moved into Jones Gulch in 1939. By this time a chapel was finished and the water supply improved. Several service clubs of San Francisco, as the Gyro Club, had erected cabins. Gyro Hall, dedicated on June 8, 1941, was not only financed by the Gyro Club but also designed and built by its members.

These tents and trees could mean camping — then or now, but the date on the photo reads “1911.” The scene was Camp McCoy in the Sierra Nevada near Pincrest.



Visitors to Camp McCoy often went boating in nearby Strawberry Lake.



Teenage campers from Y.M.C.A. youth clubs helped construct at Jones Gulch the rustic outdoor chapel which is shaded by giant redwood trees. Groups of all ages and faiths use this chapel.

The large outdoor heated pool at Y.M.C.A. camp in the Santa Cruz Mountains accommodates on a busy day up to 150 swimmers. It was completed in 1938.



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Much credit for the development of the property goes to Louis J. Klein who was appointed by President Keesling to be both general chairman of the Camp Committee and Jones Gulch chairman. The first manager of Jones Gulch was John Hart who was succeeded by George McLean and who, in 1941, was followed by Robert W. Simcock. No one had had a longer and more intimate relationship with the development of Jones Gulch than Bob Simcock. His first period of service as manager extended from 1941 to 1945. He was then transferred to other duties in San Francisco but returned to Jones Gulch in 1954 and has been there as manager up to the time of this writing.

In 1937 an effort was made to call the site Camp Knightwood but the name never became popular. The original title of Jones Gulch soon reappeared in the official records.

### *The Japanese Branch Building*

The second major acquisition achieved by the Y during the depression years was the erection of the new Japanese Branch building. Mention has already been made of the fact that the board had about \$40,000 on hand at the end of 1928 for this purpose. John R. Mott had promised a contribution of \$75,000 from the International Committee provided a like amount could be raised locally. Mott had advanced \$15,000 to pay for a site. The local board, however, felt that it was impossible to raise the additional \$35,000 needed during the depression. On March 8, 1933, the International Committee took action to withdraw its offer unless the San Francisco Association could give "satisfactory assurance that it can meet the conditions within the next few months."

The board then proposed that the International Committee match the local funds available and permit the erection of a less expensive building. Lyman Pierce made a trip to New York in the fall of 1933 to intercede on behalf of the San Francisco Association. After considerable negotiations, the International Committee finally agreed to this plan. The committee contributed a total of \$35,000. A building costing about \$46,000 was erected in 1935 at 1530 Buchanan Street, which site had been secured in 1929. The formal opening was held on January 13, 1936. Dr. K. Kitagawa was the branch chairman and Kiyoshi Tomizawa, the executive secretary. Tomizawa, after serving the Japanese Y from its beginning in 1918, retired on September 30, 1939.

Following the outbreak of World War II, the Japanese people were interned at various places in the interior of the country. On April 27, 1942, the board was faced with the problem as to how the Japanese Branch building was to be used. After some study, the board agreed to rent the property to the United Services Organization for \$225 a month as a center for Negro troops.

## DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE BRANCHES

When Perkins retired in 1942, the Metropolitan Association had ten branches including Central at Golden Gate and Leavenworth. One new branch was started during the 1930s, the Golden West, under the direction of John R. Titsworth. The beginning of this work may be traced back to the March 1930 meeting of the Board when the Directors were told of the growing boys work in three new areas — Balboa, out beyond the Mission District; Ingleside; and Sunnyside. In the Balboa District the boys were holding their club meetings in private homes and were using a borrowed gymnasium. By May of that year a Committee of Management had been organized for Balboa at which time fourteen boys clubs were operating. By 1938 the number had increased to twenty-eight. About this time the name was changed to Southwest Branch. Titsworth had his office at 35 Vincente Street. A little later the name was known as the Sunset Branch and then in May 1939, it became the Golden West Branch.

The property of the Mission Branch at 1004 South Van Ness Avenue, which was the former Spreckels residence, was sold on February 6, 1939, for \$32,575. The activities of the branch were transferred to rented quarters and to private homes plus the use of such public facilities as schools when these were available. The board felt the necessity of erecting a new modern building in the Mission District but this project had to wait several years before it could be realized.

During 1938-42, a program of modernization of the main building used by the Central Branch was effected. This included the installation of deluxe swimming and bathing facilities. The total cost was about \$45,000.

The Presidio Branch and the Army and Navy Embarcadero Branch amalgamated their administrations on May 11, 1931, with George S. Martin as the executive secretary for both centers. The Y work on the Presidio continued to receive high praise from the various commanding officers who served there. The major portion of the recreational activities of the post, now considered a normal part of Army responsibilities, was handled by the Y. For instance, the Y ran the movies. On August 14, 1931, the Presidio Y requested permission from the board to install sound motion pictures at a cost of about five thousand dollars. The request for the expenditure included the statement: "Silent pictures are now obsolete." A nominal admission charge was made of service personnel attending the shows out of which the cost was recovered. In 1938 the Army built its own theater at the Presidio which took over the motion picture program of the Y. During May and June 1938 the Presidio Y extended its services to Fort Ord near Monterey in order to minister to the troops engaged in summer training.



The first mention of the desirability of starting work in Marin County is found in the minutes of the board for March 10, 1930. At that time it was reported that from ten to fifteen boys clubs had already been organized within that county.

### THE Y.M.C.A. HOTEL

The Y.M.C.A. Hotel on Turk Street, financed almost entirely on borrowed money, opened its doors in December 1928. Times were still prosperous and there was every expectation that interest charges could be paid and the loans gradually amortized out of the income received from rentals. This was an approved method of financing such a project in those days. No one could foresee the difficult years of the depression when the hotel would be unable to pay interest due and when some bondholders threatened to take legal action. The Y Hotel received no help from the Community Chest. It had to be completely self-supporting or cease to exist.

Naturally it took some time for the hotel to cultivate a clientele. A large percentage of its guests were transient young men from out of the city. During August 1930, there was an average occupancy of 285 rooms out of the more than 400 which were available. The effects of the depression were being felt during the early months of 1931 when by May the average occupancy had fallen to 251 even when room rentals were reduced to seventy-five cents a night. Every possible economy was practiced. The staff was cut to a minimum. George S. Martin, who had served as manager of the hotel since its opening in addition to his duties as executive secretary of the Army and Navy Y, resigned on June 29, 1931, after he had been given the responsibility of being the executive secretary of the Presidio Y.

During 1931 and 1932 the Y Hotel was unable to pay the six per cent interest due to the bank and the seven per cent due to the bondholders. On October 10, 1932, the board learned that a meeting of bondholders was to be held to review the situation. Some members of the board discussed the possibility of placing a mortgage on the main building in order to raise money in order to buy out the bondholders who wished to sell at fifty cents on the dollar. However, calmer advice prevailed. The bondholders were advised to be patient and in time all bonds not donated to the Y were redeemed at face value.

A low point in room occupancy came in September 1932 when only 45 per cent were taken. During the first seven months of 1933, conditions began to improve when a 60 per cent occupancy was realized, but another dip came in October 1934 when the percentage fell to 43. From then on business began to improve. The average occupancy for 1936 was 72.6 per cent. The income per bed per night was 87.2 cents in 1930; 72.1 cents in 1936; and 99 cents in 1939. The twelfth floor

was opened to women and the eleventh to married couples in 1935. These changes helped the financial situation.

In 1935 the bank which held the principal mortgage reduced its interest rate from six to five per cent. Another readjustment was made in 1937 when the bank cut the rate to four per cent and made it retroactive to June 21, 1933. By the end of 1936 the hotel was almost able to balance its books. However, no provision was being made for depreciation. The total indebtedness at the end of 1936 was over \$728,000, when the original cost of the building, apart from the lot and equipment, was \$414,000. A remodeling job was done prior to the opening of the 1939 World's Fair on Treasure Island which reduced the number of single rooms to 336 and increased the number of double rooms to 76. The total capacity then became 460 beds. By the end of 1941 Perkins was able to report that: "The Hotel was in the best condition it has been since it opened."

### THE Y AT WORK

The activities of the Y during these years, 1930-42, were multitudinous. Of the ten branches, all but three — Park-Presidio, Peninsula, and Golden West — had buildings. In 1923 an aggregate total of 3,337,000 men and boys made use of the facilities of the Metropolitan Association. In 1938, fifteen years later, the grand total was 3,429,695, or five times the population of San Francisco for that year. In other words, during 1938 an army of about ten thousand men, women, boys, and girls entered one or more of the seven buildings or took part in some of its activities every day of the year.

The three branches that operated from offices alone made use of community facilities when available as school buildings and playgrounds and also private homes and even garages. Such secretaries as John R. Titsworth were demonstrating the fact that a virile Y program could be conducted in a community without the benefit of an expensive Y building complete with swimming pool and gymnasium. In fact a survey of the activities for this decade shows that the great emphasis which the Y had once been placing on the gymnasium was declining. Instead more and more attention was being given to boys clubs and small group activities.

A new development in the Metropolitan program appeared during the 1930s when the Y turned its attention to girls work. Mention has already been made of the first camp for girls, called Camp Wasiata, held in 1930. This became an annual camp thereafter. On May 21, 1934, representatives from five different Women's Auxiliaries from the following branches: Park-Presidio, Japanese, Mission, Presidio, and Central were presented to the board. These auxiliaries were a revival of the former Ladies' Central Committee which was active in the 1880s.

For the most part the members of these auxiliaries were mothers of the boys and girls who were active in the Y program. The opening of the Y Hotel to women brought new contacts with young women. By the end of 1938 the Metropolitan Y had more than 1,450 paid memberships from girls and young women, or 8.9 per cent of the total membership for the year.

During the ten-year period, 1929-39, the membership of the San Francisco Y grew from 7,500 to 17,317. According to the 1939 report: "Of this total, 14 per cent were boys between the ages of 9 and 17; another 23 per cent were young men between the ages of 18 and 30; and approximately 8 per cent were women and girls." The membership fee remained at ten dollars a year. In addition to the 17,317 members listed at the end of 1939, there were another 7,000 who were members for a part of the year. This gave a grand total of 24,389 for all or part of 1939.

### *The Religious*

All three aspects of the program of the Y.M.C.A. symbolized by the red triangle continued to be emphasized during this decade under review. In the annual report of activities for 1932, Perkins referred to 366 religious meetings held under the sponsorship of the Metropolitan Y with a total attendance of 14,474. For a number of years the Central Branch sponsored a Thanksgiving Day Service for boys in one of the down-town city churches.

In a review of the activities of the Y for 1939, the question "When is an activity religious?" was answered as follows:

In this day when the work of the Association is not characterized by a "religious department", it is sometimes assumed that there may be a lack of religious dynamic.

Restraint and objectivity would caution one against the glib assumption that the religious content is woven throughout our program enterprises, but it is fair to say that the Christian ideal for which the Association stands, and the aim of building Christian character, are still paramount throughout our program.

During the year many activities of a religious nature were conducted which helped to emphasize the religious purpose of the Association, "to build Christian personality and a Christian society." These included hundreds of personal interviews, boys' conferences, vesper services, young men's conferences, discussion groups, inspirational addresses, campfire talks and worship services, special Thanksgiving services, induction services of Hi-Y and Tri-Y clubs, as well as many other clubs and groups that stress the all-around development of the individual.

Through the years there was a gradual shifting of techniques rather than of emphasis. The "C" was still in the Y.M.C.A.

*The Educational – Golden Gate College*

The mental or educational aspects of the second side of the Y triangle in the program of the San Francisco Y centered largely in Golden Gate College. With the ever growing popularity of the courses offered, the Central Y became a college campus. The annual report for 1932 stated that during that year 1,654 class sessions had been held with a total attendance of 22,040. The evening law school, first to be established in California, continued its fine record during these years. On December 8, 1933, J. E. White retired after serving as dean for twenty-five years.

On May 8, 1933, Golden Gate College became a junior college and remained as such until 1935 when it returned to its original status upon the establishment of the San Francisco Junior College. An evening course in graduate accounting was added to the curriculum in 1932 and a School of Advertising was started in 1940. The enrollment of the college in 1939 was 910. As was to be expected, the enrollment dropped after the beginning of World War II. The college received \$21,922 in tuition and \$34,815 in 1938. One of the key figures in the history of Golden Gate College since 1929 is Nagle Miner who became associate director in 1929. He was the director 1931-48 and president 1949-58. Since November 1958, Miner has served as executive dean.

Although not a project of the college but rather of the main Y itself, mention should here be made of the Personal Growth Institute which was held in the Central Branch for eight weeks during October and November 1936. This consisted of seven seminar groups which met during the evenings Monday to Friday inclusive. They were planned "to meet the modern needs of the modern young man and the modern young woman." Such subjects as "Marriage in the Modern Manner," "Getting ahead in Business," and "Is our Democracy Threatened," are indicative of the subject materials presented. The institute, under the direction of Activities Secretary W. F. Meyer, was popular with several hundred young people and was repeated for a number of years. The enrollment in 1940 was over two hundred.

*The Physical*

As has been indicated, the physical aspect of the Y program for boys and young men began to taper off during the 1930s. In December 1933 the question arose of having Sunday athletic competition games. Such a question could never have been discussed in Y.M.C.A. circles seventy-five years earlier when the Y still shared the commonly held Puritan idea of Sunday observance. But times had changed. The question was referred to the Board of Directors who, on December 18th, approved the plan with the stipulation that such games "should never take place during the hour of worship at churches." A good place to trace out the changing mores of Protestants in the United States would be in the history of the Y.M.C.A.

**ACTIVITIES**



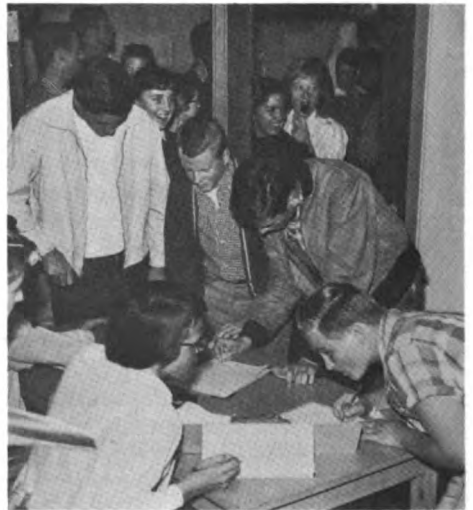
A log blazed on the hearth on a winter evening in 1910 when this quiet scene was photographed at Central Y.M.C.A.

This modern hearth scene, photographed at Peninsula Y.M.C.A., one of the Association's community youth branches, illustrates the change in generations.



Boys used to look like this when they came down to enroll in a Y.M.C.A. swimming class.

Today's youth looks like this, crowded around the desk to enroll in Y.M.C.A. activities.



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Most of the activities connected with gymnastics, athletic games, and swimming continued through these years. Instruction was given in swimming and life saving. The report for 1939 states:

The attendance of participants at activities of this type during the past year was 330,601. Of this total, 134,021 participated in gymnasium classes. Swimming lessons were given to 11,835 and 664 passed the beginner's test which qualified them as swimmers.

#### *Boys Work*

The summer camping program for boys grew steadily in popularity during the 1930s in spite of the depression. Some material improvements were made at Camp McCoy in the Sierras in 1932 when a chapel was constructed and McCoy Lodge was reconditioned. A number of San Francisco service clubs as the Rotary, Kiwanis, Gyro, and Optimist Clubs made contributions to the Y's camping program from time to time. Mention has already been made of the construction of a lodge at Jones Gulch in 1932 by the San Francisco Gyro Club. The minutes of the board for October 1937 refer to the fact that the Mission Optimist Club had paid the dues for some boys from the Mission District for the preceding summer's camp. The reference includes the statement: "45 per cent of the boys were . . . of the Catholic faith." This is not surprising as about 25 per cent of the 522 boys members in the Mission Branch at that time were Catholics.

An indication of the popularity of the camps is to be found in the following statistics: In the summer of 1932, there were 224 boys and 53 leaders at Camp McCoy while 292 boys and 58 leaders were at Camp YuMiCiA, making a grand total of 625. In 1935 Camp McCoy registered 516; YuMiCiA had 472; and Jones Gulch enrolled 407 including members of work parties — making a grand total of 1,395. The old camp site in the San Mateo Memorial Park continued to be used until adequate facilities were developed at Jones Gulch. Boys were still camping at the old site as late as 1938.

The following item taken from the minutes of the board for April 25, 1938, tells of another project sponsored by the Y in order to raise funds for the camping program:

Mr. Titsworth also announced the 17th Annual Chronicle Shoot on behalf of the Y.M.C.A. camps. This Shoot, the largest of its kind in the country, is to be held on May 15th at West Alameda. During the past 7 years the Y.M.C.A. has received \$2,735 from this source for the development of its camp and for sending boys to camp.

Mention has already been made of the introduction of the Hi-Y and Tri-Y movement among high school students by Robert Simcock in San Mateo County during the latter part of the 1920s. The work was

so successful that Simcock was asked to introduce such activities in San Francisco. The first Hi-Y Club to be established in San Francisco was in the Balboa High School. From a small beginning of four clubs started during the spring of 1937, the Hi-Y and Tri-Y organization increased to sixteen clubs by 1940. A special effort was made to interest the upper-class students from each high school under the leadership of a faculty member of the respective schools. These clubs proved to be an effective means of furthering the teachings and practices of Christian democracy in the high schools. On September 16, 1940, the directors of the San Francisco Y were told that some 200,000 boys and 20,000 girls in 7,000 different clubs in some 5,000 high schools throughout the nation were then in the movement.

Several sight-seeing tours for young people were sponsored by the Y during these years. In 1933 a planned "boys' Tour" to see the Worlds Fair in Chicago was conducted at a cost of \$120 per boy. During the summer of 1937 a party of fifteen young people visited the Siskiyou Mountains and the Oregon Caves. During that same summer a party of seventeen girls and their leaders spent eight days on a camping trip in the Yosemite.

Following the outbreak of World War II, a need arose for workers in the harvesting of California's fruit crop. Military service and the demands of the war industries had stripped the agricultural regions of man power. So the Y sent out a call for high school boys to work in harvest camps under its sponsorship. Robert Simcock directed this project. In 1942 about 330 boys signed up. More responded during the following year.

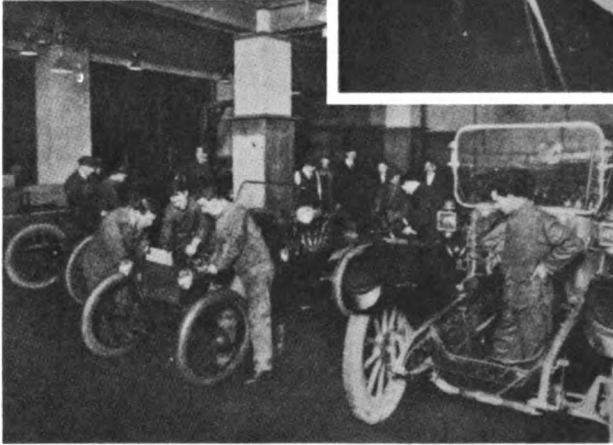
#### *Other Activities*

This history cannot be a photographic report of all of the multi-phased activities of the San Francisco Y. Rather it might more properly be likened to a portrait in which the author as a word-painter gives an impressionistic picture of what was taking place during the years under review. The principal source of his information comes from the minutes of the board and the annual summaries of the years' activities. But such sources often leave unsaid the most important facts or give but a passing glimpse of some significant development.

One of the new projects undertaken during the 1930s was a service to the men who were in the Civilian Conservation Corps. At the request of the Federal Government, the Y.M.C.A. was "drafted" to minister to these men. The San Francisco Y was responsible for some sixteen hundred men housed at Forts Scott, Barry, and Baker, all in the Bay Area. Two secretaries were assigned in 1933 to set up recreational programs, provide reading materials, and sponsor church services. This project continued for about two years.

The social life of the Metropolitan Y increased during these years in

19TH CENTURY . . . .  
Gold in the hills —  
assaying class in the Y.M.C.A.



EARLY 20TH CENTURY . . . .  
“Tin Lizzies” on the streets —  
auto mechanics class in the Y.M.C.A.



TODAY . . . .  
A complex world —  
Y.M.C.A. Model Legislature  
at Sacramento

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proportion to the growth in membership. The *Annual Report* of activities for 1932 mentions the many forums, dances, concerts, and other functions which were held, and to which girls were invited. There were 1,039 such events for the year with a total attendance of nearly 53,000. On November 10, 1933, the Central Branch sponsored a "Fun-Fest Program" which drew a crowd of one thousand.

The financial depression was the indirect cause of increasing interest in all kinds of hobbies and handiwork. So the Y had classes in leathercraft, wireless telegraphy, model airplane making, archery, fencing, wrestling, auction bridge, and ballroom dancing. A harmonica band was organized. Thousands upon thousands of young men and young women turned to Y secretaries for advice. The report of the activities for 1938 states: ". . . it is significant that there were 49,099 personal problem interviews during the past year."

In four branches — Central, Embarcadero, Hotel, and Chinese — the Y had over 1,000 beds for rent. In 1936 there was a 72 per cent occupancy. Whenever the U.S. Fleet was in port, there were never enough beds to accommodate all sailors who wanted over-night lodging. With the increase of military preparations before the outbreak of war in December 1941, this aspect of the Y's work became increasingly important. The board was told on March 17, 1941, that as many as four hundred service men from twenty military installations in the vicinity of San Francisco were being housed each week-end at the Embarcadero, Central, and Hotel Branches. By May 1942 Perkins reported that the two branches ministering especially to service personnel were receiving as many as ten thousand uniformed men daily.

On March 17, 1941, the board learned that the Y.M.C.A. had joined with six other national bodies to form the United Services Organization, familiarly known as the U.S.O. to serve military personnel. Thus when war actually came in December of that year, there was an organization incorporated and ready to receive the millions of dollars poured out by interested citizens for the benefit of their sons and daughters in uniform. In this U.S.O. work, the Y.M.C.A. played a prominent role.

#### SOME ASPECTS OF THE FINANCIAL SITUATION

Some interesting aspects of the financial situation which existed in the Y during the 1930s should be mentioned as a part of this history. The drastic reduction of staff was paralleled with an unprecedented number of volunteer workers who came to the rescue. Here was a good result arising out of an unhappy situation. At the end of 1932 Perkins reported that the Y during that year had used the services of 1,203 volunteers. By March 15, 1937, this number had grown to an average of 1,909 per month. From its very beginning, the Y.M.C.A. has

been a lay movement. Here is the very genius of its success through the years. Although many clergymen have served as secretaries or as members of the many Boards of Directors throughout the nation, the vast majority of the leadership have been laymen. This is especially true of the San Francisco Association. Also, with the exception of a limited number serving as secretaries, the larger majority of the administrative leadership including the directors have served without compensation. Even the doctors who attended the various summer camps during the 1930s served as volunteers.

In 1936 and 1937 the Government set up several organizations which were responsible for placing unemployed persons in positions suitable to their individual training or skills with the Government paying the wages or salaries. This was another attempt to solve the unemployment problem. On March 15, 1937, Perkins informed the board that three agencies of the Government — the Works Progress Administration, the Emergency Education Program, and the National Youth Organization — had sponsored the employment of ninety-three people by the Metropolitan Y. These included stenographers, typists, clerks, janitors, handymen, seamstresses, and a few instructors of athletic games. Altogether the Y was receiving over 2,000 hours of service from these people per week.

As early as 1912 the Y began to use union engineers but its unskilled employees were not unionized. The argument was made that since the Y was not a money-making institution and since it was willing to accept the services of many men and women who for various reasons could not find work elsewhere, such should not be subject to union standards. However, in August 1937 the janitors and elevator operators were unionized and on August 6th members of these unions picketed the Army and Navy Y on the Embarcadero. The strike, unauthorized by the Central Labor Council, was settled when an agreement was reached to pay the men \$105 a month for a three-year period. This was more than the rate then being paid by several top San Francisco hotels at that time. The unions had asked for \$125 a month.

At the February 17, 1936, meeting of the board the subject of Communism came up. Some members of the board had objected to certain statements which had been made by the National Council on the general subject of freedom to debate the issues involved. The majority of the board, sensitive to the danger of losing financial support if any suspicion got abroad that the Y was in any way sympathetic to Communistic ideals, passed a resolution condemning Communism. Also, the resolution was designed to "prevent any participation in or sanction of activities of Communistic, allied and related, groups" within any activity of the Metropolitan Association. Any forum discussion of the merits or demerits of Communism was distinctly forbidden on the grounds that since it was so destructive to the Christian religion and



Christian ideals of the home, it was best for the Y to have nothing whatsoever to do with the movement or its teachings.

San Francisco was troubled with labor unrest, especially along the waterfront, during the latter years of the 1930s. Many felt that Communistic influences were to blame. On May 16, 1938, the board faced the question of compulsory union membership. A resolution was then adopted by the board which stated that "Labor is entitled to fair wages, reasonable hours and proper working conditions," but at the same time, "Employees have the right to join or not to join any union as they prefer." The board felt that "The use of force, coercion or intimidation must not be tolerated."

In June 1941 the contract with the janitors and elevator operations came up for renegotiation. The men again asked for a wage of \$125 a month but finally agreed to accept \$120. Maids accepted an offer of \$100. By the end of 1939 the Y had 128 full-time employees including its secretarial staff. The ratio of paid workers to volunteers was then one to twenty-five.

At the close of 1939, a summary of the material assets held in the name of the Metropolitan Y was submitted to the Board of Directors. This indicated that a total of more than \$2,800,000 had been paid out for land and buildings. No attempt was made to indicate the existing market value of such holdings as of that date. Just before his retirement in the summer of 1942, Perkins reviewed the financial situation again and reported that the Y had improved its assets during the period from January 1, 1936, to January 1, 1942, by nearly \$175,000. This included over \$16,300 received in legacies. However, there was still a heavy debt on the Y.M.C.A. Hotel and another of \$50,000 on operating expenses.

#### REORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD

When Dwight L. Moody rescued the San Francisco Association from bankruptcy in 1881, he insisted upon a complete change of leadership and also upon a new constitution. In order to prevent the recurrence of a crippling indebtedness, a Board of Trustees was established as a separate corporation to hold title to all property owned by the Y. The Board of Trustees was incorporated for a fifty year period beginning April 18, 1881. The San Francisco Association operated until 1940 under the provisions of the 1881 constitution, with a few changes being made in 1905.

With the passing of the years and with the great growth of the Metropolitan Association, especially through its several branches, the provisions of the old constitution and by-laws became increasingly obsolete. There was a tendency for the Board of Directors to become more and more self-perpetuating. The board through its nominating committee selected its new members. Technically the new members

were elected by the membership of the Association at the annual meeting which was supposed to be held in January but which occasionally was held at other times. If a seat on the board became vacant during the interval between annual meetings, the vacancy was filled by the board. As new branches were developed, new procedures had to be devised. The time was ripe for a new constitution long before one was adopted.

As early as March 1921 Perkins recommended that a new constitution be drafted but nothing was then done. Again in April 1927 the board passed a motion approving such a step but again nothing happened. At its meeting held on February 9, 1931, the board faced the problem of making certain changes in its rules to permit the recruiting of new and younger men for its membership. Even though the old constitution called for a rotation of membership after one had served nine years, it appears that this provision was not being observed. At this February meeting, a proposal was adopted to establish a Senior Council. The older members of the board who had served faithfully for many years were elected "honorary directors" and made members of this Senior Council. They had the right to attend board meetings and to vote. Thus the way was left open to put some younger men on the board. By 1934 ten former directors had been elected to the Senior Council.

On December 20, 1937, President Keesling appointed a committee to draw up a new constitution. This with a new set of by-laws was adopted at the December 1940 meeting of the board. These documents provided for a General Assembly to be composed of not less than 300 nor more than 500 members which should meet once a year at the time of the annual meeting to hear reports and to elect officers. In 1944 the number of delegates to this assembly was changed to not less than 400 or more than 700. Each of the ten branches was assigned a certain quota of its adult members who were to be a part of the General Assembly. Central Branch, for instance, was allotted 125. In addition to the representatives from the branches, the Board of Directors could select forty members-at-large. The new plan was designed to make the Association more democratic and to secure a greater participation on the part of the members.

The annual meeting was set for the second Monday evening in January at which time the General Assembly would elect the needed number of directors to serve for a three-year term. The board was limited to twenty-four members but an amendment passed in 1943 raised the number to thirty. No director could serve more than three terms without the lapse of a year before being reelected. Membership on the Senior Council was limited to ten and they were no longer given the right to vote at the meetings of the Board of Directors. They were welcomed to attend these meetings and to give advice.

Provision was made for the government of each branch through a Board of Managers of not less than six members. Sixty per cent of the members of both the Board of Directors and of the various boards of management were to be members of evangelical churches. The Board of Trustees was continued as a holding corporation for the property. Individual branches were given a large degree of self-government but were required to submit monthly reports to the Board of Directors. Even as the Metropolitan Y had its General Assembly, so each branch was to have a similar body known as the Council to be composed of "not less than six nor more than two hundred voting members." And each branch was to have its annual meeting. No limitation as to membership in an evangelical church was required of active members.

Thus by means of a new constitution and by-laws the San Francisco Y was streamlined to meet an existing complex organization situation.

#### HONORABLE MENTION

The Minutes of the Board often carry tributes to certain individuals who had rendered many years of faithful service to the San Francisco Y. Special honor was paid to John H. McCallum at the June 1933 meeting of the board in recognition of twenty-five years service, which included the period of 1922-33 when he was president. Among those who were present and took part in this meeting was James S. Webster. About a year later, or on May 31, 1934, the board made note of Webster's death and remembered that he had had a continuous connection with the San Francisco Y for fifty-six years.

The minutes of the board for its January 1937 meeting carries the notation that the following had served as directors for twenty-five consecutive years: A. S. Johnson, T. G. Crothers, Frank I. Turner, J. H. McCallum, George S. Boardman, L. L. Morse, and William H. Crocker. This is indeed a remarkable record. Much credit is due to the influence of the three General Secretaries McCoy, Pierce, and Perkins who were able to command and to hold the loyalty and devotion of such busy men over so long a period. T. G. Crothers served as attorney for the Y since 1902.

Among the secretaries who merit special mention are Wiley Winsor and George S. Martin. On January 19, 1942, Winsor resigned his work with the San Francisco Y in order to enter the service of the U.S.O. Winsor began his connection with the San Francisco Y in 1909 as Boys Physical Director. At the time of his resignation, he was the executive secretary of the Central Branch. Another who was called to larger responsibilities because of the demands of World War II was George S. Martin who in the spring of 1941 was asked by the National Council of the Army and Navy work to supervise Y activities in camp communities all along the Pacific Coast. Martin at that time had had more than thirty-seven years of service as Y secretary, thirty-three years

of which had been with the San Francisco Association. The minutes of the board bear frequent tributes of appreciation for his devoted services. He retired in 1946.

No name in the history of the San Francisco Y shines with greater luster in the period between World War I and World War II than that of Dr. Richard R. Perkins whose services with the Association began in 1912 and continued for thirty years to his retirement at the end of September 1942. Perkins first joined the staff of the San Francisco Y as an associate secretary. His genial personality, his deep religious convictions, and his proven ability as an executive quickly won for him a place of respect and trust in the minds of the members of the board. When Lyman L. Pierce resigned as General Secretary in the fall of 1919, the board turned without hesitancy to Perkins to be the next General Secretary.

For twenty-three years Perkins guided the destinies of the Metropolitan Y through the booming years of the 1920s and the depression years of the 1930s. In November 1938, at the conclusion of twenty-five years service, a group of seventy friends including members of the board held a special dinner in his honor at the Palace Hotel. The festive occasion was climaxed by the presentation of a gift to Dr. and Mrs. Perkins from the members of the Board of Directors.

The heavy duties and responsibilities which were thrust upon the General Secretary following the outbreak of World War II were added reasons why Perkins felt he should retire. The times called for a younger man at the helm of the Metropolitan Y. In his letter of resignation dated April 27, 1942, Perkins drew the attention of the board to "the new era of enlarged opportunity" which was opening up and said that the Association needed a new chief executive who would be reasonably likely to furnish some years of continuous service. "At a similar turn of affairs, years since," he wrote, "you gave me a comparable opportunity; I covet the same for another."

The board received the letter with sadness and regret. Some members argued that the emergencies of the times demanded the continuance of experienced leadership. But Perkins was firm in his conviction that he should retire. However, he consented to stay until his successor was found.

A recognition dinner was held on Tuesday evening, June 30th, in the St. Francis Hotel when hundreds of friends gathered to honor Dr. and Mrs. Perkins. Tributes of appreciation included those given by Eugene E. Barnett, General Secretary of the National Council; Guy V. Shoup from the Board of Directors; and George S. Martin, representing the staff. An elaborate eight-page folder, which carried a concise summary of the accomplishments of the San Francisco Association through the twenty-three years Perkins had served as General Secretary, was issued for the occasion. Mention was made of the fact that

during the previous sixty-one years, the San Francisco Association had had but three General Secretaries. They were, with their years of service: Henry J. McCoy, 1881-1914; Lyman L. Pierce, 1915-19; and Richard R. Perkins, 1919-42. This most fortunate succession of capable and devoted secretaries lifted the San Francisco Association from the depths of despair of 1881 to its proud position of 1942 when it was one of the strongest Metropolitan Ys of the nation.

Perkins continued his work as General Secretary through September 1942 when his successor, Harold A. Wagner, assumed the duties of this office. Another era in the history of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. had come to a close.



## The Administration of Harold A. Wagner 1942-1946

The fourth General Secretary, or Managing Director as the office was called after 1940, was Harold A. Wagner who was introduced to the board at its September 28, 1942, meeting. Wagner came from Los Angeles. He was a graduate of Occidental College and had served for many years on the staff of the Los Angeles Y.M.C.A. For several years during the 1930s he was program secretary on the Pacific Southwest Area staff. At the time of his call to the San Francisco position, Wagner was associate general secretary of the Los Angeles Association. After three and a half years service in San Francisco, the Los Angeles Y extended a call to him to be its General Secretary. Wagner was moved to accept. In his letter of resignation of March 8, 1946, to the Board of Directors, he stressed the fact that his relationships with the San Francisco Y had been "very pleasant and satisfactory." He felt that his unique qualifications for the Los Angeles position provided sufficient reasons for his acceptance of the call. His resignation became effective on July 31st of that year.

### THE WAR YEARS

When Wagner took over the duties of Managing Director in September 1942, the San Francisco Y had already been facing the problems and opportunities arising out of a state of national emergency or actual war for the three previous years. The world situation had become so threatening that on September 9, 1939, President Franklin Roosevelt had declared a state of national emergency. As a result all branches of the Armed Services began to increase their strength. Twenty-seven months later, or on December 7, 1941, the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor thus drawing the United States immediately into the vortex of a world war. These events led to increased activities in the Embarcadero and Presidio Branches of the San Francisco Association in particular but the Central Branch with its dormitory and the adjoining Y Hotel also felt the impact. Uniformed men flocked to these centers, especially over the week ends, for rooms and other services.

The minutes of the Board of Directors for May 24, 1943, noted the fact that the "20,000,000th enlisted man" had entered the doors of the Embarcadero Branch. If we date the beginning of this branch from April 22, 1908, when the Naval Club House was first opened in San

Francisco for the men of the U.S. Fleet, then we realize that this tremendous response came within the short period of thirty-five years.

The war brought thousands of Negro laborers and their families to San Francisco and the Bay Area. A housing development to take care of twenty thousand people on an integrated basis opened at Hunter's Point in 1943. Many Negro families settled in the Fillmore district taking over dwellings vacated by the Japanese who were moved to internment camps. As has been mentioned, the Japanese Branch located in that area began a Negro U.S.O. in the spring of 1942. The first indication in the minutes of the Board of Directors of problems arising out of the integration of colored and white in the use of the facilities of the Association, including the pool in the Central Branch, is found in a letter written by D. E. Paterson dated May 19, 1943, to the Board of Directors. He wrote:

Today, Central Branch is serving from 100 to 200 service men daily. These men come from all races. We realize that once it becomes known that colored men are using the facilities, the number applying will increase. Likewise, the number of colored civilians who will apply will also increase; for these men are not in uniform while they are in the pool. Although we have not had any serious complaints from members when they understand the circumstances under which the different races are admitted, we know that members are concerned, and some of them disturbed. The fact remains that there are no swimming facilities set up for colored men, and we feel that it is our duty to serve them — costly as it may be in the loss of members who do not understand.

Beginning with the first week of July 1944, memberships from Negroes were accepted by the Central Branch. Although there were a few isolated complaints from some white members, there was no noticeable discontinuance of membership.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE AND PERSONNEL CHANGES

George H. Becker, M.D., was elected president of the Board of Directors in January 1942 to succeed Francis V. Keesling. Becker was the first to come up through the activities of the local Association from boyhood to its highest office. He served as president through the war years and to the end of 1947. Becker's long association with the Y and his personal knowledge of its activities and membership made him a logical choice. Upon his shoulders and those of the Managing Director, Harold A. Wagner, fell the critical task of replacing almost one-half of the staff as one by one the experienced secretaries and other employees entered the Armed Services or accepted other responsibilities. This change of personnel was also noticed in the ranks of the directors as by January 1, 1943, four of their number were in uniform.

Among the more important changes in the secretarial staff during these years were the following: Lester S. Day became executive secretary of the Embarcadero Army and Navy Y in September 1942. Here he served until January 1, 1956 when he became the assistant treasurer of the Metropolitan Y. Secretary R. W. Blosser retired as comptroller at the end of 1943 after twenty-six years service in various capacities in the Metropolitan Y. His successor as business secretary was Marion N. Richards, formerly business secretary of the Brooklyn Y.M.C.A. Richards is still on the staff. D. E. Paterson resigned as executive secretary of the Central Branch in September 1944 in order to become manager of the Y.M.C.A. Hotel in which position he is still serving. V. M. Robertson became executive secretary of the Peninsula Branch in September 1943 and continues in this capacity to the present time.

In addition to the changes among the paid members of the staff, there was a great turnover during the war years in the ranks of the volunteer workers. Wagner experienced great difficulty in finding qualified replacements.

### FINANCES

The San Francisco Y has always had to work within a limited budget and to struggle to keep its books balanced. This situation was true during the administration of Harold A. Wagner. The help rendered by the Community Chest was of inestimable value. In 1945 the Chest contributed \$180,000, thus for the first time in twenty years returning to the amount given in 1925. Since the annual operating budget was then over half a million dollars, this meant that the balance of the needed income had to be realized from membership fees, room rentals, individual contributions, and fees for other services.

As early as the mid-thirties the main building at Golden Gate and Leavenworth was beginning to show need for extensive repairs and alterations. Very little had been done among these lines since its opening in 1910. An ever changing program gradually made certain features of the building obsolete. The auditorium, for instance, with its gallery and stage was not as useful in 1940 as it had been thirty years earlier. Class and committee rooms would have been much more useful. On September 24, 1944, the directors were told that \$350,000 was needed to make the desired alterations and to buy new furnishings. A study was made of the needs of the various branches and at the November meeting the board was informed that the Metropolitan Association with all of its branches needed over \$3,000,000 to provide new buildings, to renovate the old, and to buy new furnishings. It was felt that a capital funds drive should be launched. However, since the Y was a part of the Community Chest, permission had to be secured from this body before such a drive could be conducted. This delayed action so nothing was done during Wagner's administration along these lines.

### OF GENERAL INTEREST

The Board of Directors at its July 1943 meeting gave some consideration to a bill then before the state legislature which called for the exemption of charitable agencies from taxation. It was estimated that such a provision would save the San Francisco Association as much as \$18,000 annually. The board learned at its May 1945 meeting that the proposal had become a law.

The San Francisco Y joined in the world-wide celebration of the organization of the first Y.M.C.A. in London by George Williams on June 6, 1844. A special Centennial Committee was appointed to make sure that proper recognition of the events was made. Extensive publicity regarding the centennial was given by the daily press, the major radio stations, by window displays, through the Protestant pulpits, and by speakers before service clubs and other organizations. The celebration came to a climax in a birthday party held on Tuesday evening, June 6th, in the Palace Hotel. Notwithstanding the fact that June 6th happened to be the day when the Allied forces began their invasion of Normandy, some 550 were present for the dinner and the program. The observance of the centennial was a means of focusing public attention not only upon the fine work a great organization had done through a century but also upon the continuing service of the San Francisco Association to the youth of this generation. It is impossible to measure the good-will engendered through such an observance.

The initial meeting of the United Nations in San Francisco in May 1945 called for some special activities by the Y. On Friday, May 18th, a youth meeting was held under the Y's sponsorship in the Civic Auditorium when about 9,000 young people were present. Among the speakers were Jan Masaryk of Czechoslovakia and General Carlos P. Romulo of the Philippines. About one hundred attended a dinner in the Saint Francis Hotel on May 30th in honor of delegates from eight different countries who had had a close association with the Y.M.C.A. in their respective homelands.

Work for girls, which dated back to the establishment of Camp Wasiata in 1930, continued. The December 1945 meeting of the board considered some basic principles in the preparation for the proposed drive for capital funds. Included was provision for an expanded place in the Y's program for girls. It was then stated that "Locker rooms, shower and powder rooms have been provided in all buildings and lounges in several."

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANNUAL REPORTS

The activities of the San Francisco Association are so varied and so multitudinous that no norm exists by which their results can be measured. Although it is possible to count the number of people who at-

tend a certain program or use some facility, who can measure the intangibles to be found in the inculcation of new ideals and in the strengthening of moral purposes? Here the statistician is baffled. All he can do is assemble statistics and then trust that the reader will use his imagination.

A review of the annual reports for 1942-45 inclusive brings out the following highlights for the years of Wagner's administration:

The membership of the Chinese Branch rose to over 2,000 of whom nearly one-half were under eighteen years of age. Enrollment in Golden Gate College for June 1944 reached a record of 1,782. Steps were taken to make the college eligible to receive veterans under the G.I. Bill of Rights. In 1944 the Golden West Branch made the initial payment on a suitable site for a new building. The total using the facilities of the Association in 1943 was 2,853,851 and for the following year, 3,252,660, or an increase of 13.9 per cent.

Wagner laid great emphasis upon group activities for boys and girls. This was one of his primary interest and is reflected in the statistics for 1945 when nearly 2,700 boys and girls were enrolled in 166 clubs. During the same year over two thousand had taken part in the camping program.

In his report for 1944, Wagner stressed the fact that the San Francisco Y was then in a transition period. The war had changed things. New demands were being made on facilities which were both out-of-date and in need of repair. Already the leaders of the Y were looking forward to 1953 when the San Francisco Association would be celebrating its centennial. To get ready for the next hundred years and to meet the ever expanding and constantly changing needs of the post-war years, a Centennial Development Program was proposed. New buildings were urgently needed for those branches which had none. All of the older buildings needed remodeling, refurnishing, or redecorating. More important than these improvements to the physical equipment was the necessity for a serious restudy of the objectives and the methods of the Y's program. How were the emerging needs of youth in a war-changed city and society to be met?

These were the problems that were inherited by Roy Sorenson who became the fifth Managing Director of the San Francisco Association on September 1, 1946.



## The Guiding Hand of Roy Sorenson

Roy Sorenson, who has served as Managing Director of the San Francisco Association from September 1, 1946, to the present time, was eminently qualified for the task to which he was called. For nineteen years he had served as a member of the staff of the National Council of the Y.M.C.A. and for ten of those years as associate general secretary. His duties had often taken him to San Francisco where he had had frequent contacts with the local Association and thus had become acquainted with both its problems and its opportunities. Sorenson took the helm of the San Francisco Y at a critical time. The needs of post-war San Francisco called for not only a renovation and enlargement of the physical facilities but also for a thorough restudy and modernization of the Y's program. Roy Sorenson was just the man to lead in this movement.

Since the full story of Sorenson's administration with an evaluation of his achievements can not be written until his period of service is ended, this chapter will deal only with some of the major developments which have taken place during these years. Special attention will be given to the first seven years of his administration to bring the history of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. down to July 18, 1953, its one hundredth birthday. Mention will be made of some events that have transpired after that date in order to round out the history.

### THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND THE SECRETARIAT

The success and efficiency of any institution as large as the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. is conditioned by the ability and loyalty of men who compose the Board of Directors and who serve as secretaries. In this respect Roy Sorenson was highly favored in the caliber of his associates. When Sorenson became Managing Director, Dr. George H. Becker was chairman of the board. Few men in the long history of the San Francisco Association have given so much time and energy to the details involved in the administration of the Y as did Dr. Becker. He served as president for five lively, fast-moving, and rewarding years, 1942-47.

Allan E. Charles succeeded Dr. Becker as president of the thirty-man Board of Directors in January 1948 and served for four years. Charles was one of a number of young business men of the city who were brought onto the board several years previously. This was part

of an effort to get a fresh look at the Y's policies, program, and possibilities through the eyes of young men. As one of this group, Charles manifested so much interest and ability that he was made president. During the years of his administration, 1948-52, the Association tackled its capital problems. This involved the beginning of renovations on the main Central building, the erection of a new building for the Peninsula Branch, and the establishment of other new branches. The Building for Youth Fund, which represented the combined program of eight youth agencies, was launched in 1948 and continued for three years. This produced for the Y.M.C.A. about \$375,000 which was used for enlargements and improvements of the physical facilities.

Arthur W. Towne, who as a boy had been a member of the Central Branch Boys Department, a member of the Board of Directors for many years, and the vice-president at the time of his election, became president in January 1952 and served through 1954. He came from one of San Francisco's early distinguished families, was an executive in a well known business firm, and was active as a vestry man in an Episcopal Church and a trustee of the Church Divinity School in Berkeley. During these three years of his administration, the San Francisco Association dedicated three new buildings for the Golden West, Mission, and Park-Presidio Branches and saw further renovation of the Central Branch.

In 1951 John Titsworth, after serving in various capacities with the San Francisco Association for thirty-two years, resigned to accept a position with the Presbyterian Conference Grounds at Lake Tahoe.

#### DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE BRANCHES, 1946-53

At the time Roy Sorenson became Managing Director, the Metropolitan Association had eight active Branches, the Y.M.C.A. Hotel with its separate Board of Directors, two camps — McCoy and Jones Gulch, and the former Japanese Branch on Buchanan Street then being used as a U.S.O. for colored service men. The status of each of these activities together with a brief review of the developments which came during the seven years which elapsed after Sorenson became Managing Director and the one hundredth birthday of the Y in July 1953 follows:

The CENTRAL BRANCH, oldest of all the branches, was housed in the main building at Golden Gate and Leavenworth. This building, dedicated on November 24, 1910, was strategically located to serve young men working in the downtown business district and boys living in the sub-standard areas surrounding the business area. It also served thousands of men in uniform especially through its 140 dormitory rooms. Housed in the main building were Golden Gate College and the business offices of the Metropolitan Association. During 1951 and 1952 a

modernization program was completed at a cost of about three hundred thousand dollars. Among the major changes were the discontinuance of the laundry and the elimination of the isolated power plant which was replaced by commercial power. This latter change effected an estimated annual saving of six thousand dollars. The main lobby was put on the first floor and modernized. Automatic elevators were installed and also health club facilities for men.

Golden Gate College, which was the outgrowth of the early emphasis the Y placed upon giving employed youths a second chance to get an education, continued to thrive. The enrollment of the college in February 1947 was 2,700 and by May 1950 was 3,061. The College was accredited in 1950 by the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools. The affairs of the college are managed by its own Board of Directors.

The CHINESE BRANCH has had a long and distinguished history of service in the heart of Chinatown. Although this branch did not become a part of the Metropolitan Association until 1916, its antecedents reach back to 1870 when the Presbyterians organized the first Y.M.C.A. for Chinese. The building of the Chinese Branch, dedicated in 1926, was originally planned to accommodate 300 boys but by 1945 this branch had about 2,000 members enrolled in forty clubs. The program and activities of this branch had far outgrown its physical equipment and an enlargement of the building was urgently needed. A Fiftieth Anniversary Dinner was sponsored by the Chinese Branch on July 11, 1961, at which time an attractive historical booklet was issued.

The MISSION BRANCH, first organized as the Twentieth Street Branch in 1887 and reorganized in 1922, was without a building before its present edifice located at 4080 Mission Street was opened in 1953. In 1946 the work of the branch was directed from rented office headquarters. About 210,000 people were then living in this district in a highly congested area and in deteriorated buildings. In 1946 this branch had 517 boys enrolled in thirty-one groups which met in churches, schools, or wherever accommodations could be found. Several groups were operating on an inter-racial basis. The new building was of the institutional type which majored on small group activities.

The PRESIDIO BRANCH, organized in 1898 during the Spanish-American War, was located within the military reservation and served the personnel of the Presidio, the Letterman General Hospital, and other nearby military installations. It had an old building with a small modern wing which had been built after World War I. During 1945 this branch had the amazing number of 735,451 enlisted personnel enter its doors. Of this number about one-half were ambulatory patients from the hospital. In 1954 the Metropolitan Association withdrew from the management of this branch and it became a Service Men's Center under Army control.

The EMBARCADERO BRANCH, which began in 1908 as the Navy Y.M.C.A., was fortunate in having a fine modern building, with sleeping accommodations for about four hundred, which was opened in 1926. This branch was known for a time as the Army and Navy Y but when its facilities were made available to merchant seamen, the Metropolitan Association preferred the name, the Embarcadero Branch. During World War II, a U.S.O. center was operated here.

The PARK-PRESIDIO BRANCH, founded in 1922, was located in a middle-class residential district between Golden Gate Park and the Presidio and in 1946 was serving a population of about ninety thousand. A lot was purchased on 18th Avenue just north of Geary in 1924 which had on it a building which the local committee adapted to youth work. By 1945 this branch was serving 381 boys and girls who were organized into twenty-three groups. As one of the results of the Building for Youth Campaign, enough money was secured to erect a new building for this branch which was dedicated in 1953.

The PENINSULA BRANCH, originally known as San Mateo, was established in 1924. By 1945 the work for want of a building was being conducted from a rented office in Burlingame and through a small youth center in Redwood City. The major emphasis was upon club activities. In 1945 this branch reported having twenty-six clubs with a total enrollment of 364. In 1947 the Redwood City work, briefly known as the Sequoia Branch, withdrew from the Metropolitan Association and began its independent existence. The Peninsula branch conducted a successful campaign for building funds in 1948 raising \$106,000. A desirable site for a building was purchased in 1949 for \$26,000 at 240 W. Camino Real in San Mateo on which a building costing about \$175,000 was erected. The dedication was held on October 21, 1951. By 1953 this branch was sponsoring about sixty clubs for boys and girls.

The GOLDEN WEST BRANCH was the youngest of all the eight active branches in existence at the time Sorenson became Managing Director. This branch was begun in the early 1930s and was earlier known as the Southwest or Sunset Branch. It was located in a large residential area of about 125,000 people south of Golden Gate Park and west of Twin Peaks. Here also the secretary worked from an office headquarters and majored upon club activities. In 1945 this branch reported having thirty-six clubs with an enrollment of 498. In 1945 the Metropolitan Association took title to a lot on Eucalyptus Avenue near 19th. Payment was made from funds raised in the Building for Youth Campaign of which mention will be made later. Shortly afterwards a big shopping center was planned for this general area and the developers, the Stoneson Brothers, agreed to erect a building for this branch at 333 Eucalyptus Avenue in exchange for a portion of the land the Y owned. Satisfactory arrangements were made in August 1950 and a building was erected which was dedicated on January 10, 1954.

**COMMUNITY BUILDINGS**



**Chinese Y.M.C.A., dedicated 1926**



**Buchanan Y.M.C.A., dedicated 1936**



**Peninsula Y.M.C.A., dedicated 1951**



**Mission Y.M.C.A., dedicated 1953**



**Park Presidio Y.M.C.A., dedicated 1953**



**Golden West Y.M.C.A., dedicated 1954**

**THESE SIX BUILDINGS, WITH ONE TO COME IN MARIN COUNTY, ARE  
MODERN SERVICE STATIONS FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH PROGRAM**



### OTHER DEVELOPMENTS – PROPERTY AND FINANCES

A number of important developments took place in regard to other properties owned by the Metropolitan Association after the coming of Roy Sorenson in 1946. The first had to do with the former Japanese Branch on Buchanan Street. This center was turned back to the Y.M.C.A. in the fall of 1946 after having been used for about four October 26th with Fred Hoshiyama as executive secretary. However, the population pattern of the community had changed. Negroes had moved into the dwellings formerly occupied by the Japanese and the returning Japanese, finding it impossible to secure living accommodations in their former location, were dispersed throughout the Bay Area. Thus a new approach to the community had to be made. In 1947 in cooperation with the Y.W.C.A. an interracial program was inaugurated to meet the needs of the youth of the community. The Board of Managers and staff of the branch were also interracial. The new approach met with an immediate and favorable response. Before the year closed the branch had forty-eight organized groups with an enrollment of 680. The Y.W.C.A. had a building at 1830 Sutter Street in the same general area. During the period, 1947-60, when the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. were joined in the branch on Buchanan Street, the Y.W. building was leased to the Friends Service Committee. In 1960 the Y.W. returned to its center with the Y.M. continuing its former program at the Buchanan Street Branch.

In 1946 the San Francisco Y moved northward across the Golden Gate and organized a Branch in Marin County. Dr. Donald G. Stewart, a member of the faculty of San Francisco Theological Seminary and one of the most active promoters of the new branch, was made president of the Board of Managers and Joe Potts the first executive secretary. By the end of 1947 this branch had thirty-four groups with an enrollment of 446.

#### *The Y.M.C.A. Hotel*

One of the major management adjustments that came during the first decade of Sorenson's administration involved the Y.M.C.A. Hotel. This building with accommodations for about 450 men was erected in 1928 when the economy of the nation was still on the upswing. At the time of construction, the San Francisco Y had only \$100,000 to apply on the total cost of about \$500,000 including equipment. The balance was financed by a first mortgage held by a bank and by preferred stocks and bonds. Within a year after the opening of the hotel came the stock market crash of October 1929. During the dark days of the depression, the Y.M.C.A. Hotel had to face the distressing fact that it

was unable to keep up interest payments on its indebtedness. As has been stated, the financial situation began to improve after 1941.

From the very beginning of its operation, the hotel had a separate Board of Managers which held full title to the property. With the passing of the years and the gradually improved financial picture, the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Y began to feel that one corporation should hold title to all Y.M.C.A. property. Finally in June 1955 action was taken for the transfer of the title of the Y.M.C.A. Hotel together with all assets and liabilities from the former Board of Managers of the hotel to the Board of Trustees of the Metropolitan Association. Gradually the remaining indebtedness was liquidated so that by 1960 the hotel was free of debt.

When the transfer of the hotel property to the Metropolitan Y was completed, the San Francisco Association had over \$4,200,000 worth of buildings and real estate. What a contrast with the humble beginnings of 1853 when the charter members rented some modest rooms over the Post Office in the California Exchange Building opposite Portsmouth Square for \$125 a month.

#### *Camps McCoy and Jones Gulch*

The attractions of Camp McCoy in the Stanislaus National Forest in the Sierras gradually lost their appeal after the acquisition and development of the Jones Gulch property. Camp McCoy was too far distant from San Francisco. Moreover it was too expensive and too difficult to keep two camping sites in operation. Therefore the Metropolitan Association in 1949 sold its Sierra Camp to the Alumni Association of the University of California for twelve thousand dollars.

The two camps at Jones Gulch – Camp Wasiata for girls and Camp YuMiCiA for boys – became increasingly popular during the years under review. The site came to be known as La Honda after the small post office to which mail for the campers was sent. During 1952 the number of campers using the facilities at La Honda totaled 3,529. Of these 745 were summer camp boys; 510, summer camp girls; and 2,274, week-end campers. By 1960 the total had risen to 9,352. The camp facilities were open to many groups not directly connected with the Y.M.C.A. including churches, schools, synagogues, and community groups.

R. W. Simcock, camp director of the La Honda property since 1954, reported having eighteen full-time paid members on the staff in 1960. This fact in itself speaks eloquently of the great development which had taken place. Today the property has fifty-eight buildings; a splendid water system including a large swimming pool with dressing rooms, a dam, reservoir, and sewage system; and five hundred acres under supervised forestry with selective harvesting of mature timber and ex-

tensive planting of seedlings. During 1958-61, about twenty thousand seedlings of Douglas Fir were set out. There are many Redwoods on the property which are able to reseed themselves. The camp property is now self-supporting though the 1961 budget was over \$119,000.

A unique feature of Jones Gulch is seven memorial Redwood trees which have been dedicated to benefactors of the Y.M.C.A. Those thus honored are: Harold Burr Millis, David Franklin and Minnie McGraw, Edwin V. Krick, Lyman L. Pierce, Col. and Mrs. H. K. Cassidy and Patricia Cassidy, Richard R. Perkins, and Worthen Bradley.

#### *Building for Youth Campaign*

Before Harold A. Wagner resigned as Managing Director in 1946, sentiment was crystallizing within the Board of Directors in favor of some kind of a capital funds drive. Some felt that as much as \$3,000,000 was needed to provide new buildings and renovate the old. Consent had to be secured from the Community Chest before such a drive could be launched. Since several other welfare and charitable agencies included in the Chest were also in need of capital funds, a joint effort on the part of eight of these agencies, including the Y.M.C.A., was held in 1948-50. It was called the Building for Youth campaign. Following is the distribution of funds raised beyond campaign expenses:

Boy Scouts . . . . .	\$ 45,695.00
Camp Fire Girls . . . . .	24,050.00
Columbia Park Boys' Club . . . . .	108,225.00
International Institute . . . . .	36,175.00
Telegraph Hill Neighborhood House . . . . .	43,290.00
Booker T. Washington Neighborhood Center . . . . .	96,200.00
Y.M.C.A. . . . .	360,750.00
Y.W.C.A. . . . .	96,200.00
	\$810,585.00

The funds were used by the Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls for camp improvements; by the Y.W.C.A. to renovate its first floor lobby; and enabled the Columbia Park Boys' Club, International Institute, Telegraph Hill Neighborhood House and Booker T. Washington Neighborhood Center to secure new buildings. The money received by the Y.M.C.A. made possible the renovation of the first two floors of the Central Branch, the erection of the Park-Presidio and Mission buildings, the purchase of a lot for the Golden West Branch, some camp improvements, and an allocation to the Peninsula building fund.

At the time that the Building for Youth campaign for San Francisco agencies was being planned, the Peninsula Branch received permission from their local Community Chest to carry on a capital fund campaign. In return for not soliciting in San Francisco, the Peninsula Branch was granted \$20,000 from the Y.M.C.A. Building for Youth fund.

## A RESTATEMENT OF POLICY

Ever since 1933 when the National Council voted to allow each local Association to fix its own conditions of active membership, the San Francisco Y had admitted all who applied for this status without questioning whether or not the applicant belonged to an evangelical church. At the 1947 annual meeting of the San Francisco Association, the following statement was adopted. This was a modification of a similar statement made previously by the Chicago Association.

The YMCA believes that its Christian objectives can be realized even though its members consist of Jews, Roman Catholics, Protestants, and persons who have no religious affiliations. This belief is based on the simple philosophy: First, that a religious person participates in the particular customs and beliefs of his own religious tradition. Second, that a religious person expresses his religion by the way he lives and in everything he does. He is religious not only when he is in the church or synagogue, but in the home, in his business, and at his play.

In its program, the YMCA aims to help every individual to grow in both of these aspects of religious living. It wants every person to be an intelligent and loyal participant in his own religious culture. Every one in the membership is encouraged to find the spiritual home that meets his own needs, and to share loyally in its life.

Perhaps the more natural way in which the YMCA realizes Christian objectives is to stress the second aspect of religious living — by cultivating Christian ways of thinking and acting in everything that is done. Basketball games, committee meetings, group activities and aquatic meets may be conducted in such a way that Christian values are realized.

In spelling out the intentions of this restatement, the action taken by the annual meeting declared that the Y.M.C.A. should interpret "its religious program in such a way that each person would become a better adherent of the church or synagogue that meets his needs, and at the same time grow in those attitudes and qualities of life that are basic in all religions." Religion was interpreted in its widest application. This was a considerable departure from the objectives of the founders of the Y.M.C.A. who looked upon the Association as an arm of the evangelical church. The emphasis now was upon tolerance, brotherhood, high morality, and character development. Although Christian teachings were continued in various Hi-Y and Tri-Y clubs, according to the individual interests of the leaders, in general the Association encouraged its members to turn to their respective churches or synagogues for further instruction in the tenets of their faith.

## THE CENTENNIAL YEAR — 1953

Although references to the centennial of the organization of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. frequently appear in the minutes of the Board of Directors for that year, no special service of commemoration was held. The *Y.M.C.A. Year Book* for 1954 has the following analysis of the membership for the San Francisco Association for 1953:

	Male	Female
Members under 18	2,768	1,738
Members 18-29	2,230	755
Members 30 and up	7,493	1,550
Totals	<u>12,491</u>	<u>4,043</u>
Grand Total		16,534

What a contrast with 1853 when during the first year of its existence the San Francisco Y enrolled 343 members. Another significant difference between the statistics for 1853 and those for 1953 is found in the fact that in the latter year about one-fourth of the paid memberships came from girls and women.

The operating budget for the first year was \$2,093.66. In 1953 this had grown to \$1,531,700. Running the Metropolitan Association had become big business. By 1961 the annual budget had increased to over \$2,000,000. Beginning with the first year of Sorenson's administration, there was a steady growth in services rendered, income, and costs. During the years 1946-49 inclusive, the San Francisco Y was weathering the storm of inflation. To complicate the picture, the U.S.O. subsidy was discontinued and although the contribution received annually from the Community Chest (including the contributions from the Community Chests of San Mateo and Marin counties) was somewhat increased, yet the ratio of such help to the rising operational costs declined. And yet through these years to the present, the Metropolitan Y has not only balanced its books but has also discharged the indebtedness inherited from earlier years.

## DESIGNING EDUCATION IN VALUES

The coming of the centennial in 1953 was used as an occasion to submit the policies and program of the San Francisco Association to a rigorous reexamination and a redesigning. Chronologically the Y stood at the end of one century and the beginning of another. But an even greater and much more significant turning point was at hand. The world in 1953 had entered a new age — the atomic age. The physical sciences had ushered all mankind into a new and a terribly dangerous era. Advances in psychology and the behavioral sciences



called for a reexamination of old educational methods and the adoption of a new approach to character education and even to religion itself.

Beginning in the years when Allan E. Charles was president of the Y, 1948-51, and extending through the administration of Arthur W. Towne, 1952-54, the Board of Directors under the guiding hand of Director Sorenson carried on the project of examining, testing, and designing a suitable program for the new century. The Rosenberg Foundation gave a grant which made a thorough and scientific study of this problem possible. Fourteen pilot projects in character education were set up in the various branches in the early 1950s. The experimentation was carried on for about four years and then the results were published by the Association Press in 1955 under the title *Designing Education in Values, a Case Study in Institutional Change*. Roy Sorenson and Hedley S. Dimock, who was formerly dean of the George Williams College in Chicago, shared the responsibilities of authorship. The 365 page volume received wide national distribution.

The objective of the study was not to reorganize the Y.M.C.A. but to reorientate it to its task in this generation. Not only the San Francisco Association but Y.M.C.A.s everywhere were faced with developments and changes in goals, methods, and the social environment in which young people of this generation find themselves. The study will remain for years to come as a valuable reference work in the field of Christian education.

### THE CHANGES OF A CENTURY

During the century, 1853-1953, a tremendous advance in human achievements was wrought. This was the age of remarkable discoveries and of new inventions. In the realm of material things, American society passed from the age of candles to neon lights, from ox-drawn covered wagons to jet airliners, from sailing ships to atom-powered vessels, from muzzle loading single-shot rifles to hydrogen bombs, and from an occasional balloon ascension to space-travel. Innumerable devices, totally unknown in 1853 but commonplace a century later, lifted burdens in factory and home which were once so onerous. The existence of these material things, entirely amoral in themselves, had tremendous effect upon the way people lived and this in turn influenced moral and spiritual values.

We need the perspective of time to grasp the depth and extent of the changes that came. The average citizen of 1953 was surrounded by physical comforts totally unknown to his grandfather and possibly even to his father. His life expectancy was lengthened by decades over what the average citizen of 1853 faced. In 1953 the average individual had more time for reading, for recreation, for vacations than was

dreamed of a century earlier. Indeed the forced leisure of 1953 often became a problem for unemployed boys and men. The ease and rapidity of transportation in 1953 immeasurably widened a community. Back in 1853 the average community had a radius determined by the distance a horse could travel in a day. By 1953 this was multiplied many times by the automobile speeding over paved roads. This made it possible for young people to escape the restraints and inhibitions of a small closely knit community. A number of important inventions in the world of communication as the telephone, radio, and television, had by 1953 brought the world into the living room often while the events being described were actually taking place. The world as a community had shrunk. The most isolated community in 1953 quickly felt the effects of events in the most distant places. These new inventions and discoveries have had a tremendous effect upon the thinking and the living of all people. Involved are new social, moral, and religious implications which affect every individual and every home.

During this century under review, tremendous changes have also taken place in the theological and social outlook of the Protestant churches of the United States. The introduction of higher criticism from the Continent in the latter part of the 19th century; the various revisions of the Bible which in scholarly circles replaced the old King James version; and the rise of the so-called social gospel, all had their impact upon the thought and life of the churches. The maturing of the behavioral sciences and the new theories of education brought radical changes in the church's program of religious education.

Change is a characteristic of growth. No organization as a church or a Y.M.C.A. can remain static and live. The very fact that during these one hundred years both the church and the Y.M.C.A. changed their approach to their responsibilities is evidence of life. Among the changes to be noted was a mellowing of the former dogmatic Calvinistic theology. By 1953 there was less emphasis upon evangelistic revivalism and more upon character education. Even the terminology of the Christians had changed. Phrases that were once so meaningful to the devout back in 1853 sounded hackneyed in the ears of those who lived in 1953. Too frequent use over too many years had dulled the meaning of these old expressions and made them useless clichés.

The Y.M.C.A. as a child of each generation has reflected these changes of thought and outlook in its program. As we of this generation look back upon the early days of the San Francisco Y, we are amused at the way old Puritanical taboos against certain games and activities were observed. Back in 1865 the Board of Managers actually voted against permitting chess to be played in the rooms of the Association! For years pool and billiards were excluded as being sinful. At first no dances were ever held either in the rooms of the Association or elsewhere under its sponsorship. Cigarette smoking was plainly of the

devil until after World War 1. Gradually the climate changed. Now such activities are regarded as mere incidentals. Both the church and the Y.M.C.A. are majoring on basic attitudes which are far more important in character development than some particular activities.

A review of the various activities of the San Francisco Association during the past century reveals the fact that one after another of once important projects have become obsolete as the need was filled by public institutions or agencies. In the early years of the Association, a library was important. The opening of a public library, however, made a Y library unnecessary. Bathing facilities at the Y were no longer needed when bath rooms were built into rooming houses. The gymnasium and the swimming pool, once considered the *sine qua non* of every well equipped Y building, are no longer the attraction they once were because such facilities are now common in our modern schools or in public parks. The old literary clubs, debating societies, singing schools, or lecture courses are now a thing of the past. Today a television is far more entertaining and informative. The rise of public supported social agencies has taken care of the unemployed and the indigent. Today the San Francisco Y has no secretary whose responsibility it is to find work for men except for college students. Throughout the years the San Francisco Y has been sensitive to areas of human need as they affected young men in particular. As these needs have changed or as they have been adequately met by other agencies, the Y has changed its program accordingly.

During this century under review, only the first and last words of the Young Men's Christian Association have remained the same in meaning. Today as at its beginning the institution continues to major upon serving youth and it is still an association. The meaning of the other two words, however, has been enlarged. Today the activities of the Association include young women as well as young men.

Today the word Christian has a much wider connotation in Y.M.C.A. circles than was given to it back in 1853. The founders of the first Y.M.C.A. in this country at Boston were much concerned about the threats of Unitarianism. Membership in the Association was limited to young men who were members of an Evangelical Church. All through the first seventy-five years of the history of the Association throughout the nation, great emphasis was laid upon prayer meetings, Bible study, revivals, and personal conversions. The Y had no more faithful friend or supporter than Dwight L. Moody who found within the Association a congenial atmosphere for his evangelistic campaigns. But gradually this emphasis changed. The old evangelical test for membership began to be modified at the turn of the century. The consensus of the Y leaders was that the test was too restrictive. Many Associations, including that at San Francisco, were having more Roman Catholics in their activities than members of any single Protestant

denomination. By 1925 the National Council approved the action which made the evangelical test optional. This was never an issue with the San Francisco Y. It moved along with the sentiment held by the other Associations of the country.

In 1947 the San Francisco Association accepted a broad basis for membership which included, "Jews, Roman Catholics, Protestants, and persons who have no religious affiliation." In reinterpreting its standards for membership, the Y did not intend to give up the name Christian. Rather it felt that it was emphasizing values just as important to the development of a full-rounded Christian character as were the values stressed by the founders a century ago. From concern about violations of Puritanical taboos and acts of moral turpitude, the Y moved into the larger field of character education. It wanted to use the new knowledge made available by the development of the behavioral sciences. The emphasis was shifted from the individual to the group with the conviction that the group in turn would change the individual. There was less emphasis on creedal adherence and more on Christian ideals and practices. Instead of relying upon a great revival meeting for an emotional experience, the Y now emphasizes the importance of having mature leaders with Christian convictions lead the members of their respective groups into a deeper appreciation of what it means to be a Christian.

In 1956 the San Francisco Association codified and reformulated its policies for the members of its staff and of all branch boards. This manual, called *Policies*, begins with a section entitled "Purpose and Objectives." Reference was here made to the action taken at the centennial annual meeting in 1953 when the specific objectives were defined as "to develop a way of living in which the member increasingly becomes healthy and fit, intelligent and reasonable, emotionally adequate, self-reliant and responsible, cooperative, recreative, and motivated by principle in his family, work or school, and community." The religious policy which was to be the role of the San Francisco Association was clearly outlined as follows:

1. To make known that the organization, its staff, and its volunteers place a high value on religious faith and to seek to demonstrate in all aspects of the internal life of the Association the meaning of its Christian principles.

2. To encourage members to belong to, and participate in, the church or synagogue of their choice where they can be instructed in the tenets and literature of their faith, express devotion to the saints and prophets of their faith, and associate with others in religious aspiration.

3. To stimulate the search by each person for an ever deepening and maturing faith and to encourage the sharing of these convictions with others.

4. To foster living in accord with religious ideals. To seek to make the ideals of religion, such as love, charity, peace, justice, and brotherhood prevail in the relationships of men. And to identify and resist evil; such as greed, crime, exploitation, tyranny, hate, and intolerance. To encourage members, through their appropriate means and associations, to work for the application of their religions faith and practice in the sphere of their daily calling, and in the performance of their citizenship responsibilities.

On the basis of this enlarged conception of what the full name Young Men's Christian Association meant, the San Francisco Y moved forward into the second century of its history. The future will be more than an extension of the past. In place of frontier town and old city is the metropolis demanding operations to match the scale of population. In the central city there is obsolescence, urban renewal, and mobility of masses. Suburban sprawl scatters urban life over the countryside. The place of social change responding to industrial technology, the new war technology, outer space exploration, and world events modify American culture and its intellectual and spiritual climate. The world is in ferment as the Colonial world awakens with popular economic and political aspirations. Social organization becomes more and more complex and the Y.M.C.A. works in a matrix of government services, hundreds of voluntary agencies, and Bay Area federated financing. The outlook and needs of youth contrast sharply with the past. Adolescence is no longer a brief period between puberty and a job, but rather almost a decade, resulting from prolonged education and ever later entry into the work force.

The Y.M.C.A. of San Francisco in its second century will be called upon to make continuous adaptations of its goals, program, methods, facilities, and leadership to be relevant, contemporary, and influential in the new world. This spirit they share with the pioneers who invented a service to youth while reaching out to the world a hundred years ago. But unlike the founding fathers, the present generation of board and professional leaders must reckon with a long past while reaching to a new future.



# Appendix A

## PRESIDENTS OF THE SAN FRANCISCO Y.M.C.A. 1853 - 1953

1853-54	W. K. Osborn	1868-70	Noah Brooks
1854-55	E. P. Flint	1870-71	Capt. Charles Goodall
1855-56	W. G. Badger	1871-72	B. H. Freeman
1856-57	Charles W. Bond	1872-73	E. A. Lawrence
1857-58	Henry J. Wells	1873-81	Jacob S. Taber
1858-59	James A. Banks	1881-83	A. B. Forbes
1859-60	Judge E. D. Sawyer	1883-95	George W. Gibbs
1860-61	E. W. Playter	1895-99	J. J. Valentine
1861-62	Judge John Reynolds	1900-14	Rolla V. Watt
1862-63	G. W. Armes	1915	James S. Webster
1863-64	H. L. Chamberlain	1916-22	Capt. Robert Dollar
1864-65	W. M. Cubery	1922-32	John H. McCallum
1865-66	Judge R. C. Harrison	1933-35	Guy V. Shoup
1865-66	Samuel Irving	1936-41	Francis V. Keesling
1865-66	Jonas A. Eaton	1942-47	Dr. George H. Becker
1866-67	Daniel C. Breed	1948-51	Allan E. Charles
1867-68	George Barstow	1952-54	Arthur W. Towne

## Appendix B

Statistics of Finances, Membership, and Number of Volumes in the Library of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A. for the first fifteen years, 1853-1868. In each case the statistics cover the fiscal year ending July 31st.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Receipts</i>	<i>Expenditures</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>Members</i>	<i>Library Books</i>
1854	\$2,045.97	\$2,039.66	\$ 6.31	343	439
1855	2,308.32	2,285.10	-23.22	287	900
1856	2,739.92	2,703.98	35.94	260	1,273
1857	1,656.95	1,656.84	.11	370	1,488
1858	1,298.83	1,286.05	12.78	209	1,500
1859	1,275.58	1,256.91	18.67	261	1,600
1860	1,302.27	1,273.43	28.84	345	1,509
1861	1,637.11	1,573.37	63.74	288	2,000
1862	1,283.71	1,244.62	39.09	343	2,002
1863	1,268.64	1,215.83	52.81	381	2,000
1864	3,133.91	3,129.28	4.63	313	2,000
1865	2,518.48	2,535.66	-17.18	274	2,000
1866	1,450.15	1,516.91	-66.76	262	2,000
1867	1,978.10	1,899.73	78.37	286	2,000
1868	7,456.15	9,155.12	-1,698.97	?	2,000

The figures for 1860 include \$435 for a building fund. The receipts for 1868 also include building fund contributions.

## Footnotes

All references to Annual Reports are to those of the San Francisco Y.

### Chapter I – THE BEGINNINGS OF THE Y

- <sup>1</sup> Willey to Badger, Dec. 3, 1848. Original in A. H. M. S. files, Chicago Theological Seminary.
- <sup>2</sup> Published copies of these sermons are in the library of the San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, California.
- <sup>3</sup> Soule, Gihon, and Nisbet, *Annals of San Francisco*, p. 488.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 447.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 452.
- <sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 425.
- <sup>7</sup> Williams, *A Pioneer Pastorate*, p. 56.
- <sup>8</sup> In 1837 the Presbyterian Church divided into the Old School and the New School. Each in turn was divided over the slavery issue. The two southern branches united to form the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. In 1869 the two northern branches united to form the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. By tradition the New School cooperated more closely with the Congregationalists than did the Old School. The Rev. Albert Williams was Old School; the Rev. T. Dwight Hunt was New School. The New School Presbyterians and the Congregationalists sponsored the *Pacific*. The Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Bancroft Library at the University of California, and San Francisco Theological Seminary each has a fairly complete file of this periodical.
- <sup>9</sup> Whiteside, *The Boston Y.M.C.A.*, p. 5; Drury, *Presbyterian Panorama*, p. 96.
- <sup>10</sup> Whiteside, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
- <sup>11</sup> 1860 Annual Report, p. 19.
- <sup>12</sup> Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America*, p. 24.
- <sup>13</sup> Williams, *A Pioneer Pastorate*, p. 158. Williams in his account, published in 1882, confuses the two meetings of July 18th and 25th, erroneously claiming that the first meeting was held in the First Presbyterian Church.
- <sup>14</sup> *Constitution and By-Laws of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A.* The only known copy is in the historical library of the national headquarters of the Y.M.C.A. in New York City.

### Chapter II – IN RENTED ROOMS, 1853-1864

- <sup>1</sup> The records of the First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, N. Y., show that Captain Montgomery and his wife joined that church in 1831.
- <sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 677.
- <sup>3</sup> Drury, *A Chronology of Protestant Beginnings in California*, p. 3.
- <sup>4</sup> *Second Annual Report*, p. 27.
- <sup>5</sup> See Appendix B for a statistical summary of finances, membership, and number of volumes in the library, 1853-68 inclusive.
- <sup>6</sup> Condit, *The Chinaman as we see him*, pp. 15 ff.
- <sup>7</sup> See Appendix A for a list of the presidents of the San Francisco Y.M.C.A.
- <sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.
- <sup>9</sup> From *Journal of the Fifth International Conference of Women's Christian Associations held in Cleveland, Ohio, June 3-5, 1879*. Copy in Historical Library, Y.M.C.A., New York City.

### Chapter III — IN THE Y'S FIRST BUILDING, 1864-1868

- <sup>1</sup> The 1868 report is in the library of the Pacific School of Religion; the reports for 1871 and 1872 are in the library of S.F.T.S., San Anselmo.
- <sup>2</sup> *Annual Report*, San Francisco Y.M.C.A., 1866, p. 16.
- <sup>3</sup> *Quarterly of the Young Mens' Christian Association*, vol. II, no. 4, Aug. 1868, pp. 152-53.

### Chapter IV — AT SUTTER STREET BEFORE MCCOY, 1868-1881

- <sup>1</sup> *Quarterly*, vol. III, no. 4, Aug. 1869, p. 143.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. III, no. 3, p. 97.
- <sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 336-37.
- <sup>4</sup> Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America*, p. 126.
- <sup>5</sup> A copy of this pamphlet is in the library of San Francisco Theological Seminary.
- <sup>6</sup> Condit, *The Chinaman as We See Him*, pp. 119, ff.
- <sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 282-83.
- <sup>8</sup> A discrepancy is noted here as a report from Andrews, the librarian, printed on p. 143 in the August 1869 issue of the *Quarterly* states: "The whole number of members received into our Association since its commencement is about eighteen hundred."

### Chapter V — AT SUTTER STREET AFTER MCCOY, 1881-1894

- <sup>1</sup> From copy in *The Golden Era*, San Francisco, January 13, 1883.
- <sup>2</sup> A record in the minutes of the board for December following reads: "The Committee to which was referred the publication of this lecture, reported that as soon as the phonographic report had been returned . . ." Here the word "phonograph" is evidently used as a synonym for "stenographic" as the phonograph was not perfected until after the turn of the century.
- <sup>3</sup> For further information about the origin and work of the State Committee, see the pamphlet *Thirty Years, 1881-1911, State Association, California, Young Men's Christian Association*. Copy in San Francisco Y.
- <sup>4</sup> File of *Monatliche Rundschau*, vol. 1, no. 1, July 1887 to vol. 12, no. 2, Aug. 1898, in Historical Library, Y.M.C.A., New York City.
- <sup>5</sup> From appeal printed on the back of the 1889 *Annual Report*.

### Chapter VI — AT MASON AND ELLIS, 1894-1906

- <sup>1</sup> *Five Decades*, p. 117. Most of the data for 1903 used in this chapter was taken from this book.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- <sup>4</sup> Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A.*, p. 374.
- <sup>5</sup> From a pamphlet by McCoy, *Review of the first Fifty Years History*, p. 182. In files of San Francisco Y.
- <sup>6</sup> From pamphlet, *Army Christian Commission*, Y.M.C.A., San Francisco.

### Chapter VII — AT GOLDEN GATE AND LEAVENWORTH, 1906-1915

- <sup>1</sup> A bronze plaque above the fireplace in the central lobby of the main building of the San Francisco Association carries the names of these givers.
- <sup>2</sup> Drury, *History of the Chaplain Corps, U.S. Navy*, vol. 1, p. 156.

Chapters VIII to XII inclusive. The main data for these chapters have been taken from the official minutes of the Board of Directors, the annual reports, and incidental publications of the San Francisco Association. The author has also drawn upon information gained from

personal interviews with a number of people who have been closely associated with the San Francisco Association during the past forty years. Also see Acknowledgments and Sources.

Chapter X – Most of the information in this chapter, dealing with the evangelical test has been drawn from Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A.* The following footnotes in that chapter are to this work unless otherwise noted:

<sup>1</sup> P. 78.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 363 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Whiteside, *Boston YMCA*, p. 88.

<sup>4</sup> P. 366.

<sup>5</sup> P. 367.

<sup>6</sup> P. 381.

<sup>7</sup> P. 514.

<sup>8</sup> P. 521.



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- |                                   |                   |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
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| <i>Californian</i>                | <i>Examiner</i>   |
| <i>Call</i>                       | <i>Golden Era</i> |
| <i>Christian Advocate</i>         | <i>Occident</i>   |
|                                   | <i>Pacific</i>    |

Quotations have also been taken from a number of pamphlets and local publications of the San Francisco Association which are sufficiently identified in the text.

# Index

- ACCOUNTING, School of: 182  
Activities, program of: 60, 62, 64, 78, 82, 87 ff., 99 ff., 102, 105 ff.; after earthquake, 132; 141 ff.; growing activities, 162 ff.; 180 ff.; other activities, 185 ff.; 205 ff., 210 ff., 223 ff.  
Advertising: the Y, 28, 49; School, 207  
Ah Chong: 33  
Alexander, C.B.: 94  
American Home Missionary Society: 17  
Amusements, public: 19, 95  
Anderson, Dr. William C: 42-43  
Andrews, W.O: 59  
*Annals of San Francisco*: 19, 30  
Annual meetings: 31, 46, 51, 57, 72, 215; 1882, 78; 1891, 96; 1899, 105, 107, 114; 1907, 125-26, 130; 1915, 143  
Annual reports: first, 34; 1860, 44; 1868, 55; 1869, 68; 1882, 72; 1886, 84, 87; 1890, 90; 1895, 102; 1932, 212; 131, 222 ff.  
Armor, Joseph G: 26  
Armory Building: 29, 37  
Army and Navy Christian Commission: 108, 110  
Army and Navy Department: 110, 126, 149  
Army and Navy Y.M.C.A: 150 ff., 174-75, 203  
Army Y.M.C.A: picture, 109  
Articles of Incorporation: 26, 71  
Asilomar: beginnings of, 85-86, 105  
*Association Men*: 122, 126-27  
Athletics: 156, 207 ff.; *see also* Physical activities; gymnasium  
Attendance records: 88, 92 ff., 96, 103 ff., 105, 132, 175, 206 ff., 220, 223
- BACON, Josiah: 26  
Badger, W.G: 37  
Balboa District: 203  
Balfour, Robert: 97  
Banks, J.A: 38, 49  
Baptist Church, Pine Street: 24  
Baptist churches, San Francisco: 19, 31  
Barnett, Eugene: 217  
Barstow, George: 56 ff.
- Basketball leagues: 183  
Bathing facilities: 81 ff., 237; *see also* Swimming pool  
Becker, George H: 220, 225  
Beckwith, Rev. E.G: 54  
Beecher, Henry Ward: 63  
Bell, Lucius: 26  
Benjamin, Edmund B: 26, 35  
Benton, Rev. Joseph A: 32  
Bequests: 45, 68, 145, 177  
Bible classes: 37, 103, 181; *see also* Religious activities  
Bibles: 110, 194 ff.; presented by Capt. Dollar, 178  
Billiard tables: 81, 106, 138, 170, 236  
Billings, Mrs. Frederick: 129  
—, Josh: 83  
Black, Mrs. S.M: 200  
Blosser, R.W: 169, 188, 221  
Board of Directors: 115, 139 ff., 146 ff., 161, 166 ff., 170, 214 ff., 225 ff.  
Board of Managers: 25, 27, 40, 46, 53, 55, 68 ff.; dissolved, 70 ff.; 72  
Board of Trustees: 71, 114, 137 ff., 139, 214  
Boarding house: 33, 84  
Boardman, George S: 216  
Bond, C.W: 26  
Booming Twenties: 179 ff.  
Booth, Alfred O: 187  
Boston Y.M.C.A: 21 ff., 25, 193  
Bowling alley: 61, 81, 102, 111, 137  
Boys, R.S: 90  
Boys work: 71 ff., 76, 82, 102, 104, 112, 132, 141, 158, 183 ff., 203; Boys Department, 120, 209 ff.; illustrations, 208, 223  
Bradley, Fred W: 166  
—, Worthen: 232  
Branches: organization of first, 88 ff.; developments within, 107 ff., 167; 191, 203 ff.; summary account, 203 ff.  
Brannan, Samuel: 30  
Breed, David C: 54  
Brigham, Rev. Charles H: 17 ff.  
Brooklyn Y.M.C.A: 57, 149, 153, 221  
Brooks, Noah: 68

- Buchanan Street Branch: 230; illustration, 229; *see also* Japanese Y.M.C.A.
- Buddhist Goddess of Mercy: 88
- Budget: for 1904, 121; 1916, 159; 1921, 187; 1953, 234
- Building era: 179 ff.
- Building for Youth Campaign: 226, 232 ff.
- Building Fund: 40, 45, 53 ff., 93 ff., 97 ff., 108, 112, 125 ff., 130, 138 ff., 144, 169, 170-72, 175
- Buildings: agitation for first, 88; demand for new, 92 ff., pictures of institutional, 176; pictures of community, 229
- Buildings, early: 46-48, 53 ff.; at Mason and Ellis, 94 ff., 101 ff.; pictures of, 48, 109, 124
- Burdette, Dr. Robert J: 138
- Butler, John W: 70
- CALIFORNIA:** 1852 population, 18; prophecy of future, 32, 83
- California Exchange Building: 27-29, 37
- California Prison Commission: 50 ff.
- Californian*: 30
- Cameron, Caleb: 45, 54
- Camp McCoy: 104, 141, 160, 183, 199, 209 ff., 231; illustration, 201
- Camp scenes: pictures, 201
- Camp Wasiata: 200, 205, 222, 231
- Camp YuMiCiA: 183, 199-200, 209, 231
- Car-Men's Branch: *see* Street Car Men's Branch
- Cassidy, Col. and Mrs. H.K., and Patricia: 232
- Censorship: 104
- Centennial Year, 1953: 234
- Central Branch: 168 ff., 203; renovated, 221; 226, ff., 232; illustrations, 176, 208
- Chamberlain, H.L.: 41, 45, 49, 60, 62, 65, 118
- Changes of a Century: 235 ff.
- Changsha, China: 147
- Chapin, George W: 36
- Chapman, Rev. Erwin S: 86
- Character education: 238 ff.
- Charity activities: 79
- Charles, Allan E: 225 ff., 235
- Chess, prohibited: 49, 106, 236
- Chicago Y.M.C.A.: 153 ff., 163
- Chinatown guides: 170 ff.
- Chinese in San Francisco: 33, 50, 143; *see also* Chinese Y.M.C.A.
- Chinese Presbyterian Church: 19, 33, 66
- Chinese Y.M.C.A.: 33, 65 ff., 92, 147, 151, 154, 169 ff., 179, 223, 227
- Christian Advocate*, 18
- Christian Commission: 108
- Christian Science members: 106, 182, 195
- Christmas dinners: 77
- Chronicle, San Francisco*: 133, 149-50
- Chronicle Shoot: 209
- Churches of San Francisco: 19 ff.; represented in Y membership, 106; *see also* Religious affiliations
- Church parties: 177
- Citizenship classes: 143; illustration, 184
- Civil War: 42-43
- Civilian Conservation Corps: 210
- Coffee Shop: 65, 136
- Coleman, Edward: 145
- College Associations: 85; *see also* Student work
- Communism: 213 ff.
- Community Chest: 94, 162, 165, 179, 187 ff., 196 ff., 221, 232
- Conaughy, David: 189
- Condit, Rev. Ira M: 151
- Congregational churches of San Francisco: 19, 167-68; First, 20, 31, 72, 98
- Constitution of Y.M.C.A.: 21, 24, 25 ff.; rewritten, 70 ff.; new, 120, 214 ff.
- Converse, John H: 128
- Cook, Joseph: 83
- Cornerstone ceremonies: 1868, 56; 1893, 98; 1908, 136 ff.; 1926, 175
- Cornerstone inscription: 126, 136-37
- Correspondence courses: 103
- Counselling: 196, 212
- Cox, Rev. H: 60 ff., 63, 69-71
- Cree, Thomas H: 72, 75
- Criticisms of the Y.M.C.A.: 162
- Crocker, William H: 94, 104, 166, 214
- Crothers, Thomas G: 216; picture, 146
- Cubery, W.M: 51 ff., 118
- DANCING:** 62, 210, 237
- Davis, H.W: 120
- Day, Lester: 13, 69
- Dead Letter Office: 42, 52; *see also* Post Office Committee
- Deaf-mute, work for: 88 ff., 107
- Debating class: 41, 62, 83, 106, 237
- Debt: 37, 56, 59, 68 ff., 71 ff., 93, 99, 101, 112 ff.; paid, 116; 121, 145, 158 ff., 160-62
- Dedication ceremonies: pictures 117, 134-135; 1869, 59 ff.; 1895, 101; 1903, 116 ff.; 1910, 137 ff.

- Dental School, University of California: 65
- Depression of 1930s: 165, 186, 189, 196; *see also* Financial depressions
- Designing Education in Values*: 234 ff.
- Dewey, Admiral: 149
- Dimock, Hedley S: 235
- Dixon, Ben: 184
- Dodge, Cleveland H: 128
- , Grace H: 128
- , William E: 72
- , Mrs. W.E: 128-29
- Dollar, Captain Robert: 121, 147, 159, 161, 166, 169; presents Bibles, 178; 187, 189; picture 146
- Donors, list of: 128-29
- Dormitory: 61, 132, 141-42, 149, 169-70, 175; summary, 212; 219
- Drexler, Mrs. Elsie A: 200
- EARTHQUAKE AND FIRE**: 75, 119, 121 ff., picture, 117; effects of, 153
- Educational activities: 78, 83, 102 ff., 120, 182; *see also* Golden Gate College, Evening College, Night School
- Educational Department: 143
- Eells, Dr. James: 41, 55
- Electric light: 82, 97
- Embarcadero Branch: 156, 174 ff., 179, 220, 228; illustration, 176; *see also* Army and Navy Y.M.C.A.
- Emergency Education Program, 213
- Employees: 139, 189, 197 ff., 213
- Employment Committee: 27, 34, 37, 79 ff., 105, 143, 186, 197
- English classes: 65, 143
- Essays, original: 31
- Evangelical Test: 21, 68, 71, 120, 192 ff., 237
- Evening College: 102, 120; *see also* Golden Gate College
- Examiner, San Francisco*: 116 ff.
- FEES, membership**: 33, 36, 68, 71, 79, 111, 131, 137, 142, 206
- Felton Grove: 85
- Ferry Building: 143
- Festivals: 55, 68; *see also* Floral Festival, Ladies Festival
- Fiftieth anniversary: 108, 114, 118
- Filipino work: 106, 168
- Finances: 33, 36 ff., 41, 56, 68 ff., 72, 93, 95 ff., 112, 121, 130 ff., 133; of new building, 138; 143-44, 158 ff.; summary of 1920s, 187; 197 ff.; some aspects, 212 ff., 221; statistical review, 242
- Financial depressions: 97 ff., 101, 112, 175, 179; *see also* Depression of 1930s
- Financial problems: 38, 69-71, 108, 111 ff., 144 ff., 158, 186, 197, 221
- Five Decades*: 22, 98, 104 ff., 119
- Fleming, Dr. Sandford: 42
- Flint, Edward P: 26, 34
- Floral Festival: 39, 45
- Flu epidemic: 163
- Forbes, A.B: 70, 75, 94; death, 116
- Forman, R.B: 70
- Freeman, B.H: 62, 64
- Furnishings: 98, 138
- GAMBLE, Cecil H**: 147
- Gambling: 66
- Gambling houses in San Francisco: 19
- Games: 105 ff., 182 ff., 236
- General Assembly of Y.M.C.A: 215
- General Secretary: 36, 60, 71; pictures, 74
- Germans, work for: 88 ff., 106-07
- Gibbs, G.W: 70-72, 75, 86, 91-93, 95 ff., 98, 112; death, 115; 137; picture, 23
- Gillett, Governor: 138
- Girls work: 199-200, 205 ff., 210, 222 ff.; *see also* Tri-Y
- Gladden, Washington: 194
- Glunz, Charles A: 111
- Godtfriing, F.W: 89
- Gold Rush: 17-18, 30
- Golden Gate Branch: 155; activities, 185
- Golden Gate College: 80, 102 ff., 181 ff., 207 ff., 223, 226 ff.
- Golden West Branch: 203, 223, 228, 232; picture, 229
- Good Friday observance: 140
- Goodwin, Ralph C: 145, 151
- Gossom, R.H: 156
- Gould, Thomas G: 26
- Grady, Theodore: 89, 107
- Green Street Center: 168
- Greenwood, Monroe: 91
- Guthrie, Alexander: 70
- Gymnasium: 60-61, 78, 80 ff., 102, 138, 170, 175 ff., 205, 237
- Gyro Club: 200, 209
- HANDS ACROSS THE PACIFIC**: 185
- Harkness, E.S: 128-129
- , Mrs. S.V: 128
- Hart, John: 202
- Harvest workers: 210
- Hawaiian Islands: 30
- Hawley, Frederick S: 26
- Hearst, Mrs. Phoebe A: 104
- Hemphill, Dr. John: 99

- Hi-Y Clubs: 179, 209 ff.  
 Hobbies: 212  
 Hodge, George B: 138  
 Honolulu Y.M.C.A: 152  
 Honorable mention: 216; *see also* In Tribute  
 Hopkins, C. Howard: 75, 194, 245  
 —, Moses: 96  
 Hoshiyama, Fred: 230  
 Howard, General O.O: 75, 94, 110  
 Hunt, E.P: 185  
 —, Rev. Timothy Dwight: 20, 24, 30  
 Huyler, John S: 128
- IMMIGRATION SECRETARY: 143**  
 In Tribute: 114 ff., 216; *see also* Honorable mention  
 Information Office, Ferry Building: 143  
 Insurance, School of: 182  
 Inter-racial Fellowship: 164, 230  
 International Committee: 72, 110 ff., 126 ff., 129, 173, 202  
 International Convention: 35 ff., 85  
 Irving, Samuel: 118  
 Isthmus of Panama: 18  
 Italian work: 106, 167 ff.
- JACKSON, F.A:** 111, 119  
 James, D. Willis: 128  
 Japan tours: 185  
 Japanese Y.M.C.A: 92, 154-55, 163, 168; picture, 171; 172 ff., 192, 202 ff.; becomes U.S.O. for Colored, 220; picture of building, 229; *see also* Buchanan  
 Jesup, Morris K: 72, 128  
 Jewish members: 106, 182, 195  
 Jewish Synagogue: 19  
 Johnson, A.S: 216  
 —, Elihu: 26  
 —, G.C: 68  
 Jones Gulch Camp: site purchased, 192; 199; 209, 231 ff.; illustrations 201  
 Jubilee celebration: 116 ff.
- KAWAKAMI, K.K:** 192  
 Keesling, Francis V: 166, 192, 215; picture, 146  
 Kip, Bishop William I: 32  
 Kitagawa, Dr. K: 202  
 Klein, Louis J: 202  
 Krick, Edwin V: 232
- LA HONDA:** 231; *see also* Jones Gulch  
 Ladies at Y meetings: 35; *see also* Women members
- Ladies' Central Committee: 75 ff., 89, 98  
 Ladies Festival: 54  
 Lane, Dr. N.W: 85  
 Latin Branch: 168  
 Law School: 103, 120, 139, 182, 207; *see also* Golden Gate College  
 Leavenworth Street Branch: 155, 168 ff.  
 Lecture courses: 32, 36, 60, 63, 83, 104, 132, 138, 237  
 Lee, C.S: 155  
 —, Keu: 33  
 Leffingwell, H.L: 35  
 Letts, Arthur: 127  
 Library: 24, 27, 34, 36-37, 44, 49, 61, 102; discontinued, 132; 181, 237; statistics of books, 242; *see also* Public Library  
 Life Work Conferences: 158 ff.  
 Lippy, T.S: 128  
 Lloyd, B. E: 63, 66  
 Locations of Y.M.C.A: 47, 153  
 Lodgings: 68, 79, 93, 196 ff.  
 London Y.M.C.A: 20 ff.; centennial observance, 222  
 Loomis, Dr. A.W: 66 ff.  
 Los Angeles Y.M.C.A: 127, 219  
 Lyceum: 83
- MACCALLUM, Miss Jean A:** 200  
 MacGregor, John A: 166  
 Macurda, Prof. A.A: 103, 119  
 Maillard, J.W., Jr: 166  
 Marin County Branch: 167, 204 ff., 230  
 Martin, George S: 13, 149, 175, 203-04, 216  
 Masaryk, Jan: 222  
 McCallum, John: 166, 175, 189, 191, 216; picture, 146  
 McCarl, F.A: 149  
 McComb, J.J: 36; picture 23  
 McCormick, Cyrus: 72, 129  
 —, Mrs. Cyrus: 129  
 McCoy, Henry J: 59, 65; picture, 74; called to San Francisco, 71; description of, 75 ff.; 84; salary, 93; 101 ff., 110, 113, 119; completes 25 years, 121; describes earthquake, 129 ff.; raises \$500,000, 127 ff.; appreciation of, 129; 139 ff.; summary of 35 years, 143 ff.; retires, 151 ff.; death, 152; 218  
 McDonald, R.H: 70, 72  
 McDougall, George B: 126, 133  
 McGraw, David F. and Minnie: 232  
 McLean, George: 174, 202  
 McNab, John L: 166  
 Medical lectures: 82



- Membership:** 24 ff., 33 ff., 36, 38, 40, 47; life memberships, 55; 59, 68 ff., 79, 102, 121, 125, 131-32, 141-43, 163, 187, 191, 198, 206; by nationalities, 105, by denominations, 195; in 1954, 234; statistics by years, 242  
**Mental emphasis:** 27, 180, 207  
**Merrill, John F:** 145  
 —, Mrs. John F: 114, 138  
**Methodist churches, San Francisco:** 19, 30, 50, 167  
**Metropolitan Plan of Y.M.C.A:** 90, 108, 119, 153 ff., 167 ff., 214, 226  
**Meyer, W.F:** 207  
**Military personnel:** 43, 111, 163, 174 ff., 212, 219  
**Miller, Albert:** 26  
**Millis, Harold Burr:** 232  
**Miner, Nagle:** 207  
**Minton, Dr. Henry C:** 110  
**Missing men:** 41  
**Mission Branch:** 90, 107, 131-32, 140 ff., 167; reopened, 173; 203, 227, 232; picture, 229  
**Model Legislature:** picture, 211  
**Monterey:** 17; *see also* Pacific Grove  
**Montgomery, Captain John:** 29 ff.  
**Montreal, Canada, Y.M.C.A:** 21, 36, 193  
**Moody, Dwight L:** 21, 62, 69 ff., 86, 99, 110; death, 115; 195 ff.  
**Moral conditions in San Francisco in 1855:** 19  
**Morgan, J. Pierpont:** 128  
**Mormons in San Francisco:** 30  
**Morse, L.L:** 216  
**Mothers Tribute Committee:** 114  
**Motion pictures, sound:** 203  
**Mott, John R:** 160 ff., 169, 172, 202  
**Musical Concerts:** 40, 55  
  
**NATIONAL COUNCIL:** 225, 233; *see also* International Committee  
**National War Work Council:** *see* War Work Council  
**National Youth Organization:** 213  
**Naval Club House:** 149  
**Navy Y.M.C.A:** 149 ff., 174 ff.  
**Negroes:** 36, 202, 220, 230  
**New Orleans:** 17, 22  
**New Years reception:** 84  
**New York Y.M.C.A:** 22, 154  
**Nichols, Bishop William Ford:** 98  
**Night school:** 80, 103, 125, 182  
**Norris, Frank:** 104  
**North Beach Center:** 167 ff., 172  
  
**OCCIDENT:** 68, 85  
*Octopus, The:* 104  
**Order of exercises:** 26  
**Osborn, W.K:** 20, 22, 26, 31, 33, 34; picture, 23  
**Over-seas work:** 119, 157; *see also* World Service  
  
*Pacific, The:* 20, 24, 31, 34-35, 39, 51  
**Pacific Grove:** excursions to, 85; conferences, 105  
**Panama Pacific Exposition:** 148  
**Park Branch:** *see* Street Car Men's Branch  
**Park-Presidio Branch:** 173-74, 228, 232; illustration, 229  
**Parr, Fred D:** 166  
**Parsons, W.B:** 70  
**Patterson, D.E:** 197, 220-21  
**Peninsula Branch:** 228-29, 232; *see also* San Mateo Branch  
**Pension Plan:** 152; *see also* Retirement plan  
**Perkins, George W:** 128  
 —, Rev. G.W: 18  
 —, Richard R: 13, 65; picture, 74; 155, 161 ff., 165 ff., 173, 179 ff., 186, 191 ff., 196, 203, 217 ff., 232  
**Personal Growth Institute:** 207  
**Pfister, J.J:** 89  
**Philippines:** *see* Filipino work  
**Physical activities:** 27, 60 ff., 78, 87, 102, 132, 163, 180, 182 ff.; illustration, 184; changing emphasis, 205, 207, 237; *see also* Gymnasium  
**Pierce, Lyman L:** picture, 74; 152 ff., 157, 160 ff., 164, 187, 202, 217 ff., 232  
**Playter, E.W:** 44  
**Policies:** 238  
**Pond, Rev. William C:** 26, 118  
**Porter, H.K:** 128  
**Portland, Oregon, Y.M.C.A:** 180  
**Portland Test:** 194 ff.  
**Portsmouth Square:** 29 ff.  
**Post Office Committee:** 52, 64  
**Potts, Joe:** 230  
**Prayer meetings:** 40, 49, 62, 78  
**Presbyterian churches, San Francisco:** 19, sponsor Chinese and Japanese Ys, 154; First Church, 20; 31, 99, 167  
**Presidents, San Francisco Y:** 49, 241  
**Presidio Branch:** 108-09, 151, 156, 174, 179, 203, 227  
**Prisoners, work for:** 41, 50 ff., 64; *see also* San Quentin

- Program, expanding: 78  
 Projects: 28, 64, 78  
 Prostitution: 19, 82, 95  
 Protestant Episcopal churches, San Francisco: 19, 31, 98  
 Public Library: 19, 61, 237  
 Publications of Y.M.C.A.: 84, 89, 92
- RANKIN, Ira P:** 31  
 Reading Room: 24, 27, 34, 38, 40, 83;  
*see also* Library  
 Red Cross: 156, 160  
 Red Triangle: 21  
 Redwood Tree Memorials: 232  
 Registrar: 36  
 Relief work during depression: 196 ff.  
 Religious activities: 27, 62, 78, 84, 87, 102, 105, 120, 132, 140, 143, 180, 183, 206 ff., 238  
 Religious affiliation of Y members: 106, 195; of Golden Gate College students, 182  
 Religious Work Committee: 72  
 Rented quarters: 29, 37, 47, 54 ff.  
 Restatement of Policy: 192, 233, 238 ff.  
 Retirement Plan: 189  
 Richards, Marion N: 221  
 Richmond District Branch: 167, 173 ff.  
 Rising, F.L.: 24, 26  
 Roberts, James B: 26  
 —, Joseph L: 26  
 —, Rev. William: 30  
 Robertson, V.M: 221  
 Rockefeller, John D: 121, 128, 189  
 Rogers, William H: 128  
 Roman Catholic churches, San Francisco: 19  
 Roman Catholics: 21; members of Y, 106, 195, 209; in Golden Gate College, 182; 237 ff.  
 Romulo, General Carlos P: 222  
 Roosevelt, Franklin D: 219  
 —, Theodore: 109, 116 ff.; 127 ff.; picture, 117  
 Ruins of the Mason-Ellis building: picture, 117; 124  
 Russian work: 106; illustration, 184
- SAGE, Mrs. Russell:** 129  
 Sailors, work for: 84  
 Saloons in San Francisco: 18 ff., 95  
 Salt water in pool: 102, 104  
 San Francisco: "hell of continent," 17; 18 ff.
- San Francisco Labor Council: 139  
 San Francisco Theological Seminary: 92, 110, 230  
 San Mateo County Branch: 167, 178 ff.; illustration, 229; *see also* Peninsula Branch  
 San Mateo Memorial Park: 183, 199, 209  
 San Quentin Prison: 50 ff., 186  
 Sanitary Commission: 45 ff., 57  
 Sankey, Ira: 69, 86  
 Sawyer, Judge E.D: 22, 40, 44  
 School of Accounting: 182; of Advertising, 207; of Insurance, 182; of Traffic, 182  
 Scientific efficiency: 142  
 Scott, Dr. William A: 32  
 Secretarial staff: 221, 225 ff.  
 Segregation: 36  
 Selby, Prentiss: 70  
 Senior Council: 215 ff.  
 Service clubs: 209  
 Service men: 163; *see also* Military personnel  
 Severance, H.W: 70  
 —, L.H.: 128  
 Shirk, D.F: 179  
 Shop meetings: 120, 132  
 Shoup, Guy: 166, 191  
 —, Paul: 166  
 Sight-seeing tours: 210  
 Simcock, Robert: 13, 167, 179 ff., 185, 202, 209-10, 231  
 Singing school: 62  
 Smith, F.M: 128  
 Smoking: pledge against, 76; 142, 236 ff.  
 Social activities: 57, 72, 87, 102, 132, 163, 210 ff.  
 Sommerville, R.M: 151  
 Sorenson, Roy: 13; 223 ff., 234-235; picture, 74  
 South San Francisco Branch: 167  
 Southwest Branch: 203  
 Spanish-American War: 109 ff.  
 Spanish work: 167 ff.  
 Speer, Dr. William: 33  
 Spier, Richard P: 26  
 Spreckels, John D: residence, 173, 203  
 Stanford, Mrs. Leland: 77  
 State Conventions: 85  
 Statistics for years, 1853-1868: 242  
 Stenographer, young lady hired: 77  
 Stewart, Dr. D.G: 230  
 Stiles, Mrs. A.J: 85, Stiles Hall, Berkeley, 85

- Stillman, James: 129  
 Stone, Dr. A.L.: 55  
 Stout, John H.: 26  
 Strawberry Festival: 54; *see also* Festivals  
 Street Car Men's Branch: 88, 91, 107  
 Street preaching: 51 ff., 62 ff., 78  
 Student work: 85, 105, 157 ff., 195  
 Sukarno, President: illustration, 184  
 Summer Conference: 86, 105  
 Sunday observance: 207  
 Sunday Schools, sponsored by Y: 35, 62, 78  
 Sunset District Branch: 167, 203  
 Swanson, F.E.: 107  
 Swimming Pool: 81, 102, 104, 203, 237; illustration, 201
- TAFT, Charles P:** 176  
 —, William H: 136 ff.; illustration, 135  
 Taylor, Rev. William: 31  
 Tax exemption: 222  
 Telephone installed: 90  
 Temperance promotion: 65  
 Temporary headquarters, 1906: 126 ff.; illustration, 124  
 Temporary quarters: 131, 137  
 Ten-Year Plan, 157 ff., 165  
 Thanksgiving Day: dinners, 76-77, 105, 120, 138; services, 206  
 Tichenor, J.S.: 127  
 Titcomb, H.C.: 70  
 —, John H.: 26  
 Titsworth, John: 13, 167, 203, 207, 226  
 Tomizawa, Kiyoshi: 155, 168, 202  
 Towne, Arthur W.: 226  
 Traffic, School of: 182  
 Tri-Y: 179, 209 ff.  
 Triangle Tavern: 120  
 Trumbull, Robert J.: 49  
 Turner, Frank I.: 166, 216  
 Twentieth Street Branch: 90 ff., 107; *see also* Mission Branch
- UNION LABOR:** 139, 213 ff.  
 Unitarian Church, San Francisco: 19  
 Unitarianism: 21, 193  
 United Nations in San Francisco: 222  
 United Services Organization: 212
- VALENTINE, J.J:** 20; death, 116  
 Vallejo Y.M.C.A.: 149  
 Vanderbilt, Cornelius: 72  
 —, W.K.: 129  
 Visitation Committee: 34, 41, 49
- Vocational Employment Department: 143  
 Volunteer workers: 197 ff.
- WADSWORTH, Dr. Charles:** 43  
 Wagner, Harold A: picture, 74; 219 ff., 223; resigns, 232  
 Wallace, James S: 142  
 War Work Council: 149, 159 ff.  
 War years: 219  
 Washington, D.C., Y.M.C.A.: 153  
 Watt, R.V.: picture, 23; 103, 107, 116, 118, 137; tribute, 148; memorial, 183  
 Webster, James S: 148  
 Week of Prayer: 181  
 Wells, H.J.: 38  
 Wells Fargo Co: 80  
 What Cheer House: 52, 62ff., 78  
 Wheeler, Rev. O.C.: 31  
 White, Asa: 31  
 —, J.E.: 207  
 Wilbur, Hon. Curtis D: 166, 170, 175  
 —, Rev. James H: 30, 166  
 Willey, Rev. Samuel H: 17, 20  
 Williams, Rev. Albert: 25, 27, 31  
 —, Sir George: 20, 118; death, 120; 222  
 Wilson, Ralph: 151  
 —, Woodrow: 159  
 Winsor, Wiley: 183 ff., 216  
 Woman's Auxiliary: 76, 120, 205  
 Women employees: 61, 77  
 Women members: issue debated, 43 ff.; 57, 68, 206, 234, 237; classes for, 105; *see also* Girls Work  
 Woods, Rev. James: 35  
 Woodworth, Rev. James: 51  
 Works Progress Administration: 213  
 World Alliance of Y.M.C.A.: 193  
 World Service: 188, 189; illustration, 184; *see* Over-seas work  
 World War: First, 156, 159; Second, 192, 212, 219 ff.
- YEAR BOOKS, Y.M.C.A:** 132, 141, 166; 1954, 234  
 Y.M.C.A: need for, 53-56; land purchased, 54 ff.; denominational groups, 65 ff.; attendance records, 88, 92; historical highlights, 130; location, 133; basic philosophy of work, 157; small endowment, 163; buys parking lot, 169; summary of 1930-1942, 205 ff.; building needs, 221; centennial, 223; assets, 231; objectives, 24, 27, 233

- Y.M.C.A, Pacific Coast: 65; State Conventions, 65, 85
- Y.M.C.A, San Francisco: beginnings, 17, 22 ff.; history of movement, 20; at Portsmouth Square, 20 ff.; at Armory Hall, 37; at Washington Street, 38 ff.; in first building, 47; at Sutter Street, 59 ff., 75 ff., 92 ff., 98, 113; at Mason and Ellis, 94, 97, 99, 101 ff., 116 ff., 122; at Golden Gate, 125 ff., 132 ff., 139 ff.
- Y.M.C.A. activities: illustrations, 171, 184, 201, 208, 211; *see also* Activities
- Y.M.C.A. Hotel: 144, 177 ff., 179, 204 ff.; illustration, 176
- Y.M.C.A. movement: 20, 22, 137
- Young Women's Christian Association: beginnings of, 44 ff., 230, 232

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