

New

FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ NOVEMBER 2006

NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY



Calvary Presbyterian Church moved to Fillmore Street in 1902, above, and opened with a community Thanksgiving service. The original education building stands to the right of the sanctuary. Below, the earlier Calvary Church on Union Square, much of which was moved to Fillmore and used in the new building.



Calvary celebrates its 104th Thanksgiving on Fillmore

AFTER THE 1906 earthquake and fire, Fillmore Street became the commercial center of the city. Calvary Presbyterian Church, which had relocated from Union Square to Fillmore and Jackson just three years earlier, was an especially busy place.

As one of the largest buildings to survive the quake, Calvary became a popular meeting place for many community organizations. It served as a temporary home for Temple Emanu-el, St. Luke's Episcopal Church and Old First Church. The basement under the church was turned into a courtroom for the San Francisco Superior Court.

The April 25, 1906, edition of the Chronicle reported on a large meeting of the San Francisco Real Estate Board at Calvary, during which members began planning to rebuild the city. "It was agreed," the article reported, "the calamity should be spoken of as 'the great fire' and not as 'the great earthquake.'"

The church opened on Fillmore Street, its third location, with a community Thanksgiving service in November 1902. Calvary's first location, from 1854 to 1868, was downtown on Bush at Montgomery where the Mills Building stands today. In 1869, the church moved to the Post Street corner of Union Square now occupied by the St. Francis Hotel. Much of that church building, including all of the pews and over a million of the bricks, was moved and re-used in the Fillmore Street church. An education building was added on the north side. By 1980 the education building had been declared unsafe and unsalvageable, and was replaced by the current structure. Three of the large window arches from the old building were saved and mounted outside the floor-to-ceiling windows on the west wall of the new building.

In 2002, a major seismic upgrade and renovation project included the creation of a dramatic atrium in the space between the new education building and the old sanctuary, which is on the National Register of Historic Places and is also a San Francisco City Landmark. One wall of the atrium exposes some of the original bricks from the Union Square structure as a visible marriage of the old and the new.

— Joe Beyer