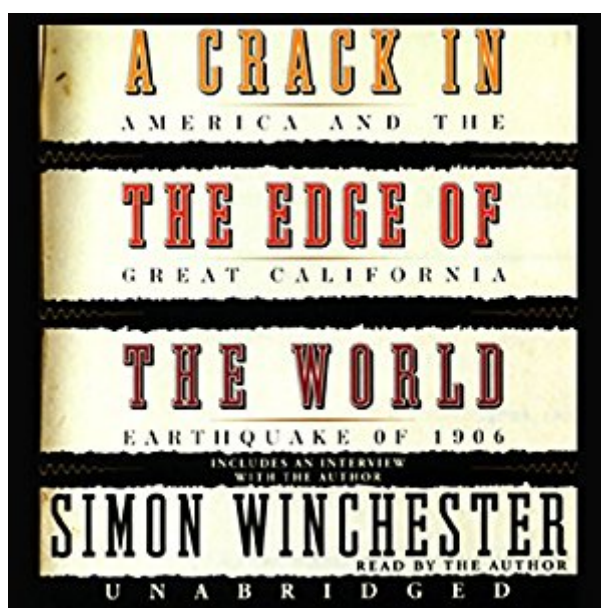


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# A Crack In The Edge Of The World: America And The Great California Earthquake Of 1906



## Synopsis

The international bestselling author of *The Professor and the Madman* and *Krakatoa* vividly brings to life the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake that leveled a city symbolic of America's relentless western expansion. Simon Winchester has also fashioned an enthralling and informative look at the tumultuous subterranean world that produces earthquakes, the planet's most sudden and destructive force. In the early morning hours of April 18, 1906, San Francisco and a string of other towns were overcome by an earthquake registering 8.25 on the Richter scale, resulting from a rupture in the San Andreas fault. Lasting little more than a minute, the earthquake wrecked 490 blocks, toppled a total of 25,000 buildings, broke open gas mains, cut off electric power lines, and effectively destroyed the gold rush capital that had stood there for a half century. Winchester brings his inimitable storytelling abilities -- as well as his unique understanding of geology -- to this extraordinary event, exploring not only what happened in northern California in 1906 but what we have learned since about the geological underpinnings that caused the earthquake in the first place. *A Crack in the Edge of the World* is the definitive account of the San Francisco earthquake and a fascinating exploration of a legendary event that changed the way we look at the planet on which we live. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 12 hours and 30 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: HarperAudio

Audible.com Release Date: October 5, 2005

Language: English

ASIN: B000BO2D32

Best Sellers Rank: #29 in Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Earthquakes & Volcanoes

#112 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > Nature #192 in Books > Science & Math >

Earth Sciences > Geology

## Customer Reviews

Having previously enjoyed Mr. Winchester's "Krakatoa" Krakatoa CD SP: The Day the World Exploded: August 27, 1883, I sought out his other AUDIO titles. Replete with dry humor, the self-narrated CDs are crisply read in a clear, British diction infusing even the possibly dry or dull

geologic treatise portions with interest and rendering the sometimes snarky comments into side-splitting humor. There are elements of his travels to explore, research and discover which clearly left him less than pleased. And his discussion of insurance not just as related to the San Francisco earthquake but to modern disasters as well had me looking at my own policies to be sure we were protected to the extent we'd thought. Seems earthquakes are NOT covered (neither is water damage absent FEMA policies) these days.

Fantastic, in-depth study of the history and potential future of the San Andreas fault. What some thought of as a fault--the deep delve into the topic as well as many related subjects--is one of the things I liked best about this book. As far as I'm concerned, this sort of coverage is one of Simon Winchester's great strengths as a writer. I listened to the audio book, read excellently by the author, before reading the print version. Endlessly fascinating material!

I loved Winchester's book about the Krakatoa eruption ("Krakatoa: The Day the World Exploded"), but "A Crack in the World" isn't nearly as good. The narrative starts off sluggishly with dull biographies of a handful of people who lived through the 1906 San Francisco earthquake/fire & later wrote about it. Then it gets much, much better as we learn about the numerous other earthquakes/sunamis that rolled across the planet in the months leading up to the San Francisco disaster. I hadn't known or read about those, & the details are fascinating - but then Winchester gets bogged down again in the city's history. To be fair, I still haven't read the book to its conclusion (because frankly, I got bored). Too many writers of history seem to want to impress the reader with the time & effort they've put into research, & so they stuff their books with masses of irrelevant/uninteresting information as if to say, see how hard I worked. "A Crack" would have been a better book if Winchester had focused on the events themselves & given the bios a few paragraphs within the story or better still, put them in the endnotes.

Simon Winchester writes books on history from the Oxford dictionary to Krakatoa, to earthquakes to... He selects interesting, but relatively unknown, topics and combines the era with an episode and adds background from science, psychology, or language.. Winchester is a wonderful teacher of what might be considered challenging material. Winchester can make plate tectonics, for example, accessible and interesting. I even wished I had majored in geology, except for the disasters and dirt. The Crack book talks about the various rifts, faults, plates, land, and earlier events in the history of California and the West Coast. The San Andreas fault may not be the biggie as much as the crack

most famous because of the news. So, anything by Simon Winchester is worth reading, but some topics are not as personally appealing. If you liked the Perfect Storm or read Erik Larson, Winchester's books like Krakatoa merit your consideration.

I am a fan of Simon Winchester and I enjoyed the book. I didn't rate it higher because I thought it dragged on a bit. That said, I learned a lot and I appreciated his insight. It is a worthwhile read if you are interested in the topic.

I bought this book to learn how the 1906 San Francisco earthquake ties into the giant Yellowstone "possible cataclysmic devastation" that might happen anytime. Yes, Simon Winchester does have a tie in this book. Simon's writing is crisp, clear and interesting. He sprinkles some humor with lots of factual information of many topics of earthquakes, volcanoes and more. Much more than the San Francisco earthquake. Information on Alaska and the pipeline of today. Information of Plate Tectonics, the different plates that are moving and the various faults around the world. Volcanic Iceland is mentioned. Also a chapter on the evolution of the continents and the far distant past of the Earth. There is information about some of the rich people that lived in San Francisco and the great tenor singer Caruso who was quoted saying "One hellava town" about San Francisco while he was there when the great 1906 Earthquake happened. There is also information of the Chinese immigrants in Chinatown in San Francisco and the terrible racial prejudice against them and the terrible living conditions they had to live in. Also them as "paper people" as their dwellings were destroyed and their addresses lost in the great fire. We see the great fire of San Francisco that destroyed much much more of the city than the earthquake did. We see the poor building construction and lack of adequate fire fighting facilities and equipment that contributed to the almost total loss of the city due to fire after the 1906 earthquake. This book brought forth a history I never heard about in high school or college. Fascinating! There are some very interesting B/W pictures sprinkled throughout the book. We learn that Simon believes that much of the western part of the US and Alaska are tied into earthquake happenings. What happens in one part of the country may influence another. Yellowstone has had 3 major eruptions. The latest about 600,000 years ago and could go at anytime thus wiping out much of the western US and maybe a worldwide cataclysm. We learn that some volcanic eruptions can be predicted with the science of today but there is no sure fire way to predict earthquakes. A fascinating read with lots of different information some of which you may never of heard about. A great book with much more information in it than I expected. 5 stars and recommended.

Wanted more on the actual earthquake and it's aftermath. Great for the reader wanting extensive information on plate tectonics, etc.

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