



## Hayward's Historic City Hall

Have you seen this building?

Located on the corner of C St and Mission Boulevard, Hayward's Old City Hall has a long and interesting history.

Though Ohlone people had been living in the area for thousands of years, and settlers had lived in the area starting in the 1840s, Hayward didn't officially become a city until 1876. And it wasn't until 1920 that the city decided it needed a separate building to act as a City Hall. A **city hall** is the main building of a city government, and acts as a place for the mayor and city council to work and hold meetings. Before that, important meetings were held in whatever building was available downtown. Sometimes, they met in the fire station! It took ten years of planning, but finally in 1930, it was time to start construction on the new, grand Hayward City Hall.

March 25, 1930 was an exciting day for the citizens of Hayward. It was time to have a **groundbreaking ceremony** for the new City Hall. This is when important people come to dig up a shovel of dirt, to “break the ground” for a new construction site. This picture shows the mayors of San Francisco and Hayward “breaking the ground” for Hayward’s new City Hall.

Hayward celebrated this day with a giant parade marching through downtown to the building site. Marchers in the parade included the Hayward Police, Hayward Firefighters, several different marching bands, and over 500 schoolchildren waving American flags.



*Mayor Rolph of San Francisco on the left and Mayor Wilbur of Hayward on the right at the groundbreaking ceremony.*

The architect, E.P. Whitman, worked with the city on the plan for the building. On May 17, 1930 another ceremony and was held to lay the **cornerstone** of the building. A cornerstone is a special stone laid at the bottom corner of a building, and then the building is built on top of it. Often the cornerstone will be carved with the date the building was built. After another parade to the construction site, the mayor placed a copper box inside the cornerstone, containing documents, newspapers, and other items. The copper box is like a secret surprise time capsule, and if the building is ever torn down in the

future, we can open up the time capsule and get a peek into what life was like in Hayward back in 1930.



*City Hall under construction, summer 1930.*

It took several more months to complete the construction, but by December 7, 1930, the entire building was finished! Hayward had its first official City Hall.

### **What Happened Next...**

The Mayor and City Council moved into their new offices in the new City Hall, and the building was the home for the local government for the next 38 years.

By 1969, though, the city of Hayward had grown and so had its government. The old building was becoming too small for the needs of a growing city. A new, larger City Hall was built on Foothill Boulevard. By the mid-1980s, no one was using the building at all.

## **But what about now? Can the building still be used?**

Well, when they originally built this beautiful Hayward City Hall in 1930, we didn't know as much about earthquakes as we do now. And the city happened to build the building right on top of an earthquake ***fault line***. A fault line is a break in the earth's crust where two giant plates of rock move past each other. Along the Hayward Fault, the two plates creep slowly past each other year by year. This constant creeping pressure is hard on the buildings near the fault - jagged cracks appear in the walls, bricks come loose, and window frames are slowly twisted out of shape, causing the glass in windows to break loose and fall out.

At this point, the old city hall is not safe to use any more, because there is too much damage from the fault and it is too expensive to repair. By the mid-1990s, the city decided the building was too dangerous and should be torn down. But a group of citizens stepped forward and organized to save the building, because it is beautiful and it is a symbol of the city's past. The City Council finally agreed in 1996 to leave the building standing and give it official historic status.

Historic City Hall today is a bit of a puzzle. It is too unsafe to be used, and too beautiful to be destroyed. There is a chance the whole thing just might fall down in the next big earthquake. But until then, we can enjoy it as a symbol of how Hayward became what it is today.