[swelling of ground beneath street and street car tracks]
BANC PIC 1905.17500—ALB Vol. 1:115

Room Two: The Day Our City Trembled

Ground Swells Galore!

San Francisco streets were a curious sight following the earthquake. In areas built on made land, one found formerly flat, straight streets contorted. The twisted streets looked as if they had been in motion, rolling like waves until the earthquake subsided. The rhythmic streets, though, were not evidence of earthquake waves, rather they were caused through a compression and shifting of the fill used to create made land. Earthquake tremors, it is believed, shifted the debris and sand that had been used to fill in the old South of Market marshes, causing the earth to sink and rise.

Upturned paving stones and bowed trolley rails denote areas of compression where patches of earth were pushed together by the quake's tremors. In many other locations, however, stretching, not compression, was evident in the large snaking fissures that split streets into two or three sections.