



Emporium Department Store (Images of America)

Anne Evers Hitz

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The Emporium--"California's Largest, America's Grandest Store"--was a major shopping destination on San Francisco's Market Street for a century, from 1896 to 1996. Shoppers flocked to the mid-price store with its beautiful dome and bandstand. Patrons could find anything at the Emporium, from jewelry to stoves, and it was a meeting place for friends to enjoy tea while listening to the Emporium Orchestra. Founded as the Emporium and Golden Rule Bazaar, the store flourished until the disastrous 1906 earthquake. Once it reopened in 1908, it dominated shopping downtown until mid-century. Many San Franciscans remember with great nostalgia the Christmas Carnival on the roof, complete with slides, a skating rink, and a train. Santa always arrived in grand style with a big parade down Market Street. After World War II, the Emporium, which had merged with H.C. Capwell & Co. in the late 1920s, began its push and opened branch stores throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. However, as competition increased, the company's financial situation worsened, and the Emporium name was no more in 1996.



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