

Earthquakes

Quake was state's fifth biggest of century

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MENLO PARK (UPI) — The big earthquake that shook Northern California Oct. 17 was the largest on the San Andreas Fault since the 1906 quake that destroyed most of San Francisco and the fifth largest in California in the 20th century.

The 1906 quake would have registered at 8.8 on the later-developed Richter scale, scientists have estimated, while the Oct. 17 quake registered 7.1, officials of the U.S. Geological Survey said last night.

The other major temblors in the United States this year were a 6.0 jolt that shook the "Big Island" of Hawaii June 26 and the 5.8 shock that rumbled from the same San Andreas Fault segment

in the Santa Cruz Mountains Aug. 8, the U.S. Geological Survey said last night.

Last week's quake in Northern California was the fifth most powerful to strike California in this century but shared that position with an identical 7.1 shock in Southern California's Imperial Valley May 18, 1940.

Surpassing them in California in the 20th century were the great San Francisco quake of 1906; a 7.8 quake in Kern County in 1952; a 7.7 quake offshore from San Luis Obispo County in 1927;

a 7.2 quake near Eureka in Northern California Nov. 8, 1980, and a 7.2 quake along the Northern Coast in 1923, scientists said.

In the 19th century, an 8.3 quake struck Southern California in 1857, a 7.2 quake hit the southern part of the present state in 1812 and a 7.0 quake occurred at the present-day site of San Francisco in June 1838, scientists said.

The only "great" earthquake in the world this year — one with a magnitude of 8.0 or higher — was

the 8.3 shock that struck in the Pacific near the sparsely populated Macquarie Islands midway between Australia and Antarctica, the service said. No injuries or damages were reported in the quake.

The most devastating earthquake of 1989 in terms of lives lost appears to be the Jan. 22, 5.3 shock that killed at least 274 people in the Tajik region of the Soviet Union near the Afghanistan border, the service said.