



The Schooner Monterey, built by M. Turner, Benicia, California 1887. Photo 1890 at San Francisco

Chapter 4: San Francisco

MARCH 20th. [1847]—The local newspaper, the “*California Star*,” is pleased, at last, to acquiesce, very unwillingly, in the change of name from Yerba Buena to San Francisco.

MAY 28th. [1847] First grand illumination in San Francisco. This was in honor of General Taylor’s great victory over the Mexicans at Buena Vista. Every building in the town, of frame or adobe, and shanty itself, shone with as much lustre as an unlimited allowance of oil and tallow could bestow. Fire-arms cracked, and bonfires blazed on all sides.

NOVEMBER 15th. [1847] “The Steamboat,”—being the only one it had no distinct name,—performed an experi-

This day a turkey flew overboard. The Captain ordered a boat to be lowered with four sailors and it was caught, but its feathers were so saturated with salt water it was deemed expedient to kill it and we had it for dinner. We have had poultry daily ever since we left New York. We have now about twelve dozen fowls and seven or eight turkeys. The Captain considers the turkeys worth thirty shillings each.



Lucy Kendall Herrick, 1852
Friday June 11th.



Gold was the irresistible magnet that drew human souls to the place where it lay, rudely snapping asunder the feebler ties of affection and duty.



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Fort Point was built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers between 1853 and 1861 to prevent entrance of a hostile fleet into San Francisco Bay. It was designed to mount 126 massive cannon. Rushed to completion at the beginning of the Civil War, Fort Point was first garrisoned in February of 1861. The fort was occupied throughout the Civil War, but more powerful rifled cannon made Fort Point obsolete. In 1886 the troops were withdrawn. The last cannon were removed about 1900. The Golden Gate Bridge was built over the top of the Fort in the 1930s. Photo 1866.

mental trip round “Wood Island.” This was but a small concern which had been brought by Mr. Leidesdorff from Sitka. It was the first vessel of the kind in San Francisco Bay, and was quite a pet or plaything in its way. Two days afterwards “the steamboat” sailed for Santa Clara. In February following it was lost in a Norther.

JANUARY 11th [1848]—Stringent resolutions were passed by the council regarding gambling. This vice had been growing in popular favor. Besides heavily fining parties engaged in gambling, one of the resolutions authorized the authorities “to seize for the benefit of the town all the money found on a gambling table where cards are played.” If this had been in force a short time afterwards, when the gold discoveries had enriched thousands, and the reckless miners hurried to San Francisco to spend their gains in the great public gaming saloons of the period, the town in a single night would have become wealthy.

But at the next meeting of the council these resolutions were all repealed.

MARCH 15th.—About this period the population of the town was ascertained by the Board of School Trustees, in canvassing the place for educational purposes, to be, 575 male and 177 female adults, and 60 children of ages to attend school, making a total of 812. Adding the number of infants and children still too young to attend school, the whole number of inhabitants amounted to about 850. The buildings of all kinds numbered 200. There were two large hotels in the place, besides boarding and public houses, and houses attached to ten-pin alleys, billiard saloons; so that the town was becoming one of some consequence, and was assuming the pretensions and attractions of older, wealthier and more populous communities. Two wharves were in the course of construction, and extensive stores and warehouses had been erected.

MAY 18th.—Mr. Wm. A. Leidesdorff died of the brain fever. This gentleman was the United States vice-consul at San Francisco, and was closely connected with all the interests of the place. Minute guns were fired as the burial train moved on towards the Mission Dolores, in the churchyard of which place the body was interred.

Telegraph Hill from Vallejo Street Wharf, 1860s



On the evening of the 10th of June, 1851, a person of the name of John Jenkins feloniously entered a store on Long Wharf, and stole a safe. An alarm being raised, he was pursued. He then got into a boat, and sculled out into the bay, followed by a dozen other boats in keen pursuit. The prisoner was next taken to the rooms of the Vigilance Committee, in Battery street. At about ten o'clock of the same night, a signal was given on the bell of the Monumental Engine Company; and shortly afterwards about eight members of the committee hurried to the appointed place, and on giving the secret password were admitted. For two long hours, the committee were closely occupied in examining evidence; and soon they had no reason to doubt the prisoner's guilt. At midnight, the bell of the California Engine House was tolled, as sentence of death by hanging was passed upon the wretched man. Before the prisoner had reached the building, a score of persons seized the loose end of the rope and ran backwards, dragged the wretch along the ground and raising him to the beam. Thus they held him till he was dead. Nor did they let the body go until some hours afterwards, new volunteers relieving those who were tired of holding the rope.