

A BRIEF SKETCH OF SAN FRANCISCO.

The year which gave birth to the great Western Republic on the Atlantic shore of North America, also witnessed the first permanent settlement on the coast of Upper California. In 1776, two Missionaries of the Roman Catholic Church, landed in the Bay of San Francisco, and proceeded to establish a central point for their operations in civilizing and christianizing the native tribes. Their names were FRANCISCO PALOU and BENITO CAMBON. They were natives of Spain, but came to this place from Mexico. Finding a fertile tract of land, capable of irrigation, near two miles south of the present city, they chose it for their home, and founded a Mission which they named MISSION DOLORES, in commemoration of the sufferings of the Virgin. The Mission of San Jose, Santa Clara, San Raphael, and others, in Upper California, were established subsequently, and were dependant on that of San Francisco.

On the present site of the city of San Francisco, a few houses were erected about the same time. This settlement was named Yerba Buena, — good herb — because an herb of that name, considered highly medicinal, and sometimes used as a substitute for Chinese tea, was found in great abundance on the surrounding hills. The town retained the name of Yerba Buena, until occupied by the Americans. The first houses were erected by settlers from Mexico, — except one building which was put up by a Russian, who had been left on shore from a Russian ship, touching at the harbor.

All the buildings were of sun-dried bricks or adobes. The first house built at the Mission, stood about two hundred yards in front of the present church, where its crumbling walls are still visible. Next was built the chapel with its appurtenances. The Presidio, three miles west of the town, and near the entrance to the Bay, was constructed near the same time for government purposes.

Soon after its organization, the Mission flourished rapidly, realizing the hopes of its founders. The Indians learned to repose entire confidence in the Padres, and embraced, with avidity, the new religion, and many of the arts of civilization. They lived in small communities and were occupied in tilling the earth and other employments under the direction of the Missionaries. They worked eight hours in the twenty-four, and received in return all the necessaries of life, such as food and apparel, together with trinkets and rum — the latter being considered in those days, as almost essential to a life of civilization and godliness.