

At various times, parties of Indians were provided with the proper means and dismissed by the Missionaries, that they might pursue an independent life. But we are told that the attempt invariably failed, and that the natives sooner or later returned to seek the protection and guardianship of the Padres, after wasting their cattle and other stock.

Some idea may be formed of the extent of those operations, from the fact that there belonged to this Mission, at one period, twenty thousand head of cattle, three thousand horses, and thirty thousand sheep. In 1810, the number of Christian baptisms had reached three thousand eight hundred and ninety-six, and in 1831, the period of greatest prosperity, the whole number had amounted to six thousand eight hundred and eighty-three. From this date a declension took place, which was greatly accelerated by the Mexican Revolution, in 1836, when the cattle and property were destroyed, and the Indians driven off by political disturbances. From 1831 to 1849, the number of baptisms was only four hundred and sixty-eight. Of the entire list, it is computed that nine-tenths were Indians, and the remainder Californians, or immigrants, and their descendants, principally from Mexico.

In the mean time the town was slowly increasing, some importance being attached to it in consequence of the hides and tallow which it exported. In 1839, it was laid out as a town by Captain JOHN VIOGET, the few houses being previously scattered without regularity. In 1845, there were one hundred and fifty inhabitants. About this time it began to attract the attention of some adventurous Americans, and the population increased in two years to nearly five hundred. It was, in fact, an American settlement, long before Upper California became a territory of the United States.

For the benefit of distant readers, it may be well briefly to describe its situation.

The city of San Francisco stands on a narrow neck of land between the Bay and the Ocean, fronting eastward on the Bay and having the Ocean five miles on the west. The Bay extends southward some fifty miles, parallel with the sea, from which it is separated by a narrow strip of land, varying from five to twenty miles in width. The city is on the extreme point of this promontory. Its site is handsome and commanding, being on an inclined plane half a mile in extent, from the water's edge, to the hills in the rear. Two points of land, Clark's Point on the north, and Rincon Point, on the south, one mile apart, project into the Bay, forming a crescent between them, which is the water front of the city, and which has already been filled in and covered with buildings to the extent of half a mile. Those points, and the lofty hills north and west, upon which the city is rapidly climbing, afford a most extensive and picturesque view of the surrounding country. There are scarcely to be found more charming and diversified prospects, than are presented from these heights. Taking your stand on Telegraph Hill, to the north of the city, and looking eastward, you see the spacious Bay, eight miles in width, crowded with ships from all quarters of the globe, and the fertile coast of Contra Costa, beyond, with its new city of Oakland, behind which rise hill on hill, to the Redwood forests on the summits. Towering over these, is the conical peak of Mount Diabolo, at a distance of thirty-five miles. To the north is the entrance from the Ocean, almost beneath your feet, and Saucelito, six miles distant, at the foot of the opposite hills. The northern arm of the Bay also stretches away till lost in the distance, studded with smoking steam-