

In 1835, however, the port and its trade were considered of sufficient importance to deserve the honors and attention of a Harbor Master, and Captain W. A. Richardson, whose decease has so recently been announced, received that appointment. He was at that time engaged in the freighting business between different points around the bay, and the vessels which visited the harbor of Yerba Buena for the purpose of obtaining supplies, or freights of hides, tallow, soap and grain. During this year he erected the first dwelling, or tent, in the place. It was merely a few posts covered with the sails of a ship. Thus and then commenced the village which, in fifteen years, was destined to astonish the world with its almost fabulous prosperity, its abundance of gold, its recklessness of trade, of life, of business, of speculation; its harbor of a thousand ships and forests of spars; its miraculous growth, sudden fortunes, stirring events and electric life.

We have passed over the minor events of a few years, the earthquake of 1812 and of subsequent dates; the torrents of rain which flooded the land in 1824 and 1825; the squabbles of the inhabitants; the trifling excitements, which scarcely broke the monotony of the place,—this not being intended as a history, but only a sketch, and what most concerns the public, are the data which mark the growth of the *American* city.

In May, 1836, Mr. Jacob P. Leese arrived at Yerba Buena, for the purpose of locating and commencing business as one of a firm, his partners to reside at Monterey. Finding that an ordinance of Governor Figueroa prevented him from obtaining a grant of land within two hundred varas of the beach around the harbor, he returned to Monterey, obtained from Governor Chico the necessary authority for selecting such a position as he should consider best suited to his purposes, returned to Yerba Buena on the first of July succeeding, landed his lumber, and at once selected a hundred vara lot, on which the St. Francis Hotel was subsequently built, and by the Fourth of July had his house—the first real house of the future city—finished. The building of the house, the arrival of Mr. Leese, the “glorious Fourth,” the beginning of a great city—perhaps of a great empire—were all celebrated by Messrs. Richardson and Leese, and as many others, American and Mexican, as could be assembled, by a grand banquet and ball—the first ball on the Fourth of July celebrated publicly in the place. Omen-lovers may find in the fact food for their faith. Captain Hinckley, of the American bark *Don Quixotte*, together with the captains of other vessels, American and Mexican, then in the harbor, supplied the decorations of flags of both countries, the band of music from the *Don Quixote*, and two cannon were obtained from the Presidio. There were present more than half a hundred of the most respectable inhabitants and strangers; a grand dinner was served, toasts were drank, a ball followed; they were all happy; they made a night of it; they prolonged the session, as do our members of Congress on the third of March, late into the subsequent day. American civilization, trade, amity and pleasure were thus inaugurated.

During the year 1838 Mr. Leese erected a large building on the spot which is now the corner of Commercial and Montgomery streets. Captain Richardson, during this year also, erected the adobe house formerly known as the “Casa Grande,” near where the Adelphi Theater now stands, a short distance west of the line of Dupont Street, between Washington and Clay Streets. After standing seventeen years, it was taken down to give place to more modern structures, and thus the most noted of the