

San Francisco. By the boundaries fixed by this charter the city covered a space of about three miles, north and south, by nearly two east and west. It divided the city into eight wards. The Charter was approved by the people on the first of May, and J. W. Geary elected Mayor, together with seven Heads of Departments, eight Aldermen, eight Assistant Aldermen and eight Assessors.

We now approach the date of the second great fire of San Francisco, viz: the 4th of May, 1850, at which time property valued at four millions, was destroyed. It commenced at about four o'clock A. M., and in five hours laid three blocks, of six fifty varas each,—more than seven acres—in ashes. The fire was supposed to be the work of incendiaries. Great however as was the disaster, the young and hopeful energy of the citizens which knew no such feeling as despair, or even despondency, commenced rebuilding ere the cinders of the conflagration had cooled. This has ever been a marked characteristic of the people and place under all similar afflictions. Instances have occurred where bargains for new buildings have been made ere the fire reached the old ones, and the timber for the one to be built begun to be landed on the lot ere the smoke from the burned building had ceased to rise. Set the mind and energies of man free, and fire his soul with hope, and there is no bound to what he may accomplish. The city government was organized on the 9th of May by the meeting of the two Boards of the Council, election of officers, appointment of committees, and reading the message of the Mayor. The finances were reported to be in a favorable condition. Another terrible fire occurred on the 14th of May, more destructive than either of the preceding, the damage being estimated at over five millions of dollars. It destroyed nearly every building, and almost all the goods located within the bounds of Clay, Kearny and California Streets and the harbor. This was a severe shock. But so elastic was the public feeling, that persons who left the city just preceding the fire, and returned in July, saw no signs of the conflagration save the absence of the buildings which they left standing, and the same sites occupied by entirely new structures. The burned district was entirely rebuilt.

The members of the Council soon begun to discuss the propriety of voting themselves salaries. This created much discussion among the people and through the press. The Council fixed high salaries for the Heads of Departments, and four thousand dollars each to themselves. Indignation meetings were held, the Council were requested to reduce those salaries or resign, and finally the salaries of the municipal officers were reduced, and the ordinance allowing the members of the Common Council four thousand dollars each, was vetoed by the Mayor. Some idea of the business and commerce of the place about this time, may be inferred from the fact that by July of this year, over five hundred vessels were lying in the harbor, by far the greater portion being ships. It was very difficult to ship a crew at that time, the mines and high prices of labor offering enticement enough to induce most seamen to desert, and to prevent them from reshipping. So, when a vessel once reached the port she was very effectually anchored for a long time, more through lack of crew than by her "ground tackle." The searchers after the Northwest Passage found not the Polar ice a more certain barrier, than did masters and consignees of vessels, the temptations which took Jack from the fore-castle and changed him into a land crab. About this time many of those who had come early to California, commenced discussing the propriety of associating themselves as a society for social enjoyment, etc.