

In 1769, Don Gaspar de Portola and his little band of adventurers were the first to glimpse the bay from the nearby hills on the south. Six years later the ship "San Carlos," in command of Don Juan Manuel Ayala, sailed through the Golden Gate to cast the first anchor in the bay. More than a century before, in 1603, Vizcaino visited what is now the Gulf of the Farallons and mapped it as Bahía de Puerto de San Francisco. This is the first time the name San Francisco appeared on record in connection with the vicinity of San Francisco.

Early Beginnings

The beginning of what is now San Francisco was just being founded by the Spaniards when the Liberty Bell pealed the birth of our nation. First Spaniards, then Russians, then Americans came and lived to enjoy life and to rule.

Colonel Juan Bautista de Anza on March 28, 1776, selected the site for the Presidio of San Francisco, and on March 29, 1776, the site for the mission which was dedicated to St. Francis de Assisi. While from the beginning the mission was called San Francisco, the settlement at the cove under Telegraph Hill was known as Yerba Buena.

First Elections

Democratic self-government of the bureaucratic sort decreed by the Mexican Republic came to Yerba Buena (later named San Francisco) before the town itself arrived. Citizens of the partido (civil district) of San Francisco, on Governor Jose Figueroa's orders, assembled at the Presidio on Dec. 7, 1834, to choose electors for the Ayuntamiento (district council). On the following Sunday, Don Francisco de Haro was elected to the district council as Alcalde for the projected pueblo of Yerba Buena.

Naming of the City

The village of Yerba Buena, which in 1847 was to be rechristened with the name of San Francisco, in 1835 was still an insignificant outpost frequented by roving seafarers and was little more than a waste of sand and chaparral, sloping down to a beach and small lagoon which has long since been filled in and is now covered by massive commercial structures. El Paraje de Yerba Buena (the Little Valley of the Good Herb) derived its name in the beginning because of the aromatic vine found in the underbrush there.

The Bay

In 1835, the Bay was declared a port of entry by Governor Pablo Vicente de Sola. He appointed as captain of the Port of San Francisco, William Antonio Richardson, a young master mariner who had deserted the British whaler "Orion" in 1822 and set up the first "house" in Yerba Buena Cove, made up of some redwood poles over which was stretched a ship's sail.

During 1836, the Port of San Francisco became an important trading post. On July 1, 1836, Jacob Primer Leese, Ohio-born, partner in a Monterey mercantile firm, arrived by the barque "Don Quixote" from Monterey and by July 4 had thrown up a frame house 25 by 60 feet, the first "real" house to be built—part dwelling and part warehouse. He then summoned all the leading Mexican families and other prominent persons to an Independence Day celebration which lasted two days and a night. During the celebration the Stars and Stripes were raised beside the Mexican flag for the first time in San Francisco.

First Survey

In the autumn of 1839, Jacques Vioget, a versatile Swiss of the Peruvian brig "Delmira," was commissioned by Alcalde de Haro to make the first land survey of Yerba Buena. By 1841 thirty families comprised the village population. During the next five years some of the prominent early settlers shifted to other localities in the Bay Area. At the same time, Yerba Buena, out-rivalled by the port of Honolulu, drifted back into obscurity.

"The Portsmouth"

Then, on July 9, 1846, the "U. S. S. Portsmouth" quietly dropped anchor in Yerba Buena Cove, and Capt. John B. Montgomery and 70 sailors and marines came ashore and ran up the Stars and Stripes on Mexico's flagpole atop the adobe Custom House near the Plaza, as the "Portsmouth" gave a 21-gun salute. Thus passed the rule of the village of Yerba Buena from Spanish to American. On Aug. 6, 1846, Captain Montgomery appointed Lieut. Washington Allen Bartlett as the first Alcalde of Yerba Buena under the American flag. Bartlett was confirmed by public vote on Sept. 15. His first important decree ordered the revision of Vioget's survey, which had served to locate building lots since 1839. His civil engineer, Jasper O'Farrell, in making the survey, discovered in 1847 that streets as laid out in the early survey intersected at $2\frac{1}{2}$ degrees from a right angle. Correction of this error, known as "O'Farrell's Swing," was made promptly.

A Reception Center Since Gold Days

When gold was discovered on Jan. 24, 1848, in Sutter's millrace on the American River, and the evidence reached San Francisco's nearly 900 inhabitants, the first gold rush, led by Sam Brannan, publisher of the town's newspaper, "The Star," left only seven inhabitants behind. As the news spread around the world and ships came streaming into the harbor, a year later found over 6,000 miners at the diggings, and San Francisco again was a cantonment of tents with a population reported at 2,000 excited transients.

GOVERNMENT

San Francisco has a consolidated City and County government, with legislative powers vested in a board of supervisors of eleven members, five and six being elected every two years for four-year terms. The Mayor, Treasurer, Assessor, City Attorney, Public Defender, District Attorney, Sheriff, and Superior and Municipal Court Judges are elected by the people and serve terms of four years. The Mayor receives \$22,400 a year. The Chief Administrative Officer, appointed by the Mayor but thereafter having permanent tenure, receives \$17,000 per annum. The Controller, appointed by the Mayor, subject to confirmation by the Supervisors, also has tenure. The Mayor appoints members of and supervises police, fire, civil service, public utilities, park and recreation, welfare, library and city planning boards or commissions, and may remove his appointees except civil service, public utilities and welfare commissioners. The Mayor also has a power of veto over legislation.

The San Francisco Unified School District and the City and County have coterminous boundaries. Members of the Board of Education are nominated by the Mayor and passed upon by the voters.

San Francisco has operated under five charters, granted in 1850, 1856, 1861, 1898 and 1932.

Initiative and referendum clauses were first embraced in the 1898 charter.

Mayor James Rolph, Jr., took office in 1911 and served five successive terms, until he became Governor of the State. In 1931 he was succeeded by Angelo J. Rossi, who served until 1944, when he was succeeded by Roger D. Lapham, who pledged himself in advance to one term only. Mayor Elmer E. Robinson took office Jan. 8, 1948, for a four-year term, and was re-elected for a second four-year term ending Jan. 8, 1956.

HARBOR AND COMMERCE

Centered in the San Francisco Bay Area, San Francisco is an important port of general commerce, handling a large and valuable domestic and foreign trade. It is the main gateway of commerce for the vast territory of the Central Pacific Coast Area and Intermountain States. The Bay extends from the Golden Gate to the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers on the northeast, and to a point near San Jose on the south, covering an area of 450 square miles. The deep-water commerce enters San Francisco Bay through the mile-wide Golden Gate, and thus shipping is afforded natural