California

IT IS April, 1945. For a second time in a century the eyes of the world are turned upon a city chosen by destiny,—cosmopolitan, seafaring San Francisco,—for here have gathered emissaries from fifty nations hoping to lay foundations for a lasting peace, while the world is still suffering the agonies of the most devastating war in the history of mankind.

As Mayor R. D. Lapham greeted the delegates to his city with the words, "Less than a century ago men came here looking for gold, but today we are searching for a greater treasure," it recalled to many the colorful history of the San Francisco Bay region.

For nearly three hundred years after the discovery of the New World, ships of many nations searched for this legendary harbor with its 450 square miles of sheltered anchorage and its mile-wide gateway to the sea. On two-hundred-odd voyages Spain's treasure galleons, beating down the coast after the long voyage from Manila, missed the Golden Gate, as did the navigators Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo and Sebastián Vizcaíno, and also Sir Francis Drake on his famous voyage on the "Golden Hind."[1] It was not until 1770 that a land expedition led by Captain Don Caspar de Portolá discovered San Francisco Bay, and five years later Juan Manuel de Ayala sailed the first ship through the Golden Gate into the harbor. Today this port city nurtures a bustling two-billion-dollar market and is the Pacific gateway for steamships and airplanes to the Far East. From here had been launched nearly one third of all American ships built in World War II.

The long history of California began fifty years after the discovery of America, when the first-known visitor set foot on California soil. The Portuguese navigator Cabrillo, seeking refuge from a storm, anchored his small vessels in San Diego Bay and claimed Alta California as a possession of the Spanish crown.

Cabrillo's was but one of many expeditions launched under the auspices of the Spanish viceroy in New Spain (Mexico) as a result of Spain's

quickened interest in the New World, following the great Spanish conquistador Hernando Cortes's conquest of Mexico City, the complete crushing of the Aztec power, and the seizure of the "fabulous wealth of gold, silver, turquoises, and emeralds" held by the Indians.

Suddenly Mexico had become the "brightest jewel in the crown of the Ferdinands," and it was from the fear that her rival powers—Russia moving down from her northwest trading posts, and the restless English colonists on the Atlantic coast—might push on to the very border of her own Mexico, that Louisiana, Texas, and California, then vast, uncharted territories, were established as buffer states.

Under a succession of Roman Catholic monarchies, Spain became a powerful military nation and launched upon a vast empire-building program. In the sixteenth century, America was practically under her control.

The Catholic Church was the Spanish government's greatest ally in colonization, and the conquest of California was carried out in typical Spanish style. With the soldier went the padre, establishing twin outposts of a military fort and a mission, the priest acting as diarist as well as chaplain on every military expedition.

From the fragmentary documents left by the Franciscans, some of the legendary periods of California history have become historically authentic through comparatively recent translations. Juan Crespi was the only friar to make the fifteen-hundred-mile march with Portolá from Old Mexico to San Francisco Bay and back, and he also accompanied every major path-breaking expedition on the Pacific Coast.[2] According to Crespi's notations concerning the native Indians, which they found in great numbers, these people were proficient in the mechanical arts and learned Spanish readily.

Francisco Paloú introduced the Indians to the Spanish world in his *Historical Memoirs of New California*, written shortly after the first expedition had established a garrison and mission at San Diego in 1769, as very intelligent Indians, noisy, bold, great traders, covetous, and thievish, all armed with bows and quivers of arrows.[3]

Pedro Font, in his diary of the year 1776, spoke of the natives found in San Diego "as being in body vile, ugly, dirty, careless, smutty, and flat-faced."

While the majority of existing original reports on the California Indian are derogatory, yet if one believes the accounts of Vizcaíno and Constanso, who saw him before he had come in contact with civilization,

he was not inferior in intelligence to the nomad aborigines of the country east of the Rocky Mountains.

Vizcaíno describes the Indians he found on the shores of Monterey Bay as "of good stature and fair complexion, the women being somewhat less in size than the men and of pleasing countenance." They were skilled boat makers and hunters. They believed in a Supreme Being, and in their folklore are found traces of the Biblical record of creation and the birth and death of Christ.[4]

Up until the year 1821, when Mexico freed herself from Spain, the missions of California are the most prominent feature of her history. In tracing this period, one sees in the lives of many of the Franciscan missionaries examples of heroism and devotion;[5] they suffered almost unbelievable hardships in their efforts to promote the interest of the church. Bancroft says: "Never men struggled so hard to achieve martyrdom."[6]

While the passing years record lives of saintly, gentle missionaries, yet the system, according to Hittell, made of them "in reality despots. . . . They were in all cases taskmasters and in many cases cruel taskmasters. They recognized no independent rights in the Indians; but used them and their enforced labors merely to build up the missions and swell the number of so-called converts to the church."[7]

Taking advantage of a faith that could "scoop up whole tribes of savages, dazzling them with the symbols of religion and impressing them with the conviction that submission to the padres was obedience to God," the system resulted in the eventual absorption by the missions of lands, capital, and business of the country; shut out emigration, suppressed enterprise, and "molded every interest into an implement of ecclesiastical sway."[8]

According to J. M. Guinn, early president of the Historical Society of Southern California, few forms of land monopoly have ever exceeded that in vogue under the mission system of California.[9] Stretching from their original base in Loreto, Lower California, to the first California mission, established at San Diego in 1769, and to the last and most northerly and twenty-first of the chain, founded in 1823 at Sonoma as an adjunct to the Mission Dolores at San Francisco,[10] the properties monopolized the greater part of the fertile land between the coast range and the sea. The limits of one mission were said in some instances to cover the intervening space to the limits of the next.[11]

Hundreds of neophytes—recent Indian converts—worked under the direction of the thrifty friars and were held to their tasks by the physical discipline imposed upon them by the military. They watched the

flocks and herds, tended the orchards and fields of the missions, which many times embraced thousands of head of stock and hundreds of acres of cultivated land.

There was but little land left for the immigrant, and a settler could not obtain a grant if the padres of the nearest mission objected.

It was not the intention of the Spanish government that these establishments should remain permanently as missions. According to the law, at the end of ten years from the founding of each mission it was to be converted into a municipal organization, known as a pueblo or town, and the property of the mission was to be subdivided among the neophytes of the mission. The government encouraged intermarriage between the Indians and the Spaniards with a view to settling the country. But the training the natives received at the missions did not fit them for self-government. They were forced to labor, and they thus gained some knowledge of the pastoral arts. Some of the brighter Indians were taught mechanical trades and became fairly good blacksmiths, weavers, tanners, shoemakers, and brickmakers. They were instructed in some of the ceremonial observances of the church; but they received no intellectual training, and the padres persisted in arguing that they were incompetent to use and manage property. The Indian received food and scanty clothing for his labor. All the profits of these vast establishments went to the padres.

The military posts, or presidios, were established for the protection of the missions and to prevent foreigners from entering California. Under the Spanish system the governor or commandante-general of the territory was always an army officer, and the principal service of the soldiers was to keep in check the neophytes, to protect the missions from the incursions of the gentiles, or wild Indians, and to capture deserting neophytes who had escaped to their unconverted relatives.[12]

During the rule of the new republic of Mexico, which began in 1821, the grip of the Roman Catholic Church upon California was gradually loosened. As the original, purpose of the missions had been to aid in the settlement of the country, the principles of freedom on which the new government was established did not coincide with the existing mission regime, and under increasing pressure from the people for secularization, the breakup of the mission properties began. In 1833 commissioners were appointed by the Mexican government to superintend the subdivision of the mission properties among the neophytes and colonists.

Although this had been threatened before, when the final decree was issued, the mission fathers, according to Guinn, "with energy born of

despair, eager at any cost to outwit those who sought to profit by their ruin, hastened to destroy that which through more than half a century thousands of human beings had spent their lives to accumulate." The wealth of the missions lay in their herds of cattle. The mission fathers knew that if they allowed the possession of their herds to pass to other hands, neither they nor the neophytes would obtain any reward for years of labor. Haste was required. The mission butchers could not slaughter the animals fast enough. Contracts were made with the rancheros to kill on shares. The work of destruction began at the missions.

Quoting again from Hittell: "At San Gabriel the cattle were all slaughtered. This latter was by far the richest mission in the territory. Its cattle numbered over a hundred thousand. They were killed where they were found, in the valleys or on the hills; the hides taken off, and the carcasses left to rot. The spectacle presented was horrible. Some of the valleys were entirely covered with putrescent masses; and for years the country in the neighborhood was white with skeletons. In some places the skulls and large bones were so plentiful that long fences were built of them. And the slaughter was so complete that afterwards, when a new missionary was sent to take charge of the spiritual concerns of the establishment, he was obliged to depend upon the alms of a neighboring ranchero for meat."[13] San Gabriel mission contained about a million and a half acres and extended from the San Bernardino Mountains to the sea.[14]

In covering this period, one views another sordid chapter on the fate of the American Indian. The freeing of the childlike natives, in spite of the protests of thinking individuals, came too abruptly. They were preyed upon, defrauded of their holdings, and in some instances became virtual slaves on ranchos. Many refused to work, squandered their property, and fled to the wild frontier tribes. The Indian pueblos which supplanted the missions became "sinkholes" of crime.

According to population and birth rate count, the passing of the neophyte had begun long before the breakup of the mission regime. As long as there remains in the heart of man greed, avarice, hatreds, the history of the human race will repeat itself, following the inexorable law: 'Where a stronger race comes in contact with a weaker, there can be but one termination of the contest—the extermination of the weaker."

The lavish land grants—some as high as 100,000 acres—offered by the Mexican republic not only to Mexicans but to foreigners who would accept Catholicism and become naturalized, ushered in the much-romanticized period of the ranchos and haciendas. Some historians have written of an era when the cowboy lived an idyllic existence with no fences to ride

and when cattle were raised only for their hides and tallow; "when women were beautiful and men were bold;" when life was simple and unhurried and everyone happy and satisfied; of a land where the inhabitants led an enchanted existence with much time given to singing and dancing to the accompaniment of strumming guitars; where the wayfarer could be sure of meals, lodging, and provision for his riding animals, for which the "ranchero was above accepting remuneration," and where some might even place money in the guest's room for his use if needed.

After much delving into these past records, one may find himself in wistful fancy reliving those halcyon days of a past, only to be rudely jarred from his reveries by a more practical, less visionary chronicler. One such reports the typical Californian of that day as a "dirty, idle, shiftless, treacherous, tawdry vagabond dwelling in a disgracefully primitive house, and backward in every aspect of civilization."

Though trade with foreigners was illegal and the entrance of heretics to Spanish territory was forbidden, there was a gradual infiltration of both, through the trading vessels that entered the ports and the trappers who finally threaded their way from the last posts of civilization to the west coast.

These Mountain Men—as they were known because of their extensive hunting explorations in the Rocky Mountain regions—contributed greatly to opening the West by blazing trails for the immigrants. "Their paths have become our highways; their campfire ashes our cities."[15] Chauncey Thomas said: "The map of the West was drawn on a beaver skin."

One brigade leader, Jedediah S. Smith, "the Knight in Buckskin," carried a Bible and a rifle. With his hardy band of followers he reached Southern California in 1826. Later he crossed the snow-covered Sierras and the deserts of Nevada on approximately the route of the present Lincoln Highway. In the following year he broke a land route northward to the Columbia River, making his way back to the Wind River of Wyoming. Smith later returned to Missouri and led a wagon train to Santa Fe in 1831.[16]

Another trail breaker, whose current popularity and tremendous public acclaim eclipsed all others, was the Government explorer, John Charles Frémont. His writings became the most popular source of information about the West. However, under the scrutiny of able historians, his popularity has waned; nevertheless his name features prominently in the records of California history during those tempestuous years preceding her acquisition by the United States.[17]

Those years embrace a period dear to the heart of every American schoolboy. His heroes march across the pages of history, some in coonskin cap and fringed buckskin suit with powder horn, bullet pouch, muzzle-loading rifle, and knife; others at the head of caravans of covered wagons. For it is the epic of the great West, when the peoples of a new nation were conquering the frontiers.

As early as 1835 the United States had made diplomatic moves to gain possession of California, but it was more than a decade later before a successful organized revolt was made by the settlers, and California was declared a republic under the Bear Flag. Less than a month later Frémont received word that the United States was at war with Mexico and that an American Naval force was in undisputed possession of Monterey, the capital. In a few short years California had burst the shackles of colonial servitude, and in 1850 it was admitted as a state into the Union. Popular fancy still reverts to the Bear Flag revolt as the means by which California won its independence; and California's official emblem, the Bear Flag, must be flown today on all state buildings.

These pages will not permit the enumeration of the pioneering men who wrote their names high in the history of those times, except as they appear in the development of this narrative. For this reason we mention Captain John A. Sutter, a Swiss, who before 1840 by his tact and personal magnetism won an invitation from the Mexican governor to settle here. Choosing a "princely domain" in the Sacramento Valley, he established Fort Sutter, and here, during the American conquests of California, many explorers, soldiers, and settlers found refuge and succor, and on this grant gold was discovered in 1848.

At the time gold was discovered, the population of California was sparse, the extent of immigration comparatively meager. San Francisco, then known as Yerba Buena, was a drowsy little pueblo with two hotels, two uncompleted wharves, and a population of 812 persons. Here shrewd Yankee traders came to bargain with the Spanish for the hides and tallow from their ranchos.

A few months after the discovery of gold at Coloma on Sutter's claim, the attempts to keep it secret became futile. One of the greatest stampedes in modern history was started when Samuel Brannan strode the streets of San Francisco, swinging his hat in one hand and a quinine vial of gold dust in the other, shouting: "Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold from the American River!" The village for a short time threatened to become a ghost town as everyone rushed off for the "diggin's."

Within a year the electrifying news had encircled the world, and ships from all seas sailed in through the Golden Gate. In 1849, more than five hundred vessels lay in San Francisco Harbor; hundreds of eager, insistent men were dumped upon the shores, with tons of merchandise piled about them, looking for places to eat and sleep; hundreds of thousands of dollars in gold were pouring in from the mines for supplies and mining equipment.

A city of flimsy canvas and rough lumber sprang up with unparalleled swiftness; the streets, which made no pretense of following the lines of official survey, were many times rendered impassable, not only because of the bales of merchandise piled in them, but because of knee-deep dust or seas of mud.

An unbelievable democracy developed as the result of the lack of laborers. Class distinctions dissolved. Doctors, lawyers, and men of former political distinction and wealth did their own cooking and mending, carried their own trunks, worked with pickax and shovel. Many times, when they were unsuccessful in finding gold, they drove mule teams for former day laborers who overnight had become wealthy in the mines. For a time the dirty linen of San Francisco was sent to Hawaii or China to be laundered. Rentals reached astronomical figures; and many a poor man unsuccessful in his search for treasure returned to San Francisco to find himself wealthy in the possession of real estate which a few weeks before had been practically worthless.[18]

One continues to read through pages of history of the growth of a city purged by many fires, rebuilt each time more substantially; of a city purified of its lawless element—the inevitable backwash of the unprecedented gold rush—by the Vigilantes.

There is no record of a Protestant missionary on the Pacific Coast until 1833, when Jason and Daniel Lee, representing the Methodist Church, responded to the dramatic appeal made in St. Louis by the Nez Percé Indians for Christian teachers. These men went to the Willamette Valley in Oregon. Their mission had hardly started before Dr. Marcus Whitman and his company arrived in 1835 in the Walla Walla Valley in Eastern Washington and opened up mission work under the auspices of the Presbyterian Board.[19]

It is ten years later before we find any trace of the Protestants' entrance into California. Adna Hecox, a licensed Methodist preacher, crossed the plains in 1846. His party was directed to the Santa Clara Mission near the southern end of San Francisco Bay, but on arriving there they found it ravaged with typhoid fever and starvation. When one of the white women

died, Hecox preached the first known Protestant sermon in California. As a result of his stay of six weeks, he raised up a small company of believers. The first Methodist missionaries to be sent out officially by the church were William Roberts and James Wilbur, who sailed into San Francisco Bay April 24, 1847. They held services on shipboard before disembarking, and a few weeks after their arrival organized the first Methodist Sunday school.[20]

The Presbyterians soon had their representatives in California. Timothy Dwight Hunt has the honor of being the first Presbyterian minister to engage in Christian work in the state. In 1848 he was pastor of the American church in Honolulu. When the news of the discovery of gold in California reached the islands, every foreigner left who could get away. His congregation having dissolved, Mr. Hunt obtained a leave of absence and set out for San Francisco. He arrived there October 29, 1848. Supported by the better elements of the city, he became chaplain at large in December, 1848. At the same time he bound himself for the space of a year not to organize a church which would belong to any denomination. Although he did not organize the first Presbyterian church in the state, he later established the first Congregational church of San Francisco.[21]

In 1849 Sylvester Woodbridge arrived in California, and on April 25 of that year he organized a Presbyterian church in Benicia, the first church of that faith within the state. About this same time, February, 1849, O. C. Wheeler, a Baptist missionary, reached San Francisco, and in June of the same year he organized the first Baptist church. During December, 1849, the first Protestant Episcopal church was established.[22]

At this point we leave the further growth of these churches and confine ourselves to the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the State of California.