Natural History

The Channel Basin was originally comprised of sand dunes, marshes, and a large bay called Mission Bay. Mission Bay was created 5,000 years ago after the end of the last glacial period, and originally occupied 240 acres in what now is the area between Townsend Street to the north, Eighth Street to the west, and Sixteenth Street to the south. The waterfront edges of Mission Bay were marked by Steamboat Point, which today is the launch point for the Bay Bridge, and Point San Quentin, now called Potrero Point. Feeding into Mission Bay were Hayes Creek, Mission Creek, and Dolores Creek, which today run underground beneath the Civic Center area and Mission District.

Mission Bay contained an abundance of mussels, limpets, and smelt that fed herons, egrets, oystercatchers, hawks, and other migratory birds, as well as the native people of the area. Two Yelamu villages, Siri-tzan and Chuchit, occupied the banks of Mission Creek.

Sand dunes occupying what are now the Richmond, Sunset, Western Addition, and Financial Districts were gradually razed in the late 1890s to make way for development, and their remains were often used to fill Mission Bay and its surrounding creeks and marshes.

Current Projects

Mission Bay is a rapidly re-developing, mixed-use area. Interagency Cooperation Agreements commit all City departments to the infrastructure plans.

The Transbay Terminal, a collaboration of Bay Area government and transportation agencies, is designed to improve transportation efficiency. The project is currently in planning and development stages. The Wiggle Neighborhood Green Corridor, a SFPUC and SFMTA collaboration, will integrate stormwater management through green infrastructure technologies, and improve bike and pedestrian safety.

The Bay Conservation and Development Commission now limits the fill and uses along the edge of the Bay.