

Black Entrepreneurs

In San Francisco

Pioneers of the Past (1810–1915)



"Every great dream begins with a dreamer."
— Harriet Tubman

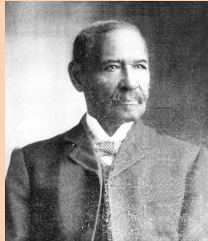
William Liedesdorff (1810-1848)

William Alexander Leidesdorff is widely believed to be the first millionaire of African American descent. Leidesdorff opened a mercantile business and developed a profitable export-import trade route between San Francisco and Honolulu. From the proceeds of his business he purchased a "lot" at the corner of Clay and Kearny streets that later became the site of The City's first hotel.

Mary Ellen Pleasant (1815-1904)

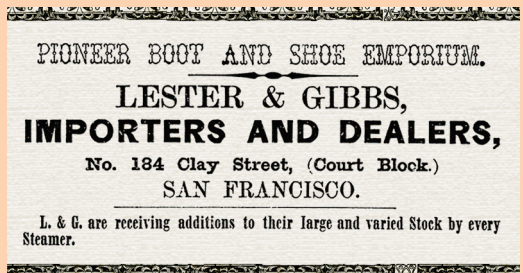


Mary Ellen Pleasant was a self-made millionaire and an astute investor whose portfolio included real estate, railroads, restaurants, and boarding houses. While working as a cook, Pleasant eavesdropped on the conversations of wealthy patrons in the hopes of overhearing valuable information. She took what she learned to help her build a fortune and eventually became one of the richest women in San Francisco.



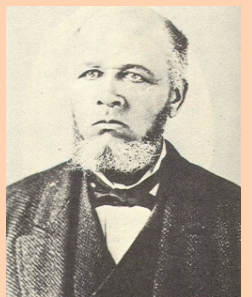
Mifflin Wistar Gibbs (1823-1915)

A self-taught carpenter who arrived in San Francisco with a mere 60 cents. Mifflin Wistar Gibbs got a job working at a shoe store, where he met Peter Lester. The two started up their own business and went on to make a fortune selling luxury shoes.



Peter Lester (1814-unknown)

Peter Lester moved with his wife and five children from Philadelphia to San Francisco in 1850, where he made a living as a bootblack and boot maker. When he met Mifflin Wistar Gibbs in 1851, they opened up a successful shoe store that imported from Philadelphia, London and Paris. Their business saw wide success and the pair became wealthy.



The Legacy Continues (1960–Present)

Shear's Barber Shop & Beauty Salon

Howard Crowther was considered the "unofficial" barber for the San Francisco Giants during the early 1960s. He purchased Lillie's Beauty and Barbershop in 1971 after working there for many years and would eventually change the name to Shear's Beauty & Barber Shop in 1980. The business has remained a pillar in the Bayview Hunters Point community for more than 50 years.



"PASSION IS ENERGY. FEEL THE POWER THAT COMES FROM FOCUSING ON WHAT EXCITES YOU."
— OPRAH WINFREY

Miyako's Ice Cream

Thomas Bennett owned a seafood restaurant in Philadelphia before moving to San Francisco and establishing Miyako Old Fashion Ice Cream Shop in 1993. The business continues a community hub in the historic Fillmore District, serving generations of families throughout the city.

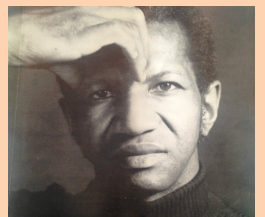


Figure 1. SF Chron. Dec. 1962

The Jazz Room

Since its founding in 1962, the Jazz Room has become a cultural staple for local residents, hosting notable jazz musicians and organizing regular community events. The business has been family-owned and -operated for over 54 years.

Black Renaissance



QUEEN'S LOUISIANA PO'BOY CAFE

Since opening in 2009 on San Bruno Avenue, Queen's Louisiana Po Boy Café has remained true to its Louisiana culture and cuisine, inspired by classic Cajun and Creole dishes. In 2017 the business opened a new location at Pier 33 ½ at the Embarcadero in San Francisco, one of the few black businesses in the area.

AJS Painting & Decorating

After getting laid off of a construction job, Alphonso Rhodes decided to take matters into his own hands and launched AJS Painting & Decorating in 2001. Since that time the business has grown to be the premier black owned painting business in the San Francisco Bay Area.



Ian James

Ian James is on a mission to build a brand that inspires life. The self-named brand, Ian James Made consists of hand crafted, leather bags and accessories for every occasion.

"WE CAN TRANSCEND THE SCRIPT OF A PRE-DEFINED STORY, AND PAVE THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE THAT WE DESIGN."
— ROBERT F. SMITH,
AMERICAN BILLIONAIRE BUSINESSMAN, PHILANTHROPIST, CHEMICAL ENGINEER AND INVESTMENT BANKER.

THE VEGAN HOOD CHEFS

What started out as a way to educate the community about the importance of healthy eating has now turned into a movement. The owners of The Vegan Hood Chefs, Ronnisha Johnson & Rheema Calloway are healing the community through a deliciously healthy soul food cuisine.



Harris Hoisting

Tana Harris, owner of Harris Hoisting is changing the game for women owned construction businesses. In a largely male dominated industry, the business continues to excel at every level and is poised to crush the glass ceiling.