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Stevens, Stanley David

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African American Churches in the City of Santa Cruz: The Early Years

by Stanley D. Stevens and Joan Gilbert Martin¹

Introduction

Historically, churches have played a crucial role in the African American experience.² Indeed, President Barack Obama in his celebrated eulogy on June 26, 2015, cited the importance of the African Methodist Episcopal church: “The church is and always has been the center of African American life. . . .”³ Robin Musitelli, writing for the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, noted that social life for blacks in Santa Cruz “revolved around the churches.”⁴

This article describes the origins of the three African American churches in the City of Santa Cruz: the African Methodist Episcopal Zion, the Missionary Baptist, and the Progressive Missionary Baptist.⁵

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in the city of Santa Cruz, was born about 1905 and faded from the scene about 1911. (This church re-emerged briefly in 1974, but no trace of its current presence has been found.)⁶ In 1947, the second African American church, the Missionary Baptist Church, was established in Santa Cruz, where it remains to this day at 714 Woodrow Avenue.⁷ The third church, the Progressive Missionary Baptist Church, came into being in 1963 and still thrives in Santa Cruz today.⁸ Because the focus of this article is on Santa Cruz City churches, we did not include another African Methodist Episcopal church, the Zion Chapel in Watsonville, active between 1867 and 1890.⁹

African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church: (1905 to 1911)

The evolution of African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Zion churches in California can be traced back to New York, where in the 1820s, black Methodists separated from white Methodists, calling their church the African Methodist Episcopal Church Zion. The first black A.M.E. Zion church in San Francisco was founded in 1852.¹⁰

The period between the end of reconstruction in 1877 and World War I was a difficult time for African Americans. During this period, “the federal government virtually turned a deaf ear to the voice of the African American populace.” It was a time when black men and women began to leave the rural South in large numbers.¹¹ It was also the time of Booker T. Washington, when African Americans became educated in unprecedented numbers. And, while “only a small percentage of the black population had been literate at the close of the Civil War, by the turn of the twentieth century, the majority of all African Americans were literate.”¹²

In the early years of the twentieth century, a number of black families moved to Santa Cruz “enhancing the growing Black population already there.”¹³ It was during this period that the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was established in Santa Cruz. In November 1905, the Reverend Tink Arthur McEachen arrived from the San Joaquin Valley to establish the first African American church in the city of Santa Cruz.¹⁴ This occurred shortly after he was appointed pastor of the A.M.E. Zion church in Hollister with circuit responsibilities for churches in Santa Cruz, Wat-

**Biographical Sketch:
Cassius Marcellus Clay Ellis, II
(1910-1977)**

The Reverend Ellis moved with his family to Santa Cruz in 1963 after 21 years as a US Army chaplain, having retired at Fort Ord.¹³⁸ He was a frequent speaker at various churches in Santa Cruz, as well as at Temple Beth El synagogue.¹³⁹ In December 1966, he succeeded Reverend Samuel M. Jackson as pastor at the Progressive Baptist Church at 517 Center Street.

He was proctor and Honorary Fellow of Cowell College, University of California Santa Cruz, and also chairman of the Community Action Board, which was designed to end poverty in Santa Cruz. He had difficulty holding the African American community together during the 1970s and faced financial problems, which he resolved to overcome.¹⁴⁰

He led the memorial to Martin Luther King Jr. in April 1968, at the Progressive Missionary Baptist Church. He died aged sixty-six at Fort Ord on April 1, 1977.¹⁴¹

Acknowledgements

Lorraine Reader kindly gave us access to Phil's unpublished research, and wherever "Reader" is indicated as a source, it is through her courtesy.

Marla Novo, Archivist at the Museum of Art & History, provided photocopies of the Articles of Incorporation of the Santa Cruz Missionary Baptist Church and of the Progressive Missionary Baptist Church of Santa Cruz.

Notes

¹ We dedicate this article to the late historian Phil Reader, whose research and writing specialized in the under-represented people of Santa Cruz County—those whose history has largely been ignored. African Americans are certainly among them as evidenced by his extensive writing on their history, see "To Know My Name, a Chronological History of African Americans in Santa Cruz County," <http://www.santacruzpl.org/history/articles/127/>.

² For a general discussion of the role of churches in African-American communities, see "The Black Church, a brief history" in the African American Registry, http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/black-church-brief-history, viewed October 19, 2015.

³ Barack Obama. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/06/26/remarks-president-eulogy-honorable-reverend-clementa-pinckney>, viewed June 26, 2015.

⁴ Robin Musitelli, "Blacks tread a slender bridge: Link to the community grows tenuous for many in Santa Cruz population," *Santa Cruz Sentinel* January 19, 1992, A-1:4, A-6:3.

⁵ Paul Tutwiler discusses Baptist and Methodist churches in general in his overview of Santa Cruz Spirituality, <http://www.santacruzpl.org/history/articles/478/>.

⁶ "Zion Church Installation is Sunday," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November 22, 1974, 13:4.

⁷ Geoffrey Dunn quotes briefly from an interview with Isaac Jackson, deacon of the Missionary Baptist Church, in "Beyond Loudon Nelson: Black History In Santa Cruz," *Santa Cruz is in the Heart*, (Capitola, CA, Capitola Book Company, 1989), p. 66.

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sonville, and Salinas. McEachen, like many other black preachers at this time, held degrees from several educational institutions.

A contemporary newspaper account said McEachen had been assigned from Modesto to this circuit by Bishop Caldwell of the California-Oregon conference of the A.M.E. church. The account went on to provide details:

African Methodists to Organize Colored People Of This City Are To Have A Church All Their Own

Rev. T. A. McEachen . . . has made good progress in his canvass, having 37 names for membership and will hold services this Sunday in Old Temperance Hall to complete organization. Mr. McEachen has charge of Hollister, Salinas, Watsonville, and this city. He is now located at Hollister, where there is a flourishing church, but will probably move here if a church is organized, as this city would be a better center for his work. . . . All are welcome to attend, says Mr. McEachen, regardless of color.¹⁵

The first meeting was held upstairs at the Old Temperance Hall on Bulkhead Street. There were two services on that first day, one Sunday afternoon at 1:30 and the other at 7:30 in the evening. Reverend McEachen preached at both. This was the first endeavor to organize a church for “colored people” in Santa Cruz.¹⁶ On the following Monday, the paper reported on the success of this first meeting.

A New Church Organized In Santa Cruz By Colored Methodist Preacher

Rev. T. A. McEachen was successful in organizing an A.M.E. Zion Church in this city on Sunday. The following persons joined the church: Chas. Berry, Sarah Berry, Mattie Brown, Mabel Pinkney, Amanda E. Davis and Lucy Down. A Sunday school of 19, with Mrs. Mable [sic] Pinkney as superintendent

and Miss Mattie Brown as assistant superintendent, was organized. Chas. Berry was elected minister’s steward, and Sarah Berry, Lucy Down, Amanda E. Davis, Mable Pinkney and Mattie Brown as stewardesses. The class leader is to be Chas. Berry. . . .¹⁷

The new church was very social. In December it held a Christmas party featuring a Christmas tree, and in January the church held a concert to raise money for the church. At the Christmas party, the newspapers reported that Miss Mae Venable, one of the new corps of Sunday school teachers, was master of ceremonies and Miss Lorena Hunter presided at the organ and gave a select reading. Others who provided music and recitations were: Millie Wilson, four members of the Berry family (Ruth, Vernon, Ella, Floyd and Louis), Grace Wilson, Carl and Irvin Harris, Miss Emma Stout, and Johnnie and Thomas Dunn. Clearly, the new church had a significant congregation and one that was both educated and musical.¹⁸

A number of the young men in the congregation played baseball with the Colored Giants, an all black baseball team in Santa Cruz. These included: Lou Venable, Louis and Floyd Berry, Raymond Hunter, and Jack Harris. Isaac McEachen, son of Reverend McEachen also played on the team, although he apparently still lived in Oakland.¹⁹

The newspapers also reported that the “new church is to hereafter meet at the Turn Verein Hall on Vine Street—the first of several moves.²⁰ The economics of establishing a viable church were a problem from the start. Reverend McEachen’s efforts to raise money are evident throughout the newspaper articles of this period. He held events wherever he could get an audience:

Zion Church Entertains

The concert in aid of the work of the African M. E. Church in this city, given by the Excelsior Concert Company, in the Y. M. C. A. hall on Friday evening, was well attended by the

colored people of this city, with a good sprinkling of white folks too.

The Excelsior Band entertained, with solos by Stanley Griffin, Miss Minnie Stout of this city, and a guitar selection by D. J. Russell; the Santa Cruz quartet performed; there was a recitation of "Archie Dean" by Mrs. Minnie Douglass McEachen of Hollister; a cornet solo by Briggs Bennett; another vocal solo by Miss Lallie Cole of Hollister; a recitation of "A Domestic Tempest" and a vocal solo by Mrs. Minnie Douglass McEachen.²¹

Mrs. Minnie Douglass McEachen was Reverend McEachen's wife. Notice that she was "of Hollister" as was another soloist, Miss Lallie Cole. Apparently the reverend and his family had not yet settled in Santa Cruz. The concert was a success and Reverend McEachen thanked all the people who took part in the affair, which took in \$59.50, of which \$29.00 was for the benefit of the church.²²

From subsequent reports, it appears Reverend McEachen was living in Santa Cruz in March 1906. In order to make ends meet in his new city, he went to work as a house cleaner.

Gritty Preacher Takes To House Cleaning Colored Methodist Minister Preaches On Sundays And Works At Trade During Week

A gritty man is Rev. T. A. McEachen. He organized an African Methodist Zion Church here a short time ago and has had good success so far, the colored people of this city responding freely to his calls. But Mr. McEachern [sic] is determined that the church shall not be handicapped by having to support a minister in its early stages, so he had gone to work at his old trade of house cleaning.

For several days now he has been at work in the "Sentinel" office and we can heartily recommend him as a most painstaking, quick and efficient man to entrust with such work. Mr. McEachen is a man of good education

and is thoroughly in earnest about his church work. He should be encouraged to stay here and if any of our readers need his services in the house-cleaning line, he will surely deliver the goods.²³

In June 1907, two other preachers came to town. The reverend S. W. Hawkins preached at the A.M.E. church in the old Turn Verein Hall on Wednesday night and continued all week. He was reported to be "holding protracted meetings for the African Church, and great interest is being aroused among the colored people."²⁴ Later that week, the Reverend T. Brown, D. D., of Baltimore lectured at the Y.M.C.A. hall in aid of the A.M.E. Zion Church. His topic was the San Francisco earthquake to which he had been an eyewitness. Tickets were twenty-five cents.²⁵

Perhaps these two preachers were standing in for Reverend McEachen while he was out of town. For a number of years, McEachen had led "colonization parties" that would go back into the heartland of the South, where he came from, and "conduct parties of colored people to California and the San Joaquin Valley."²⁶ Later, in October 1906, he visited his hometown in North Carolina, where he was the victim of a racial incident.

Rev. M'Eachen Does Not Like Carolina Was Victim Of Misunderstanding And Had To Hasten Away

Rev. T. A. McEachen, the colored pastor of Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church of Santa Cruz, recently went back to his boyhood home in the village of Maxton, North Carolina, to visit his mother, who was very ill. While there, Rev. McEachen was the victim of a most unpleasant and disagreeable incident, and one that for a time gave promise of something serious.

The story, as related by the colored pastor, is an interesting one. He went into a small store to make some purchases. Being neatly dressed and of pleasing appearance, he desired a few more articles to complete his elevation in the

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eyes of the people of the neighborhood. He asked for some perfume. The person behind the counter was a white girl. She professed to misunderstand his order and asked him to repeat. This Mr. McEachen did. She immediately went into a back room and soon her brother came rushing out and lifting a weight from the counter aimed a blow at the preacher, demanding in excited tones to know why he had insulted his sister. Mr. McEachem [*sic*] protested. He had asked for perfume, he said, and had insulted no one. The irate brother took no heed, but started another blow continually demanding to know why he had insulted the girl. The sister at this point interfered, stating that she had not been insulted, but that the man was merely trying to make a purchase.

The preacher escaped at this juncture, but a warning was sent to him that for some reason the white folks were stirred up and he stood in danger of being lynched. Rev. McEachen stayed in seclusion for a few days and then came back to Santa Cruz.

The whole thing is a mystery to him, but from what he went through he has decided that North Carolina is no place for him, but that he will remain in this city.²⁷

In February 1907, McEachen wrote a letter to the *Sentinel* that he had “watched the outgoing year with its joys and sorrows” and welcomed in the “glad new year” with a resolution to do something “worthy and true.” His letter shows how the congregation has grown and provides an indication of his preaching style.

Appeal And Thanks Rev. McEachen Desires To Acquire Church Property For Local Negro Christians

First of all, I will state that I came to your beautiful city in 1905 and found the people of my race unorganized and without a place of worship. Since my arrival I have been suc-

cessful in renting a hall from F. A. Hihn and furnished it with seats, a pulpit, an organ, Bibles and hymnals. Each and every one who comes are made welcome. We have fifteen communicants, twenty-six associated members, twenty-four Sunday-school scholars and five on probation. We are moving along nicely and our great ambition is to have a house of worship . . .

Unfortunately we are too poor at this time to do all we desire to do for ourselves, so please help us. We are taught to love each other, and as we would treat a brother we must do by one another till the Master comes. God has promised His blessing to such ones.

Take God at His word. He that giveth to the poor lendeth unto the Lord. We need the assistance and encouragement of the good people of Santa Cruz to help to build a church and care for the souls of those who are groping in darkness. Who will help in this worthy cause? . . .

We are poor and much forsaken,
But our faith has not been shaken,
And we cannot be mistaken,
For the word of God is true.

Every one shall have deliverance; that is written in His word. Ask yourself this question: Does this work appeal to your conscience. The First National Bank of Santa Cruz is treasurer. Donations can be left there and credit received. Our address: T. A. McEACHEN, Pastor, 62 Beach St.²⁸

The *Sentinel* vouched for the reverend, saying, “We have found him to be a man of integrity and a thorough Christian, and we recommend his work to the people of Santa Cruz.”²⁹

Church attendance was growing—now over seventy-five attendees. The good work of the Reverend McEachen and his church continued throughout 1907. A benefit concert by Cissel & Mines Concert Company was held at the Y.M.C.A. Hall on February 21. The ad for the contest said:

“Come one, come all and enjoy yourself. Pass an hour and a half in solid enjoyment. First you smile, then you laugh, then you scream, and go home satisfied. Admission, 25¢; reserved seats, 35¢. Doors open at 7:30, concert at 8:15.”³⁰ The next event was a Sunday school picnic at Hihn’s Park, in Capitola, hosted by Mrs. McEachen, who is listed as the Sunday school superintendent. “All are cordially invited.”³¹ On the Fourth of July, they held a Chicken Dinner with Ice Cream at the New Abrams building on the corner of Pacific Avenue and Elm Street. Twenty-five cents admission.³²

October 1907 was a time of both stress and celebration. On October 9, the *Sentinel* reported that Reverend McEachen would preach a farewell sermon before attending the A.M.E. Zion California and Oregon conference in Oakland.³³ It’s not clear whether this was a final sermon before leaving for the conference or a more permanent final sermon. Upon his return from the conference, where he had apparently made a pitch for his Santa Cruz church, McEachen published a “Card of Thanks” in the *Sentinel*. Fellow A.M.E. churches from out of town contributed. The local Santa Cruz Christian Church and the Reverend McEachen each contributed a dollar. Another church, the North Methodist Church of Watsonville, contributed \$8.10.³⁴

Having settled all bills against his church, Reverend McEachen was about to leave Santa Cruz. In October 1907, he was appointed to take charge of a church in Redding, California, but he declined that post and it was reported he was considering a transfer to one of the eastern conferences. The headline read, “Colored Pastor Bids Farewell to Santa Cruz.”³⁵ Then in January 1908, he was appointed State Missionary of the A.M.E. Zion Church for California, but would retain his residence in Santa Cruz.³⁶

He may have remained in Santa Cruz for a while, but in June 1909 the *Sentinel* wrote that McEachen was in Hanford, California:

Rev. T. A. McEachen, the colored pastor, who presided over his flock here for a year or more, writes us from Hanford, enclosing a money

Biographical Sketch:

Tink Arthur McEachen (1859-1918)

Tink Arthur McEachen was born in June 1856, in North Carolina, as were all his family. He was married to Minnie E. Douglass and had a daughter, Mattie, and a son, Isaac.³⁸ He was educated at the Whiten Normal School in Lumberton, North Carolina, and at Biddle University in Charlotte. He left school in 1886, his eyes failing him, and in the spring of 1887 he came to California and united with the A.M.E. Church of the San Francisco Conference. In 1888 he was licensed to preach by the “late lamented” Bishop Charles Calvin Petty.³⁹ McEachen was considered one of the best-known ministers on the Coast. When the church was yet in its infancy, undaunted, he traveled from one end to the other of the San Joaquin Valley, zealously laboring for the uplift of the cause. He was the organizer of the first colored church at Fresno in the San Joaquin Valley.⁴⁰ Upon leaving the A.M.E. church he founded in Santa Cruz, he was reassigned as State Missionary for California and eventually moved to Hanford, CA. He died at the age of 59 in Kings County, California, on February 16, 1918.

order for his subscription to the “Sentinel,” and says: “I am well pleased with “Sentinel,” it is a welcome guest in my house; we love to read about Santa Cruz and its many improvements; we long for the climate of your city; here it is 3 P.M. and the thermometer stands at 110 in the shade; what do you think of that for enjoyment of such beautiful weather.”³⁷

This was the end of McEachen’s tenure as pastor of the American Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Santa Cruz.

In 1909 a new preacher, Reverend William Wealthy Howard, succeeded Reverend McEachen as pastor. He preached his first sermon to the congre-

**Biographical Sketch:
Reverend William Wealthy Howard
(c. 1880 -?)**



William Wealthy Howard, graduate of the Class of 1911, College of the Pacific, San Jose. (Courtesy of Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library, Stockton, California).

We have not yet found information about when and where Reverend Howard was born. We do know that before Howard came to Santa Cruz, he was presiding elder-pastor at the A.M.E. church in San Jose, and before that he was pastor in Fresno.⁵⁰ Between 1908 and 1911, while parson of the Santa Cruz A.M.E. Zion Church in Santa Cruz, he lived in San Jose at 905 South 10th Street, with his father, Commodore Perry Howard.⁵¹ During that time, he attended the College of the Pacific in San Jose (now the University of the Pacific at Stockton), the first African American to attend that college. He graduated in 1911 with a Bachelor of Arts degree.⁵² He later earned a Bachelor of Divinity degree from the Kimball School of Theology in Salem, Oregon, and a Doctorate of Divinity from Livingstone College in Salisbury, Maryland, the chief school of the A.M.E. Zion church.⁵³

In April 1915, after he had left Santa Cruz, he married thirty-seven-year-old Susie Edna Williams in Los Angeles. In 1942, he was Pastor of the A.M.E. Church in Salem, Ohio.⁵⁴ It is here that we lose track of his history. So far, the date and circumstances of his death have not been found.

gation of the A.M.E. Zion Church in Santa Cruz on April 18 of that year.⁴¹ The church was now located in the Farmers' Union Hall at the corner of Soquel and Pacific Avenues.⁴² The usual benefit entertainments were held throughout 1909 and into 1910.

Enjoyable Social

A very enjoyable benefit social was held at the home of Mrs. A. [Albert] Logan, 18 South Branciforte avenue, Monday night, and it realized the A.M.E. Zion church a goodly sum. The program included a recitation by Floyd Berry; piano solo, Carl Harris; vocal solo, Mrs. S. Hall; recitation, Mrs. Hall; recitation, Mrs. Kenn; piano duet, Misses Hunt and Berry;

song, Miss Brown; songs by trio, Louis Berry, Raymond Hunter, Miss Hunter.⁴³

The benefits continued, their purpose to raise money to build a church. In April 1910, the A.M.E. Zion Church set out to purchase a lot, thirty-four by eighty-four feet, on River Street Extension.⁴⁴ They hoped to build the church for \$2,000. The California Conference backed the plan.⁴⁵ However they still needed to raise money towards the purchase. The Willing Workers Club of the church hosted a "literary and musical entertainment at Arion Hall on Front Street.⁴⁶ Church services at the Farmers' Union Hall on the following Sunday were billed as a "grand rally day." They spoke of the effort to raise \$300 toward paying for the church lot.⁴⁷ By May 1911, they had raised the

money and paid for the lot. There is no evidence, however, that a church was ever built there. And it appeared that Reverend W. W. Howard, still the presiding elder, was soon destined to leave. The papers said he would “be here again till fall” but would spend the summer in Oregon and Washington, which were part of his larger district.⁴⁸

Throughout 1911 up until the end of October, the *Santa Cruz Evening News* Church Directory listed the A.M.E. Zion Church as residing at the Farmers’ Union Hall, still holding Sunday services. But this was the last mention of the church.⁴⁹ It seems that by the end of 1911, the A.M.E. Zion Church had failed to gain enough support and died.

During his time as pastor of the A.M.E. Zion Church, Reverend Howard was living in San Jose and attending The College of the Pacific from which he received his Bachelors Degree in 1911. He would go on to study for several advanced degrees, leaving Santa Cruz and its now failing church behind.

New A.M.E. Zion Church: (1974)

A brief news report in 1974 indicates that a congregation headed by the Reverend Billy Gene Trotter tried to found a new A.M.E. Zion Church in Santa Cruz. An installation service was held at the old Twin Lakes Baptist church on Seventh Avenue.

Zion Church Installation Is Sunday

Zion Baptist Church installation services are scheduled for Sunday at 3 p.m. with the pastor, the Rev. Billy Trotter in charge. Visiting churches and choirs will include Santa Cruz Missionary Baptist with the Rev. Henry D. Pratt and Friendly Church of God in Christ; Bethel Baptist of Seaside with the Rev. H. H. Lusk; Holy Assembly Baptist of Monterey with the Rev. M. D. Slade and New Hope Church with the Rev. J. W. Paige.

... All members and friends of the newly-organized Zion Church are invited to attend the

Biographical Sketch:

Billy Gene Trotter (1943 – 2009)

Billy Gene Trotter was born in Hot Springs, Arkansas, on June 2, 1943. He was reputed to have begun preaching when he was only eight years old (some say seven years old).⁵⁶ He served as assistant pastor of the Mount Zion Baptist church in Hot Springs for nearly nine years while he completed his schooling. He then attended Arkansas Baptist College for two years. By the time he was twenty, in 1963, he had traveled through thirty-eight states preaching the gospel. He then made his home in San Francisco and enrolled in the Bible Fellowship Institute of that city.⁵⁷

Trotter continued to live in San Francisco with frequent visits to Santa Cruz, where he was active in the Progressive Missionary Church, founded in 1963.⁵⁸ In March 1973, he celebrated his second year as Pastor of that church.⁵⁹ He married Lois L. Lastrape on November 26, 1983. He died in San Francisco on November 12, 2009.⁶⁰

services. The church is at the old Twin Lakes Baptist church plant, 200 Seventh Avenue.⁵⁵

This is the first and last mention of the resurrection of the A.M.E. Zion Church in Santa Cruz; no other indication of its continuation has been found.

* * *

Missionary Baptist Church: The Early Years (1947-1973)⁶¹

The years following World War I were hard for African Americans in general. A combination of extreme racism in the South and the decline of Southern agriculture led to what’s known as the “Great Migration” from the rural South to cities, mostly in the North and East. Migration to the West was primarily to large cities such as Los An-

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geles and Seattle. Few blacks were attracted to the small city of Santa Cruz and very few lived there.

Between 1916 and 1941, the few blacks remaining in Santa Cruz saw a significant change in the attitude of the white community. Where tolerance had been the norm, bigotry became a policy. In a tourist town, blacks were unwelcome at hotels, road houses, inns, and other recreational spots. Finding housing or a job became impossible. Even churches refused to accept Black parishioners. As a result, many Black families left the area.⁶²

World War II changed both these demographics and the attitude of Santa Cruz citizens toward their black neighbors. The war brought the all-black 54th Coast Artillery to Santa Cruz to defend the northern coast of Monterey Bay. The 1940 census showed only eighteen African Americans living in Santa Cruz. A soldier who came here in 1942 said, “. . . there was 15 blacks here. That’s what you had. . . . It was a ghost town when I arrived.”⁶³ This soldier, Isaac Jackson, was one of the two hundred black soldiers of the 54th Coast Artillery who arrived in Santa Cruz on Easter Sunday, April 1942. They were stationed at what is now Lighthouse Field.⁶⁴ According to one of the soldiers, “Santa Cruz had never seen so many black people before . . . They didn’t know what to do.”⁶⁵ After early attempts by the city fathers to keep the soldiers out of certain downtown areas, “the local businesses chose economics over racism.” Churches and other civic groups welcomed the soldiers. One of the few black families living in Santa Cruz at the time, Edward and Inez Smith, opened their home at 607 (later 611) South Branciforte Avenue to the soldiers, effectively creating a USO.⁶⁶ Some of the young soldiers formed a baseball team that played local high school teams.⁶⁷

Although there was still no black church in Santa Cruz, other churches welcomed African Americans to their congregations. For example, on February 14, 1945, the Reverend Heber St. Clair Mahood of First Congregational Church presided over the wedding of former 54th artillery member Isaac Jackson and his bride Elizabeth Parker at the home of her sister, the aforemen-

Biographical Sketches: Isaac Jackson (1907-2005) and Mary Elizabeth Parker Boles Jackson (1907-1952)

Isaac Jackson was born in Palestine, Texas, on February 19, 1907; Mary Elizabeth Parker was also born in Texas in April of that same year. At the time of their marriage in 1945, Isaac was still stationed in Mississippi. He and his best man, Upsie Hannan, came all the way from their camp in Mississippi for the wedding at the home of his wife’s sister and brother-in-law, Inez and Edward Smith. This was the home where, two years later, the Missionary Baptist Church was born.

Isaac and his wife became members of the church; he was the church treasurer, and she was known as the “Mother” of the Church. Elizabeth died in Santa Cruz on January 7, 1952. After her death, Isaac remarried. His second wife, Willie Prillie Anderson, died in 1967. Sandy Lydon interviewed Isaac for the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* in 1992, and observed that in the early days, when Jackson arrived in Santa Cruz with the 54th Coast Artillery, “an uneasy accord developed between the segregated army unit and the community it was protecting from international fascism and racism.”⁶⁹ Upon Isaac’s death on March 17, 2005, his daughter, Ardine Vivian, said “He helped found the Santa Cruz chapter of the NAACP and won the group’s Humanitarian Award in the 1950s for his promotion of human and civil rights.”⁷⁰

tioned Inez Smith of South Branciforte Avenue. All the members of the wedding party were black. Reverend Mahood was white.⁶⁸

In 1947, Mr. and Mrs. Luther Creer Jr. of San Francisco proposed a new “African Methodist” church in Santa Cruz to continue the tradition of the earlier A.M.E. Zion Church. The Reverend Vastine T. Clark would be the first preacher.⁷¹

Negro Church Organization Is Underway

With the colored population of Santa Cruz reaching approximately 160, it was learned here this week that an African Methodist church is soon to be established.

Actually, this will be a reviving of a religious organization that functioned here approximately 40 years ago, when the African Methodist Episcopal [Zion] church was organized here and held meetings in the Farmers Union hall. . . . then the center of the religious and social life of this group of Santa Cruz folk.⁷²

The first meeting of the revived organization was held at noon Sunday in the home of Inez and Edward L. Smith on South Branciforte Avenue. Sunday school would meet at ten o'clock Sunday morning.⁷³ Officers for the Sunday school were Mrs. John R. Bowen, superintendent and musician; Mr. Parker, secretary; Mrs. Jackson, teacher; Mrs. Edward L. Smith, treasurer.



Announcement of benefit to be held at the home of Edward & Inez Smith. (*Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, April 10, 1949)

Biographical Sketches:

Edward Leroy Smith (1880-1951) and Inez Tandy Smith (1899-1974)

Edward Leroy Smith was born in Winchester, Indiana, in July 1880; his wife Inez Tandy Smith was born in Texas on January 25, 1899. When the Missionary Baptist Church was first established in Santa Cruz, church services were held at their home on South Branciforte Avenue. Ed ran a shoeshine parlor in the Palomar Arcade for many years. In a 1977 interview, Ezetta Dawson, a prominent member of the congregation, said that whenever a black family arrived in Santa Cruz, they were told to go see Ed Smith; he would put them up until they were established.⁷⁴

Ed was a California statewide officer in the Independent Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World. He often played the mandolin and ukulele, and did a little soft-shoe dancing. When he died on August 23, 1951, his front-page obituary reported he once said "that in pre-war Santa Cruz he could call every resident of the city by his first name."⁷⁵ Inez Smith lived on until February 21, 1974.⁷⁶

As was the tradition, the new church planned benefits to raise money. One of their first activities was a chicken dinner served from 1 to 8 p.m., October 5, at 611 South Branciforte Avenue, the home of that generous couple, Edward and Inez Smith. The benefit was dedicated to the construction of a church where they could meet without inconveniencing the Smiths. Other benefits would be held at their home in the next few years.

By November 1947, three new members were received into the Santa Cruz Missionary Baptist church, bringing the membership up to twenty. The newspaper reported, "This is a church among the negro people. They have about \$300 in the building fund."⁷⁷

“Voice of the People”

. . . We wish to thank all those who were so generous in their donations in our recent drive for building funds. . . . If our children can grow up in the atmosphere of a church they will be citizens that not only Santa Cruz but the whole state can be proud of.

REV. V. T. CLARK, Pastor [and]

MRS. JOHN R. BOWEN, S. S. Supt.⁷⁸

Soon they would have more. In January 1948, they announced their first baptism and that they had \$500 towards the new church.⁷⁹ By April 1948, the church was able to take a thirty-day option to buy a residence to be converted to a church at 116 Taylor Street, near the Santa Cruz High School. The property costs \$6,800.⁸⁰ This option expired, but the congregation continued to raise money. All through the spring of 1948, they held benefits. Many of these were hosted under the auspices of the Northern California Baptist convention, including not only the Grace Methodist Church in Santa Cruz, but also churches in San Jose, Pacific Grove, Palo Alto, San Mateo, and San Francisco.⁸¹

While waiting on the purchase of their church building, the Missionary Baptist Church of Santa Cruz was incorporated on August 24, 1948. The Articles of Incorporation show that the Reverend Vastine T. Clark was President, joined by Ezetta Dawson as Secretary, and Isaac Jackson as treasurer. Henry Dennis Pratt and his wife Nina were named as directors. These five people would be the mainstays of the church for many years.⁸²

In August 1948, the church was officially incorporated and by November they had purchased a building in which to worship. They owned the building (formerly the Red Men’s Hall) and the lot on which it stood at 714 Woodrow Avenue on the corner of Woodrow Avenue and Wilkes Circle in the Garfield Park neighborhood. The loan for the building had been secured through the efforts of Henry H. Mitchell, field secretary for the Northern California Baptist convention.⁸⁸

The opening ceremonies were held on Sunday afternoon, November 28, 1948. “A popular choir

Biographical Sketches:

Ezetta Illinois Dawson (1912-2005) and Russell Raymond Dawson (1916-2012)

Ezetta Dawson was born February 5, 1911, in Waco, Texas; Russell Dawson was also born in Waco, on August 4, 1916.

A signer of the not-for-profit Corporation papers of the Santa Cruz Missionary Baptist Church, Ezetta Dawson was a high profile, out-spoken woman. She and her husband, Russell Dawson, came to Santa Cruz in 1943 with the 54th Coast Artillery. He was the first black mail man in Santa Cruz, working twenty years for the U.S. Postal Service. He was also a Master Sergeant in the Army Reserve. Russell’s primary role in the church was musical; he played the organ and sang at funerals, including the funeral of Isaac Jackson’s first wife, Mary Elizabeth Jackson.

The Dawsons were founders of the Santa Cruz branch of the NAACP in 1949 and were on its Executive Board.⁸³ In 1961, Ezetta adopted an abandoned child, Marina Swain and raised several others, including three boys, Richard Moore, Nolan Snell, and Louis Wright.⁸⁴ Ezetta was later a Trustee of the breakaway Progressive Baptist Church founded in 1963.⁸⁵ Upon her retirement as Paralegal Advisor at Senior Citizens Legal Services in 1977, she criticized the local NAACP, saying, “They don’t speak out enough. If there is a problem or if one is solved, they should let the public in on it.”⁸⁶ She died on December 30, 2005, aged ninety-three. Her obituary spoke of her extensive service to the Santa Cruz community.⁸⁷ Russell Dawson died in Santa Cruz, on Aug. 8, 2012, four days after his ninety-sixth birthday.

from San Francisco and featured soloists” performed. The church served dinner for those attending morning services, who would later attend the dedication.⁸⁹ The building had been modified

to include a dining room for the conventions of the Northern California Baptist Church.⁹⁰

Capacity Congregation At Church Dedication

Dedication of the new church at 714 Woodrow avenue, last Sunday, was an important event for the Missionary Baptist church group and 400 people crowded into the church proper, while many others stood outside during the dedicatory service.

Rev. P. S. Osborn of the Macedonia Baptist church in San Francisco preached the dedicatory sermon, and Rev. W. D. Armstrong of the First Baptist church of Santa Cruz pronounced the benediction.⁹¹

On December 3, the *Sentinel-News* listed the church in their Church Directory for the first time:

**SANTA CRUZ MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH (Negro)
714 Woodrow Avenue.⁹²**

On December 13, the church gave thanks to those who helped build their new church.

THANK YOU

. . . We, the members of the Santa Cruz Missionary Baptist church wish to take this opportunity to thank all of those who participated in our church building program. . . . The carpenters, plumbers and other workmen who toiled so faithfully to get the building finished in record time; as well as those who so kindly and generously gave their donations. We also thank the various local churches who participated in our dedication day program. We feel that this church will be instrumental in the further upbuilding of Santa Cruz.

MRS. J. R. BOWEN, [Erva Bowen]
515 River street. Publicity chairman.⁹³

**Biographical Sketch:
Reverend Vastine T. Clark (1907-1985)**



Rev. V. T. Clark

Portrait of Reverend Vastine T. Clark
(*Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, May 15, 1949)

Vastine Clark, also known as Vas, Vass, or Vasten, was born on April 17, 1907, in Portland, Ashley County, Arkansas. He married Viola Thomas in Arkansas on September 16, 1934. They came to California about 1945 and settled in San Francisco where he worked as a painter at Hunters Point navy yard. In 1947 he was called upon to help establish the Missionary Baptist Church in Santa Cruz, and he and his wife moved to Santa Cruz. He signed the Articles of Incorporation of the church on August 17, 1948, as the first-named signer and President. However, his tenure as pastor of the church would not last. He resigned from the Missionary Baptist Church in September 1949, returning to San Francisco. Vastine Clark died at the age of seventy-eight in September 1985, in Vallejo, California. His wife, the Reverend Viola Thomas Clark, pastor of the Christian Fellowship Baptist Church in San Francisco, died in her hometown of Portland, Arkansas, in June 1988.

Do You Know My Name?

Everything was going well for the church, but not for its first pastor. At the end of December 1948, Reverend Vastine Clark filed for voluntary bankruptcy in San Francisco federal court. He declared his assets as \$2,000 annually from the church (although “the majority of the time without compensation”) and wages of \$4,800 annually from his job at the Hunters Point Navy Yard. His debts were \$6,649, assets only \$2,419.⁹⁴ Like Reverend McEachen, who worked as janitor while he was pastor of the A.M.E. Zion Church, Clark worked in a San Francisco navy yard during the week and preached in Santa Cruz on Sunday. Unfortunately, being pastor of the church did not provide a living wage.

Throughout 1949, the church’s “Pastor’s Aid Club” held benefits to help Reverend Clark pay his debts. A dinner in April was once again hosted by Edward and Inez Smith at their home on South Branciforte Avenue. In May 1949, the church held a weeklong celebration in his honor at their new church on Woodrow Avenue. Over the course of the week, at least a dozen local preachers spoke in his honor. The concluding ceremonies on Sunday featured talks by Reverend J. Sutton and Rev. L. Burton, both of Seaside. They pointed out that Reverend Clark had been their pastor for the previous nineteen months, the majority of the time without compensation.⁹⁵

But the efforts on his behalf were not enough, and in December 1949, Clark resigned as pastor of the Missionary Baptist Church.

With the resignation of Reverend Clark, the Missionary Baptist Church was without a pastor. To fill the gap, they invited the Reverend William M. Brent of the San Francisco Baptist Church to be guest pastor for the remaining Sundays in September.⁹⁶ Reverend Brent was known to the congregation; he had assisted Reverend Clark in the first baptism at the church in January 1948. In September of that year, Reverend Brent succeeded Clark as guest pastor, and in October he was identified as pastor in the Church Directory of the *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*.⁹⁷

In December 1950, a concert was held to raise money for the church and to build a par-

sonage for Reverend Brent who “now must commute from San Francisco.”⁹⁸ In October 1951, the Church honored him and Mrs. Dorothy Brent for his past three years of service with a weekend of church activities. During this period he was still commuting from San Francisco and eager to move to Santa Cruz. It’s not known whether they raised the money to build a parsonage, but it seems they raised enough to help him buy one. In November 1951, Brent located a home for sale at 3336 Winkle Avenue. He made inquiries about moving into the neighborhood and was informed by the current owner and his neighbors that they would not object to his moving there. He made a \$300 down payment and on Saturday, November 3, 1951, Brent and some of his congregation visited the house. That night a fire broke out in the kitchen causing an estimated \$3,000 damage.

Brent came to the house after the fire and people gathered about him and asked him why he didn’t stay out of the neighborhood and “things of that sort.” He was quoted by the news-reporter: “They told me this was a white community and they wanted to keep it that way. They told me the next day when I went back to the house that there would be more violence similar to the fire if I moved into the neighborhood.”⁹⁹

Other citizens of Santa Cruz were outraged. The Grace Methodist church board of directors adopted a resolution of protest.¹⁰⁰ Investigators of the California Department of Justice, the County Sheriff, and fire-insurance underwriters probed the dwelling for clues. The Attorney General’s special investigator declared that “There [was] no doubt the fire . . . was arson.”¹⁰¹ Norman Lezin, chairman of a steering committee for the local chapter of the NAACP, and seventy-five other attendees appointed themselves to determine facts and raise money to pay expenses. The NAACP and the ACLU, both of San Francisco, offered a reward if the arsonist was caught and convicted.¹⁰² No one was ever caught.¹⁰³

Ultimately, the Brents decided not to purchase the house. In a magnanimous statement, they wrote, “We are not buying the house, not because of the objections of some of the members of the

**Biographical Sketch:
William Matthew Brent
(June 1921–October 2012)**

William Matthew Brent was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, in June 1921, and was raised by his widowed mother Carrie. Brent was referred to by the honorific “Doctor,” so he probably had an advanced degree, but we have yet to learn about his education or his career before he came to Santa Cruz.

By October 1947, Reverend Dr. Brent was in Santa Cruz and was associated with the Missionary Baptist Church. At that time, he attended the first social function of the church, along with Reverend Vastine T. Clark, and Luther Creer, the state superintendent of religious education for the Baptist Church.¹⁰⁶ He remained pastor through 1953. In 1973, Dr. Brent, who was then pastor of the Evening Star Baptist Church of Los Angeles, returned to Santa Cruz to celebrate the first twenty-six years of the Missionary Baptist Church.¹⁰⁷ He died on October 3, 2012, in Los Angeles County and was buried at Rose Hills Memorial Park in Whittier, California.¹⁰⁸

community, but because the recent rain brought to light some inadequate conditions of the house that were not known to us before.²¹⁰⁴

In February 1952, the church hosted a celebration of National Negro History week. The Fun and Aid Club of Santa Cruz joined the church in a program that featured “The Achievements of the Negro in America.” Members discussed black leadership history in American fields, such as education, science, music, religion, athletics, business, civic affairs and fraternalism.

Rev. W. M. Brent, pastor of the Missionary Baptist church, will present the scripture and prayer and the benediction.

H. F. [sic] Pratt, president of the F. & A. club will present a short talk along with William Jackson, president of the local chapter of the NAACP, who will discuss the principles and aims of the organization.

Speakers will include: Cornelius Bumpus on education, Mrs. Robert Jones on science, R. R. Dawson on music, Mrs. John R. Bowen on religion, Isaac Jackson on inventions, Willie Jones on athletics, H. D. Pratt on business, Mrs. Almeta Valentine on fraternity and Al Smith, Palo Alto police officer, on civil affairs.

Miss C. Jackson and R. R. Dawson will render solo numbers along with choir selections by the Missionary Baptist choir.¹⁰⁵

By March 1954, a new pastor, Reverend Henry D. Pratt, was named to the Missionary Baptist Church. Reverend Pratt had been a deacon of the church and was President of the church’s Fun and Aid Club. He would remain the church pastor until his death in 1980.

Over the years, the church held anniversary celebrations. At their fourteenth anniversary celebration in August 1961, Reverend Pratt claimed that in those first fourteen years, membership grew from twelve to more than one hundred. He credited the success of the church to Mr. and Mrs. Edward L. Smith, who contributed a large sum of money as well as a great deal of their time towards establishing the present church on Woodrow Avenue.¹⁰⁹

At a daylong celebration for their sixteenth anniversary in August 1963, guest pastors came from Berkeley and Los Angeles; the Reverend Heber Mahood once again spoke to the congregation. Early church members were present, including Russell Dawson, who gave a piano recital, and Deacon Isaac Jackson, chairman of the church board and finance committee.¹¹⁰

In 1973, Reverend Pratt helped celebrate the church’s twenty-sixth anniversary. It was a special anniversary as both the first pastor of the church, the Reverend Vastine Clark, and the second pas-

Biographical Sketches:

Henry Dennis Pratt (1910-1980) and his wife, Nina M. Pratt (1915-1997)

Henry Dennis Pratt was born April 2, 1910, in Ardmore, Oklahoma. Like so many other congregants of the Missionary Baptist Church, he came to Santa Cruz with the 54th Coast Artillery. After serving in the US Army for four years, he attended the Berkeley Baptist Divinity School, Pacific School of Religion, at Berkeley and the educational school of the Baptist Convention.¹¹¹ In 1954, he became the third, and longest serving, pastor of the Missionary Baptist Church. Before he was pastor, he was a deacon of the church and, with his wife Nina, had signed its articles of incorporation. Upon his death on July 11, 1980, his obituary stated he had served as pastor of the Missionary Baptist Church for the previous 26 years.¹¹² His wife Nina (also known as Ina Mae) died at the age of eighty-one in April 1997. She and Henry are both buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Santa Cruz.¹¹³

tor, Dr. William Brent, joined Reverend Pratt in honoring their church. Another pastor, the Reverend Billy Gene Trotter, assisted Dr. Brent. Reverend Trotter's attendance is interesting. A little over a year later, in November 1974, he was reported to have founded a new A.M.E. Zion Church in Santa Cruz, which met briefly at the Twin Lakes Baptist Church on Seventh Avenue. (See "New A.M.E. Zion Church (1974)" earlier in this article.)

Reverend Pratt continued as pastor of the Missionary Baptist Church until his death in 1980.

The Missionary Baptist Church continued to thrive and is still in operation today in its original location at 714 Woodrow Avenue.

* * *

The Progressive Missionary Baptist Church: The Early Years (1963-1967)

1963 was a pivotal year in black history. In April of that year, while being held in jail for civil disobedience, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote his "Letter from Birmingham Jail" entreating his fellow clergymen to support civil rights. On August 28, King led the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, where he made his "I Have A Dream" speech that resonated throughout the land. Less than a month later, on September 15, four young girls were killed by a bomb at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. The black Baptist community was waking up.¹¹⁴

It was in 1963 that some Santa Cruz Baptists decided to break from the Missionary Baptist Church to found the new Progressive Baptist Church. The word "Progressive" in the church name speaks to an affinity with the aims of the burgeoning civil rights movement. The first mention of the Progressive Missionary Baptist Church in local newspapers was on March 15, 1963, but the idea of a new "progressive" church had likely been brewing for a while.

The first pastor was the Reverend Samuel M. Jackson. And the first order of business of the new church was to launch a building-fund drive.

Progressive Baptists To Launch Drive

The newly formed Progressive Missionary Baptist church will launch a building fund drive Monday with a special series of services at Faith temple, 1303 Fair Avenue.

Speaker for the nightly series . . . will be Rev. Billy Trotter[sic], a young evangelist who has been preaching the gospel since he was 7 years old, according to Rev. Samuel M. Jackson, pastor.

Rev. Jackson has announced that the regular Sunday services of the church will continue

to be held at 316 Myrtle street, the congregation's temporary meeting place.¹¹⁵

The event was a success, raising nearly two hundred and fifty dollars. By then, the congregation had swelled to forty-one members.¹¹⁶ One of the early sustainers of the Missionary Baptist Church, Ezetta Dawson, had now joined the new Progressive Church. At a meeting of the Santa Cruz United Church Women, she spoke on the theme of "One Family Under God." The meeting was ecumenical; it was held at the First Congregational Church and one of the speakers was Reverend Henry Pratt of the Missionary Baptist Church.¹¹⁷

In August, Reverend Jackson led a meditation during "an interfaith assembly for racial and religious harmony." The program was held in conjunction with the March on Washington and commemorated the one-hundredth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Reverend Robert Nordstrad of the First Congregational Church joined him.¹¹⁸

By September, the new church had a home. They bought the building at 517 Center Street from The Santa Cruz Church of Christ; the two churches would share the building while the Church of Christ built a new church in East Santa Cruz.¹¹⁹ The Progressive church held a celebratory march that started at 619 Woodrow Avenue and ended at 517 Center Street, followed by a service.¹²⁰

The church was active in the civil rights movement. Shortly after moving to their new building, they hosted a meeting to observe Human Rights Day on December 10, 1963. Representatives came from many organizations and churches. The ACLU, the AAUW, and the NAACP sent representatives; the Deanery of Catholic Women and the United Church Women represented women; religious organizations that participated were the Santa Cruz Council of Churches, the Ministerial Union, the Unitarian Fellowship, and the Watsonville Buddhist Church. At the meeting, they presented a petition for signature using words that resonate today. The petitions stated:

The civil rights issue today claims the attention of responsible people everywhere. The following citizens of Santa Cruz county declare their intention to work to insure the right of any individual, whatever his race, color or creed, to settle in a neighborhood of his choosing and to engage in any labor for which his skills, training, and desire qualify him.¹²¹

A year later, the church celebrated the first anniversary of the move to their new home. They had nightly services and special events at the church on Center Street. Mrs. Ezetta Dawson was in charge of arrangements.

Progressive Baptists Mark First Year With Events

... Services the past three evenings have averaged about 100 members and guests, according to the church pastor.

Church members taking part in the former services have been Mrs. Jackson and Mrs. Lee as mistresses of ceremonies, and Mrs. John Jackson, Inez Smith, Mrs. Lowery, Elder E. D. Givens, Mrs. Hill, Mrs. Louis J. Wright, Rev. F. D. Hanes of San Francisco, Rev. James Page of Seaside, Mrs. Percy Owens, Deacon Titus Jackson, Charles Barnes, Rev. H. D. Pratt of Santa Cruz Missionary Baptist church and Rev. O. T. Davis of Santa Cruz Pentecostal Church of God.¹²²

Notice that Inez Smith, once the spiritual "Mother" of the Missionary Baptist Church and Reverend Henry Pratt, pastor of that church, both attended.

Music was important to the new church. Reverend Jackson sang "Negro spirituals" at the celebration honoring Human Rights Day.¹²³ The church sponsored a very successful Gospel concert, featuring singer Johnnie Howard Franklin at the Civic Auditorium.¹²⁴ The Bishop Johnson singers of Oakland appeared in a musical pro-

**Biographical Sketches:
Samuel M. Jackson (?-?) and
Ovetta Jackson (1920-2001)**



Reverend Samuel M. Jackson.
(*Santa Cruz Sentinel*, August 27, 1963)

Reverend Samuel Jackson came to Santa Cruz in 1963 as the first pastor of the Santa Cruz Progressive Missionary Church. Before then, he had pastorates in St. Louis, Missouri.¹³¹ The date and place of his birth is not yet known. During his time as pastor in Santa Cruz, Reverend Jackson was known for singing spirituals in concert and leading weeks-long revival meetings.¹³² In 1968, he and his wife, Ovetta, were still living in Santa Cruz at 519 Center Street, next door to the Progressive Missionary Baptist Church.¹³³ But by 1969, he was no longer pastor of the church. A later newspaper article placed him as pastor of St. Andrew's Baptist Church in San Francisco in 1976. The date and place of his death is unknown.¹³⁴

His wife, Ovetta Ophelia Hurd Jackson, was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on July 25, 1920. She lived in San Francisco in the 1970s and died there on May 1, 2001.¹³⁵

gram.¹²⁵ And the church sponsored Christmas caroling.¹²⁶

Like the other churches, they held barbecues and chicken dinners to raise money.¹²⁷ And they continued their progressive activism. The church held a program honoring the nineteenth observance of United Nations Day. Two local women's groups co-sponsored the event: the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the YWCA. Cooperating agencies included The Religious Society of Friends and the Baha'i group.¹²⁸

On Sunday, December 4, 1966, Reverend Lawrence Jackson of Chicago preached both morning and evening services; Reverend Samuel Jackson did not preach that day; instead he began an "old-time revival" beginning that night, which would continue through Saturday, December 17. At the revival there would be "preaching nightly and a special time for prayer. Any person who needs God's help is welcome."¹²⁹ This was not the first revival sponsored by the Progressive Missionary Baptist Church; at least one other was held, between March 16 and March 27, 1964.¹³⁰

On Sunday, December 11, 1966, Reverend Jackson preached his last sermon as pastor of the Progressive Missionary Church. On the following Sunday, December 18, a new pastor, Reverend Cassius Ellis presided over the service. No explanation of this change in pastors has been found. The Church Directory in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* simply recorded the names of the pastors on those respective dates.¹³⁶ On December 21, 1966, Reverend Ellis invited all churches in the area to join in the Christmas festivities at the church and to go caroling afterwards.¹³⁷

Reverend Ellis would continue as pastor of the Progressive Missionary Baptist Church into the 1970s.

Born in the era of civil rights, the Progressive Missionary Church continued their progressive agenda, making sure to honor all human rights, including women's rights, the rights of labor, and the rights of people of color; they celebrated United Nations Day and Human Rights Day. The Progressive Missionary Baptist Church remains to this day at 517 Center Street in Santa Cruz.¹⁴²

Do You Know My Name?

⁸ Paul Tutwiler wrote briefly about the Baptist Missionary Church and the Progressive Baptist Missionary Church in “Santa Cruz Spirituality: Pietist-Methodist” <http://www.santacruzpl.org/history/articles/478/#bapnoaf>, viewed June 5, 2015.

⁹ Paul Tutwiler writes briefly about this Watsonville church in “Santa Cruz Spirituality: Pietist-Methodist: Zion Chapel, Watsonville, 1867-1890,” <http://www.santacruzpl.org/history/articles/474/#africanmezc>.

¹⁰ Rudolph M. Lapp, “Chapter 7, Churches and Schools,” *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977), pp.158-159.

¹¹ “A number of resettling schemes were attempted by various humanitarian organizations. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was one of the most active groups in such activities. It sent missionaries and elders into depressed rural areas where they set up a new congregation and literally moved the whole membership to a more promising location elsewhere, usually to one of the large northern cities or out to the west coast,” Delilah Leontium Beasley, *The Negro trail blazers of California*, a compilation of records from the California archives, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, and from the diaries, old papers, and conversations of pioneers in the State of California, (Los Angeles, Times Mirror, 1919), p. 168; Phil Reader, MAH Research Forum, posted February 12, 2009; and Phil Reader, MAH Research Forum, “The Pinkney Family,” posted February 17, 2009.

¹² “Booker Taliaferro Washington was the foremost black educator of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He also had a major influence on southern race relations and was the dominant figure in black public affairs from 1895 until his death in 1915.” *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris editors, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1989), <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/washington/bio.html>, viewed September 15, 2015; and “The Booker T. Washington Era,” from the Library of Congress exhibition, *The African American Odyssey: A Quest for Full Citizenship*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aahtml/exhibit/aopart6.html>, viewed Aug 2, 2015.

¹³ Phil Reader in “To Know My Name, a Chronological History of African Americans in Santa Cruz County, part 4, Chronology 1900 – 1990” <http://www.santacruzpl.org/history/articles/130/>. In this chronology, he specifically mentions the origins of the AME Zion Church. He also notes that the population of Santa Cruz in 1910 was 81 (U. S. Census).

¹⁴ “Tink” or “Turk?” Ancestry.com interpreted his name on the 1900 census for Fresno, California, as “Turk,” but Phil Reader interpreted it as “Tink” and the authors agree. McEachen registered to vote in 1892 as “Tink Arthur McEachen” according to the Great Register of Voters of San Joaquin County.

¹⁵ “African American Methodists to Organize . . .,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November 18, 1905, 3:3.

¹⁶ “African Methodist Episcopal, Zion Church . . .,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November 19, 1905, 7:2.

¹⁷ “M. E. Zion Church Organized,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November 21, 1905, 6:5.

¹⁸ “Zion Christmas Tree, The Colored People Hold a Celebration With Tree and Program,” *Santa Cruz Surf*, December 22, 1905. Clipping courtesy of Phil Reader archives; and “African M. E. Christmas Tree,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 27, 1905, p. 2.

¹⁹ See the article by Geoffrey Dunn, “Black and Tan Baseball in Santa Cruz: An Unknown History” in this journal.

²⁰ “Zion Christmas Tree, . . .”

²¹ “Zion Church Entertains,” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, January 27, 1906, 5:5.

²² “Zion Pastor Says ‘Thank You,’” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, January 29, 1906, 8:8; *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, January 28, 1906; and *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, February 3, 1906.

²³ “Gritty Preacher Takes to House Cleaning,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, March 10, 1906, 1:3.

²⁴ *Santa Cruz Evening Sentinel*, June 21, 1906, 7:4.

²⁵ *Santa Cruz Evening Sentinel*, June 24, 1906, 7:2.

²⁶ In 1897, McEachen conducted a party from the South to the Fresno-Bakersfield area. A member of this party was eighteen-year-old Elias Pinkney. In 1902 he married Mabel Davis of San Jose who was active in the A.M.E. church. They would later move to Santa Cruz and join McEachen’s A.M.E. Zion Church, “The Pinkney Family,” Phil Reader, MAH Research Forum, posted February 17, 2009.

²⁷ “Rev. McEachen Does Not Like Carolina,” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, October 25, 1906, 1:3.

²⁸ “Appeal and Thanks,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, February 13, 1907, 11:3-4. F.A. Hihn may have been a supporter of the church. He rented them a hall; he was Vice-President and principal investor in the First National Bank of Santa Cruz that handled donations to the church; and the church’s Sunday school picnic the following June was held at Hihn’s Park in Capitola.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, February 20, 1907, 7:2.

³¹ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, June 16, 1907, 7:2.

³² *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, July 4, 1907, 7:3.

³³ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 9, 1907, 7:1.

³⁴ “Card of Thanks,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 18, 1907, 7:3; and *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, October 19, 1907, 5:5.

³⁵ Rev. T. A. McEachen Will Leave for the East,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 29, 1907, 3:2; and *Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, November 2, 1907.

³⁶ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, January 4, 1908, 5:1.

³⁷ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, June 8, 1909, 4:3.

³⁸ The 1900 census says he was 44 years old, his wife was 40, his daughter 20, and his son was 19. The census record entered “Annie” as his wife’s name, but later evidence confirms her name as Minnie.

³⁹ Quote from Beasley, *The Negro trail blazers of California*, p. 168; Bishop Petty died December 8, 1900, aged fifty-one *The Gaffney Ledger* (Gaffney, South Carolina) December 14, 1900, 1:6.

⁴⁰ Beasley, *The Negro trail blazers of California*, p. 168.

⁴¹ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, April 18, 1909, 6:4; and *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, September 19, 1909, 63-3.

⁴² *Santa Cruz Surf*, December 11, 1909, 7. Clipping courtesy of Phil Reader archives.

⁴³ “Enjoyable Social,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, July 21, 1909, 1:3; “Colored Church Gives Social,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, February 16, 1910, 4:5.

⁴⁴ River Street Extension was where the current River Street continues north of Water Street.

⁴⁵ “Will Build a Church, The A.M.E. Zion People Purchase a Lot,” *Santa Cruz Surf*, April 18, 1910. Clipping

⁴⁶ “For Benefit for New Church,” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, August 20, 2:5.

⁴⁷ “A.M.E. Church,” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, August 20, 6:7.

⁴⁸ “Zion A.M.E. Church,” *Santa Cruz Surf*, May 25, 1911, p. 6. Clipping courtesy of Phil Reader archives.

⁴⁹ “Santa Cruz Church Directory,” *Santa Cruz Evening News*, October 21, 1911, 4:6-7.

⁵⁰ “Fresno’s Yesterdays, Fifty Years Ago,” *Fresno Bee/The Republican*, October 28, 1956, 48:7.

⁵¹ 1910 Census, San Jose, California; Polk-Husted Directory Co’s San Jose City and Santa Clara County Directory, 1907-8, 355.

⁵² William Holt Atherton library archive, Stockton, Calif., by Rickey Boyland and Sandra Leflore Love, a student survey of graduates of the University of the Pacific; Pacific Alumni Association, www.pacificalumni.org/s/749/.../Saved%20by%20the%20Archives.doc, viewed Jul 30, 2015

⁵³ *The Salem News*, (Salem, Ohio), July 18, 1942, 4:2.

⁵⁴ *The Salem News* (Salem, Ohio) June 27, 1942, 3:1

⁵⁵ “Zion Church Installation Is Sunday,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November 22, 1974, 13:4.

⁵⁶ “Speaker . . . will be Rev. Billy Trotter [sic] who has been preaching the gospel since he was 7 years old, according to Rev. Samuel M. Jackson, “Progressive Baptists To Launch Drive,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, March 15, 1963, 7:6.

⁵⁷ “New Progressive Baptist Church to End Series Tonight,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, March 22, 1963, 7.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “Pastor to be Honored,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, March 23, 1973, 9:13-14.

⁶⁰ California Marriage Index, 1960-1985; obituary of Billy Gene Trotter, <http://www.tributes.com/obituary/show/Billy-Gene-Trotter-87230170>, viewed September 18, 2015.

⁶¹ See Paul Tutwiler for a discussion of Baptist churches in general and the local black Baptist churches in particular; under the heading “Baptist: exist in 2010” he points out the difference between the two Santa Cruz Baptist churches and other Baptist churches, <http://www.santacruzpl.org/history/articles/478/> viewed October 8, 2015.

⁶² Phil Reader, “To Know My Name, part 4,” <http://www.santacruzpl.org/history/articles/130/>, viewed October 8, 2015.

⁶³ 1940 census; Isaac Jackson quote, Geoffrey Dunn, *Santa Cruz Is in the Heart*, (Santa Cruz, Capitola Book Company, 1989), p. 66.

⁶⁴ A plaque in the Company’s honor stands at Lighthouse Field State Beach.

⁶⁵ Isaac Jackson quote, Frank Perry, *Lighthouse Point: Illuminating Santa Cruz*, (Santa Cruz, Otter B Books, 2002), p. 115; for a full description of the 54th Coast Artillery, see pages 109-120 of *Lighthouse Point*.

⁶⁶ The Smith house was located on what is now the parking lot of Shopper’s Corner Market. It was demolished in 1957. “One of the oldest homes in Santa Cruz, approximately 75 years old, will be demolished to provide extra parking for the Shopper’s Corner market.” The owners of Shopper’s Corner, Vince Williams and Bud Beauregard, said, “Our parking facilities have been taxed to capacity for some time . . . This will add 5000 square feet of parking and will be extremely helpful to our customers,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, June 6, 1957, 6:6-7. The USO is the organization that has provided service to members of the US armed forces since 1941.

⁶⁷ Perry, *Lighthouse Point*, p. 116; also see Geoffrey Dunn, *Sports of Santa Cruz County*, (Charleston, South Carolina, Images of America, Arcadia Publishing, 2013), p. 29.

⁶⁸ “Jackson-Parker Nuptials Held,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, February 14, 1945, p. 3:5; after the Missionary Baptist Church was established in 1947, Reverend Mahood was an occasional guest preacher, *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, May 14, 1949, p. 2:5, and *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 24, 1951, 2:6.

⁶⁹ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, January 19, 1992, 45:1-6

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- ⁷⁰ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, March 21, 2005, A6.
- ⁷¹ “Negro Church Organization is Underway,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, September 11, 1947, 8:8.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*; “Negro Church Gets Underway With Chicken Dinner October 5,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, September 17, 1947, 1947, 3:3.
- ⁷⁴ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, August 23, 1951, 1:1.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁶ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, February 24, 1974; 48:7; and *California, Death Index, 1940-1997*.
- ⁷⁷ “Additions to New Church,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, November 4, 1947, 3:4.
- ⁷⁸ “Voice of the People,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, October 16, 1947, 7:2.
- ⁷⁹ “Society News,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, January 29, 1948, 3:5.
- ⁸⁰ *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, April 1, 1948, 9:4; and April 4, 1948, 6:4-6. The property was once part of the Weeks Orchard.
- ⁸¹ “Negro Church to Have Benefit Rally,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, April 7, 1948, 3:1; “Negro Church Launches Fund Drive Today,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, April 11, 1948, 7:3; and “Missionary Church Swells Building Fund By Serving Dinners,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, May 27, 1948, 3:2.
- ⁸² Museum of Art & History Archives, Santa Cruz County, Articles prepared by Joseph A. Brown, Attorney at Law, De Young Building, San Francisco. Filed in the office of the County Clerk, County of Santa Cruz, State of California, August 26, 1948. H. E. Miller, County Clerk, by Emma Rodhouse, Deputy Clerk. #230105. County Clerk’s Index No. 1541. Certified by the California Secretary of State, Frank M. Jordan, August 24, 1948.
- ⁸³ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, April 20, 1949, 3:7.
- ⁸⁴ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, August 10, 1961, 3:1
- ⁸⁵ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 16, 1977, 15:2.
- ⁸⁶ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, August 7, 1977, 11:1-4.
- ⁸⁷ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, January 4, 2006.
- ⁸⁸ “Missionary Baptist Church Marks 16th Anniversary,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, August 23, 1963, 7:2.
- ⁸⁹ *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, November 26, 1948, 3:6.
- ⁹⁰ “Negro Church Launches Fund Drive Today,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, November 14, 1948; April 11, 1948, 7:3.
- ⁹¹ “Capacity Congregation at Church Dedication,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, December 3, 1948, 3:2.
- ⁹² “News of the Churches,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, December 3, 1948, 3:2.
- ⁹³ “Voice of the People,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, December 13, 1948, 6:6.
- ⁹⁴ “Pastor Files Bankruptcy,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, December 30, 1948, 6:1
- ⁹⁵ “Mark Anniversary,” May 15, 1949, 2:2.
- ⁹⁶ “S. C. Baptists Have Guest Pastor,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, September 11, 1949, 4:4.
- ⁹⁷ *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, October 14, 1949 4:1.
- ⁹⁸ “Raymond Soares’ Concert Will Benefit Missionary Baptists,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 15, 1950, 7:1-2.
- ⁹⁹ *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, November 12, 1951, 1:2-3.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, November 13, 1951, 1:8.
- ¹⁰¹ *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, November 12, 1951, 1:2-3.
- ¹⁰² *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, November 15, 1951, 1:5.
- ¹⁰³ *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, March 16, 1952, 15:8.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, January 31, 1952, 8:6.
- ¹⁰⁵ “Celebrate National Negro History Week Here Today,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, February 10, 1952, 2:1.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, October 9, 1947, 3:6, “New Church Group Gets Underway With Chicken Dinner.” Rev. Brent was misidentified as “Rev. W. N. [sic] Brent.” He was also misidentified as “Brant” on other occasions.
- ¹⁰⁷ “SC Church to Mark Anniversary,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, August 24, 1973, 15:1-2.
- ¹⁰⁸ Find a Grave Index, Ancestry.com, viewed September 18, 2015.
- ¹⁰⁹ “Missionary Baptists Plan Celebration,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel-News*, August 25, 1961, 7:4. The same Reverend Heber Mahood of the Congregational Church, who presided over the wedding of Isaac Jackson and Elizabeth Smith at the Smith residence on South Branciforte Avenue, attended the celebration and gave the response to the welcoming address.
- ¹¹⁰ “Missionary Baptist Church Marks 16th Anniversary In SC,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, August 23, 1963, 7:2.
- ¹¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹² *Santa Cruz Sentinel*. July 14, 1980, 24:1.
- ¹¹³ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, April 9, 1997, 6:3.
- ¹¹⁴ “Black History Timeline,” the 1960s, <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/bhmtimeline.html#AAH-1960>, viewed September 14, 2015. 1963 was a culmination of a number of earlier acts, including: in 1955, Emmett Till was murdered, and Rosa Parks kept her seat on the bus;

in 1957, Martin Luther King, Jr. and others formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and Governor Forbus of Alabama blocked nine black students from entering school; in 1960, black students sat in at a lunch counter, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was founded; 1961, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and SNCC sponsored volunteer “Freedom Riders” (black and white) to ride buses throughout the South; and in 1962, James Meredith was the first black to enroll at University of Mississippi, and President Kennedy sent troops to quell the rioting.

¹¹⁵ “Progressive Baptists To Launch Drive,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, March 15, 1963, 7:6. Over ten years later, in 1974, Trotter would try to reopen the A.M.E. Zion Church. See “New A.M.E. Zion Church (1974),” earlier in this article. Source: “Zion Church Installation Is Sunday,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November 22, 1974, 13:4.

¹¹⁶ “New Progressive Baptists Report Drive’s Success,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, March 29, 1963, 7:6.

¹¹⁷ “United Church Women Tell Plans for May Fellowship Day,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, April 26, 1963, 7:2-3.

¹¹⁸ “Meditation Leader,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, August 27, 1963, 7:8.

¹¹⁹ “SC Church Of Christ Sells Plant, Changes Schedule,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, September 27, 1963, 7:6.

¹²⁰ “Progressive Baptists Plan March to Service,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, September 6, 1963, 7:2.

¹²¹ “Public Affairs Groups Prepare Plans For Human Rights Day,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November 22, 1963, 5:2-3.

¹²² “Progressive Baptists Mark First Year With Events,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November 6, 1964, 7:3-4.

¹²³ “Aptos Methodist Church To Observe Human Rights Day,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 9, 1963, 3:2.

¹²⁴ “Opera, Gospel Concert Set For March 21 Here,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, February 5, 1965, 9:3; “Concert Tickets Now Available,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, February 1, 1965, 9:4; and Gospel Singer At Auditorium This Afternoon, *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, March 21, 1965: “Miss [Johnnie Howard] Franklin was a dramatic soprano who sang hymns, spirituals, [opera] arias and gospel songs.”

¹²⁵ “Sunday Musical Slated By Missionary Baptists,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, March 25, 1966, 9:5.

¹²⁶ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 16, 1966, 11:4.

¹²⁷ “Two-Day Barbecue Set By Missionary Baptist Church,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, August 21, 1964, 9:2; and Progressive Missionary Baptists Slate Barbecue, *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, May 21, 1965, 7:2. Notice that the newspaper did not always include the word “Progressive” when naming this church.

¹²⁸ “U.N. Day Program Slated Here Next Sunday,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 20, 1964, p3.

¹²⁹ “Rev. Jackson To Preach Here Sunday,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 3, 1966, 9:5.

¹³⁰ “Revival Series Set At Missionary Baptist Church,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, March 13, 1964, 7:3.

¹³¹ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 14, 1966, 9, 1-2.

¹³² “Aptos Methodist Church To Observe Human Rights Day,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 9, 1963, 3:2; “Meditation Leader,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, August 27, 1963, 7:8; and “Rev. Jackson To Preach Here Sunday,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 3, 1965; 9:5.

¹³³ 1968 Polk’s Santa Cruz directory.

¹³⁴ “13th Anniversary Observance,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November 26, 1976, 8:3.

¹³⁵ Ancestry.com, viewed September 18, 2015.

¹³⁶ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 9, 1966, 10:6; and *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 16, 1966, 11:14.

¹³⁷ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 21, 1966, 8.

¹³⁸ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, November 8, 1963, 7:3.

¹³⁹ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, March 17, 1967, 11:2.

¹⁴⁰ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, December 4, 1970, 15:1-8.

¹⁴¹ *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, April 3, 1977, 42:5.

¹⁴² See the church website at <http://www.progressivemissionary.com>.