

Cover Sheet

California Pioneers of Santa Clara County
Essay Contest

Year of Entry: 2019

*Telling Our Story: Antioch Church a Legacy of Service
as a Beacon Light in San Jose, California*

Author Name: Harriett Arnold

Author Phone Number: (408) 258-6529

Author Email: harnold@pacific.edu

Title Page

California Pioneers of Santa Clara County
Essay Contest

Year of Entry: 2019

*Telling Our Story: Antioch Church a Legacy of Service
as a Beacon Light in San Jose, California*

Author Name: Harriett Arnold

Author Phone Number: (408) 258-6529

Author Email: harnold@pacific.edu

Telling Our Story: Antioch Church a Legacy of Service as a Beacon Light in San Jose, California

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	1
Introduction	2
History of African Americans in San Jose	5
Establishing a Place of Worship	8
Embracing Change in the Twentieth Century	10
The Best is yet to come: Celebrating 125 Years of Service	12
Epilogue	14
Bibliography and Additional Sources	16-17

Abstract

If the Lion does not tell his story, it will only be told through the mouth of the hunter (African Proverb). [1]

For the past few decades, we have written and discussed the importance of African Americans and the history of California. There continue to be reams of research on the significance of California history and the roles of the church yet, there is a need to examine the intersections of history, church and African Americans in San Jose.

This paper suggests that, almost paradoxically, the best way to enhance the human the dimension of examining an understanding is to work on explicitly addressing some of the same issues with those who are interested in learning and understanding the African American church and service in the twenty-first century. We share and explore San Jose history and Antioch Baptist church in order to have deeper meanings, seek purpose and understand the power of transcendence.

A leisurely ride east down Julian Street in San Jose, California from Market Street and you will soon arrive at the corner of Seventh and Julian, look to the right and know that this is the place that has been a religious beacon light for over one hundred and twenty-five years of community service. This proposed submission has a focus on African Americans, Antioch Church, San Jose history as viewed through the lens of a historical researcher and active member of an American Baptist congregation. Curiosity, resilience, and discovery were key elements in the development and research of this paper. An inquisitive year-long series of events and programs that led to beginning to understanding the importance of change and practicing reflection for greater understanding of the issues surrounding California history, Antioch Church and the need for acceptance and continued service confirm the significance of telling our story through the lens of lived experiences.

1. African Proverb, Anonymous

**Telling Our Story: Antioch Church a Legacy of Service
as a Beacon Light in San Jose, California**

*Hold fast to dreams,
for if dreams die.*

*Life is a broken-wing bird,
which cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams,
for when dreams go.*

*Life is a barren field,
frozen with snow.
Langston Hughes [2]*

Introduction

The biblical tale of the Good Samaritan is often described as a parable with a deeper meaning about compassion. This poignant allegory is relevant to the scholarly examination of the significance of change and resilience. A parable is a comparison of two things, often done through a story that has two or more meanings. An exegetical study of this parable concerns an itinerant rabbi who is asked a question and becomes engaged in theological discourse with an attorney about a question. A simple question was asked by the lawyer, “Who is my neighbor?”

The parable tells of a traveler who travels from one city to another and in the process is attacked, beaten, and left for dead on the side of the road. He is found hurt, bleeding, and unconscious from his attack by three people on their way to the city. The first person who sees this man is a local priest who looks at this injured man, but continues on his way and seemingly ignores what he sees in front of him on the side of the road. The second is still another important man, a Temple associate who is revered and kept in high esteem by the local community. He, too, sees the injured man but he does not stop to assist but continues on his way to do his work at the temple. A third individual is a man who is a despised outcast – a Samaritan. He decides to

2. Hughes, Langston

stop, cleanse the man's wounds, and place the man upon his own donkey for transportation to a local inn, stay with him, and afterward give coins to the innkeeper to pay for the man's residence, enabling him to have a place to safely heal from his wounds.

It is clear that many African American men and women have had a profound impact on society, history, culture, language, and the church. For several years, my professional life had not intersected with my professional life and this was a comfortable place to be within my church. So, while giving much thought to the submission of this paper, there were several questions that were raised that necessitated not only research within the field of California and San Jose history but to Antioch Church, as viewed through the lens of African Americans who have attended over several generations.

So, what is the interconnectedness of African American men and women who were born and live in San Jose and the church? Why would this be of interest to local church research? Why is it necessary to celebrate one hundred and twenty-five years of residency on Julian Street? The Antioch Church, San Jose history, change, and service can be found together with their beginnings within a small group of people. Who live and work in San Jose for many years. The population has been small since the nineteenth century in 1893, the year of establishment for the church and continued throughout the twentieth and now the twenty-first century. Why does this institution serve as a beacon light for those who are new or come to the San Jose community? Why do we find Christians who continue to be drawn to the church on Seventh and Julian?

In retrospect the church members of Antioch Church have served the City of San Jose and the county of Santa Clara for more than one hundred and twenty-five years. The members of the church have provided a place of spiritual and personal refuge for all who have entered this special place. The nineteenth century was a place that beckoned African Americans that was

safe and provided social, cultural, economic and spiritual refuge for as long as friends' and members chose to remain in the area. As the traveler made certain that the injured man had been provided for his safety and a vision for the future—so has Antioch in the twenty-first century.

The Antioch Church has provided food, shelter and spiritual shelter for all that would enter the doors. There have been many within the community that come to Antioch to have their “wounds of life cleaned” such as a bus ticket, food and for a long period a rotating shelter for the night that provided a place to be safe from the elements of nature and those that might choose to bring harm. [4]

4. Antioch Church Historical Records, 2019.

History of African Americans in San Jose

Just California

“Twixt the sea and the deserts,
‘Twixt the wastes and the waves,
Between the sands of buried lands
And ocean’s coral caves,
It lies not East nor West
But lie a scroll unfurled,
Where the hand of God hath hung it,
Down the middle of the world.

It lies where God hath spread it,
In the gladness of His eyes,
Like a flame of jeweled tapestry
Beneath the shining skies;
With the green of woven meadows
And the hills in golden chains,
The light of leaping rivers,
And the flash of poppied plains.

Days rise that gleam in glory,
Days die with the sunset’s breeze,
While from Cathay that was of old
Sail countless argosies;
Morn breaks again in splendor
O’er the giant, new horn West,
But of all the lands God fashioned,
‘Tis this land is the best.
Just California stretching down
The middle of the World.

(McGroarty, John S., Beasley, D. p.140) [5]

Introduction

According to historian Herbert Ruffin, “what I find is that contrary to what twentieth-century scholarship on blacks in urban American concludes, the existence of a black community was not a reaction to such outside forces as residential segregation, economic discrimination and political impotence but rather was something that began with the people themselves and was consciously chosen (Ruffin, p.11). [6]

5. Beasley D. p.140,

6. Ruffin, H. p.11.

African American California Pioneers

The first Spanish settlement in the South Bay was Mission Santa Clara de Asis. Today, this institution is known as Mission Santa Clara, established on January 12, 1777. Later in 1777, Lieutenant Don Jose Joaquin Moraga established El Pueblo de San Jose de Guadalupe or known today as the first civil settlement: San Jose. It is interesting to note, that the Castas: The Racial Classification System in Colonial New Spain reflects that of the sixty-eight original Settlers, fifteen were people of African ancestry (Ruffin, p.18) [7]

In other words, 22 percent of the founding population was categorized as having African Heritage (Ruffin, p.18) [8] It is within this system of castes, most of these persons of African lineage were identified as Mulatto or racially intermingled Hispanicized citizens of predominately African heritage (Ruffin, p.18) [9] The Census (*Padron*) listed the nine original land grantees of 1783 as follows:

Spaniards, 3, Coyote (half-breed), 1
Indian, 1, Mulatto, 2
Mestizo (half-breed), 2, Unknown, 1
(Arnold, H., p.3) [10]

Leslie Rout shared in his research the categories of the racial classifications with more than forty classifications with the Spaniards being the most desirable and the Negro the least preferred. San Jose's settlers of African descent were categorized using this classification. For example, a male Spaniard and Negro female had off-spring that were classified as Mulattoes. (Ruffin, p. 19). [11]

Clyde Arbuckle writes that on November 29, 1777, under the command of Commandant Moraga of the Presidio of San Francisco took nine soldiers, five pobladores and one servant from the San Francisco and Monterey settlements. Together with their women and children they founded California's first civil settlement, el pueblo de San Jose de Guadalupe located on the eastern bank of the Guadalupe River. (Arbuckle, p.10) [12]

Arnold 7

The Coloma gold discovery of January 24, 1848, brought thousands of people from all over the United States and other countries. There were free slaves and slave owners who brought their slaves with them to California. (Arnold, p.3) [13] Among the gold miners who came to California were African Americans, for they too wished to be a part of the change that was taking place in the United States. The African Americans used their earnings to pay for their freedom, liberty, their family and relatives who were far away and contribute to the Colored Conventions to secure legislation for those of African Ancestry who lived in California. Delilah Beasley listed that there were early African American pioneers prior to the gold rush who lived in San Jose, California. They included Alfred White, H. E. Speight, William Whiting, Harriett Smith, James Williams, Ella Hawkins, Jacob Overton and Sara Massey Overton. (Arnold,) [14]

The “gold fever” would spread well beyond California and information about what was taking place in California was shared throughout the United States. The news of California and its riches would be strong and entice African Americans from the south, east and the north to “come west”. It is with this background that the need for religion and places of worship would become important to the newcomers to California. The new changes would be significant to the nineteenth century African American pioneers that would enhance the political, economic, social and religious changes that were taking place. One of the early African American pioneers in San Jose, California was Ella Hawkins. She would become central to the foundation and establishment of Antioch Baptist Church in 1893.

7. Ruffin, p.18.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Arnold, p.3

11. Ruffin, p. 19

12. Arbuckle, p.10.

13. Arnold. p. 13

14. Ibid.

Establishing a Place of Worship

Introduction

According to Delilah Beasley, there were California pioneers of African descent who were moving to and living in several cities establishing a place of worship.

All the movements for the uplift of the Negro race during pioneer days in California were strongly supported by all the ministers of the African Methodist Church (AME). It is befitting that a short survey of these trail blazers be given in this history. (p.158) [15]

The AME Church has been the leading spirit in the building of California for the Negro, notwithstanding the other denominations, such as the Episcopalian church and their pastors have worked shoulder to shoulder. (Beasley, p.158). [16]

The early pioneer years of San Jose was not unlike other cities in California in the area of religious places of worship. Reverend Peter Williams Casey had already established himself with the local Trinity Episcopal Church in 1863. It is interesting to note that Reverend Casey attended the California Colored Conventions and served on committees as indicated by Delilah Beasley. The local African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church was organized in San Jose in 1864 and on January 6, 1893, Dr. Washington visited San Jose at Zion AME from Chicago and the San Jose Evening News indicates that there were 3,000 in the audience. [17]

The City of San Jose has many early settlers that are little known yet they contributed to its development. The nineteenth and eighteenth centuries were an interesting time for people of African descent in California. There were economic, social, and political changes that were taking place throughout the state. Little is written about those of African descent, yet their contributions and presence is documented by few historians, in private collections, church records, diaries, private and public documents.

15. Beasley, p. 158

16. Ibid.

17. San Jose Evening News, January 6, 1893.

The Genesis of Antioch Baptist Church

A group of Christians came together to form a Baptist church in San Jose, California. A meeting of African American Christians came together in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hawkins located at 75 Vine Street for the purpose of forming a church. On August 2, 1893, the Antioch Baptist Church of San Jose, California was established with Reverend Cyclades C. Laws was introduced to the members of the church as the first pastor of the newly formed church (*Antioch Church, Historical Records, 2019*). [18]

According to the Antioch Church Minutes, the members of the church on August 2, 1893, were: Henry Hawkins, Ellen Hawkins, Carl Arther, Turner Berry, Ellen (Ella) Davis, Robert Evans, W. Johnson, John w. Jordan, Daniel Pinkey, Eva Pinkston, Simon Turner, L. Walker, W. M. Mast. Later on September 4, 1893, F. C. Copeland, Josephine Simms, Willie Reno, Annie Fallie, Hattie Johnson, George Johnson and Elizabeth Mast (*Antioch Church, Historical Records, 2019*). [19]

The concentration of African Americans would be in the mining-regions in Northern California where they were engaged in the mining related work. John W. Jordan came to California from Carlyle, Pennsylvania in the late 1800s with Rosalind his wife. They would initially live in San Francisco but due to their son's asthma they were forced to move from this cold climate and they chose San Jose. They took up residence on North 6th street until 1908 when he would purchase land and build a three-bedroom home on North 11th Street.

In 1893, John W. Jordan became one of the founding members of the Antioch Baptist Church. He would serve as a trustee and deacon of the church. His wife Rosalind would serve for many years as a Sunday school teacher. He and Rosalind would have eight children and he supported them by working as a waiter and then working for the Southern Pacific Railroad Company. During the day, Rosalind would work part-time at the depot and later as her family grew she would work as an alterations lady for a fine ladies clothing store in San Jose. One of those children, Bernice would marry and ultimately become the mother of Joyce Ellington.

Nineteenth-Century Change at the dawn of the Twentieth Century

In 1874, the California Supreme Court upheld the rights of African American children to attend public schools. For many of the leaders of African descent who struggled with untiring devotion, stands one who gave his life and his all in his dedication to bringing this court's decision into reality, and who met with an untimely fatal accident the next year, August 1875. It would be approximately twenty years (1846) from the annexation of California into the United States that the conflict of how to educate its citizens would remain without resolution. The works of Reverend J. B. Sanderson and his untiring devotion of founding and promoting schools for children of African descent in San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, and Stockton can be found in much of the California historical literature. There are other educational pioneers William Alexander Leidesdorff, a wealthy Black businessman in San Francisco, Red Bluff, California (1860). In San Jose (1862) under the direction of Reverend Peter Williams Cassey, a school was formally organized under the supervision of Trinity Church. The school was located on 4th at the corner of St. John Street which is the present location of Trinity Episcopal Church. The school was a combination day and boarding school which accommodated over two hundred students from California, Oregon and one from Panama of African descent.

Lucy Turner would come to San Jose with her mother, father, and sister during the late 1800s to live and work. She attended San Jose State Normal College and graduated in June, 1906. Her studies would be in the secondary area of teaching. She and her family were members of Antioch for many years serving in a variety of areas for the church. The Santa Clara County California 1890 Great Register indicates that John Jordan, #5490 and Henry Hawkins,

#4612 were residents of San Jose and members of Antioch Baptist Church. [20]

Each of these men and their families provided leadership for the African American community and their church.

Antioch has its early roots in the field of education. Lucy Turner Johnson, a member of our church would graduate from San Jose Normal college (today, known as San Jose State University) as a teacher in the spring graduating class of 1906. Our founders were building a legacy for children and youth of African descent living in the City of San Jose. [21]

Today, we are able to enjoy and participate in the vision that our church ancestors forged one hundred and twenty-five years ago. Our present-day nursery has its roots in the 1940s with church leader, Inez Jackson. The reorganized Children's Church in the 1980s along with the Board of Christian Education in the 1970s, are examples of the continuing focus on our children and youth. The church records inform us that in the 1970s there was a *Gils Girls* association which was a forerunner to our Youth Department of the 20th century.

The teaching ministry of our church school can be traced back to the turn of the century. Our Sunday School records indicate that teachers, students, children and youth were actively involved in the bible, their community and the work of the church. "Mr. Vance then led the school in prayer. The lesson taking up was *The Feeding of the Thousand*, Mark 6:30-44. An introduction read by the superintendent and a summary read by Hester Berry" (Sunday School Record Book, September 22, 1910".

"Sunday School was called to order at 12:45, by the superintendent. Hymn 169, Precious Name, then sung for the opening song. The superintendent then led the school in prayer after the school recited, Our Father. Hymn 165, Sunshine in my Soul, then sung. Since today, was review Sunday, the superintendent taught all classes combined. After an excellent quarterly review by the superintendent, school was called to order, Classes A, B, C, D were combined for 16-54 minutes". (Sunday School Record Book, October 6, 1912.

A history of a teaching church which dates back to the turn of the century is reflected in this the 21st century. A continued focus on education can be found in our present-day congregational life ministries.

Telling Our Story: Antioch Church a Legacy of Service as a Beacon Light in San Jose, California

Arnold 12

The Best is yet to Come: Celebrating One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years of Service

Introduction

The congregation at the Antioch Baptist Church made a decision to celebrate their founding over an entire year with different programs and events.



Public Programs at Antioch Baptist Church in Celebration of our establishment on August 2, 1893

March 1 – August 31, 2018

A Quasquicentennial Brick Paver Project

This program is an opportunity to remember your family, elders, community members and friends of Antioch. Make certain that you purchase an engraved paver in the amount of \$125.00 that will be added to our existing church grounds.

Arnold 13

April 29, 2018

1:30 PM

Soul Sanctuary I Film Showing

Join Dr. D. Michael Cheers, San Jose State University Professor, Journalist and Documentary Filmmaker as he shares a compelling documentary that examines the lives of African Americans in San Jose who found sanctuary for their souls at Antioch Baptist Church.

May 20, 2018

1:30 PM

African Americans in 19th Century San Jose

Enjoy an opportunity to learn from our two historical panelists as they share little known information about the church, community and local life in San Jose, California.

Dr. Forrest Williams, First AME Church, San Jose
Rev. Jerry Drino, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral

June 24, 2018

1:30 PM

Politics, Religion and 21st Century Realities

Antioch Church was founded in the 19th century and time has changed but what about the realities of life? Come and hear our panel of local and state politicians as they examine the changes in the times. Are there differences? If so, what are they?

July 28, 2018

11:00 AM – 3:00 PM

A Summer Block Party

In celebration of our *Quasquicentennial*, a summer block party in collaboration with the African American Services Agency founded in 1978 will rejoice together! We will close Julian Street to automobile traffic. Join us for activities at both the church and the agency that will include games, activities, food, and tours of Antioch church and the agency and fun!

August 3, 2018

12:00 noon

A Birthday Party for Antioch!

Sing happy birthday and enjoy cake and ice cream

Epilogue

*In deliverance from natural calamity and other heart-breaking misfortune,
it had much in common with its sister
AME Zion Church—Providence had smiled upon both (Arbuckle, 1983).*

Antioch Baptist Church was established on August 2, 1893 in San Jose, California. On October 22, 1996, the City of San Jose granted Historical Landmark Status (#96-105) to the church as the first African American church in an area that reflects 2% of the population being associated with the African diaspora. Today, in the 21st century, Antioch Church is diverse and located in Silicon Valley has a membership that reflects different languages and ethnic groups but central to the beliefs of being a Baptist.

According to Clyde Arbuckle (1986), he states that “Same as the prophet whose gospel they preach, San Jose’s black citizens of Baptist persuasion trace their local denomination to a humble beginning. Seven of them gathered in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hawkins on August 2, 1893, to organize the Antioch Baptist Church”. He also states that the first building was a city-fronted frame structure on the south side of Julian Street. A photograph taken in 1893 shows it with channel siding in front, board-and-batten on the sides, and a common gable roof whose shingles appeared somewhat sun-warped. It would accommodate no more than forty worshipers with any degree of comfort. Today, the building at 268 East Julian Street is located in the third edifice having survived a move due to the 1906 earthquake and the damage it caused and to the growth of the church membership over the past 125 years.

18. Antioch Church Records

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. San Jose Normal College, 1906.

Antioch Baptist Church has continued to serve as a beacon light to all that come to San Jose, California since 1893. It is a specific location that attracts all that come to visit or live in the city. It has the attraction to first be a place of worship, a location for navigation for others of different groups who are in need of food, social or economic information or resources. It has continued to serve as a location to attract positive attention and to signal that this is a location that will be a place of protection. It is a place to celebrate and mark special occasions whether they are weddings, funerals, births, family celebrations, birthdays or other religious significantly Holy days.

It is the place that has had several generations of members gather together since 1893 and holds a special honor in individual and collective families. This essay has focused on only two of our early founders, John Jordan, grandfather of Joyce Ellington and Lucy Turner. Joyce Ellington, member of the Antioch Historical and Archival Committee would be honored by the City of San Jose on June 8, 2002, for her work as a Northside community activist. She has served on the board of San Jose's oldest neighborhood group during the entire 36 year history. The first black chair of the city's library commission was the driving force behind obtaining a library for the Northside of San Jose in the 1970s. The Empire Library was officially renamed in honor of Joyce Ellington and African American woman who has provided leadership to the community.

There are numerous stories of families, friends and members of the Antioch Church. Now, in the 21st Century they still work to improve the lives of all who follow the beacon light called Antioch. Just as the biblical story that began this essay indicated the members of this Church continue to serve the poor, needy, provide food on a weekly basis, visit the sick and serve the San Jose community.

The interconnections of family, religion, faith, San Jose history and those members who have been trailblazers in the African American community continue from the eighteenth century to the 21st century today.

Bibliography

- Arbuckle, C. (1986). *Clyde Arbuckle's History of San Jose*, Memorabilia of San Jose: San Jose.
- Arnold, H. (1996). *Antioch: A Place of Christians Chronicles of an African American Church 1893 – 1993*. Western Book Journal Press: San Mateo.
- Beasley, Delilah L. *The Negro Trail Blazers of California, 1919*. Reprinted, San Francisco: R & E Research Associates, 1968.
- Hughes, Langston. *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.
- Ruffin, Herbert G. *Uninvited Neighbors: African Americans in Silicon Valley, 1769 –1990*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014.
- San Jose Pennant Yearbook, 1906*, San Jose Normal College, California: San Jose.
- Santa Clara County California, 1890 Great Register*, (1999). Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society: Santa Clara, California.
- Sunday School Record Books*, (1910 & 1912), Antioch Baptist Church Archives, 2019.
- Wheeler, B. Gordon. *Black California: The History of African Americans in the Golden State*. Hippocrene Books: New York: 1993.

List of Additional Sources

Antioch Baptist Church Historical Archives and Papers, 1893 - 2019

Demographics Statistics: Cities, <https://www.sccgov.org>

History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley, Garden City Women's Club (1978) San Jose.

Interviews with Joyce Ellington, Dave Ellington and Robert Ellington, 1993 – 2019.

Northside Newsletter (Fall, 2001), San Jose, California.

Pinkston, M. Samuel. *The Development and Expansion of the Black Church in American with Special Emphasis on Northern California*, Unpublished Dissertation.

Rout, Leslie B. *The African Experience in Spanish America: 1502 to the present day*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Smith, Edith, *Some Early African American Settlers in the Santa Clara Valley*, San Jose, California: Sourisseau Academy, 1994, 2.

Winther, Oscar Osburn, *The Story of San Jose, 1777-1869 California: First Pueblo, Part I*, California History Magazine, 14, San Francisco: California Historical Society, 1935, 3.