

Old Santa Cruz

● ● By Ernest Otto

(Editor's Note: The late Ernest Otto, famed and beloved waterfront correspondent for the Sentinel-News and writer of the "Old Santa Cruz" column, left a number of columns written before his recent death. They will be published weekly by the Sentinel-News.)

If all of the churches which were started in Santa Cruz had lived, this community today would be one of the most over-churched cities in America.

Even back as far as the 70s, Santa Cruz was well equipped with churches according to its population. The Catholic church was started here in 1790, the Methodist in 1848, the Congregational in 1851 and the Baptist and the Episcopal in the 60s.

Among the churches which eventually died natural deaths was the Unitarian, which had a building on Walnut avenue which later was sold to the First Presbyterian church. The Unitarians had several brilliant ministers. Among them was Dr. Ames, later the pastor of the Church of the Disciples in Boston, one of the noted New England churches. This writer, while in Boston, saw the church building then ministered over by the same pastor who preached here. It was more than 40 years between the ending of the Unitarian church and the organization of today's All Souls Unitarian church.

For a time a Spiritualist church worshiped in the Unitarian church.

After the Advent Christian church was organized in the late 70s, the membership divided on a doctrinal difference and the Advent Christian Chapel church was organized in addition to the first. The chapel group finally gave the chapel to the Salvation Army and returned to the other body.

A Universalist church was organized by Rev. Edfar Leavitt. Most of the time, the group met in the Odd Fellows' hall. The church was well organized with a Sunday school and Christian Endeavor society. The church owned a lot where the First Congregational parsonage now stands and planned at one time to build. A considerable number of the early Unitarians worshiped with the Spiritualists.

Some time after the First Baptist church moved from Locust street, a Second Baptist was organized. A lot out in a field near the present Gault school was presented to the church by the late Calvin Gault. But there were few people living in that area, and the church had to move its building to Pennsylvania avenue and subsequently rejoined the First church. The building was sold to the Seventh Day Adventists and is a part of their present structure.

The German Methodist church was a thriving group for years, meeting first in the Temperance hall and then the present Salvation Army building. Twice an attempt was made to organize a German Lutheran church before the Messiah Lutheran church was established.

At one time the negroes, never a large element in the city's population, organized an African Methodist Episcopal Zion church. They were on a circuit with traveling ministers. They collected money for a lot but never constructed a church building.

For a number of years, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints met in the Blum building.

The First Congregational church had a chapel on Grant avenue near Morrissey avenue. They had a Sunday school for years and for awhile regular church services were ministered to by Mrs. Douglas, an ordained Congregational minister. A branch church was not organized, however, and the chapel was only a mission.

The Congregationalists also conducted a Chinese mission successfully for about 30 years. The city's Chinese population totaled some 300 persons and about 40 Chinese connected with the mission became members of the church. The church also had a Japanese mission and organized the first Chinese and Japanese Christian Endeavor societies in the United States.

A man who called himself Swami Mazzazandi conducted a Buddhist church in the Farmers' Union hall. He was a cockney Englishman and would read the Gospel of Buddha from one side of the altar and the Epistle of Buddha from the other. He gained many followers.

In a building which was used by other churches, Hebrews of the community conducted their services Saturdays and holidays. It was 50 years between that time and the present synagogue.

The Plymouth Brethren were staunch Bible Christians, who met Sundays in members' houses to break bread and hear the message. There were two different branches here.

The Theosophists were strong here at one time, meeting in Delamater hall. The group of students, delving into the mysteries of what they called "the truth," brought such leaders as Mme. Blavatsky, Mme. Tingley and the Buddhist priest Daramapala to speak to them.

The Missionary Alliance, organized here many years, held no organized services, since the leaders' work mainly was of a missionary nature.

And for many years there was a strong interdenominational group known as the Holiness Band. Emphasizing the doctrine of entire sanctification, the group had members from all churches, who met Sunday afternoons in Temperance hall.