Elihu Anthony, First Lay-Preacher

While Adna Hecox was a non-appointed exhorter, Elihu Anthony was the first irregular preacher to arrive in the Valley about a year after Cpt. Aram encamped at Mission Santa Clara. Elihu and his brother's gospel labors gave the methodist people in the Valley a sure footing before General Conference formerly organized the state.

Elihu and his brother, Charles, grew up in Saratoga Co., New York. The Anthonys were generational Quakers, going back to England. While his father left the Society (for Universalist convictions), his mother stayed within with their Meeting[1]. Likely, family Quaker influence helped Elihu & Charles imbibe somewhat progressive instincts—not only for Temperance but Anti-Slavery, Indian Mission, & American Labor campaigns. The famous suffragette, Susan B. Anthony, in fact, was their cousin!

Quakerism likewise may have given Elihu a preference for *irregular* ministry. Elihu journeyed west without an appointment to help the Oregon Mission[2] before taking a wiser route to California, eventually staying there. Elihu left Indiana due to Bp. Waugh's apparent heavy-handedness. Evidently, Elihu held the personal call higher.

When first arriving in California, September 1847, Elihu stayed at Mission San Jose. By the end of the month, Elihu reached the Pueblo and was recognized a methodist preacher. He soon led meetings previously kept by the Campbells and quickly organizing methodists of the San Jose area into a class or experience meeting. The class meeting continued until Bp. Taylor's landing, c. 1850, making it the kernel of San Jose's 1st Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC)[3]. Overall, San Jose was the second class-meeting organized in California, following the one formed the same year by Rev. William Roberts in San Francisco[4].

Rev. Roberts was the first ordained MEC minister to visit California, coming by ship on his way to Oregon. While anchored, Roberts traveled to Sonoma & Monterey. When California was placed under the Oregon Conference in 1849 as a district, Roberts returned as superintendent, then making classes in Monterey & Coloma. In between these dates, Elihu visited the same locals, preaching to methodists whom Roberts temporarily organized. Soon, charmed by Monterey Bay, Elihu settled besides the Hecoxs, Reeds, & Bennetts in Santa Cruz. By Jan. 1848, California's third class-meeting was created there, eventually becoming a MEC.

As said elsewhere, Gold Discovery barely interrupted methodist religious activity. Elihu assisted Rev. Roberts throughout 1849, and in 1853 Elihu was finally made a reverend deacon for Watsonville. However, many important civil projects jockeyed his time. Elihu made his living from merchandise & smithery. In 1851 he built Santa Cruz's famous wharf, with assistance from Henry Cowell. Then, in 1856, he upgraded the existing horse trail from Santa Cruz to Campbell for wagon and coach passage. He also supplied the pipes for water, protecting the town from fires. In 1880 he served in California's Legislative Assembly.

Elihu's brother, Charles V Anthony, arrived in 1851 by way of Panama, joining the district MEC the next year. Two years later he became a preacher in the Valley circuit, and in 1860 he served as Pastor at our own Santa Clara MEC. Charles is best known for his history, *Fifty-Years of Methodism*, only matched by Bp. Taylor's memoirs.

Elihu's biography sheds further light on the importance of the beginnings of Santa Clara UMC. As a preacher, Elihu kept the methodist people of the Valley together, securing us dates for the earliest Protestant churches in Santa Cruz, San Jose, & even Coloma. We can now add Watsonville to the list! Second, we see the importance both Anthony & Roberts assigned to class meetings, even picking lay leaders, for the basis of preaching points and future churches in the district.

Elihu Anthony died in 1905 and was buried at Santa Cruz Memorial Park, IOOF section. Charles V. passed in 1908, but his grave is at Oakland's Mountain View Cemetery.

[1] Quakers who eagerly incorporated elements of Revivalism, e.g., hymn-signing, preaching, and social prayer, were known as Gurneyites.
[2] The Oregon Mission began in 1834 to minister to Flatheads. Elihu intended to temporarily stay in Calif.
[3] Anthony preached with Hecox & Rev. Lyman, a Congregationalist, alternating. Cpt. Aram was an early member of this class. Half its people were Presbyterians.
[4] This date is April 24, 1847. By then lay-exhorter, Adna Hecox, had already left the Valley for Soquel.