

Measurements and art language description

Artist: Owen Doremus (1819-1878), New Jersey United States installed 1863

Photographed by Jean Libby with an HTC 10 Android on September 11, 2016

Essay "The Smith Families Window: Abolition Congregation" by Jean Libby for The Dean and Rector, Officers, Wardens, and Members of the Vestry of Trinity Cathedral in San Jose

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The Smith Families Window: Abolition Congregation

The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world carries the triumphant banner into the sanctuary, bestowing mercy as the Communion liturgy resounds. (John 1:29) The Paschal Lamb of Passover tradition in Judaism commemorates the people's Exodus from slavery in the days of Moses. *Agnus Dei* is in the liturgy of Christianity since the time of Paul, placed between the Lord's Prayer and the Eucharist.

The Lamb alone portrayed Jesus in Early Christian art, which was changed by Constantine in 707 A.D. to be the human form Jesus on the sacrificial cross. But the Lamb imagery remains, the sun behind His head which is often interpreted as a halo. The bottom element depicts the golden candlestick representing seven churches of Biblical history.

Revelations 1:20

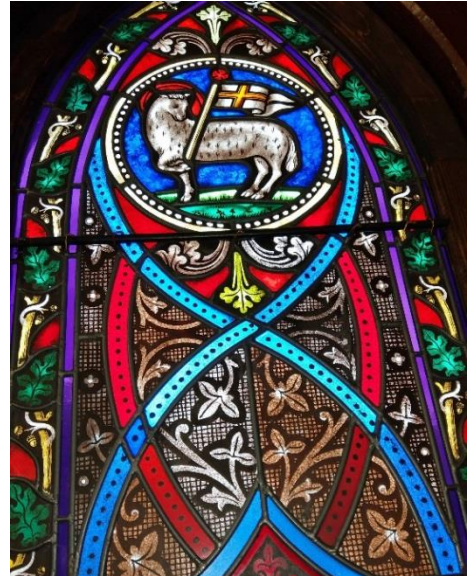


Photo by Michael Barry July 18, 2018

By 1863, the time of the installation of eighteen stained glass windows at Trinity Episcopal Parish in San Jose, Owen Doremus was a prolific manufacturer who employed an English architect and a French artist who lived at the New Jersey home studio. The fifteen extant Doremus windows at Trinity Cathedral were not known to art historians whose work was published in the 1990s (i.e., before Google searching).¹ The Smith Families memorial window is at the NE corner of the north transept, which was added when the church was cut in two and enlarged in 1876. Two Doremus windows are on that wall, which is dominated by later and larger more translucent windows whose creators are not remembered in the records.

Lest we forget, the American Civil War was raging in 1863. Although the Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln in January of that year, it applied only to those enslaved in the Confederate States of America, whose slaveholders had withdrawn from the United States (Union). Slavery continued to be legal in states which had not seceded. Lincoln's early Emancipation Plan for choice by slaveholders and slaves was languishing in Honduras, whose government was asked to colonize the freed people. That may seem very far away, but in 1861 reality (the time of the founding of Trinity Episcopal Parish) the plan was in the charge of Elisha O. Crosby of San Jose, California, a member of the first California Legislature. He was a friend of the Secretary of State William Seward, previously a United States senator from central New York—the homeland of Crosby, his niece Mary Helen who had married Major Samuel Hensley, and Rev. Sylvester S. Etheridge, the first minister at Trinity Episcopal Church in San Jose. The entire state militia joined the Union Army. Their general (who remained in California) was Charles E. Allen of Newburyport, Massachusetts, the home of William Lloyd Garrison. General Allen (as he was always thereafter called) was San Jose's postmaster and a founder of Trinity Episcopal Church, along with James R. Lowe, Sr. and his wife Mary from Newburyport. (See "The Lowe Family Window" in *The Carillon*, November 2017)

Reverend William Ingraham Kip was rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Albany, New York, for fifteen years when he was offered a transfer to Baltimore in 1853. He was adamant in refusal to go to Maryland, where slaveholders were in charge of the government and the churches except for the African Methodist Episcopal denomination. The Episcopal Bishop's Council created the position of Missionary Bishop to California for Rev. Kip, where he arrived in 1854.² By 1857 the missions and congregations were growing as fast as the rush for gold. William Ingraham Kip was ordained in the new office, Bishop of California.

One of Bishop Kip's priorities was establishment of missions among people of color in California. He welcomed Peter Williams Cassey, whose first and second grandfathers were ordained Episcopal ministers in New York in the early 1800s into Trinity Episcopal Parish. They soon established St. Philip's Mission for Colored in San Jose and St. Philip's Academy, a secondary school for students of color denied access to public schools in California by a racial segregation clause in the state constitution.³ The abolitionist editor of the *San Jose Mercury*, J. J. Owen of Syracuse, New York, was in public support of the school and of citizenship rights for African Americans.

Slavery occurred in San Jose in the 1850s, including outright buying and selling of people by the famous Reed and Murphy families. A case involving two children who had been brought in slavery to California and attempted to return was protested by abolitionists headed by J. W. Blossom in 1853. They were made wards of the court and the slaveholder their guardian by Judge J. W. Redman, who then placed them in the home of African Americans Hanson and Amanda Leper, adjacent to his own.⁴

The memorialized J[osephine] H. and M[ary] A. Smith are among six African American families in the Trinity Episcopal Church congregation formed in 1861 - 1864. In order to appreciate the significance of these six families we consider first the demographic data of the population of San Jose in 1860. There were fewer than twenty families, and less than 100 African Americans among the 3,000 souls specified by P. J. Tully in 1860.⁵

The six African American families among the First Communicants, Confirmations, and Baptisms were Peter and Annie Cassey; Alfred J. and Rebecca V. White; James M. and Martha Griffin Floyd; Reding and Nameohee Judah Speights; A. W. and Mary A. Smith including adult son William A. and Harriet E. Smith; Francis and Mrs. Massey, daughter Sarah Massey who would marry Jacob Overton in 1869, both becoming community builders into the 20th century.⁶

The nucleus of the African Americans was Peter Williams Cassey of Philadelphia, who emigrated to San Francisco about 1853. He assisted fugitives from slavery and organized black Californians for political action while operating a barber business with a partner. An active participant in the rescue of Archy Lee, who had been returned to slavery by order of the California Supreme Court in 1858, the Casseys (including his wife Annie B., their marriage date unknown) went to Portland, Oregon with other black activists. Their move to San Jose is documented by the first Baptism performed by the Rector of Trinity Episcopal Parish Rev. Sylvester Etheridge in 1861, the infant Amy Henrietta Cassey, "colored."

In 1866 Bishop Kip ordained Peter Williams Cassey into the Episcopal clergy as a deacon. His mentoring continued with support for the formal organization of the Phoenixian Institute in San Jose which was managed and funded by local African Americans. Publication in *The Elevator*, July 5 1867 provides the

correlation with Trinity records (which are not identified with race or color) and the Census of 1860.⁷ The 1870 reverse directory of San Jose lists the mission and school at 372-379 San Antonio Street, Peter Williams Cassey as “missionary” and Jacob Overton as “superintendent.” The structure was formerly the Bascom School for girls. The San Jose Unified School District contributed tax allocations for racially separate instruction.

William A. Smith, who with his wife Harriet (another Pennsylvanian) was a founding Trinity communicant. Their daughter was named Willette Cassey Smith. He was in business as a barber at the Auzerais Hotel with Alfred J. White, the brother-in-law of Peter Cassey. It is likely that William A. and Harriet E. Smith were the donors of the memorial to Josephine H. Smith and Mary Ann Smith. Church historian Joan C. De Lisle described Josephine as age 24, and wrote the memorial was from Josephine’s godmother.

In 1872 Christ Church Mission for Colored headed by P. W. Cassey opened in San Francisco, reporting to the Protestant Episcopal Board of Missions in New York.⁸ Bishop Kip invited Rev. Peter Williams Cassey to preach at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. Annie B. Cassey, who managed the school in San Jose and was chief instructor while her husband was occupied with Christ Church Mission in San Francisco, passed away on September 5, 1875. Peter, with their 14-year old daughter, her grandmother Henrietta Lockwood, and an adopted niece moved to Alameda. The Reverend Deacon Cassey was a founder for another African American Episcopal congregation, St. Augustine’s in Oakland.⁹

“He was an abolitionist!” exclaimed Jeanette Clay, front right, at a gathering to honor Rev. Peter Cassey at the gravesites of Annie B. Cassey and her mother Henrietta Lockwood at Oak Hill Memorial Park. From left: Dean and Rector David Bird; church historian Janice Paull; Roger Lobbes; Karen Kieffer Gillette; Otilia Ahad; Rev. Jerry Drino, historian and author of the Diocese of El Camino Real Resolution (2018) to declare a Feast Day “A Great Cloud of Witnesses” records of the Episcopal Church; Jeanette and Harold Clay.



Photo by Jean Libby, September 3, 2013

At the age of fifty, Peter Williams Cassey was called to serve the St. Cyprian’s Episcopal congregation at New Bern, North Carolina, that was in use as a school by the Freedmen’s Bureau. He was rector in charge there from 1881 to 1894, marrying much-younger teacher Ella Clark from the nearby normal school and raising their large family.¹⁰ At the age of seventy, in 1900, Rev. Peter Cassey was assigned as rector in charge of the new church built in New England style for St. Cyprian’s Episcopal congregation in St. Augustine, Florida. For the next seventeen years Rev. Deacon Peter Williams Cassey negotiated the shoals of segregation by public accommodation and diligent attention to occupational and professional advancement for his people.

References

- ¹ "Owen Doremus (1819-78) Another pre-opalescent American stained glass maker" by Linda Morey Papanicolau. *The Stained Glass Quarterly* v. 89, No. 3, Fall 1994:189-191,224-229. Stained Glass Association of America, Raytown, Missouri.
- ² "The Early Days of My Episcopate," by The Right Reverend Wm. Ingraham Kip, Bishop of California. 1892. Digitized copy readily available online.
- ³ "The Church, The Chinese, and The Negroes in California 1849-1893" by Lionel U. Ridout. *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (June 1959):115-138.
The history of St. Philip's Academy and Rev. Peter Williams Cassey begins on page 132. It is evident that the author's source was Trinity Episcopal Church historian Joan C. De Lisle.
- ⁴ "Slavery in San Jose" by Cora Baggerly Older, No. 155 "When San Jose Was Young" *The Evening News* 1917-04-14. Jan Batiste Adkins, *African Americans of San Jose and Santa Clara County*. Arcadia Publishing, 2019:15,
- ⁵ Schedule I. "Free Inhabitants in San Jose Township in the County of Santa Clara State of California enumerated by me on the 14th day of July, 1860." P. J. Tully, Ass't Marshal, Post Office San Jose:173.
- ⁶ "Weddings of Santa Clara County Pioneers at Trinity Cathedral, San Jose: Sarah Massey and Jacob Overton (1869)" by Jean Libby. http://www.alliesforfreedom.org/files/Weddings_of_SCC_County_pioneers_Massey-Overton_Sept_2018.pdf First published in *Santa Clara County Connections...a publication of the SCC Historical and Genealogical Society*, Vol. 52 No. 1, Spring 2015.
- ⁷ "Phoenixonian Institute Purpose ; Constitution ; Members" *The Elevator*, 5 July 1867 transcribed by Edward Hodges for the San Jose Unified School District
http://www.alliesforfreedom.org/files/Phoenixonian_Institute_purpose_constitution_members.pdf
- ⁸ Christ Church Mission continued association with Trinity Church in San Jose. In the 1890s the black congregation moved with its members into western San Francisco, becoming St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church. As Japanese immigration increased the Sei Ko Kai congregation organized at the original Christ Church Mission on Powell Street. Trinity Cathedral member Philip J. Hanasaki remembers his mother Betty (Masako Ota) Hanasaki playing the organ for the congregation in the 1950s. Today the Sei Ko Kai church has moved to the Alamo District and is ethnically diverse, always remembering the culture and history of the original Japanese Americans.
- ⁹ In 1910 St. Augustine's on 27th Street combined with Trinity Episcopal Church on 29th Street in Oakland, moving into the historic building and retaining the name St. Augustine. The present church is active in the United Black Episcopalians of Northern California.
- ¹⁰ Catherine W. Bishir, *Crafting Lives: African American Artisans in New Bern, North Carolina, 1770–1900*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.