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COVER IMAGE: *The Cherry Tree* quilt, Charlotte Jane Whitehill, 1936, 82 x 82 inches. Neusteter Textile Collection at the Denver Art Museum: Gift of Charlotte Jane Whitehill, 1955.77. *Photograph courtesy Denver Art Museum.*

THE HISTORY AND MEANING OF AN INSCRIBED QUILT FROM AN AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN

By Marsha MacDowell, Berkley Sorrells, and Marsha Music

In 2016, the Michigan State University Museum acquired a unique redwork quilt with twenty embroidered blocks containing the names of women, streets, numerical addresses, and telephone numbers. The addresses trace back to what were once vibrant, predominantly African American neighborhoods in Detroit that were decimated by urban renewal actions in the 1960s. A research team involving museum faculty and staff, community historians, and congregants of a church used object-based research, online digital sources, the collections of Michigan State University Museum, social media, and oral histories to uncover the history of the quilt, its makers, and the urban religious, cultural, and social communities in which the makers lived. This study revealed that the quilt was made by women closely connected to the Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ on Mack Avenue in Detroit, and the quilt is now valued as an important document of history.

IN 2016, AN INTRIGUING QUILT IN GOOD CONDITION CAME TO THE attention of the curatorial staff of Michigan State University (MSU) Museum (fig. 1). Offered for sale online by a quilt dealer in Oklahoma, the quilt featured twenty blocks with embroidered names—all but four prefaced by the word "Sister"—followed by street names and numerical addresses from Detroit, Michigan, and local telephone numbers (fig. 2, Appendix). The only information the seller could provide was that the quilt had come from an estate sale in Long Island, New York.[1]

FIGURE 1. Zion COGIC Quilt, 65 × 90 inches, Michigan Quilt Project, Michigan State University Museum; Michigan State University Museum Collection, object number 2016:50.1 (https://quiltindex.org/view/?type=fullrec&kid=12-8-6640). *Photograph by Pearl Yee Wong.*

FIGURE 2. Zion COGIC Quilt block detail, Michigan Quilt Project, Michigan State University Museum; Michigan State University Museum Collection, object number 2016:50.1. *Photograph by Berkley Sorrells.*

Curators thought the honorific "Sister" might indicate that the quilt was connected to a group of African American women and, using the Google Maps tool, made a quick check of several of the addresses. Their initial findings supported this supposition. The addresses were in

what had once been vibrant multicultural and predominantly African American neighborhoods, including neighborhoods known locally as "Black Bottom" and "Paradise Valley." These communities had been largely decimated in the 1960s by urban renewal programs.[2] In fact, the sampled addresses on Google Maps revealed images of empty, grassy lots with remnants of sidewalks, driveways, and alleyways (fig. 3). Using the Google Maps tool to scan in all directions, only a few extant buildings could be seen dotting the landscape where the houses once stood. The curatorial team was familiar with Michigan's African American quilt history because of projects by Michigan State University Museum and the Michigan Traditional Arts Program; they knew that there had not been much study of historical quilting in this particular part of Detroit. Because the Michigan State University Museum's collecting priorities included searching out quilts with at least basic provenances that included origins in Michigan and those made by African American quiltmakers, the museum decided to purchase the quilt for its collections. The quilt, now known as the Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ Quilt (Zion COGIC Quilt), was added to the museum collection, and digital images and basic information about the quilt were added to the Quilt Index.[3]

In late 2020, the Zion COGIC Quilt became a focus of in-depth research by MSU undergraduate student Berkley Sorrells and MSU Museum Curator of Folk Arts and Quilt Studies Marsha MacDowell.

FIGURE 3. The 3000 block of St. Aubin Street, Detroit, Michigan, 2022, from Google Street View.

For one year, Sorrells and MacDowell used a variety of COVID-compliant remote research strategies and resources to investigate basic questions about the women whose names were on the quilt and when and why was this quilt made. In 2021, they were joined in this quest by a Detroit community historian and activist named Marsha Battle Philpot (known professionally and hereafter here as Marsha Music) and her fellow members of Detroit's Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ (hereafter referred to as "Zion COGIC"). This paper describes the research journey, what was learned about the quilt and its makers, and, ultimately, why this kind of research investigation, especially with community engagement, is important for museum practice and for quilt studies.

THE QUILT

Measuring 80 by 65 inches, the quilt features twenty machine-pieced blocks rendered in the pattern most often referred to as Chimney Sweep in solid-blue and solid-white cotton fabric. Each of the blocks measures 15½ inches square. The blocks are placed in five rows of four blocks each, and there is no sashing between the blocks. A two-inch solid-blue cotton border is placed on either side of the set of blocks; there is no border on the top and bottom of the quilt.

Red-colored cotton embroidery floss was used on nineteen blocks for the inscriptions in the central white cross section of the pattern. Addresses are listed with variations of the following information: street name, house number, and the words "Detroit," "Michigan," or "Mich." Thirteen of the blocks also include a telephone number with both alpha exchange designations and the line numbers. One block carries only one woman's name and is the only one with an inscription rendered in cursive script and in blue-colored embroidery floss. Except for a few letters here and there, all text on the other blocks is in block letters, and several blocks appear to have similar handwriting and embroidery stitches. Blocks are set on point with some of them placed so that the writing is angled to the right; in other blocks, the writing slants to the left.

The batting is of thin to medium-thick cotton; the backing is solid-white cotton. The quilt is hand-quilted in four to five stitches per inch in the elbow and parallel line quilting designs with one-half to three-quarters of an inch between each line of quilting. White quilting thread was used throughout—except for a few lines of quilting with blue thread. The quilt is bound with a separate binding of white cotton measuring one-half to one inch wide. The quilt is in good physical condition with little indication of use.

RELEVANT LITERATURE ABOUT INSCRIBED QUILTS, AFRICAN AMERICAN QUILTING AND QUILT STUDIES IN MICHIGAN, AND DETROIT HISTORY

Based on a review of the existing literature on inscribed quilts, this quilt could have been made by a group of family or friends, conceivably associated with an organization that was situated geographically near the inscribed addresses. The quilt might have been made as a fundraiser, to honor an individual, or to mark a special occasion. Although there was no evidence to support it, the authors wondered if the one block that contained just one name and was rendered in a different color might indicate that the quilt was made for that person by the others.

Next, the authors reviewed literature on quilts made by African American makers in Michigan.[4] Extensive work has been done since the mid-1980s by Michigan State University Museum-based folklorists, textile historians, and quilt specialists working with African American individuals and organizations in Michigan communities of historically black settlements and predominately black populations. Information about scores of African American makers in Michigan and their quilts has been recorded on Michigan Quilt Project forms and added to the Quilt Index; artists and their work have been photographed; their stories have been audio-recorded in interviews; and major collections of quilts and quilt-related documents have been developed at the MSU Museum. A search of the Quilt Index and in museum records for each of the names inscribed in the Zion COGIC Quilt did not yield any matches.

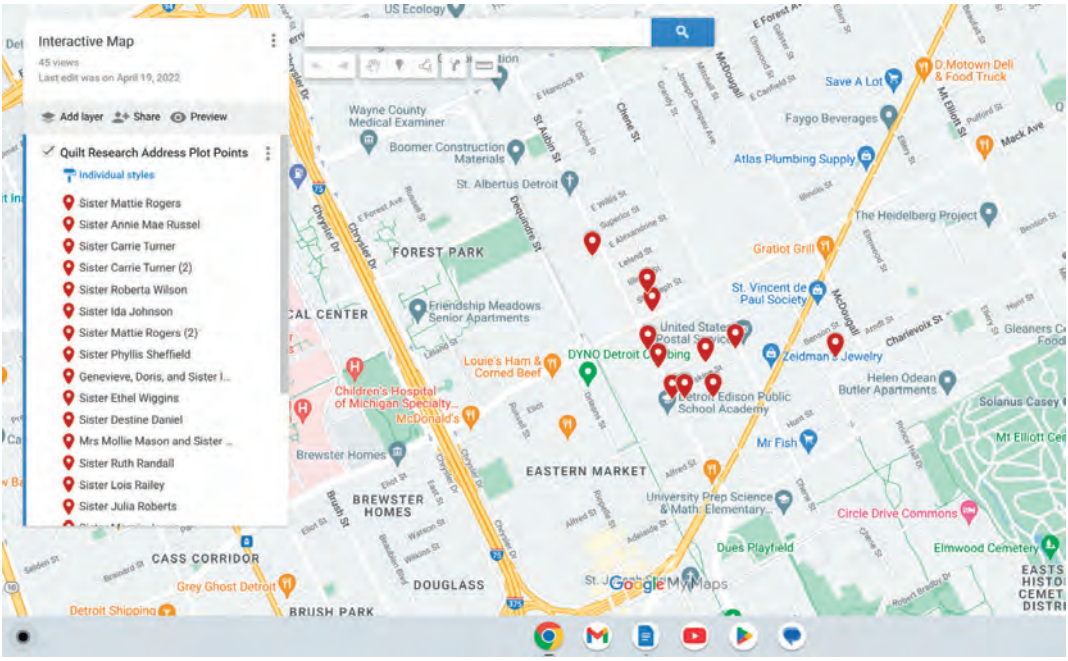

FIGURE 4. Google My Maps Plot created by Berkley Sorrells, January 2021. (Accessible via https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1RqMm2LJFlFjayFTldRd9Am5lWbwgf6qI.)

THE SEARCH OF ONLINE RESOURCES AND DIGITAL TOOLS

The Google interactive map feature called "My Maps" was enlisted to plot each of the addresses stitched on the quilt onto a modern map of Detroit (fig. 4). The Google algorithm recognized street addresses even if the physical house was no longer standing, which was the case with most of the addresses. The plotting of the addresses allowed for a more visual engagement with the physical neighborhood and community represented on the quilt. It aided in determining how close the residences were to one another and provided a more tangible extension of the community it embodied.

Because the quilt could have been made by a group of African American women possibly affiliated with a church, the map was consulted to determine if there had been a nearby church. The Zion COGIC building was still standing within walking distance of most of

FIGURE 5. Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ, 2022. *Photograph by Marsha MacDowell.*

the addresses on the quilt, and the church's 2135 Mack Avenue address was listed on one of the blocks (fig. 5). Google searches revealed the church maintained only a basic online presence. Because calls to the listed number went unanswered and because COVID protocols set by the university prohibited physical visits to the church, the authors turned their attention to research that could be done remotely.

The telephone numbers provided clues to when the quilt was made. The first phone line in Detroit was established in 1877.[5] It is not clear when phone numbers came into use, but the numbering systems changed as the number of telephone users increased and the communication technology and businesses matured. Up until the 1940s, Detroit assigned telephone numbers that were alphanumeric with a two-letter, five-digit system that identified the region in which the telephone exchange operations existed and where human telephone operators physically made the connections at switchboards.[6] For many people growing up in Detroit, the exchange name, sometimes shortened to the first two letters of the exchange name, defined their neighborhood location. Beginning in the early 1950s, the city began using a seven-digit dialing system with the first two numbers coinciding with the place on a rotary telephone dial where one would have found the first two letters of the exchange name. Individuals who had become accustomed to the

FIGURE 6. House at 2303 St. Aubin, Detroit, Michigan. A group of young people stand on the corner near the house, September 5, 1950. This photograph was taken about ten blocks from the homes of quilt signers like Sister Ruth Randall and Sister Carrie Turner, who lived on the 3000 block of St. Aubin. Accessed via https://digitalcollections.detroitpubliclibrary.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A139748. *Courtesy of Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Libraries.*

alphanumeric system often continued to write or say their phone listing that way, and, until the early 1970s, telephone directories still carried listings with the exchange initials followed by five digits.

On the Zion COGIC Quilt, some telephone listings were shown as only four digits, some with only five digits, one with full exchange name (Melrose) and four digits, two with a two-letter abbreviation of exchange name (MA for Madison, ME for Melrose) followed by four digits, and one with a two-letter abbreviation of an exchange name (TY for Tyler) followed by five digits. None of the listings was presented with seven, all-numerical digits. Thus, the quilt was likely made during the time of a transition of assignment and use of telephone listings around the late 1940s or early 1950s and before the 1960s era when many of the homes were razed. Also, the quilt likely predated 1972, when the all-numeric listings became the standard.

A variety of online tools and resources proved useful for locating information about the women whose names were listed on the quilt and might have been living in or before 1972. Both the street addresses and the names of women were input into each resource. Searches of US Censuses of 1930, 1940, and 1950 revealed data about some of the women, including their occupations, financial situation, racial or ethnic designation, and marital status. In addition, the census records listed the names and ages of other household members residing at each address. Ancestry Library Edition resources provided access to birth and death certificates that corroborated the ages or family members of some individuals on the quilt. Google searches of addresses revealed that some archives held a few historical photographs of the homes and businesses on the streets listed on the quilt, but no historical photographs of any of the exact residential addresses on the quilt were located (fig. 6).

The ProQuest online newspaper archives proved a crucial source of relevant information because it held digitized issues of the *Michigan Chronicle*, Detroit's predominant African American newspaper. First published in 1936, the *Michigan Chronicle* contained numerous articles that not only provided a sense of general community life in the Black Bottom neighborhood but also documented and promoted a variety of quilt-related activities, including afternoon quilting circles, fairs, contests, and fundraisers. For example, one article told of a quilt raffle and party held by the Sepia Club on September 29, 1939, in which the holder of the winning ticket won a quilt made by the club's members. The event included refreshments and live music, and named community members were seen "jittin' and jiving."[7] Importantly, some articles in the *Michigan Chronicle* linked some of the names on the quilt to the Zion COGIC.

Clearly, the quilt was made by women who had, in common, an affiliation with the Zion COGIC, but only a little was known about a few of the named individuals on the quilt and nothing was known about some of the people named. It also was not evident when or why the quilt was made.[8] The authors initiated a search for someone still living whose name was on the quilt or who closely knew someone listed on the quilt.

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN DISCOVERING QUILT HISTORY

In May of 2021, upon discovering a COGIC History Facebook page, the authors posted a photograph of the quilt, a list of the inscriptions on the quilt, and a call for help in uncovering the history of the quilt to the Facebook page.[9] The post proved to be a breakthrough moment in making a connection to those with living memories of the Zion COGIC and the women on the quilt. Within a couple of days, the post received dozens of responses from members of the Zion COGIC and people who recognized and were related to women on the quilt.[10] One respondent was Marsha Music, who is a community-based historian and a Zion COGIC member.[11] Deeming the quilt a very important piece of Detroit history, Music joined authors MacDowell and Sorrells in researching the quilt. Together, they contacted all those who had responded to the Facebook post and encouraged each respondent to become part of a collective research effort. Because the pandemic still prohibited travel to conduct on-site interviews, the team experimented with conducting a recorded interview over Zoom with some of the respondents but encountered difficulties with Internet access and auditory clarity. The group discussed holding a community event at which the quilt could be shown to members of the church and where stories about the quilt and its makers could be shared and recorded. Music shared this idea with current Zion COGIC pastor James Hall and first lady Brenda Hall, who gave their enthusiastic endorsement. The continuation of the pandemic through 2021 and the reticence of older congregants to travel during winter months meant that the event could not take place before late spring of 2022. Because the Zion COGIC was undergoing renovations, the event could not be held at the church, and Music worked closely with the Halls and MacDowell to find a Detroit venue that would be affordable, available, and easily accessible to congregants.

On April 30, 2022, the Zion COGIC Quilt Story Sharing Event was held at the MSU Detroit Center, a university-operated facility located only a few miles from Zion COGIC. Music and the Halls handled invitations to the one-day event, took special care to invite church historians, and encouraged all attendees to bring any documents they thought

FIGURE 7. Elder Bruce Clifton shares a photocopy of the historical photograph he brought to share, using a red pen to identify several quilt contributors in the photo, April 30, 2022. From left to right: Berkley Sorrells, Robbie Green, Elder Bruce, and First Lady Brenda Hall look on. *Photograph by Marsha MacDowell.*

might be connected to the quilt. MacDowell and Sorrells transported the quilt, on temporary loan from the MSU Museum, to the center and hung it where it could be safely and easily viewed. During a nearly four-hour period, the attendees were actively engaged in learning and sharing information about this quilt. They examined the quilt closely, often sharing anecdotes about the women listed on the quilt or memories triggered by looking at the quilt. They took photographs of the quilt and of themselves in front of it. During lunch (provided by the museum), they laughed, reminisced, shared more stories about the quilters and church-based quilting activities, and sang church hymns together. One church elder brought in a photocopy of a historical photo of the congregation that allowed for the identification of several quilt signers; another elder brought in a printout of his working document on the Zion COGIC history. With participants' permission, Sorrells and MacDowell were able to audio-record stories, photograph the event, and obtain copies of documents that the attendees brought (fig. 7).

FIGURE 8. Zion Congregational COGIC members pose with the photo poster of the quilt, April 30, 2022. From left to right: Robbie Green, Minister Bruce Clifton, Gwendy Darty, Reather M. Quinn, Elder Leon White, First Lady Brenda Hall, and Marsha Battle Philpot (Marsha Music). *Photograph by Marsha MacDowell.*

Because the church did not have the physical or security conditions required by the MSU Museum for venues that want to temporarily borrow and display museum-owned objects, the museum denied a request by the church to borrow the quilt. However, Sorrells and MacDowell presented the Halls with a large photographic poster reproduction of the quilt for future installation at the church (fig. 8).[12] Within a week, Music posted more than fifty photographs and a report about the event on Facebook, and within a month, the posting had been "liked" by 163 individuals, shared nine times, and had seventy comments, many including testimonies about the importance of the quilt and offering additional information about the makers of the quilt.[13]

FINDINGS: UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNITY WHERE THE QUILT WAS MADE

Detroit occupies the contemporary, traditional, and ancestral homelands of the three Anishinaabe nations of the Council of Three Fires:

FIGURE 9. Map of greater Detroit, Michigan, ca. 1920. *Courtesy of Burton Historical Society, Detroit, Michigan.*

the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi. Through the Treaty of Detroit, these three nations, along with the Wyandot, ceded land in 1807 that is now occupied by the city.[14] One area of Detroit became known as Black Bottom, so named because of the area's once rich, dark soil.[15] Attracted by the soil, early French settlers established what were called ribbon farms—narrow lots fronting the Detroit River but extending one and a half miles inland (fig. 9).[16] As settlement increased and the farmlands were replaced by streets and developments, the memory of those early French settlers was retained in the names of landmarks and streets, including the streets St. Aubin and Chene that run through the neighborhood where the women named on the quilt lived.

Mainly due to the growth of the automotive industry, by the early to mid-twentieth century, Detroit had developed into the fourth-largest city in the country.[17] This industry demanded a large workforce and

drew new immigrants, newly settled immigrants from other regions in the US, and notably a major migration of African Americans from the US southern states. While men found employment in factories, domestic labor outside the home was the most common profession for African American women in urban areas, north or south, in 1930.[18]

Zion COGIC was in one of many robust areas of greater Detroit that was settled primarily by this workforce, and the surrounding area supported hundreds of homes, schools, businesses, and civic, social, and religious organizations. In 1940, all the addresses listed on the quilt were locations of single-family homes. Many individuals or families, often unable to afford to purchase a home due to either finances or redlining, resided as lodgers within households owned by others.[19]

The neighborhoods surrounding Zion COGIC were greatly disrupted by Detroit urban renewal programs that began in the 1940s to address "decay" and to build urban highways. As many white families moved out of the city and into newly developing suburbs, the urban renewal efforts focused on areas in which lower-income, non-white residents were living in structurally impoverished and redlined neighborhoods like Black Bottom. As portions of their neighborhoods were abandoned and later razed, remaining community members were left bereft of many of their community spaces, connections, and relationships. Local employment was impacted, remaining housing values plummeted, and the area continued to struggle to retain viable housing stock. As one example of enduring impact, notice of foreclosure was reported in 2003 for the home of Adell Anderson, one of the individuals named on the quilt, for $523.69.[20]

FINDINGS: ZION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST

When MacDowell and Sorrells first recognized that the quilt might be linked to a church group and then specifically to the Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ, they sought out historical information about the Zion COGIC. Researching the church proved a challenge. Many churches built for European American congregants are of architectural significance and have well-documented histories.

Those structures serving African American congregants are often more modest, and many historical churches were destroyed in reconfigured and bulldozed neighborhoods; their histories are generally missing from the city's records. Fortunately, a nomination for Zion COGIC to be designated part of a Detroit historic district was available online and provided some background.[21] Later, Music was able to provide her own lived experience as a congregant of Zion COGIC and encouraged Zion COGIC elder and historian A. Leon White to share portions of his unpublished history of the church.

The Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ in Detroit is affiliated with the Church of God in Christ, "a Holiness-Pentecostal Christian denomination, and the largest Pentecostal denomination in the United States. Although an international and multi-ethnic religious organization, it has a predominantly African-American membership based within the United States."[22] The Zion COGIC in Detroit was founded in 1919 when southern preacher Elder I. W. Winans traveled to Detroit from Mississippi and opened a church at 1420 Clinton Street.[23] This first church was sometimes referred to as the "Clinton Street," a colloquialism common in Detroit circles, wherein churches were referred to by the street on which they were located.

According to White, "Elder Winans' fame for his strict preaching of both spiritual and practical matters increased his reputation for being extremely orthodox. He taught that one's spiritual life qualities could not exceed the integrity and diligence exemplified in the quest for everyday life. . . . [He also] was keenly aware that most of his congregation had migrated from the south for employment reasons . . . [and that he] was most conscious of the difficulties members of his congregation had to embrace because of racism."[24]

Under the stewardship and leadership of Winans, the Clinton Street congregation soon outgrew their initial building. Winans and his congregation determined to build a new church of their own, rather than "inherit" a church structure from Jewish or white religious groups who were moving, along with their congregants, to locations outside the downtown area. They attempted to find a location outside of Black Bottom geographical area but were limited by racial segregation and redlining to locate in a nearby neighborhood. Winans ended up buy-

ing two lots on Mack Avenue that were just outside Black Bottom but would continue to be convenient to those who lived in the area. A white contractor agreed to build a structure only if it was designed as a multiuse/industrial-type building—a hedge against what the contractor anticipated would be an inevitable inability of Zion COGIC to raise the necessary building funds or even to sustain a congregation. Winans took the deal, and the opening service at the new two-story church at 2135 Mack Avenue was held October 2, 1929.[25] According to White, "it had a seating capacity of approximately 1200 and [at the time] was the largest and first brick constructed Church of God in Christ building and the most modern in Michigan."[26] The large size of the church was expected to accommodate the annual state COGIC Convocation.[27]

In 1942, the church became an independent congregation, and the name of the church was changed to Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ, although it was still locally referred to as "Mack Avenue." As of 2022, the church continues to offer an array of worship and support services for the faithful congregation.[28]

Church historian White's research and writing provided a foundation of the church's historical beginnings, but the articles in the *Michigan Chronicle* proved particularly helpful in providing historical information about the activities of the church when the quilt was made. For instance, one article documented the Golden Age Club's turkey and lamb dinner held at the Zion COGIC. The church's pastor, Elder I. W. Winans, was in attendance. Three of the people named on the quilt—Phyllis Sheffield, Iverleaner Parker, and Ethel Wiggins—were also mentioned in the article. Sheffield was about seventy-seven years old when she attended the event, which was likely in celebration of the elders of the church community.[29]

An article from January 25, 1958, well after when the quilt would have been completed, reported that Adell Anderson and her husband, Reverend A. L. Anderson, attended the Ministers' Wives Circle banquet, an event in which wives of various ministers within Detroit COGIC congregations "entertained their husbands and friends."[30] Anderson likely no longer attended Zion COGIC at that time since her husband was then pastor at the Rose of Sharon COGIC on Chene Street.[31] One month after the banquet, in May of 1957, the Ministers'

Zion Congregational COGIC Opens Building Program

REVIEWING PROGRAM.—The Rev. Jesse T. Stacks Sr., (third from right) pastor of Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ, 2135 Mack, reads program with members of the deacons' board preceding the entrance into church for the opening of a building fund feature held Sunday. Also (from left) are Samuel Wiggins, William Howze, Gussie Tillman, Arthur L. Daniels and Thomas Vann Houston.

Elder Jesse T. Stacks Sr. Presides at Ceremonies

"For the People Had a Mind to Work" Is General Theme For $25,000 Project

Elder Jesse T. Stacks Sr., newly-elected pastor of Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ, 2138 Mack, led a mammoth program which officially opened a building fund drive in the church on Sunday.

The purpose of the program is to modernize the interior and exterior of the church building.

Preceding the Rev. Mr. Stacks was the late Elder I. W. Winans, who served as overseer and pastor. He was the founder of the church which is the oldest Church of God in Detroit.

The church is the headquarters for all of the Congregational Churches of God in Christ throughout the country, with churches in Detroit, Muskegon and Flint, Mich.; Pennsylvania, New York, Indiana and West Virginia. The newly-elected overseer is Elder *A. W. Porter of Pennsylvania.*

According to the Rev. Mr. Stacks, the remodeling program will cost over $25,000. It will include a new church front, nursery, modern ladies and men's lounge, modern dining hall and kitchen. The work is expected to be completed by August, 1968.

Members of the steering committee are Deacons Floyd Lemon, Eugene Sims, Arthur L. Daniel, Gussie Tillman, William Howze, Samuel Wiggins and Thomas Vann Houston, junior deacon.

Others are Elders Carvin Winan, son of the late overseer I. W. Winans; Cato Weatherspoon Jr., Dr. Samuel Skinner, James Stewart and ministers Rosco Evans and Joseph Anthony.

Irene Clifton is the church secretary; Iantha Pinkney is the corresponding secretary; Mrs. Denise Stacks, wife of the pastor, is the public relations secretary; Ethel Wiggins is church mother; and Iverlean Parker is the assistant church mother.

CONGRATULATING PASTOR — Samuel Skinner (third from left), congratulates the Rev. Jesse T. Stacks Sr. (left), pastor of Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ, 2135 Mack. Also from left, are Elder Cato Weatherspoon and Elder Carvin Winan.

AT CHURCH SERVICE — Among women, who played an important part in the opening of a building fund program at Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ, 2135 Mack, were (from left) Mrs. Ethel Williams, Mrs. Evelyn Winans and Mrs. Iantha Pinkney.

FIGURE 10. "Zion Congregational COGIC Opens Building Program: Elder Jesse T. Stacks Sr. Presides at Ceremonies: 'For the People Had a Mind to Work' Is General Theme for $25,000 Project," *Michigan Chronicle*, November 4, 1967.

Wives Circle was photographed for the *Michigan Chronicle* with baskets full of goods they assembled to donate to the local children's hospital.

As a community leader in her own right and also the mother of nine children, Anderson was celebrated by the young women of the COGIC community as a pillar of the church and role model for the next generation of women in the congregation.[32] In May of 1959, she received a special citation at the first annual reception of the Teenage Club of the COGIC chapter of Northeastern Michigan.[33]

In a later *Michigan Chronicle* article, three women named on the quilt were singled out for leadership roles at Zion COGIC. Ethel Wiggins, whose funeral was announced in the *Michigan Chronicle*, was church mother. Iverleaner Parker was the assistant church mother.

Iantha Pinkney was the church secretary. The women were praised for the "important part" they played in the opening of the Zion COGIC's building fund program (fig. 10).[34]

Many congregants at the Quilt Story Sharing Day shared memories about growing up in Zion COGIC around church elders, including some of the women named on the quilt. For example, Church Mother Brenda Hall distinctly remembered watching Iantha Pinkney pray with the congregation. "Everybody would be on their knees praying and she would be too," she remembered, but Pinkney always prayed with her eyes open and watched over the others while they prayed. "The Bible says watch as well as pray, which fit her, because she would always sit up, whenever you came in upstairs."[35]

FINDINGS: MORE ABOUT THE WOMEN WHO MADE THE QUILT

The 1930, 1940, and 1950 Censuses confirmed that the women named on the quilt, except for Genevieve and Doris Parker, were of similar ages, background, and physical circumstances around the time the quilt was created. In 1940, Phyllis Sheffield, born in Tennessee about 1882, lived at 2145 St. Joseph Street, the same address recorded on the quilt. A widow, she lived with her forty-one-year-old daughter, Ethel Sanders, who was denoted as married, even though her husband was not listed as an inhabitant in the home with them.[36] In the 1930 Census, Sheffield's address was listed as nearby 8842 Canfield Avenue along with her husband, Clay, who was born in Mississippi about 1863, before the end of slavery in the American South.[37] Sheffield was employed as an in-home worker for a private family, whose ethnic or racial identity is not indicated but was most likely white. In 1940, she was listed as a seamstress, indicating she was working on sewing projects for income and had skills to possibly participate in the making of the Zion COGIC quilt.

In 1940, Roberta Wilson was a resident at 1988 East Alexandrine Street, her address listed on the quilt. Born in Mississippi about 1896, she worked as a domestic worker in a private home. Her husband, Thomas Wilson, was born in Louisiana about 1895 and worked as a construction laborer.[38] Geneva and Samuel Parker lived at 2212 Pierce

Street in 1940 with their four children, including Genevieve and Doris Parker, aged three and one year old, respectively. The children's names are listed with that address on the quilt. Samuel worked as a construction laborer. Geneva, born in Georgia, took care of the children.[39] Ruth Randall was listed in 1950 living at the address documented on the quilt with her seventy-five-year-old grandfather and two siblings. The census indicated that she was only twenty years old and "separated" from her husband, and her occupation was listed as "keeping house."[40]

The story of Church Mother Ethel Wiggins exemplifies the common path of northern migration for African American families. Wiggins, a native of Moscow, Tennessee, married John Henry Davis in 1902, and they had thirteen children together. Wiggins first moved to Detroit in 1926 and then relocated to Youngstown, Ohio, with her family. By 1950, she was back in Detroit living as a seventy-year-old widow with multiple tenants at the address stitched on the quilt.[41] When Wiggins passed away around the age of ninety-eight, Reverend Jesse Stacks presided over her funeral at Zion COGIC. She had forty-two grandchildren, seventy-seven great-grandchildren, and three great-great-grandchildren.[42]

It was only at the Quilt Story Sharing Day that firsthand stories connecting the women directly to quiltmaking and to quilting activities associated with the Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ emerged. Several attendees knew that their friends or relatives listed on the quilt were affiliated with the church's sewing circle. Minister Bruce Clifton remembered displayed quilts being for sale to raise funds at the church's annual Convocation, which brought in members of various COGIC houses of worship.[43] Gwendy Darty, who grew up in the church, shared this story.

> My mother's name was Adell Anderson, and when I was a child, maybe four or five years old, I remember my mother being a member of the sewing circle at Mack Ave. Congregational Church of God in Christ, and she was a very faithful member, very crafty. And at times the sewing circle would meet at different . . . homes where different members would have patches of the quilts that they would make and then come together, somehow, and put the quilt together to be

> displayed at the annual Convocation, which is a time of gathering of the saints at a particular time of the year. And it was also a time of fellowship where the various quilts were placed on display for viewing and for purchase. I don't have a memory [of quilts] past that time, but I knew my mother was a very crafty person. Not only did she make quilts, but, as she was a seamstress, she also made our girls'—when we were younger—clothing. But the most profound memory I have of my mother was that she was a faithful member of that particular sewing circle.[44]

The attendees at the Quilt Story Sharing Day discussed the potential dates that the quilt could have been made. By comparing what they knew of the ages and, in some cases, death dates of the women whose names were on the quilt, they determined it was probably made in the early 1950s—likely in 1953, a date they recalled when one of the Convocations took place at the church.[45] This would have corresponded with the estimate provided by the dates of the telephone exchange history and the fact that Doris and Genevieve Parker, whose names were on the quilt without the honorific "Sister," would have been too young to have been accorded the more adult "Sister" title.

As the Sharing Day, the physical presence of the quilt, and the names listed on it prompted spiritual reflections from some of the attendees, First Lady Hall shared a prayer she remembered from founding pastor Bishop I. W. Winans that resonated with her while she looked at the quilt. "His prayer was 'Now Lord, these are your people, all by your name.'" She continued, "I'm excited. I feel it in my spirit . . . that's why I think God is in this and it's just turning in the wheel of time, and [the names on the quilt] are coming back into history."[46]

Many of the women whose names were on the quilt had lasting impacts on the lives of those in the church who attended the event. Robbie Green shared that Iverleaner Parker (named on the quilt) "saved her life" one day in the church.

> My mom was an usher. And she would never let children just go all over the place. She was so strict about that. We had a good foundation. But one time, my mom found me downstairs in the little church, and she was going to whoop me because I shouldn't have

been down there. But Sister Parker hollered from the kitchen, 'Don't whoop her, bring her in here . . . send her in here to me.' And from that, working in the kitchen with the saints, I went to culinary arts school and became a chef.[47]

SUMMARY

Why has researching this quilt been important? The Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ Quilt research project, centered on one inscribed quilt, has yielded information about a group of African American women whose life stories have not otherwise been very visible in historical records. *Although all the signers are no longer living and the homes at the addresses listed on the quilt no longer exist, the quilt exists.* In this instance, the quilt is the primary record that documents the connection of women who were part of the history of a unique area of Detroit and of a church that has long anchored that community. The names on the quilt are now more than just embroidered script on a textile; they are conduits to the histories of specific individuals who participated in the church and lived in or nearby Detroit's Black Bottom neighborhood. Through the quilt, the stories of the women and their church community are being documented and remembered. As Robbie Green expressed, "Growing up [in Zion COGIC], with a lot of these saints, I was a little child, and they were old. . . . You keep [these women] in your memory by talking about them over and over again."[48]

While it still is not known exactly when or why this quilt was made, we know that, with the information derived from archives, oral history, and social media research activities, the quilt was one of many made by these and likely other women affiliated with the church to help sustain and broaden the reach of the church. The quilt stands as a tangible reminder and enduring proof of a close-knit community that provided and cared for others in the name of faith and goodwill, which is continued and maintained by members of the church today.

The Zion COGIC Quilt research project has also been important in a variety of ways to the museum's collections-based activities. It has enabled student engagement in a mentored, object-based research learning experience. It has resulted in more data to add to the museum's collection

catalog records, making the object even more valuable for use in teaching, future research inquiries, and education. In 2022, MacDowell and Sorrells curated a small exhibition about the quilt and the research project at the MSU Museum and held associated public engagement activities (fig. 11).[49] Importantly, the quilt stimulated community engagement in research based on an object in the museum collection, connecting that object to the community from which it emanated, and establishing what is hoped will be an ongoing sense of connection between the museum and this Detroit urban community. Already the Halls are planning to hold a special event to install the poster of the quilt in the church when church renovations are completed, and members of the Zion COGIC Quilt research project team, along with other members of the community, will be invited. Jena Baker-Calloway, the director of the MSU Detroit Center, was present at the Quilt Story Sharing Day and has volunteered to host additional Quilt Story Sharing Days. On these days, other quilts from the MSU Museum will be shown and community members can bring in their quilts to be documented in the Michigan Quilt Project. Baker-Calloway has also requested that another copy of the poster version of the Zion COGIC Quilt be installed at the MSU Detroit Center and would like a temporary installation of poster versions of other quilts in the MSU Museum collection.

As for the importance of this project to the community, one has only to peruse the comments that were posted on the Facebook page report of the Quilt Story Sharing Day. A few examples follow.

> Wowwwww . . . such history . . . can u imagine what love n thoughts were in these Ancestors hearts and minds while performing this labor of love.
>
> What lovely memories. . . . such a great opportunity to honor the ancestors.
>
> Wow this is dope!
>
> Thank you for sharing a wonderful account of our history. The importance is immeasurable. The beauty of the quilt speaks.
>
> This is so precious. My grandmother Mother Ethel Wiggins was on the quilt and so many former beloved saints of Zion.

FIGURE 11. A family explores the exhibition *Discovering African American Detroit Community Histories through One Signature Quilt* at the MSU Museum, January 3, 2023. *Photograph by Marsha MacDowell.*

> This was a blessed event. You could just feel the love and the presence of the Lord. Thank you again to all who participated.
>
> Oh, my goodness! What a beautiful work and honoring of these women!
>
> What phenomenal provenance. Just think . . . Little did Carrie Turner ever fathom that in 2023 her name and their historic work of heritage art . . . would be so properly and justly honored and to be seen by thousands across the country, the world on . . . [electronic] devices. Magnificent.[50]

APPENDIX: INSCRIPTIONS ON THE ZION COGIC QUILT

Sister Roberta Wilson 1988 E. Alexandrine Detroit, Michigan Te. 13457	Sister Ethel Wiggins 9134 Delmar Street Detroit Michigan	Sister Adell Anderson 3429 Chene Street Detroit Phone Melrose 9835	Sister Irene Grean 4108 Horatio St. Detroit TY 4-0078
Iantha Pinkney	Genevieve Parker 2212 Pierce Street ME 2711 Detroit Michigan	Sister Ruth Randall 3118 St. Aubin Detroit, Michigan	Sister Margie Jones 2180 Waston Detroit Mich Te 12988
Sister Carrie Turner 3537 St. Aubin Street JE.20985 2135 Mack Ave. Detroit Mich.	Sister Phyllis Sheffield 2145 St. Joseph Street Detroit Michigan	Mrs. Mollie Mason 3429 Chene Street Detroit Michigan.	Sister Julia Roberts 13593 Lumpkin Street Detroit Michigan TO 7-4684
Sister Annie Mae Russell 3133 St. Aubin Detroit, Michigan Te-23312	Sister Mattie Rogers 3118 St. Aubin Detroit Mich Phone TE.30199	Sister Destine Daniel 8029 Russel Street Detroit Mich MA 7612	Sister Iverleaner Parker 2212 Pierce Street ME.2711 Detroit Michigan
Sister Mattie Rogers 3459 St. Aubin Detroit, Michigan	Sister Ida Johnson 1789 Canton St. Detroit, Michigan	Doris Parker 2212 Pierce S ME2711 Detroit Michigan	Sister Lois Railey 2928 Arndt St Detroit Michigan.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1]Sales receipt, acquisition document file, MSU Museum.

[2]The actual boundary of what was considered Black Bottom was technically a mile south at Gratiot Street, but the addresses on the quilt were within what was culturally considered an African American enclave.

[3]The Quilt Index, https://quiltindex.org//view/?type=fullrec&kid=12-8-6640, accessed December 4, 2022.

[4]See Marsha MacDowell, ed., *African American Quiltmaking in Michigan* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press with Michigan State University Museum, 1998).

[5]"Michigan Bell Telephone Co. History," FundingUniverse, http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/michigan-bell-telephone-co-history/, accessed December 5, 2022.

[6]From direct experience of two of the authors. Also see "A Little History & Fun Facts about Phone Numbers," TalkRoute, https://talkroute.com/a-little-history-fun-facts-about-phone-numbers/, accessed December 5, 2022; and "Telephone Exchange Names," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telephone_exchange_names, accessed December 5, 2022.

[7]"Sepia Club in 'Quilt Raffle' and Party," *Michigan Chronicle*, October 7, 1939.

[8]In spring of 2021, Sorrells reported on the initial findings in "Stitched Together: Documenting the Vibrancy of Black Bottom Detroit through Redwork Quilting," at the MSU undergraduate research symposium; see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ssOd4wSkWI&ab_channel=[secondary author][secondary author].

[9]Marsha MacDowell, "The COGIC History Page," Facebook, May 19, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/groups/COGICHistoryPage/permalink/968817003659758.

[10]Ibid. Note: the comments have since been removed by Facebook, but fortunately we took screenshots of the names and comments before they were removed.

[11]Marsha Music, "Hidden in Plain Sight—The Invisibility of the Mies van der Rohe Community—Lafayette Park, Detroit," *Marsha Music—The Detroitist Blog*, https://marshamusic.wordpress.com/hidden-in-plain-sight-the-invisibility-of-the-mies-van-der-rohe-community-lafayette-park/, accessed December 4, 2022. Her late father, Joe Von Battle, owned an important music store on nearby Hastings Street and had recorded the gospel, sermons, and jazz of, among others, the Reverend C. L. Franklin, father of Aretha Franklin.

[12]Lynne Swanson, MSU Museum Cultural Collections manager, provided the photography and coordinated the production of the poster.

[13]Marsha MacDowell, "Zion/MSU Quilt Project," Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?vanity=marsha.philpot&set=a.10221129760935144, accessed May 24, 2022.

[14]Jade Ryerson, "Native American History in Detroit," National Park Service, https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/native-american-history-in-detroit.htm#:~:text=Detroit%20occupies%20the%20contemporary%20and,by%20the%20city%20in%201807, accessed December 5, 2022.

[15]Ken Coleman, "The People and Places of Black Bottom, Detroit: Remembering a Neighborhood in Michigan," *Humanities* 42, no. 4 (Fall 2021), https://www.neh.gov/article/people-and-places-black-bottom-detroit, accessed December 5, 2022.

[16]Paul Sewick, "Detroit's Ribbon Farms: Shaping the Future Metropolis," *Detroit Urbanism Blog*, February 15, 2016, http://detroiturbanism.blogspot.com/2016/02/detroits-ribbon-farms-shaping-future.html, accessed December 5, 2022.

[17]Katharine Q. Seelye, "Detroit Census Confirms a Desertion Like No Other," *New York Times*, March 22, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/23/us/23detroit.html?_r=0, accessed December 5, 2022.

[18]Robert L. Boyd, "Race, Self-Employment, and Labor Absorption: Black and White Women in Domestic Service in the Urban South during the Great Depression," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 71, no. 3 (2012): 639–61.

[19]"Redlining" refers to the practice of physically zoning those who live in lower economic neighborhoods and hence were deemed a financial risk. Families who lived in "redlined" neighborhoods were less likely to receive mortgage or business loans or insurance. This practice by lenders and insurance agencies was based on racism and perpetuated structural inequality and a lack of intergenerational wealth for many.

[20]Classified Ad 3, no title, *Michigan Chronicle (1939–2010)*, March 12, 2003.

[21]Historic Designation Advisory Board, City of Detroit City Council, *Proposed Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ Historic District Final Report*, June 23, 2009, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2018-08/Zion%20Congregational%20Church%20of%20God%20in%20Christ%20HD%20Final%20Report.pdf, accessed December 5, 2022.

[22]"Church of God in Christ," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_God_in_Christ, accessed December 5, 2022. See also Ithiel C. Clemmons, *Bishop C. H. Mason and the Roots of the Church of God in Christ* (Lanham, MD: Pneuma Life Publishing, 1996); C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press, 1990); and Anthea Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

[23]This street was closed in the 1960s when Lafayette Park, an urban renewal district, was built, largely to the detriment of the historic Black Bottom neighborhood. The Lafayette Park complex contains the largest collection of residential buildings designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and was designated a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service in 2015.

[24]A. Leon White, untitled and undated typescript manuscript, MSU Museum, Michigan Traditional Arts Research Collections, p. 3.

[25]White, 5.

[26]Ibid.

[27]*Proposed Zion Final Report*, 5.

[28]Note: the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Elder I. W. Winans were world-renowned gospel performers and, for a number of years, would gather on important holidays

for gospel concerts at the church. "The Winans," Encyclopedia.com, https://www.encyclopedia.com/education/news-wires-white-papers-and-books/winans, accessed December 5, 2022. David Glenn Winans Sr. and his wife, Delores, performed with their ten children: Benjamin ("Bebe"), Priscilla ("CeCe"), Deborah, Angelique, Daniel, David, Michael, Ronald, and fraternal twins Carvin and Marvin. Marsha Music's maternal grandmother, Virgie Baker, was the Sunday school teacher of the Winans' children and godmother to CeCe Winans.

[29]"Golden Age Club Has Dinner," *Michigan Chronicle (1939–2010)*, March 28, 1959.

[30]"Ministers' Wives Circle Aids Children," *Michigan Chronicle (1939–2010)*, May 25, 1957.

[31]"Anderson Rites Saturday," *Michigan Chronicle (1939–2010)*, April 27, 1968.

[32]1950 US Census, Wayne County, Michigan, population schedule, Detroit, enumeration district 85-678, sheet no. 12, lines 19–29, household 3429, Adell and Arthur Anderson. Online source accessed via Ancestry Library Edition, accessed December 20, 2022.

[33]"Teen-Age Club Honors Mothers," *Michigan Chronicle (1939–2010)*, May 30, 1959.

[34]"Zion Congregational COGIC Opens Building Program: Elder Jesse T. Stacks Sr. Presides at Ceremonies 'for the People Had a Mind to Work' Is General Theme for $25,000 Project," *Michigan Chronicle (1939–2010)*, November 4, 1967.

[35]Brenda Hall, interviewed by Marsha MacDowell and Berkley Sorrell, April 30, 2022, Detroit, Michigan, Michigan Quilt Project Files, MSU Museum.

[36]1940 US Census, Wayne County, Michigan, population schedule, Detroit, enumeration district 84-419, sheet no. 10B, lines 66–67, household 2145, Phyllis and Cube Sheffield. Online source accessed via Ancestry Library Edition.

[37]1930 US Census, Wayne County, Michigan, population schedule, Detroit, enumeration district 82-674, sheet no. 9A, lines 21–22, household 8842, Phyllis and Cube Sheffield. Online source accessed via Ancestry Library Edition.

[38]1940 US Census, Wayne County, Michigan, population schedule, Detroit, sheet no. 5B, lines 67-68, household 1988, Thomas and Roberta Wilson. Online source accessed via Ancestry Library Edition.

[39]1940 US Census, Wayne County, Michigan, population schedule, Detroit, enumeration district 84-416, sheet no. 6b, lines 57–62, household 2212, Geneva and Samuel Parker. Online source accessed via Ancestry Library Edition.

[40]1950 US Census, Wayne County, Michigan, population schedule, Detroit, enumeration district 85-766, sheet no. 2, lines 19–22, household 3118, Ruth Randall. Online source accessed via Ancestry Library Edition.

[41]1950 US Census, Wayne County, Michigan, population schedule, Detroit, sheet no. 1, enumeration district 85-364, lines 24–27, household 9134, Ethel Wiggins. Online source accessed via Ancestry Library Edition.

[42]"Mrs. Wiggins Funeral Held," *Michigan Chronicle (1939–2010)*, September 28, 1968.

[43]Bruce Clifton, interviewed by Berkley Sorrells and Marsha MacDowell, Detroit, Michigan, April 30, 2022, Michigan Quilt Project Files, MSU Museum.

[44]Gwendy Darty, interviewed by Berkley Sorrells and Marsha MacDowell, Detroit, Michigan, April 30, 2022, Michigan Quilt Project Files, MSU Museum. Darty grew up in the Zion COGIC and is the daughter of Adell Anderson, whose name is on the quilt.

[45]Multiple individuals, interviewed by Berkley Sorrells and Marsha MacDowell, Detroit, Michigan, April 30, 2022, Michigan Quilt Project Files, MSU Museum.

[46]Brenda Hall, interviewed by Berkley Sorrells and Marsha MacDowell, Detroit, Michigan, April 30, 2022, Michigan Quilt Project Files, MSU Museum.

[47]Robbie Green, interviewed by Berkley Sorrells and Marsha MacDowell, Detroit, Michigan, April 30, 2022, Michigan Quilt Project Files, MSU Museum.

[48]Ibid.

[49]*Discovering African American Detroit Community Histories through One Signature Quilt*, exhibition at MSU Museum, East Lansing, Michigan, May 2022–January 2023. The exhibit was promoted as "Voices from Black Bottom, Detroit Community History."

[50]From comments in response to posting by Marsha Music of report and photographs of Quilt Story Sharing Event, "Zion/MSU Quilt Project," Facebook.

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