

LDS CHURCH IN THE LEEWARD ISLANDS OF FRENCH POLYNESIA

Compiled by Gerald Faerber
May 2014 Revised June 2020

Missionaries arrived in French Polynesia in 1844. French Polynesia consists of islands in five archipelagos: The Windwards, Leewards, Tuamotus, Australes and the Gambiers. The Leeward Islands (commonly called Raromatai or Iles Sous-Le-Vent (ISLV)) consist of Raiatea, Tahaa, Huahine, Bora Bora, Maupiti and Tupai north west of Tahiti.



Map of the Leeward Islands (Iles Sous-Le-Vent)

Noah Rogers went to Huahine in October 17, 1844. He did not have any success and returned to Tahiti in January 1845. When missionaries returned to French Polynesia in 1892 they focused their efforts in Tubuai, Tahiti and the Tuamotus. The Leeward Islands came under French control in 1897. Mission President Daniel T. Miller planned to open the work in Raiatea on August 27, 1897. On September 13, 1897 Elders Israel E. Wiley and Edgar L. Cropper left for Raiatea. On November 22, 1897 a family of five was baptized on Raiatea. By December 14, 1897 there were 5 Elders in the Leewards. Missionaries were soon sent to Raiatea and Huahine. By August 1898 there were 22 baptisms in the Leewards. In 1900 there were two missionaries on Raiatea and two on Bora Bora. On April 18, 1900 there is a mission journal entry that Bora Bora was not receptive. In August 1900 Mission president Joseph Y. Haight visited Huahine and Raiatea. At the end of 1900 there were missionaries in Raiatea, Huahine and Bora Bora. "On 20 November 1903, President Hall received a letter from the First Presidency saying that "all parts of the mission where elders had been for a year or more without making converts should be closed." So missionaries were removed from the Leewards as well as the Marquesas, Gambiers and Cook islands (p49 SFC). Elder Franklin J. Fullmer's missionary journal indicates he served in Bora Bora from December 1905 to March 1906 and from October 1906 to May 1907.

In April 1918 President Ernest Rossiter visited Raiatea. During the period from 1920 to 1940

little missionary work was done. Elders occasionally tracted round these islands and sold subscriptions to the mission newspaper Te Heheuraa Api (The New Revelation) but they rarely attempted to do any long range missionary work. President Leonidas Kennard sent Elders Benson and Nelson to the Leewards on October 1, 1920 to attempt to start proselyting there. It had been many years since missionaries served there. During the latter part of his first mission in Tahiti (1896-99), Leonidas Kennard had served in the Leewards and he was very desirous that the work be re-opened there if possible. In 1928 Elder Mangum went to the Leewards.

In 1939 President Kenneth Stevens sent missionaries to the Leewards. Interesting details are drawn from Rutena Allred's journal:

"Tahaa and Raiatea, "Leewards" Having journeyed back to Tahiti for Elder's Conference and Xmas, my next assignment (Feb 1939) was with Elder Uel C. Hunting (Uela) to "open" the Leeward Islands. We might say "Pioneers" as far as recent Missionaries to the Leewards are concerned. The first Elders in 20 years.

We landed in Raiatea but started our work in Tahaa. We found Protestantism established very firmly but did what we could in bearing our testimonies as to the true Church of Christ. Our work took us around Tahaa, walking all the way, six times, and completely around Raiatea once, one trip over the mountain, and working the districts from our H.Q. in Uturoa. It was in Tahaa I witnessed the Power of God in the laying on of hands by those in authority. One was almost instantly healed and the other was the healing of the dread disease "elephantiasis".

We hope sincerely that through our efforts the future Missionaries may find the way a little easier for them. Huahine, "Leewards" On April 8th 1939 we left the beautiful Islands in Raiatea lagoon and journeyed to Huahine, a matter of 3 hours ride on "Potii Raiatea ". Elder Hunting went on to Tahiti leaving me as Senior and Elder Haslem as Junior. In Huahine we followed almost the same pattern of tracting as on the last two. With two H.Q. we were able to work both sides nicely. In "Fare" we stayed with a Mr Tetua Mervin and in Maroe we were with our native Missionary, Tahiri Torihi. We were blessed considerably while here."

At the beginning of WWII all US missionaries were sent home in November 1940. Ernest Rossiter and his wife were the caretakers of the mission during the War. When President Mitchell reopened the mission in 1946 he had a limited number of missionaries (8). They were sent to Tubuai and the Tuamotus. The visa limit was increased to 12 in 1947. Missionaries went to Huahine in October 1947. There were some baptisms and a small bamboo fare pureraa with niau roof was constructed by February 25, 1948. In July and August 1948 Apostle Matthew Cowley toured the mission with President Mitchell. They went to Huahine, Raiatea and Bora Bora as well as the Australes. In 1949 a small branch was established in Huahine. It had been closed for over 20 years. It was no longer active in the early 1950s.

President Mallory (1950-2) also focused his limited resources (He only had 8 visas) in Tubuai and the Tuamotus. However the missionaries did take a trip on the Paraita to sell the mission magazine, Te Hehueraa Api and the pupu pu (brass band) played some concerts and the mission SDJ basketball team played some basketball games in the Leewards in 1951. The met some members in Haapu, Huahine. Tahiri Mariteragi was the leader. President Orton changed the focus of missionaries to proselyting from running the branches in 1953. Prior to 1953 the church had not been able to get permission for the missionaries to stay long term in the Leewards. The visa quota had increased to 12 however President Orton was not able to get

permission to proselyte in the Leeward Islands. Finally in late 1954 acting Mission President Larson Caldwell secured governmental permission to send missionaries to the Leeward Islands. There were no active branches in the Leewards in 1954. "During 1954 serious missionary work (that is work that was intended to bring about lasting branches of the church rather than simply good public relations) was started on Raiatea and Tahaa, and in 1955 in Huahine. President Caldwell sent Ira Tree and Lynn Bissell to Raiatea to sell Te Ve'a subscriptions. Instead they did proselyting and had many converts in Uturoa. By the time they left in the spring of 1955 they had a branch of 30 to 40 members. In January 1955 President Larson Caldwell and Elder Joseph Childers organized a Sunday School at Uturoa, Raiatea, one week before the first two converts were baptized and confirmed members of the church. Thirty-six investigators attended the first meeting." (p.72 UIS Britsch.) In 1956, Elders Don Marshall and Charles Jeppson baptized the first members in Avera and started the first branch there. Temporary fare pureraa niau chapels were constructed in Raiatea and Huahine. A wooden chapel was dedicated in Patio Tahaa in 1956. In 1956 the Barcarolles (youth choir) made a tour of the Leewards on Paraita, which provided an interest in the church. Of note is the fact that in the 1950s and 60s there were no roads around the islands and travel to the various districts was very difficult. The relatively young Leeward branches had few actual members in 1957: Uturoa 66, Avera 12, Cumora Tahaa 82, Huahine 27. Nonetheless in Uturoa, Raiatea often five times the number of actual members regularly attended meetings and that island was seen as a productive area for future growth.

"In December 1958, the first conference of its kind in the Leeward islands was held with members from Raiatea, Huahine and Tahaa attending. The Paraita carried President and Sister Joseph R. Reeder, their children and several missionaries from Tahiti to Huahine, where Elders Duplisea and Baker were waiting with a group of sixty people (three fourths of whom were non members) to board the Paraita for Raiatea and the conference. A large group of saints from Tahaa also made the trip to Raiatea. On 5 December a ceremony was held at the Uturoa building site to place a box inside the cornerstone.

After the ceremony the mission yacht Paraita took the conference participants across the lagoon to Tahaa for the following two days activities, an MIA conference (with more than 150 in attendance) and picnics. On Sunday 7 December, the morning session of conference was held with 220 people in attendance. It was followed by a moving baptismal service with 21 people entering the waters of baptism, an outward symbol of the Church's growing strength in the Leeward islands." (p 140 SFC).

The Uturoa Branch enjoyed local leadership and was becoming stronger each year. The Avera Branch was in desperate need of a permanent meetinghouse because its members had increased so rapidly. Tevaitoa had experienced outstanding growth since it was opened in 1958 and was nearly as large as the other two Raiatea branches. In Huahine, the Haapu branch with twenty five members and many non member attendees was organized into an independent branch by Elder Hugh Duplisea in January 1959 under the instruction of President Reeder. Toepekeiragi Tahiri Mariteragi was called as branch president with two Tahitian counselors. His son, Viliamu Mariteragi was called as his first counselor. Elders Gary Walton and Lynn Hutchings were assigned to Huahine in July of 1960. When they visited the Haapu Branch they discovered that the Branch President had moved to another district on the other side of the island, leaving his son, Viliamu, acting as the *de facto* branch president, Elders Elders Walton and Hutchings re-organized the branch presidency with Viliamu as president.

Elder Duplisea also organized the Puaoa branch in Huahine on 22 March 1959 with Tanetuia Mariu as branch president. (p141 SFC). Samuel Richards and Glenn Pierson opened the work in Tevaitoa in December 1958. Samuel Richards and LaMar Mills opened the Vaiaau area in April 1959.

By the end of the decade (1960) there were seven branches in the Leewards - Four on Raiatea - Uturoa, Avera, Tevaitoa, Vaiaau, Cumora in Tahaa, Haapu and Puaoa in Huahine. There was no missionary work on Bora Bora or Maupiti in the 1950s. Missionary work commenced in Bora Bora in 1961 and in Maupiti in 1962. There were soon branches on those islands. Membership was 474 in the Leewards. Avera 97, Cumora 98, Haapu 51, Puaoa 47, Tevaitoa 78, Uturoa 78 and Vaiaau 74.

In 1961 President Kendall Young called Otis Doom to be his first counselor to assist with the branches. He also called 10 experienced men to form a mission council. They helped local branch leaders resolve problems and gave them guidance. In the December 1960 Conference in Raiatea (Huahine, Tahaa joined) two members from the new mission council - Tinomana a Hauata and Tauapiti a Mariteragi attended and taught local leaders.

In April 15, 1961 after the dedication of the Avera chapel a district conference was held in Uturoa with 223 in attendance., Brother Tu Menemene was called to be the district president for the ISLV. His first counselor was Timitua Holman, who had been branch president of Tevaitoa.

Work on the other Leeward islands began as government restrictions that had limited where missionaries could serve were eliminated. In December 1961, full time Elders Pierre Konkurat and Edmund Rouet were sent to Bora Bora, an island that had been closed to missionary work for years. Maupiti was also opened to missionary work in 1962.

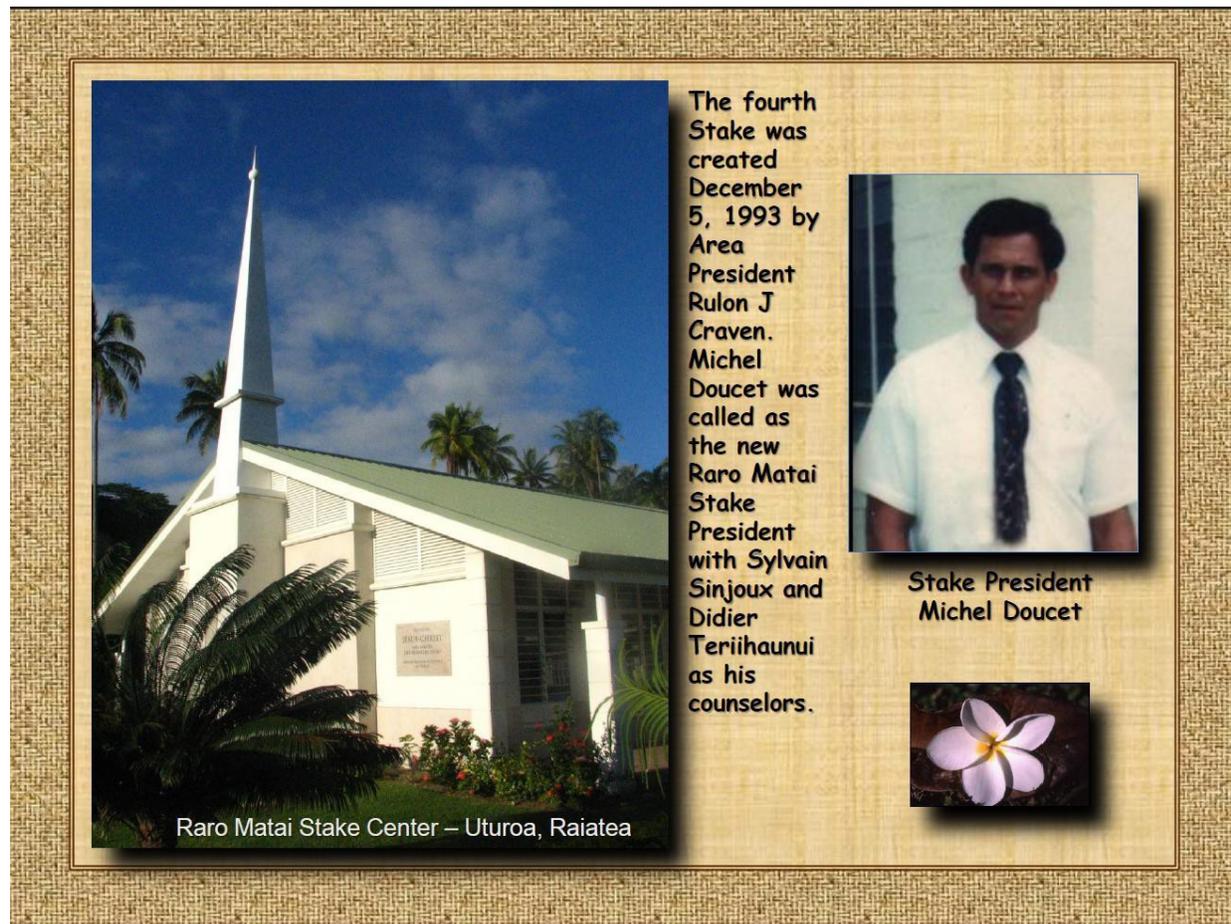
During the 1960s the missionary visa quota remained at 14. President Stone designated an experienced missionary Elder Kent Hughes to be the ISLV supervising Elder in December 1963. In 1965 Elder Ray Lyons was the president of the ISLV district with first counselor Timi Holman and second counselor Teihotaata Hapairai. Elder Joel Hart became the district president in 1966. Elder Mike Meservy became the district president in 1967. He was followed by Elder Michael Finnigan and Elder Jean Tchan Fat from August 1970 to January 1971. He was followed by Elder Remi Mataoa. The first local member was Edwin Brodien from Uturoa was called to be the district President in 1972 by mission president Joseph Childers. By 1970 Mission President Karl Richards was able to get the missionary quota increased to 40 visas. With more missionaries there was increased missionary effort in the Leewards. The church grew rapidly in the 1970s and 80s. President Joseph Childers called a Leeward district presidency of local leaders during his term of service 1972-5. President Wayne Mack called Hiomai to be the district president around 1980.

Marama Tarati was district president from August 1983 to March 1986. He was called by Mission President Jay Larson and released by mission president Stephen Graham. His first counselors were Brother Cummings from Hawaii who was the husband of Sister Thérèse, née Terooatea and Brother Félicien Holman. Then René Teivao replaced Brother Cummings who returned to Hawaii. Towards the end of his presidency in 1986, it was brother Michel Doucet

and brother Michel Yim who were his counselors, because Brother Félicien Holman was called as president of the Vaiaau branch and Brother Teivao was called to be the executive secretary for the Raromatai District. Brother Michel Yim was called to be the new District president in March 1986. Michel Doucet was his first counselor and Sylvain Sinjoux his second counselor. They served until Raromatai became part of Pirae stake.

On April 20, 1990 the branches of Raiatea and Tahaa became part of Pirae, Tahiti stake under the inspiration of Mission President Yves Perrin. The other Leeward islands were organized into the Bora Bora Iles Sous-Le-Vent district. President Yves Perrin called his counselor Eric Graffe as the president of this district. Henri Teaurai and Mihimana Pahuiri were his counselors. (p307 SFC).

The Leewards became a stake on Dec 5, 1993 when Area President Rulon G. Craven called Michel Doucet as stake president of the Raromatai Stake with Sylvain Sinjoux and Didier Teriihaunui as counselors.



The fourth Stake was created December 5, 1993 by Area President Rulon J Craven. Michel Doucet was called as the new Raro Matai Stake President with Sylvain Sinjoux and Didier Teriihaunui as his counselors.

Raro Matai Stake Center – Uturoa, Raiatea

Stake President Michel Doucet

The graphic features a photograph of the Raro Matai Stake Center in Uturoa, Raiatea, on the left. On the right, there is a portrait of Michel Doucet, the stake president, wearing a white shirt and a dark tie. Below the portrait is a small image of a white plumeria flower with a yellow center. The entire graphic is set against a textured, light-colored background.



First Stake Presidency of the Raromatai Stake with Mission President Victor Cave 1996

From Left to right : Emmanuel Terootea and his wife Sylviane, the executive secretary, Stello Holman and his wife Déa, stake clerk, President Victor Cave, Sylvain and Vahine Sinjoux 1st Counselor, Michel and Hugoline Doucet, President, Didier and Eleen Terihaunui 2nd Counselor.

On June 1, 2003 Jean-Luc Mou Tham became the stake president with Freddy Vongue as first counselor and Georges Anuanu as second counselor. They were chosen and set apart by Robert K. Dellenbach.



Stake Presidency in 2011

Standing left to right : Freddy Vongue 1st counselor, Jean-Luc Mou Tham Stake President ,
Georges Anuanu 2nd counselor
Seated: Barfrine Teriifaotua stake clerk, Laurent Holman executive secretary

In April 2011 There were 10 wards and 4 branches in the Raromatai Stake. There were 12 chapels in the Leeward islands (6 in Raiatea, 2 in Tahaa, 2 in Huahine and one each in Maupiti and Bora Bora.) Membership by island as of March 31, 2011 is listed below. Total membership was 3,432 members. Raiatea 1892, Tahaa 193, Huahine 436, Bora Bora 693, Maupiti 218.



Map Showing the 12 Chapels as of April 2011

On May 1, 2011 Bora Bora and Maupiti wards became part of the new Punauia stake.

Punauia Stake May 1, 2011 Elder James Hamula called President Ahyn Claude Nauta, 1st Counselor Marc Jean Alain M. Valenza, 2nd Counselor Steve Raiarii Tchan. Vaitape and Anau wards from Bora Bora and Maupiti ward are in the Punauia stake.



Marc Jean Alain Valenza 1st C, President Claude Nauta, Steve Raiarii Tchan 2nd C

Area President Elder Hamula et Daniel Waikolo reorganized the presidency of the Raromatai /stake on October 27, 2013.



Stake Presidency in 2014

William Mariteragi, 1st counselor, Freddy Vongue, StakePresident, and Boyer Teheiura, 2nd counselor

The tenth stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in French Polynesia was organized on 29 April 2018.

The newly created Bora Bora Tahiti Stake includes the islands of Bora Bora, Tahaa and Maupiti. It was organized to accommodate growing numbers of members in the area. Currently, membership in the Bora Bora Stake exceeds 1,900 members.



Elder Glenn Burgess Area Seventy, Taaroa Tapea - first counsellor, Moana M. Teriipaia - Stake President, Josuah Tiori - second counsellor, and Elder O. Vincent Haleck - Pacific area President

Presiding at the conference where the new stake was announced was Elder O. Vincent Haleck, Pacific Area president. Elder Glenn Burgess, Area Seventy, also participated.

Moana M. Teriipaia was called to be the new stake president with Taaroa T. Tapea as first counsellor and Josuah J. Tiori as second counsellor.

While speaking at the conference Elder Haleck encouraged the members of the newly formed stake to support their new Church leaders. “This stake is blessed to have excellent leaders,” he said, “but they cannot do the work alone.” He continued, “They are the hands of the Lord on the earth and they will bless the people who live in these three islands.”

Mayor of Bora Bora, Gaston Tong Sang, and other local guests also attended the stake conference.

A new stake has been created from the Punaauia Tahiti and Raromatai Tahiti stakes. The Bora Bora Tahiti Stake, which consists of the Haamene and Hipu branches and the Anau, Cumorah, Faanui, Maupiti and Vaitape wards, was created by Elder O. Vincent Haleck, General Authority Seventy, and Elder Glenn Burgess, an Area Seventy.

BORA BORA TAHITI STAKE: (April 29, 2018) President — Moana M. Teriipaia, 60, retired; wife, Romalaaron Eritaneta Fleurise Teriipaia. Counselors — Taaroa T. Tapea, 47, substitute teacher; wife, Née Pore Rose Tapea. Josuah J. Tiori, 34, electrician; wife, Lomay Poeala Tiori.

New Stake in French Polynesia

The Church organized a new stake in French Polynesia on April 29th. The Bora Bora Tahiti Stake was organized from a division of the Raromatai Tahiti Stake and the Punaauia Tahiti Stake. The new stake includes the following five wards and two branches: the Anau, Cumorah, Faanui, Maupiti, and Vaitape Wards, and the Haamene and Hipu Branches. All but one of the congregations (Faanui) are designated as Tahitian-speaking. The new Bora Bora Tahiti Stake includes LDS congregations on three islands: Bora-Bora (3), Tahaa (3), and Maupiti (1). The creation of the new stake in Bora Bora comes after many years of preparation by mission and stake leaders according to reports from full-time missionaries. More information about the creation of the new stake can be found [here](#).

There are now 10 stakes and 3 districts in French Polynesia, whereas there were only 6 stakes and 3 districts in 2010. The Church has experienced a significant increase in membership growth, congregational growth, and stake growth during the past 5-6 years.

(Church News May 12, 2018)

Listed below by island are specific details of the early missionary work in the 1950s and 60s that led from 187 members in 1957 to over 3,432 members in April 2011.

Raiatea:

"Acting Mission President Larson Caldwell was successful in getting government permission to send missionaries to the Leeward Islands. In December of 1954 the first proselytizing missionaries were sent to Raiatea. There were only 6 other missionaries at the time, so President Caldwell also went to Raiatea with three other missionaries to help open up the work and find a house where the elders could live and hold meetings. At the first Sunday School meeting presided over by President Caldwell in Uturoa in January of 1955, thirty-six people were in attendance. The missionaries soon averaged six meetings a day. The first baptismal service was held on February 6, 1955 for two converts" President Caldwell had to return to Papeete. " Elder Joseph Childers and Elder Ira Tree remained in Raiatea to carry on the work. This initial period of success was truly the beginning of the Church's permanent establishment in Raiatea and Tahaa. With fifteen converts and several children, a branch of about twenty-five members of the Church was organized in Uturoa, Raiatea on 22 May 1955, and plans were made to purchase land for a meetinghouse." (pp 120-121 SFC). Keith Merrill: I was in Uturoa in 1955 and we had no actual church building at that time.

Uturoa:

In 1954 Ira Tree and Lynn Bissell were sent to Uturoa, Raiatea. There were no members in Raiatea. They were told to sell subscriptions to the mission magazine Te Ve'a. Instead they started proselyting. There was one Chinese sister living there at the time. She died shortly after their arrival. The first converts were Henriette Yim Yiu Cheung. Henriette was baptized and confirmed on February 20, 1955, by Ira Tree. (Henriette later married Tekehu Munanui) and the family of Mimi Oaoa (two daughters Collette and Francoise).



The First Uturoa Chapel was the Living Room of a Rented House



Uturoa Members with Elder Ira Tree 1954

Front row: Elisabeth (YIM) CHEUNG (Henriette's sister), Denis OAOA, Henriette (YIM) MUNANUI, Germane TERIITEMOEHAA, Florence OAOA, Marius ARIITAI, child-?, Ira TREE

Second row: child-?, Marinella____, Yvette ARIITAI, Francoise OAOA, Colette OAOA (married to Robin UTAHIA), Anna TERIITEMOEHAA, girl-?

Third row: Atonia TERIITEMOEHAA, Tutu ARIITAI, Liliana ARIITAI (holding her daughter, Adele ARIITAI), Anita AH SING, Francoise____, Ariitu TERIITEMOEHAA, lady in green?, Tiare____(in pink), Roorau vahine (in blue)

Back row: Mimi OAOA, Marereva (RAITUPU) YIM (Henriette Munanui's mom)



Uturoa Chapel Constructed of Bamboo with Niau Thatched Roof, 1958



Uturoa branch members in front of their chapel February 1959

The Uturoa land was purchased by the Church from the Brown family. “In January 1956, the Church finally received permission to purchase a parcel of land in Uturoa for \$11,905 US, but there were disputes not only about boundaries but also about meetinghouse plans.

The blueprints were finally rejected by the government on the pretext that there were too many classrooms. There seemed to be some anxiety among government officials that the church was going to use the building classrooms to teach school in English. The plans were resubmitted with some slight structural modifications and with the classrooms designated as something less offensive. Work on the Uturoa project began in July 1958 with John Ward. President Reeder arrived in November of 1958. The first week of December he and his family came to Uturoa where he conducted cornerstone ceremonies for the Uturoa chapel, and a conference was held there and in Patio, Tahaa featuring a pupu himene from Papeete. The count Gary Walton recorded in his journal is as follows: Raiatea 134 including 50 from Uturoa, 50 from Tevaitoa, 34 from Avera. Those from Tevaitoa were all recent converts. Taha'a: 105 total including Cumora Branch, 50, and a sprinkling from five other districts, including the entire 22 members of the Pahure district soccer team. The Uturoa chapel was dedicated 7 November 1959 by Mission President Joseph Reeder in Tahitian and by former mission President Ernest Rossiter in French.



Uturoa Chapel in the Early 1960s

Renovated Uturoa Chapel was dedicated 26 August 1990 by Lysis O Teroatea



**The Uturoa chapel was Demolished and a New Stake Center was Dedicated
In 2005 by Elder Jean A. Tefan**

Avera:

Missionary work started by Donald Ray (Re) Marshall and Charles (Tihaere) Jeppson on December 21, 1955. Protestant members from Avera came to Re and Tihaere in Uturoa and asked them to come to Avera and preach to them. The meeting was a set up. The other ministers asked tough questions. Neither missionary was fluent but Re was able to open his Bible to the right page and found the answer to their questions. The first baptism in Avera was in May 1956.

Account of Don Marshall (Re Orometua): "While under the supervision of Elders Donald Ray Marshall and Charles Jeppson in early 1956, the branch meetings in Uturoa began to grow in attendance if not in membership, due, at first, to such additional activities as English-language classes as well as the teaching of choral music, even attracting young people from other districts further around the island. The timing was perfect because, at this very same time, many people in Avera were becoming more and more uneasy and dissatisfied with their Protestant leader. Before long, one member of his parish bicycled into Uturoa, urgently inviting the missionaries to come out there and share their message.

Now, although that invitation may have initially been only to frighten their Protestant minister, something wonderful happened. The proposed cottage-meeting planned by missionaries Jeppson and Marshall attracted so much interest that the disgruntled Protestants had to keep searching for a larger venue for that meeting, ending up with their finally renting the large thatch-and-bamboo cinema-house, and when the missionaries pedaled out there on their bicycles on that scheduled evening, they were shocked to find a crowd of nearly 150 people waiting for them--including an uninvited Protestant deacon, the minister's right-hand man, and even the 7th-Day Adventist minister as well.

Because Elder Jeppson had been in the islands longest (though still only a matter of months), the two companions agreed that he would give the main lesson, and Elder Marshall would not only give the Joseph Smith story but would also try to be prepared (with his little Tahitian bible containing no concordance of any kind) for questions that these uninvited visitors might pose. And these questions did come, throughout the lesson, and twice Elder Marshall found his bible just opening up to scriptures he otherwise would have had great difficulty to find. The excitement of the audience was palpable and the Elders knew that not only was the Lord on their side, but the majority of that crowd was as well.

The outcome of that evening and the evenings that followed was a series of baptisms of key people in the community, and what eventually became the Avera Branch."

The first chapel was a fare niau chapel on the land of Tevaihitua Anuanu.



First Avera Chapel Constructed of Bamboo Sides and a Niau Roof

Elder Jeppson has a record of baptism of the following two baptisms in Avera: 1st Tevaihitua Raiatea Tamatauro on May 5, 1956 by Elder Don Marshall and confirmation by Elder Charles Jeppson of May 6, 1956. 2nd Tevaihitua Tepuaitua Tamatauroa on June 2, 1956 by Elder Charles Jeppson and confirmation by Elder Don Marshall (Daughter of Tevaihitua).



Early Avera members with Re Orometua (Elder Don Marshall) in 1956

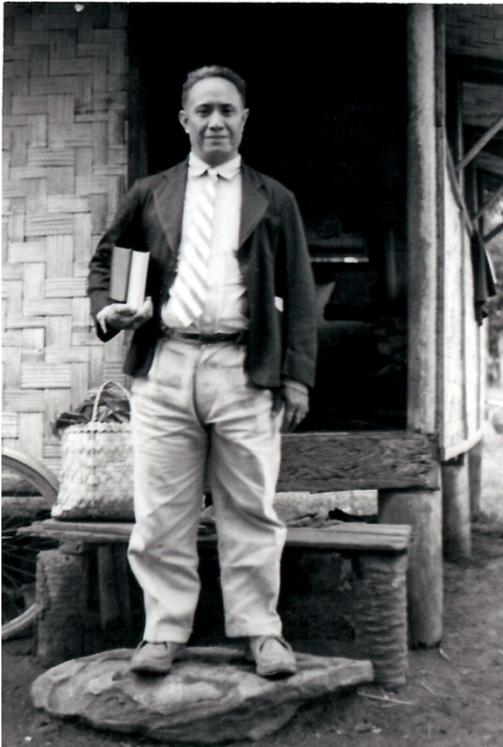
Elder Jeppson was transferred to Tahaa with Elder Brent Shaw on August 10, 1956. First six members baptized included Gisele Tefan's mother and brother Tararaina and Emile Mou Tham and the Anuanu family. The politics in 1958 also caused some problems in getting land for a chapel in Avera. The windwards (Tahiti, Moorea) had voted against independence from France. However the Leewards had voted for independence in the referendum of June 3, 1958. This did not sit well with the French government. There was concern on the French government's part that the church was pro independence. The small niau chapel that had been built in Avera as a temporary measure was outgrown by March 1959 and attendance at all meetings was more than 100%.



Avera Branch Members around 1959



Avera Branch Members in front of their chapel June 1960



Tevaihitua Anuanu Avera Branch President 1959 Avera Branch Presidency June 1960

There were many legal difficulties in purchasing land for a permanent chapel. Land was finally purchased in Avera in June 1961. John Ward, who had been the building supervisor for the Uturoa building returned that month to supervise the construction of the Avera chapel and a small building in Opoa Raiatea. On 28 November 1961 the cornerstone was held. President Kendall Young and Otis Doom and several members of the mission council attended, as well as Monsieur Damery, Leeward Islands administrator, attended and participated. The Avera, Raiatea chapel was dedicated on April 14, 1962 by Elder John Longden. Attendance 208. This chapel had the same plan as the Uturoa, Raiatea and Paea, Tahiti chapels.



Avera Chapel Dedicated on April 14, 1962 by Elder John Longden



Avera Chapel in 2008

Tevaitoa:

Samuel Richards and Glenn Pierson opened the work in December 1958 with the baptism of 12 converts, including the Holman family. They are still a stalwart influence in the church in the area. They constructed a fare pureraa niau chapel initially. Later they rented the home of a Frenchman, Jean Vidal with a 10 year lease in June 1959.



**Rented Home used as Tevaitoa Chapel
From 1959 to Late 1960s**



Members in Front of Tevaitoa Chapel, Late 1950s

In December of 1958 Elder LaMar Mills replaced Elder Pearson who was assigned to Tahaa with Elder Walton. Land was purchased for a permanent chapel in Tevaitoa in July 1966. Construction began around 1970 under the direction of Michel Doucet. It was finally dedicated around 1972.



Tevaitoa Chapel 2008

Vaiaau:

Samuel Richards and LaMar Mills opened the Vaiaau area in April 1959 and by June of that year they had recorded 18 baptisms. Elder Mills tells of his experiences going to Vaiaau. “Tevaitoa was used as the ‘jumping off’ place for teaching in Vaiaau. Since the island paths were extra long because of the many creeks and rivers that needed to be forded the option was to borrow a or rent a boat. It so happened that a member of the Tevaitoa Branch (Manate Tihopu) had access to a 10’ dingy with a 3 hp motor. He agreed to take the missionaries to Vaiaau if he could be the captain. The trip took 1 hour to get to the village then another 30 minutes to get to the mouth of the river. The ride was somewhat tedious and disconcerting. Even though we were within the lagoon Manate had to guide the little boat around a number of coral heads that at high tide did not concern us too much but at low tide they came close to the surface. They were all identified with a tall pole used as a marker for the safest route but you needed to know which side of the marker you were to go to keep from hitting the coral head.



Elders Mills and Pearson with Manate Tihopu in the Vaiaau River

At night the trip was quite interesting. I had to buy a large 5 cell flashlight to be able to see the marker poles. To get to where the cottage meetings would be held we had to walk from the river where we tied the boat, up a long (and usually muddy) trail to our member Helene's house. We would usually visit a few homes to invite them to the meeting and then go on ahead to the cottage meeting. There was usually a good crowd there. We were sometimes invited to stay the night after the meeting if it was too dark or there was a storm, and she fed us well." Under the direction of Elders Pearson and Mills, the members of the Avera Branch carried lumber over a mountain pass to "add to" the home of a member in Vaiaau, for a nice church meeting place. They met in a fare pureraa niau in 1960. Elder Glenn Shields and Tinomana a Hauata reorganized the Vaiaau branch in 1961. Elisaia a Manarani was called as branch president.

Glenn Shields wrote: "During the tenure of President Young, an outrigger canoe was built by members for use in some areas, within the reef, to get to more difficult areas with no roads. A five horse power motor was also purchased for it. The missionaries had to be accompanied by a member of the church. A fiberglass boat was later purchased in Raiatea for the use by the missionaries going from Tevaiatoa to Vaiaau in order to hold meetings. Elders Baker and Shields used this boat."



Vaiaau Chapel 1959



Members of Vaiau Branch around 1958



Members in Front of Vaiaau Chapel 1959

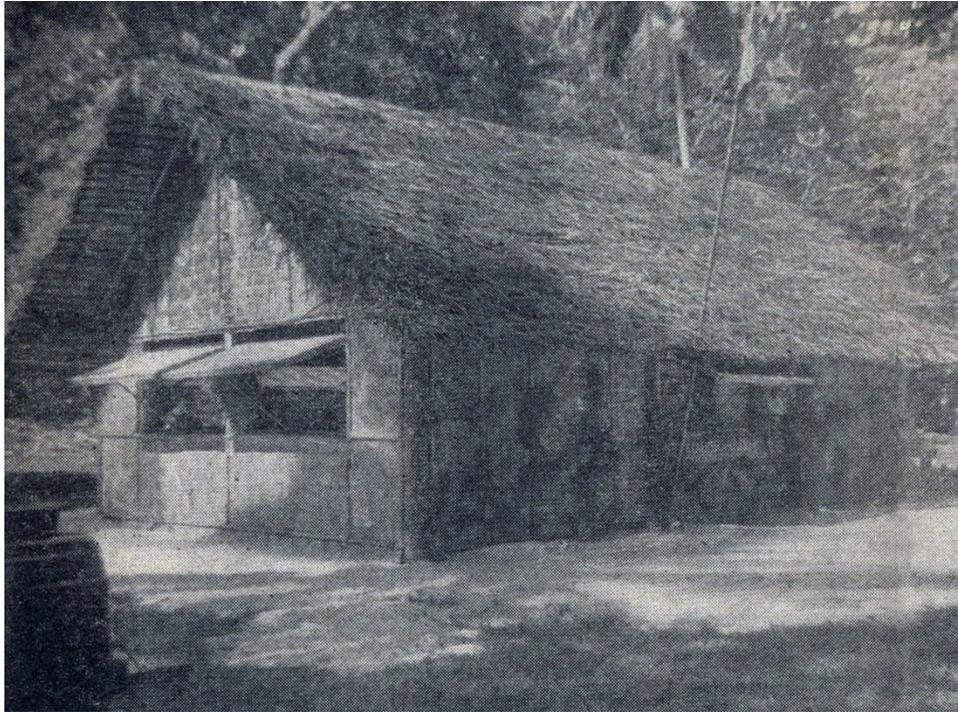
A later chapel was dedicated by President Wayne G. Mack on 20 February 1981. It was demolished before the new chapel shown below was built.



Vaiaau Chapel was dedicated on 20 January 1985 by President Stephen L. Graham
This picture was taken in 2008.

Fareatai:

Samuel Richards also opened Fareatai. They had a member transport them by boat to the outlying districts since there was no road around the island at that time. Fareatai (Opoa), Property was purchased in June 1961. The first chapel constructed in a week had bamboo side and a niau thatched roof. It was dedicated on Sunday, April 15, 1962 by Elder John Longden. About 15 members in the branch. There were 43 people in attendance for the dedication. The chapel was constructed of bamboo sides and a niau roof.



Opoa Chapel dedicated April 15, 1962 by Elder John Longdon



Fareatai Chapel in the 1970s



Fareatai Chapel Dedicated on 31 May 2009 by President Jean-Luc Mou Tham

Faaroa:

Early efforts to open Faaroa to the gospel were initiated by Elders Richards and Elder Mills in January of 1959. They were accompanied by a couple of members from Avera who had outrigger canoes as there were no passable paths or bridges along the coast. Since the two elders were being spread pretty thin trying to hold meetings to organize and operate the three branches in Avera, Uturoa, and Tevaitoa they decided to split up and take members with them to the different areas. An earlier Faaroa Bay Chapel was dedicated on 4 October 1972 by Gaston Richmond.



**Chapel in Faaroa Bay Dedicated 28 December 1983 by President Jay Larson
This picture was taken in 2008**

Tahaa:

Islanders in Tahaa had requested LDS missionaries to come and teach them and efforts were also extended there with surprising success. Shortly thereafter Joseph Childers and Larson Caldwell went to Tahaa. Stephen Graham recorded an interview with Imiura Teriipaia as follows: "In the early 1950s the Protestant minister in Patio, Tahaa evidently announced to the members of his congregation that from thenceforth it would be required of the men of his congregation to wear formal suit coats to their church meetings, or they would not be allowed into the meetings. Imiura Teriipaia was a young married man and member of the congregation who was offended by this abrupt announcement and vowed, therefore, to "find another church" to attend. He had heard of the Mormon Church in Raiatea during his frequent visits to the Uturoa port, and so decided to inquire as to the possibilities of inviting the Mormons to come to Tahaa. When he finally

contacted the missionaries in Uturoa, Raiatea, he explained his situation to the Elders and invited them to come and share their teachings with him and others in Patio. In fact, he said, he would even come in his sailing outrigger and pick them up and take them to Tahaa, since he made the trip several times a week. One of the young missionaries was Elder Joe Childers. A particular day was decided upon and he picked the Elders up at the appointed time, and thus began the establishment of the Church on the Island of Tahaa."

The first Sunday meetings in Tahaa, conducted by President Caldwell attracted 40 people. On 13 February 1955 fourteen converts from Tahaa entered the waters of baptism. Pressing mission business made it impossible for President Caldwell to remain in the Leeward Islands any longer, but he regarded the experience as one of the highlights of his entire mission. Larson Caldwell was replaced by Kenny Orton. Keith Merrill stated that we met in a member's home. The Teriipaia family befriended the elders and gave them some land on the hill in Patio. The early members were the family of Teihotaata and Teraimateata Hapairai (children included future leaders in the church Joséphine, Teraimateata, Amosa, Victor and Frédéric). He was the first branch president with Imiura Teriipaia as first counselor.



Teihotaata and Teraimateata Hapairai

Several Teriipaia families were among the early converts:

Teama Teriipaia and his wife Uratua and 3 of their children's families.

Imiura Teriipaia and his wife Tevahinehaamoura Teriipaia and their children (Gladys, Bettina, Alexis, Calixte, Georgette, Claudille, Claude, Mako)

Tiatoa Teriipaia and his wife Mataarere Teriipaia and their children.

Tani Mataiti Teriipaia and his wife Atutehaumearii and 10 children including René.

On the island of Tahaa, Teama Teriipaia donated a 30 by 60 foot piece of ground to the church in Patio. This property to be used for a meetinghouse and basketball court, was legally transferred to the church in March 1955, and permission was given by the First presidency to build a chapel there with funds to be taken from the local tithing money." (p 121 SFC)

"The erection of the Patio chapel in Tahaa was a true labor of love. After the Church's initial implantation on Tahaa in 1954, the work went forward rapidly and mission leaders envisioned a bright future in the Leeward Islands. To build the chapel on the small piece of ground that had been donated to the Church, President Christensen was required to adapt the plans he had been sent of a chapel being built in Samoa. He signed a contract with Coco Bonnet to build the chapel and missionary quarters with the Church supplying local voluntary workers and furnishing all materials. Getting the construction materials to Tahaa proved to be the greatest challenge if all in the project....The chapel constructed to hold 120 people was dedicated on 7 April 1956 with an overflow crowd of 400 people in attendance, mostly nonmembers. The Leeward Islands administrator and judge were also present and expressed their surprise and pleasure at the erection of such a beautiful building markedly different from the typical boxlike structures built for worship in the area. A traditional Tahitian feast was served to 500 people following the dedication by President Christensen. During the meeting President Christensen named the hilltop Patio branch "Cumora" in memory of the Hill Cumorah in upstate New York where the Prophet Joseph Smith recovered the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. To this day the Patio Branch retains the beautiful name. Missionary quarters were completed at the side of the chapel by the end of 1956." (pp 146-7 SFC.) A special dedicatory hymn "E To Matou Metua" original music and words composed by Elder Don Marshall, who was serving in Uturoa, had been taught to the Patio members over a period of three weeks, and was performed by them at that dedication.



Teama Teriipaia in 1958



Cumorah Chapel on Dedication Day by President Ellis Christensen 7 April, 1956



Members at a District Conference Held in Patio Tahaa in 1958



Cumorah, Tahaa Chapel 2008

Tahaa classroom Addition was Dedicated on 16 February by President Lysis O. Tereotea



**New Chapel for Haamene, Tahaa Branch
Dedicated 27 March 2011 by President Jean-Luc Mou Tham**

There are two branches and one ward in Tahaa. The branch of Haamene now has its own chapel in Haamene. The branch of Hipu shares the chapel in Patio with the Cumorah ward.

Huahine:

President Christensen was trying to strengthen the branches in Raiatea and Tahaa and didn't have enough missionaries to spare for Huahine on a permanent basis. Missionaries did visit Huahine from time to time. It wasn't until August 1958 that missionaries were permanently assigned to Huahine.

Keith Merrill: "I was in Uturoa in 1955 and we had no actual church building at that time. In Tahaa, we met in a member's home. In Huahine, It was 1956, I had just had my appendix out and was waiting for a boat back to Takaroa when we received the invitation to talk to the Elders of the Protestant Church in Huahine. I went with Brother Tauapiti Mariteragi and we started a new Branch there and the newly baptized members built a small fare niau in one day and that is where they worshipped. Metua, the Aaronic Priesthood leader at the time (a former Deacon in his church his wife left him after he was baptized. He and part of his family and the others that were baptized along with their kin helped to put up the fare pureraa niau and it would seat about 20 inside, but others sat outside when the services were done. Tauapiti and I left about 2 days later. I kept things together until other missionaries came about a year later to build a better chapel and to give the higher Priesthood. I only went there on a short term to get things going because the Head Deacon had taken all their money for a new Chapel and the people wanted to know more about our Church. We taught them for 3 days and nights and out of about 250 people initially, we ended up baptizing about 25 of them. Really a wonderful event. I then returned to the Tuamotus." In 1958 Hugh Duplisea and George Baker brought a very enthusiastic group from Huahine to the district conference in Patio, Tahaa. Elder Gary Walton counted 64 total people from there. Unfortunately he did not sort out members from non-members. He suspects it was mainly the latter including what appeared to be the entire U'i Api (Protestant equivalent of our Feia Api) from Haapu. A branch was organized in Puaoa Branch on March 22, 1959 with Tanetuia Mariu as branch president.



**First Fare Niau Chapel in Puaoa, Huahine
Late 1950s**

In July 1958, a niau roofed chapel was built in 3 days and painted green, with red and white trim. In 1961 the Branch was in Puaoa, not Fare. Puaoa is a small district north-east of Fare.



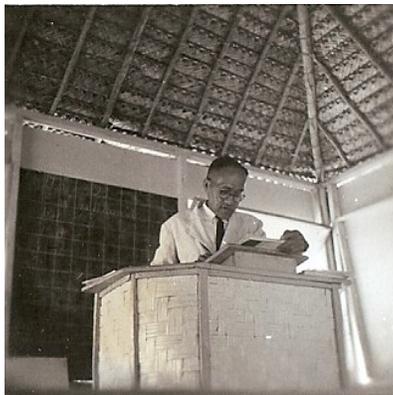
Chapel in Puaoa 1959

Fare Huahine:

By 1963 the chapel had been constructed in Fare, Huahine.



**Fare Huahine Chapel with Pinex Sides and Niau Roof
Was in Use in Fare Huahine in 1964**



Fare Branch President Tanetua Mariu 1959



Haapu Branch President Wiliamu Mariteragi 1960



Elder Gerald Faerber (Terii Orometua) with Tetuanui Teaurai Fare Branch President 1964



Fare Huahine Chapel Dedicated in 1974 by President Joseph Childers



A New Fare Huahine Chapel was Dedicated on 30 November 1985 by President Stephen L. Graham. This photo of Laure and President George Anuanu and Connie Faerber was taken in October 2007



**Fare Huahine Chapel with Addition
Dedicated 24 April 2010 by President Jean-Luc Mou Tham**

Haapu Huahine:

"Although a small struggling dependant branch in Huahine with few priesthood holders had requested missionaries, President Ellis Christensen could not afford the luxury of sending missionaries there permanently until the branches in Tahaa and Raiatea were stronger." (p139 SFC) "Elders Hugh Duplisea and George Baker went to Haapu in August 1958 after work on the island had been abandoned by the church for nearly a decade because of government regulations. The branch organized in the late 1940s had long ceased to function. A core of two strong LDS families from the Tuamotus provided a foundation for a future branch in Haapu." (p124 SFC). There was no branch in Fare, only a small niau church near the lake on the north end in the district called Puaoa. No bridge connecting the two parts of the island. They had to wade across the water to get to Haapu. They made a deal with the Chinese man who ran the cinema to let him show a slide show before the movie. They had eleven baptisms. They used the fare cinema punu for church, near where the future church was to be built. There was a core group of two strong LDS families from the Tuamotus providing a strong foundation for a future branch. The Haapu branch was organized January 1, 1959 with 25 members under direction of President Reeder. Toepekeiragi Tahiti Mariteragi was called as branch president with two Tahitian counselors. His son, Viliamu Mariteragi was called as his first counselor. Elders Gary Walton and Lynn Hutchings were assigned to Huahine in July of 1960. When they visited the Haapu Branch they discovered that the Branch President had moved to another district on the other side of the island, leaving his son, Viliamu, acting as the *de facto* branch president, Elders Walton and Hutchings re-organized the branch presidency with Viliamu as president. The Haapu branch was strongest by the end of the decade.



Temporary Haapu chapel in rented cinema house early 1960s

Huahine: Elders Walton and Hutchings were there when Hutchings arrived in July, 1960.

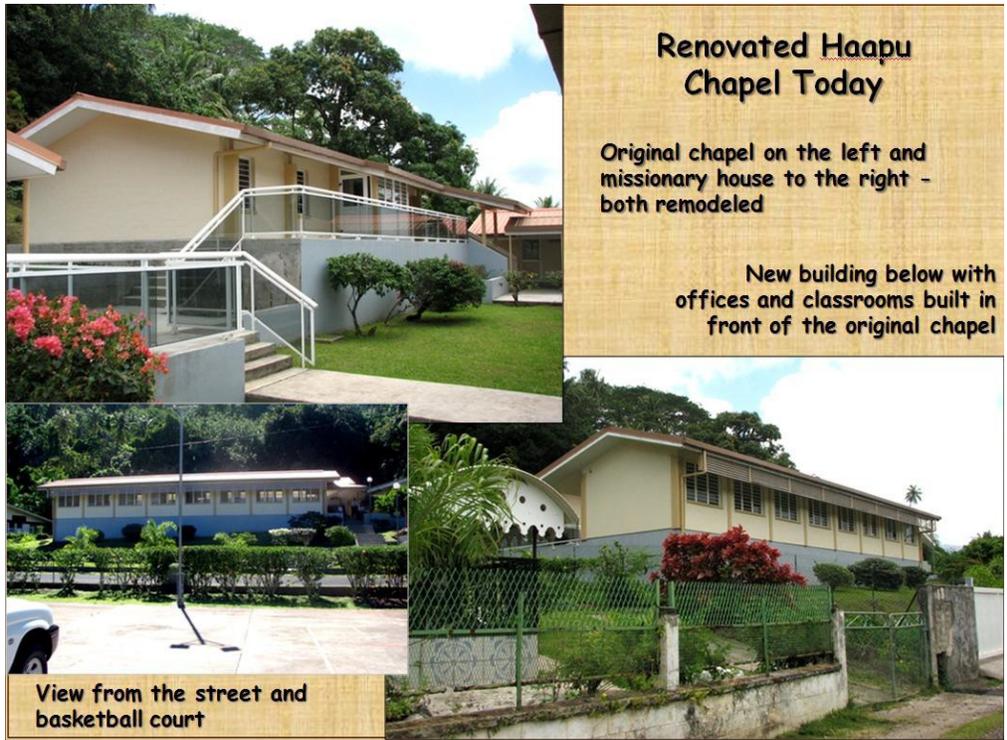
There were two branches there - Puaoa and Haapu. In 1961 Elder Glenn Shields and Tinomana Hauata from the mission council chose Pou a Temaiana as Haapu branch president and Tanetuia a Mariu as Puaoa branch president. The Haapu land purchase was approved in January 1962. Lynn Evans came to be construction supervisor in May 1962. There were sixty members in April 1962. It was built largely by work missionaries and it had electricity and running water. It was built on a hill overlooking the bay in Haapu.



**Haapu Chapel with Restrooms on Left and Elders Quarters on Right
Dedicated 22 May 1963 by Elder Gordon B. Hinckley**

Manuia Tragedy: Many Maupiti saints who had come for the dedication in May 1963 were drowned when their boat capsized going through the pass at Maupiti. See Maupiti section.

The classroom addition was dedicated on 21 April 1992 by President Tihoti Mariteragi. Another renovation of the Haapu complex was dedicated on 5 June 1999 by Elder Quinton Cook.



Bora Bora:

Elder Petero Koncurat and Elder Edmund Rouet opened the work in Bora Bora in December 18, 1961. Elder Rouet was replaced by Iosepha Hughes in April 1962. The land was leased for 6 years in February 1962 with approval to build a small building. The Bora Bora chapel dedication (pandanus roof chapel) was on Monday, April 16, 1962 by Elder John Longden, Assistant to the Quorum of Twelve. There were 275 people in attendance.



Bora Bora chapel was dedicated April 16, 1962 by Elder John Longden

In 1970 cyclone Emma blew down the bamboo niau chapel that had been built on rented land. The

lease had expired on the land, so the building was not repaired. The Church was finally able to purchase land in Bora Bora later that year for a permanent chapel near the coastline. President Jay Larson negotiated for the land on the hill, where the current chapel stands.



Bora Bora Chapel on Hill in 2008
Dedicated on July 5, 1986 by President Stephen L. Graham
Classroom addition dedicated on June 18, 2000 by Elder Jean A. Tefan

Maupiti:

Elder Setephano Hutchings and Faratini Short went to Maupiti in March 1962. Elder Short was replaced by Elder Henri Tehani after 2 weeks. They were followed by Elders Nels Hansen and Gerard Jugant.



The first temporary chapel was held in the missionaries quarters.

"In August 1962 President Young purchased land for a small chapel. The chapel was built by two full-time missionaries Lynn Hutchings and Henri Tehani with the help of members. The chapel was dedicated by President Young on 20 December 1962." (p178 SFC). Attendance was about 200.



Maupiti Chapel Dedicated December 20, 1962 by President Kendall Young

Members from the small branch went to the dedication of the Haapu Huahine chapel in May 1963. Many were drowned in the Manuia ship wreck on the return trip. Elder Gordon B. Hinckley and president Kendall Young made a special trip to Maupiti to console the family members.

The Manuia Tragedy

A great tragedy befell the boat Manuia. The Manuia was returning the members of the church who had come to the dedication of the new chapel in Haapu, Huahine. (May 22, 1963). There were 4 sailors and 47 passengers who were thrown in the raging waters of the ocean in the pass of Maupiti. This is one of the worst passes of French Polynesia. The waves were over 4 meters high. The boat was overturned and thrown upon the reef. Nine persons were drowned and six others were lost. Three babies and one 4 year old girl were among them. It was not only in Polynesia that there was sorrow. Word of the disaster spread quickly and people everywhere were saddened by the reality of the news.

One will not dwell upon the cause of this tragedy. The mission heard the news late in the afternoon of the 23rd of May. The mission president and Apostle Hinckley sought to rent a boat to go to console the members in Maupiti. It was not until 8 pm that they were able to rent the Rotui.(a PT boat) After making preparations and filling the diesel tank, it was 10 pm before the boat could leave the wharf.

In the boat was Apostle Hinckley, the Mission President Young and his wife, Jacques Tauraa, the president of the Territorial High Council, the deputy John Teariki, owner and captain, M. Pierre Hunter, member of high council of the Territory and other members of the church. After traveling all night, they arrived in Maupiti the next day at 2:30pm.

The funeral services had already been held that morning at 10:30 am by both the Protestants and Mormons.

A meeting was held at 4 pm with speakers Elder Gerard Jugant, Tinomana Hauata and Apostle Hinckley. They did all they could to help the members comprehend that the missing members did not have to suffer any more and they were with our Father in Heaven and those remaining on this earth must do all that is necessary to follow the commandments of God to have a place next to those who remember Him.

Afterwards Apostle Hinckley went to each household touched by this catastrophe and he prayed at their tombstones in the cemetery.

At 4 pm by plane from Bora Bora arrived M. Berre, Secretary General, M Angelier, administrator of the Leewards and M Francis Sanford, of the Governor's cabinet. They with the other official visitors also visited each family that was touched by the tragedy. These official visits were particularly appreciated by the people of Maupiti, still under the shock of the disaster.

Saturday the 25th Ms Berre, Angelier, Sanford, Doctor DeFlaquiere as well as the injured from Maupiti went to Bora Bora to take a DC4 plane to Papeete.

(Translated from an article in the Etoile de la Polynesie Francaise avril mai juin 1963)

In April 1968 efforts were made to find land in Maupiti for a permanent chapel. On 18 November 1977 a Chapel was dedicated by Andrea Manea, counselor in the Mission Presidency.



Third Chapel on the island Maupiti dedicated by Andre Manea, counselor in the Mission Presidency



Maupiti Chapel Dedicated 27 August 1985 by Elder Philip T. Sonntag



**New Maupiti Chapel Addition
Dedicated 21 June 2009 by President Jean-Luc Mou Tham**

Tupai:

Tupai is a small atoll north of Maupiti. Missionaries were sent there briefly in 1979. There were 6 members on the island. After 4 months of no success the missionaries were reassigned.

References: Details have been taken from mission histories, early missionary journals, Unto the Islands of the Sea (UIS) by R. Lanier Britsch and Seasons of Faith and Courage (SFC) by S. George Ellsworth and Kathleen C. Perrin (quotes used with permission). Extensive interviews have been made with many early missionaries from the 1950s. Pictures of the early chapels are from Ira Tree, George Baker, Gary Walton, LaMar Mills, Varo Christensen, Andre Manea, Gerald Faerber and Don Marshall. Details also came from *Church News* articles and current membership numbers are from the Tahiti Church statistics office.