Ellen White Portrait Unveiling Oct. 26

Artist reveals companion piece for James White portrait in library lobby

By: Danni Francis

In 2012, many years following the completion of the James White Library on the campus of Andrews University, the library celebrated its 75th anniversary. In honor of the library’s namesake, the administration unveiled a new portrait of James White, Adventist pioneer, painted by Harry Ahn.

Recently, Larry Onsager, dean of libraries, commissioned a companion portrait of James White’s wife, Ellen G. White, painted by the same artist.

Ahn is known as one of the leading portrait artists in the United States. Internationally recognized, Ahn has won numerous awards, including the Michelangelo Buonarroti 500 Celebration International Award in 2008, the Leonardo da Vinci International Award in 2009, and the Grand Prize in the International Portrait Competition in 2010, to name a few. He has been a contract teacher at Andrews University since 1990.

“My hope is that the James and Ellen White portraits here in our lobby remind our patrons of the origin of the library name, and our heritage as a university and a church,” says Onsager.
The completed portrait of Ellen White will be unveiled at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 26, in the James White Library.

Kathy Demsky, director of the Architecture Resource Center and friend of Ahn, went with Onsager to approach Ahn about painting the portrait.

“We knew that no one else could produce such a likeness to Ellen,” she says. “He brings the human spirit into his paintings. When Harry showed me the finished portrait I knew that once again he had put his heart and soul into his work.”

The library invites students, faculty and community members alike to join in the unveiling of the portrait.

“We hope people will want to honor Ellen’s place in the James White Library as we do,” Demsky says.

A Bit of History

In 1874, under the leadership of James and Ellen White, along with other church leaders including J.N. Andrews, an organized movement began toward the establishment of a denominational college, originally named Battle Creek College, then Emmanuel Missionary College and finally, Andrews University.

The college took great measures to update its buildings and resources to provide an excellent learning environment for students. Completed in 1937, the James White Library (JWL) was the first step towards preparing the university for the future.

At the time of its opening, the JWL housed over 120,000 volumes and 1,000 periodical titles. JWL now houses over 750,000 volumes in addition to 2,800 periodical titles. The Seminary Library, the Center for Adventist Research and the Mary Jane Mitchell Multimedia Center are housed in the main library, as well as a branch office of the Ellen G. White Estate. This branch office maintains an extensive collection of her published and unpublished materials. JWL also operates two extensions, the Architecture Resource Center, housed in the Architecture Building, and the Music Materials Center, housed in Hamel Hall.

Ellen White, wife of James, is one of the founding members of the Adventist church. A woman of extraordinary spiritual gifts, Ellen wrote more than 5,000 periodical articles and 40 books. Her most successful piece, “Steps to Christ,” has been published in more than 140 languages. Her writings cover a broad range of subjects including religion, education, social relationships, prophecy, nutrition and management.

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