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Founded in faith. Forward in mission!

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Founded in faith. Forward in mission!

This year, Andrews University celebrates 150 years since its founding as the first Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher education. This is how the story began.



▲ JOHN WESLEY TAYLOR V

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, formally established in 1863, arose from the Millerite movement of the 1830s and 1840s that ultimately focused on the expected return of Christ on Oct. 22, 1844. Not long thereafter, these believers began to consider the question of formal education. Many families were concerned with the lack of Christian principles in the local schools and sensed the importance of providing an education for their children in harmony with their faith.

The first Sabbatarian Adventist primary school began operation Dec. 16, 1853, in Bucks Bridge, New York, under the leadership of a Sabbath-keeping farmer-preacher, John Byington, who would later become the first president of the General Conference. His daughter, Martha, was the teacher with 17 students enrolled.

Similar schools were opened by small Adventist groups in Maine, Vermont and New York with the purpose of providing their children with a proper education while protecting them from irreligious influences. Some of these home-based schools may have started in response to an article by Ellen White, where she stated, “Parents, if you wish to save your children, separate them from the world, keep them from the company of wicked children.”¹ Similarly, James White would write, “Shall we come out of Babylon, and leave our children behind?”²

About this time, the center of the Sabbatarian Adventist work transferred to Battle Creek, Michigan. Despite several attempts to open a school in Battle Creek, beginning in 1858, significant progress stalled for nearly a decade. By 1866, however, with the establishment of the Western Health Reform Institute, the expansion of the publishing work at the Review and Herald, and the growth of the Battle Creek Church to nearly 400 members, the foundation was laid for a more formal educational effort.

Goodloe Harper Bell, a Michigan school teacher in poor health, had come to Battle Creek to regain his health at the Health Institute and soon became a Seventh-day Adventist. In 1868 Bell was employed by the Battle Creek Church to teach a day school for children. Students included Edson and Willie White (sons of James and Ellen White), John Harvey and William Keith Kellogg (who would establish the Battle Creek Sanitarium and the Kellogg Food Company, respectively), among others.

The school was a success, and by early 1869, the church provided the original Review printing office for Bell’s school. For several years the school continued under various arrangements, including providing educational opportunities for young workers at church institutions through early morning and evening classes.

At a series of meetings held in 1872, Adventist leaders began to advocate for a formal school for training Christian workers to serve in the cause of God. A committee was formed to establish a training school where students would obtain physical, mental and moral education.

G.I. Butler, General Conference president, would write, “We want a school to be controlled by our people where influences of a moral character may be thrown around the pupils which will tend to preserve them from those influences which are so common and injurious in the majority of the schools of the present day.... We want our children to have a chance for mental culture without moral loss.”³ Meanwhile, Ellen White wrote an essay on the topic of proper education, concluding, “We need a school” — a school where students could study the common branches of education and at the same time “learn more perfectly the truths of God’s word for this time.”⁴

An educational society was formed that year, purchasing land in Battle Creek. Soon it began construction of a multi-story college building capable of accommodating 400 students. Classes began in August 1874 and in December 1874, the new building was completed and the school transferred operations to the facility.

On Jan. 4, 1875, the building was officially dedicated, and the name “Battle Creek College” was adopted. The college moved to Berrien Springs, Michigan, in 1901 and was renamed Emmanuel Missionary College. With the addition of the Seminary and graduate programs in 1960, the school became Andrews University, named after J.N. Andrews, a Seventh-day Adventist missionary who, with his family, set sail to establish work in Switzerland in 1874 — also 150 years ago.

Today, the story continues as Andrews University provides an outstanding education in the context of deep faith. Throughout its history, Andrews



▲ The original Battle Creek College building from 1875.

University has sent and continues to send forth thousands of committed men and women who carry forward God’s mission in remarkable ways. I invite you to enjoy the following articles that highlight some of the areas that Andrews University faculty and students are impacting now.

And there is more to come! This summer, Andrews University is launching its Global Campus that will coordinate and expand opportunities for students around the world to obtain a Christian education. This new initiative also provides support for adult learners to further their training through distance learning opportunities and degree completion programs (andrews.edu/distance).

We invite you or someone you know to join online or in person!

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John Wesley Taylor V is president of Andrews University