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From Reluctant Listener to Enthusiastic Member

Denis Kaiser

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From Reluctant Listener to Enthusiastic Member



▲ DENIS KAISER

In the spring of 1874, Isaac and Adelia Van Horn arrived as Adventist missionaries in Walla Walla, the largest town in the Washington Territory with 2,000 inhabitants.

Soon after their arrival, the Van Horns sought an adequate location to pitch their 60-foot tent for evangelistic meetings. They soon found a French settler named Toussaint “Charlie” Chabot, who allowed them to pitch the tent near his vineyard, hoping to gain favor with God through this good deed.

Due to his Catholic faith, Charlie initially did not want to attend the evangelistic meetings. However, he enjoyed sitting on his front porch to listen to the beautiful music. Aware that Charlie was within hearing distance, Isaac preached louder with the hope that Charlie would hear the messages as well. Indeed, Charlie was moved by what he heard. Each evening, he moved his chair closer to the tent. Eventually, he joined the group inside the tent, and when the meetings ended, he became a member of the newly formed Adventist congregation. He even donated the land where the tent had stood for the construction of a permanent church building. The “Walla Walla Statesman” described the building as “the best house of worship in Oregon and Washington Territory, except one, east of the Cascade Mountains.”

Charlie’s love for music continued to play a significant role in his spiritual journey. After the Walla Walla church was built, he could always be found in the front row near the organ. Despite his inability to carry a tune, Charlie sang with great enthusiasm, a passion that occasionally irked some church members.

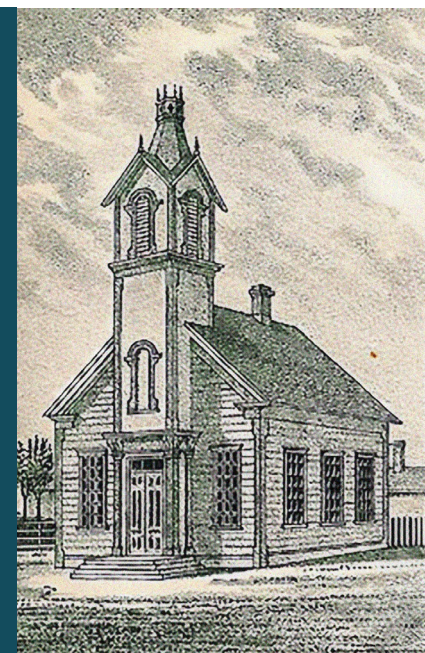
One Sabbath, after the divine service, several disgruntled church members approached Caroline Wood, the church’s esteemed organist, to express their frustration about Charlie’s loud, off-key singing. Caroline, renowned as the finest musician in

the Walla Walla Valley, responded with grace and wisdom. She said, “Not for anything would I hurt his feelings. Let Brother Chabot sing. He enjoys it. The Lord knows all about the motive that prompts him to want to sing praises.”

Caroline’s words were a reminder of the importance of compassion and understanding within the church community. Charlie Chabot’s story is a testament to how simple acts of kindness and the joy of music can bridge differences in faith and bring people closer to God. His journey from a reluctant listener to a dedicated member of the Adventist church illustrates the transformative power of faith, fellowship and music.¹ ■

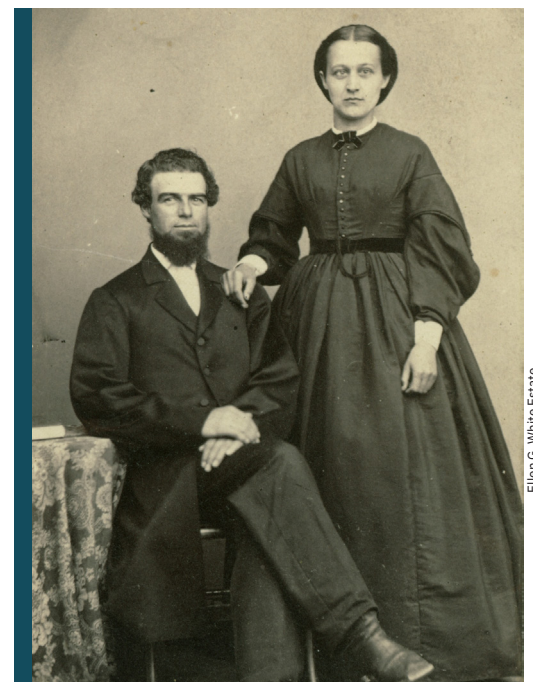
¹ Doug R. Johnson, *Adventism on the Northwestern Frontier* (Berrien Springs, MI: Oronoko Books, 1996), pp. 14–15, 17.

Denis Kaiser is an associate professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.



Whitman College and Northwest Archives

▲ The old Walla Walla church



Ellen G. White Estate

► Adelia and Isaac Van Horn