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11-2024

A Place for Rest and Relaxation

Denis Kaiser

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A Place for Rest and Relaxation



▲ DENIS KAISER

Is it acceptable for those who believe in the imminent second coming of Christ and our mission to share the gospel with those in need of salvation to take time for vacation? Surprisingly to some, James and Ellen White, cofounders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, did indeed take time out of their busy schedules for vacations.

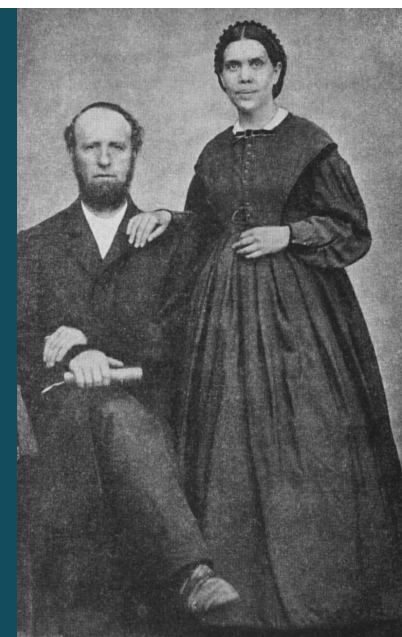
By the late 1860s, the Whites increasingly recognized the importance of incorporating rest into their schedule. Nearly every year, they attended almost every Adventist camp meeting across North America. The constant stress and recurring health issues that James faced made both him and Ellen acutely aware of the need to balance their demanding lives with physical exercise, adequate sleep, and relaxation. Thus, in December 1869, they purchased a cottage in Washington, Iowa,¹ as a “hideout” where they could relax and focus on their writing.

They enjoyed their Washington home so much that in 1871 they considered selling their Battle Creek residence to move permanently to Washington, Iowa. However, due to their commitment to the church, they decided to keep their Battle Creek home.² Despite this, they had a great fondness for their Washington retreat. James often worked in the garden there and found he could rest well at night. Ellen admired the beautiful and pleasant location, even wishing it could become their headquarters.³ She described it as “a good home for the weary pilgrims.”⁴ In June 1872, she wrote, “This is a very beautiful place and I prize it highly because it is so retired. . . . We are in the midst of flowers of almost every description, but the most beautiful of all is to be surrounded with roses on every hand, of every color and so fragrant. The Prairie Queen is just opening, also the Baltimore bell.

Peonies have been very lovely and fragrant but now they are fast going to decay. We have had strawberries for several days. . . . No one could help but like it. Very many visitors come to see the premises and look at the flowers and obtain a bouquet.”⁵

Until 1875, the Whites visited their Washington home annually during the summers, often spending several weeks there. These visits allowed them to recharge before returning to attend camp meetings in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and other locations. Their time in Washington, Iowa, serves as a reminder that even those devoted to a vital mission can benefit from moments of relaxation. ■

▼ James and Ellen White



- 1 Deed record, “Wm. H. Wilson and James White,” Washington County [Iowa], record date: January 12, 1870.
- 2 Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years, 1863–1875*, vol. 2 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1986), 316.
- 3 Ellen G. White to W. C. White, May 20, 1872, Lt 6, 1872.
- 4 Ellen G. White to W. C. White, May 22, 1872, Lt 7, 1872.
- 5 Ellen G. White to James Edson and Emma White, June 19, 1872, Lt 5, 1872.

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