



M. Kellogg



Wm. Pratt



A. Atwood

The History of St. Helena Hospital Chapter II

Merritt G. Kellogg—The First Medical Director

Merritt G. Kellogg grew up in Battle Creek, Michigan. He was the eldest son of John P. Kellogg and had 16 siblings. Two of his brothers became quite famous: Dr. John Harvey Kellogg was the founder of the first Adventist healthcare facility, Battle Creek Sanitarium. Brother Will introduced the world to cornflakes and forever changed the breakfast habits of America when he created the *Kellogg's* cereal industry.

Merritt joined the Adventist faith when he was 20 years of age and was active in his local church in Battle Creek as a Bible class teacher. In 1859 he loaded an oxcart with his belongings and headed west with his family to settle in San Francisco. He worked as a carpenter in the city and made good wages. An avid Bible student, he shared his faith with friends and co-workers and helped establish the first Seventh-day Adventist congregation in San Francisco. But deep inside he felt he was not doing what God had planned for his life.

After working for several years in San Francisco, he sold his home and business and enrolled in Dr. Trall's Hygieo-Therapeutic College in New Jersey. Six months later he graduated as a physician and returned to the West Coast to practice medicine. He convinced early Adventist church leaders J.N. Loughborough and D.T. Bourdeau that they should come to California to help spread the gospel.

The two evangelists pitched a revival tent near Petaluma in 1870 and Kellogg contributed to their meetings by speaking on health topics. When a small-pox epidemic broke out in the little town of Bloomfield, southwest of Santa Rosa, the men closed the meetings and went to offer aid to the community. Kellogg used his knowledge of water treatments and healthful diet to treat the sick, saving ten out of 11 patients who came to him for treatment. Another local physician, using the standard medical drugs of the day, lost four patients out of five. As a result, Kellogg's fame as a physician spread throughout the region.

Kellogg continued to work with Loughborough holding a series of Adventist evangelistic meetings in various towns in Northern California. Churches were

established in Santa Rosa, Healdsburg, St. Helena, and other communities. Kellogg later settled in Rutherford and opened a medical practice. Loughborough went on to help found the Battle Creek Sanitarium, and soon he and Kellogg were eager to open a similar facility in California.

In the summer of 1877, a new convert to the Adventist Church in St. Helena, Asa B. Atwood, took his wife to Dr. Kellogg's office in Rutherford for medical treatment. Kellogg and Atwood discussed the need for larger facilities in the Valley and the Crystal Springs property owned by W.A. Pratt was mentioned as an ideal location. As a result of that conversation, Atwood talked with his friend Pratt about Kellogg's idea, and the three men formed a plan of action. Pratt donated ten acres of land and an interest in the spring on the property along with \$3,000 in cash. Atwood contributed \$1,000 and Kellogg promised \$1,000 in labor.

In an article printed in the Adventist news magazine, *Signs of the Times*, November 22, 1877, Dr. Merritt G. Kellogg is quoted as saying:

“ I wish to state to the public that I shall immediately commence to erect buildings suitable to treat patients on the hygienic system. They will be located two and a half miles from Saint Helena. The location is all that could be desired. The buildings will be two hundred and fifty feet above the Valley. This elevation is covered with the most beautiful natural groves of pine, fir, redwood and manzanita, bay and madrone... A mountain spring of pure, soft water one hundred feet above the buildings will give a liberal supply for all purposes. The climate, location, and surroundings are not second to any other locality in California for the recovery and preservation of health.”

Ground was broken on December 10, 1877, and construction on the two-story frame structure began in earnest. The foundation was laid with bricks made of clay from the surrounding hillsides and baked in Pratt's kilns. A team of horses was purchased to haul lumber to the site. Kellogg, Pratt, Atwood and others doubtless spent many long hours sawing boards and pounding nails. By late spring the building had taken shape and plans were made to open the facility on June 7, 1878.

Dr. Kellogg served as medical director for the Rural Health Retreat for the next two years. In 1879 he moved to Los Angeles and four years later he sailed to the South Pacific on a mission boat named the *Pitcairn*. He worked as a medical missionary for several years in the Tongan Islands and later moved to Australia.

Thanks to Dr. Kellogg's commitment to providing the best quality healthcare, The Rural Health Retreat opened its doors, and his vision has been carried out in this same location for the past 125 years.