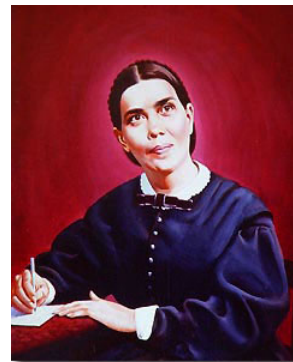


The History of St. Helena Hospital Chapter IV

Eliel Cottage, Ellen G. White and the Adventist Church

Perched on the edge of the hill at the south end of the Doctor's Parking Lot, and just above the Emergency Room entrance, is a small house that today serves as the offices for our St. Helena Hospital Foundation. The sign out front reads *Eliel Cottage*. As you enter the building, there is a plaque to the left of the front door that says "Home of Ellen G. White—1883 to 1891." Who was Ellen White and what did she have to do with the history of the Hospital? Ellen White and her husband James were among the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and were deeply involved with the development of the Rural Health Retreat and St. Helena Sanitarium.

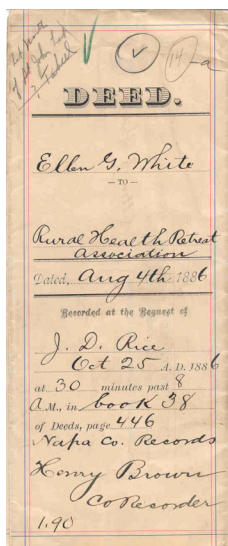
Ellen G. White (1827-1915) was a gifted Christian author who is still making an impact on the lives of people who read her writings today. During her career, she wrote more than 5,000 articles and 40 books. She is the most translated woman writer in the history of literature and the most translated American author of either gender. Seventh-day Adventists believe Mrs. White was more than a gifted writer; they believe she was appointed by God as a special messenger to draw attention to the Bible and help prepare people for Christ's second coming.



In 1863, God inspired Ellen to see the relation of physical health to spirituality, of the importance of following right principles in diet and in the care of the body, and of the benefits of nature's remedies—clean air, nutritious food, sunshine, exercise, and pure water. Previous to this time, little thought had been given to health matters. However, as a result of Ellen's writings, the leaders of the church soon became impressed with the need for health reform. In the months that followed, the health message became part of the Adventist teachings, and six pamphlets on health were published by Ellen and her husband James. Early in 1866 the church opened the Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek, Michigan, which later became the famed Battle Creek Sanitarium. John Harvey Kellogg lived in the home of James and Ellen White when he was a young man. With their encouragement, he attended medical school and became the medical director of the facility. His brother, Merritt G. Kellogg, later studied medicine, moved to California and, as they say, "you know the rest of the story."

On her first visit to the construction site of the Rural Health Retreat, Mrs. White remarked that she had seen this same location in a dream. She and James encouraged Kellogg in his work. James White, himself an author and publisher of the first Adventist news journal, *Signs of the Times*, penned the following words after they had surveyed the grounds in late 1877: "Here we find Dr. M.G. Kellogg, very busy in establishing an institution for the cure of the sick. The locality is well selected . . . The enterprise will doubtless be a grand success." *Signs of the Times*, Dec. 20, 1877.

Ellen returned to St. Helena often and in 1880 wrote to a friend: "While at St. Helena last week we visited Crystal Springs, where this health retreat is located. It is our opinion that a more beautiful spot could not have been selected . . . A place of greater natural loveliness we have seldom ever seen." Every time she visited the Retreat she became more enamored with the place.



William Pratt was offering free half-acre homesites near the Retreat to Adventist families and hoped to develop a small supporting community near the institution. He offered a plot to Mrs. White if she would build a home on it. The next day she told him she could not accept his generous offer, but that she wanted to buy 10 acres adjacent to the institution—all the land he had proposed to give for building sites. Pratt protested that this would spoil his plan and Mrs. White told him that was precisely what she wanted to do. She stated she had been impressed that the land would be needed by the institution and she wished to secure and hold it for such use.

Reluctantly he sold her eight-and-one-half acres, which she held for a number of years and later deeded to the Rural Health Retreat Association. On this plot she built a little cottage she described as “a gem of a house” and named it Eliel (a Biblical name that means “to whom God is might”). She made this her home whenever she was visiting the retreat. Mrs. White came for treatments as well as for meetings of the Board of Directors. She often was a guest lecturer on health and spirituality during the evening parlor talks for patients and guests of the facility.

One such guest was the mother of a Greek Orthodox bishop from Yugoslavia. The Bishop had brought his ailing mother to the United States hoping the change in scenery would help restore her health. On their visit to California he heard of a health resort run by Adventists in the Napa Valley. He made arrangements for his mother to come to the St. Helena Sanitarium, where she was greatly helped by the medical care and treatments, finding it to be a very restful place. He later told an Adventist missionary to Yugoslavia that his mother, while a patient at the Sanitarium, had heard Mrs. White speak several times during the evening parlor lectures and wanted to have a private interview with her. “So she had a number of interviews with Mrs. White,” he wrote. “The lady talked of her faith in Christ and of His love and care for the troubled in a way that brought faith and hope to my mother again. They had prayer together and it helped my mother to break away from the gloom of the past and lay hold of a real Christian experience in Christ.”

Ellen White’s counsels on health, written largely in the last half of the nineteenth century, were then considered controversial and revolutionary. Today they are regarded as sound advice. She wrote on the importance of good hygiene; vegetarianism; the need for a balance between rest and work; abstinence from tobacco, alcohol and the abuse of drugs; moderation in eating; the value of exercise, fresh air, and sunshine; and numerous other health-related topics.

Through her influence and leadership, a number of Seventh-day Adventist hospitals were established throughout California – Loma Linda, Glendale, Paradise Valley, and White Memorial, as well as other institutions around the world. She moved to Australia in the late 1800’s and then returned to the Napa Valley in 1900, purchasing the former home of Robert Pratt, located on Glass Mountain Lane at the foot of the hill below the Hospital. She named this home “Elmshaven” and lived there for the last 15 years of her life. If you are interested in learning more about the life and work of Ellen G. White, you can visit “Elmshaven,” listed by the National Park Service as a National Historic Landmark, and take a tour of this lovely home and its grounds.

At the 1907 dedication of the new hospital building at St. Helena, Mrs. White presented a twenty-minute dedication address, *Why We Have Sanitariums*. She stated, “Our sanitariums are to be centers of education. Those who come to them are to be given an opportunity to learn how to overcome disease and how to preserve the health. . .” As she closed her remarks, she stated that this was her first opportunity to see the new building and that she was “very much pleased with it.”

Sources: *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years*, p. 77; *The Later Elmshaven Years*, pp. 139-144; www.whiteestate.org; Letter from W.A. Spicer to the manager of St. Helena Sanitarium.