

Cultivators of the Soil and the Soul

Some Early Adventist Agriculturalists

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Footnotes that refer to "Letter ---" or "Manuscript ---" refer to letters and manuscripts written by Ellen White.

Many early Adventists, including some who became prominent leaders in the Advent movement, were involved in agricultural and horticultural activities. This paper looks briefly at the agricultural work of some of these Adventist pioneers. This paper discusses the work of only *some* of the Adventist pioneers – no doubt there are others who could have been included. This paper focusses on the agricultural activities of these people. No attempt is made to describe the whole scope of their lives and work. The word “agriculture” is used in this paper as a general term, and includes some activities that might more properly be called “horticulture”.

Introduction

It is an interesting fact that two of earliest and most significant pioneers of Adventism were farmers. One writer states:

It is an interesting coincidence that a farmer from Low Hampton, New York, launched the Adventist movement about August 14, 1831, and another farmer resident in Port Gibson, New York, bridged the Adventist and subsequent Seventh-day Adventist movements by the unique insight given him on October 23, 1844.¹

Of course, the writer is referring to William Miller, who, as the most prominent leader of the Advent movement of the 1830s and 40s, was foremost in teaching that the 2300 day prophecy would reach its conclusion around 1843-44, at which time he expected Jesus would come; and to Hiram Edson, whose insight gave the disappointed Advent believers an understanding of Jesus’ high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

I would suggest that it is *not* a “coincidence” that both these men were farmers. Some would argue that, as in that era a very large proportion of the American population lived on farms, it is only to be expected that a high proportion of Adventist pioneers would be farmers. However, it must be remembered that there were many non-farmers at that time who were seemingly more qualified to spearhead a religious movement. There were many ministers and theologians whom the Lord could have called to do this work. However,

It was not the scholarly theologians who had an understanding of this truth, and engaged in its proclamation. Had these been faithful watchmen, diligently and prayerfully searching the Scriptures, they would have known the time of night; the prophecies would have opened to them the events about to take place. But they did not occupy this position, and the message was given by humbler men.²

There were many “humbler men” in various trades, whom the Lord could have called. But I believe that it is significant that the Lord called these two *farmers* to deliver his special end-time message.

As the late Bob Jorgensen once said,

[It] is a conviction of mine I think if our leadership were involved in agriculture and the formative part of their experience, we probably would have a lot less theological error in our church today, because if we understand the principles of agriculture ..., but if we take agriculture as a parallel with the spiritual development of our

¹ Patrick, A.N. *Charles Fitch, Hiram Edson, and the Raison D’etre of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, p.100

² White, E.G. *The Great Controversy*, p.312.

experience, our spiritual experience, we can avoid many of the errors that are promoted in false Gospels.³

It is not the purpose of this paper to examine in detail the theological positions of these Adventist founders. Instead, it will focus mainly on their agricultural activities.

William Miller

An upright, honest-hearted farmer, ... was the man specially chosen of God to lead out in the proclamation of Christ's second coming.⁴

In the early 1800s, an interest in the imminent second coming of Christ arose in many parts of the world.

Like the great Reformation of the sixteenth century, the advent movement appeared in different countries of Christendom at the same time. In both Europe and America men of faith and prayer were led to the study of the prophecies, and, tracing down the inspired record, they saw convincing evidence that the end of all things was at hand. In different lands there were isolated bodies of Christians who, solely by the study of the Scriptures, arrived at the belief that the Saviour's advent was near.⁵

However, William Miller exerted an especially important role in this movement:

To William Miller and his colaborers it was given to preach the warning in America. This country became the center of the great advent movement. It was here that the prophecy of the first angel's message had its most direct fulfillment.⁶

Thus, "As Elisha was called from following his oxen in the field, to receive the mantle of consecration to the prophetic office, so was William Miller called to leave his plow and open to the people the mysteries of the kingdom of God."⁷

It is interesting and instructive to see what kind of agriculturalist this "upright, honest-hearted farmer" was. It is reported that

The 1825 New York agriculture census records that they [William and Lucy Miller] had 80 acres of improved land. In 1835 that had increased to 140. With hilly and rocky land it took a lot of work just to survive. The number of cattle they owned increased from fourteen to twenty-two; horses from two to four; and sheep from forty to seventy-two. ... In addition it was the wife's responsibility to keep the garden that supplied most of the food needed by her family.⁸

For its day, that was described as "quite a large farming operation."⁹

Writing in 1853, Sylvester Bliss, biographer of William Miller, described Miller's farming activities:

³ Jorgensen, Bob. "History of Agriculture in Adventism - Part 1", Presentation at Adventist Agriculture Association Convention, 13 November, 2014

⁴ White, E.G. *The Great Controversy*, p.317

⁵ White, E.G. *The Great Controversy*, p.357

⁶ White, E.G. *The Great Controversy*, p.368

⁷ White, E.G. *The Great Controversy*, p.3331

⁸ Hess, G. "Lucy Miller", *Adventist Heritage Ministry Bulletin*, vol.7, no. 2, June, 1994, pp.2,3.

⁹ Hess, G. "Lucy Miller", *Adventist Heritage Ministry Bulletin*, vol.7, no. 2, June, 1994, pp.2,3.

Let us try to get a glimpse at his wealth and resources. Twelve years ago he was the owner of about two hundred acres of land, less than half of which was capable of cultivation, yielding a liberal return to hard labor. No one, who knows with what energy, diligence, and firmness, Bro. Miller has prosecuted the labors he seems to have been raised up to perform, will need to be told that he is a man of industrious, temperate, and frugal habits. Such a man, in such a place, with a help meet for him, could not be poor and thriftless. Twenty-five years ago he built his house. Other buildings were erected as they became necessary, but none within the last dozen years, except a bee-house, and small, plain shed, or boiling-house, where food is prepared for his hogs.¹⁰ He showed me his home farm, consisting of ninety-six acres, lying wholly on the south side of the road. There is some common wall upon it; but the moss-grown, weather-beaten stones unanimously contradict the foolish and malicious lies which have been told about its recent origin. He also owns a rough tract of fifty acres, north of the road, and twenty acres of interval a little distance to the east. When he let out his farm to his son, he sold him \$500 worth of stock, and has since sold seventy acres of land to his son-in-law. What he has thus realized, and \$100 yearly for the use of his farm, have enabled him to meet the expenses of travelling, printing, and giving away books, company, sickness, etc. ... As a specimen of the fertility of his farm, he showed us a potato weighing two pounds and seven ounces.¹¹

As “a man of industrious, temperate, and frugal habits”, he seems to have been reasonably prosperous as a farmer. It is clear that his “industrious, temperate, and frugal habits” characterised his Bible study and his later preaching and evangelistic activities.

Hiram Edson

Hiram Edson’s farm has been described as the “theological birthplace” of the Seventh-day Adventist church.¹² It has been said that “Edson farmed to support his family, but lived to share the sanctuary and the Sabbath.”¹³ Not so much is known about Edson’s farming activities. We do know that in 1835 he bought a farm of 56 acres,¹⁴ which in the days before mechanisation would have been quite a large holding. In 1850 he sold the farm, and used the money to help buy the first Seventh-day Adventist printing press in Rochester, New York.¹⁵ Presumably Edson’s farm was a typical mixed farm. In 1951 it was operating as a dairy farm.¹⁶

James White

Of all the Adventist pioneers, one who had perhaps the most interesting involvement agriculture, over a long period of time, was James White.

¹⁰ Note that this was many years before Seventh-day Adventists came to an understanding of clean and unclean meats, or indeed of vegetarianism. Miller died long before the Seventh-day Adventist Church was organised.

¹¹ Bliss, S., *Memoirs of William Miller*, p.244. {1853 SB, MWM 244.3}

¹² Burt, M., *Adventist Pioneer Places*, p.130

¹³ Burt, M., *Adventist Pioneer Places*, p.151

¹⁴ Spalding, A.W. *Footprints of the Pioneers*, p.77.

¹⁵ Spalding, A.W. *Footprints of the Pioneers*, p.78; Burt, p.151

¹⁶ Delafield, “Camp Meeting in New York State”, in *Review and Herald*, 6 September, 1951, p.13.

James White was born on 4 August 1821, at Palmyra, Maine. It is said that “The people of Maine ... stressed their traditional traits of honesty, thrift, frankness, self-reliance, thoroughness, and ruggedness.”¹⁷ James White certainly exemplified these characteristics. James’s father, John White moved to Palmyra aged 21, 15 years before James born, and did his best to farm the “thin rocky soil” on his property. Only twenty acres were cleared when he bought the place, but over a period of 51 years he cleared and farmed more of his land.¹⁸ James later wrote

My father possessed from his youth great physical strength, and activity of body and mind. With his own hands he cleared the heavy timber from his land. This revealed stones in the soil, which his own hands removed and placed into stone fence, to prepare the way for the plow. He toiled on for more than half a century, till the rock-bound soil was literally worn out, and much of the old farm lost its power to produce crops. At the age of seventy-four he left it and sought rest in the more congenial climate of the West.¹⁹

It was in this environment that James grew up, and had a “hands on” introduction to agriculture. Indeed, he probably worked more on the farm than most young people did, as eye problems forced him to drop out of school, and he helped around the farm until age 19.²⁰ After a sickly childhood, by the age of eighteen he was “ahead of [his] years in size and strength”²¹ At the age of nineteen he began to seek an education. He said that “My friends advised me to turn my attention to farming, and not think of seeking for an education. But I could not take their advice.” His education opened the way for him to teach school for a time,²² and then, joining the ranks of the Millerite Adventists, he entered upon a lifetime of evangelism and ministry.²³

For a number of years James White, and his wife Ellen, who he married in 1846, lived a rather itinerant life, moving from place to place as the needs of their ministry necessitated. In April 1851, they rented a house in Rochester, New York.²⁴ At this house, the fledgling publishing work was set up, and the house was shared with a number of their associates in this work. It is recorded that “As the house stood on about an acre of land, there was space for a garden.”²⁵ Their lack of finance made growing their own food a necessity.

It took the strictest of economy to keep things going at the home and the office, but James and Ellen White knew something of poverty and economy. Soon after getting settled in the home on Mount Hope Avenue, arrangements were made to have the open land near the house prepared for a spring garden. As the plow started to turn the soil Ellen noticed many small potatoes that had not frozen during the mild winter. The drought the preceding year had resulted in a crop thought not worth harvesting. What a find! Soon Ellen, with pail in hand, was following the plowman, gathering in

¹⁷ Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.10

¹⁸ White, J.S. *Life Incidents*, p.9; Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.20

¹⁹ White, J.S. *Life Incidents*, p.10

²⁰ Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.22

²¹ White, J.S. *Life Incidents*, p.12

²² White, J.S. *Life Incidents*, p.13

²³ See *Life Incidents*, chapter “Impressions of Duty”

²⁴ *Life Sketches*, p.142, and *Ellen G White Encyclopedia* p.879 says April 1852. *Ellen G White Encyclopedia*, p.116 has April 1851.

²⁵ White, A.L. *The Early Years*, p.230

what she saw to be a precious harvest. In the White household, economy was considered not only a necessity but a religious duty.²⁶

After three years in Rochester, the Whites were invited by the believers in Michigan to move to that state. Consequently, in November 1855 the Whites moved to Battle Creek, Michigan. Here they lived for some time in a rented house which Ellen described as having “scarcely any conveniences”.²⁷ She wrote in the same letter that “The brethren think we ought to have a little house put up.” Shortly thereafter the Whites bought a block of land, but soon sold it.²⁸

Wood Street, Battle Creek

On 4 August, 1856, the Whites purchased a piece of land on Wood Street, Battle Creek. A document written a few years later describes their early years in Battle Creek:

When Eld. White removed to Battle Creek, he lived for a considerable time in a hired house. After this, by the assistance of friends, rather by their direct donation, he obtained one acre and a half of land, still covered with forest trees, and situated in the extreme western part of Battle Creek. On this piece of land, by the aid of the friends in Battle Creek and some other places, he erected a moderate-sized cottage house, which cost some \$500; and with the same friendly aid he cleared off his new land, and converted it into a garden and a small orchard of fruit trees. Here he lived several years.²⁹

This land comprised two lots, “lots 64 and 65 of ‘Manchester’s Addition’”³⁰, totalling one and a half acres. Their son Willie later described how this land was developed:

Kindhearted brethren gave their labor and cleared the land, all except a little grove of second growth oak in the northeast corner, which, at father's request, was left as a place for retirement and prayer.³¹

Concerning this patch of bush that was retained as a place of prayer, it is said that “noted for the power and fervency of his prayer life,³² he [James] spent much time in the little grove. In their letters and her diary, he and Ellen would often mention visiting there.”³³

As mentioned above, at Wood Street James established “a garden and a small orchard of fruit trees”. James White’s biographer states that this “garden and orchard would be a major food source for the family”.³⁴

²⁶ White, A.L. *The Early Years*, pp.271,272.

²⁷ Letter 9, 1856. Ellen White to Sister E.P. Below, 1 January 1856,

²⁸ Hickerson, S.D and Campbell, M.W. “Homes of James and Ellen G. White”, in *Ellen G White Encyclopedia*, p.879.

²⁹ The Battle Creek Church, *Defense of Elder James White and Wife*, p.12.

³⁰ Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.88

³¹ White, W.C., “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White – XXX. Early Memories of Our First Home”, in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 13 February 1936, p.6.

³² For example, Willie wrote concerning his father: “He did not ‘offer a prayer;’ he prayed with earnestness and with solemn reverence.” White, W.C. “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White – XXX. Early Memories of Our First Home”, in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 13 February 1936, p.7.

³³ Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.88

³⁴ Wheeler, G. *James White* p.88

An interesting feature of the Wood Street property was a well of “clear, cool water”. An Adventist neighbour, Jonah Lewis, dug a well near the boundary between his place and the White’s, so that both could obtain water.³⁵

James White was also able to buy a block described as four-fifths of an acre for with a small house, for Ellen’s parents. They did not take it, so he sold it to others. James wrote: “I bought it for Father Harmon. I have cleared it off and cultivated it and fenced it, cost fifty dollars. ... The land is *all* fit for the finest garden...”³⁶ Another Battle Creek resident, Melvina Devereux wrote concerning this place “The land is very rich. Such corn as Brother White raised there I never saw before. He planted it late, too, as it had to be grubbed out and fenced before he could plant.”³⁷

Ellen White has given some interesting descriptions of James’s gardening activities while they were living at Wood Street. For example:

[March 11, 1859] “It has been dark and stormy all day. It has rained and blown very hard. Husband has been preparing for a garden. Rather early spring. Large holes are prepared in the earth for the pieplant.”³⁸

[March 24, 1859] “Arose early. Assisted my husband and Brother Richard in taking up a currant bush to plant in our garden.”³⁹

Ellen herself was also an active gardener. Describing the daily routine of the White family at this time, Willie later wrote

After father had left the house [to go to work in the morning], mother enjoyed spending half an hour in her flower garden during those portions of the year when flowers could be cultivated. In this her children were encouraged to work with her.⁴⁰

She herself wrote

[April 11, 1859] Spent most of the day making a garden for my children. Feel willing to make home as pleasant for them as I can, that home may be the pleasantest place of any to them.⁴¹

[April 12, 1859] Continued to make garden. Went down to Sister Benedict’s for some plants. My heart is called out in sympathy for them. I know they are poor and Brother Benedict is very feeble; unable to work. The mother and the daughters are in feeble health. May the Lord pity them and may He live in the hearts of the church, is my prayer.⁴²

³⁵ White, W.C. “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White – XXX. Early Memories of Our First Home”, in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 13 February 1936, pp.6,7

³⁶ Wheeler, G. *James White*, pp.94-95

³⁷ Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.95

³⁸ Manuscript 5, 1859 (Diary 11 March 1859). (“Pieplant” was a common name of rhubarb – see <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pieplant>)

³⁹ Manuscript 5, 1859, (Diary 24 March 1859)

⁴⁰ White, W.C. “Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White – XXX. Early Memories of Our First Home”, in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 13 February 1936, p.7

⁴¹ Manuscript 6, 1859, (Diary 11 April 1859)

⁴² Manuscript 6, 1859, (Diary 12 April 1859)

Washington and Champion Streets, Battle Creek

In 1863 the Whites bought a house nearer to the Publishing House, on the corner of Wood and Champion Streets, Battle Creek.⁴³ On this property, described as 84/100 of an acre⁴⁴, were “twenty-five apple trees, forty peach trees, forty pear trees, twenty-two quince bushes, and grapes, Lawton blackberries, and raspberries, in abundance, and three thousand of the most improved strawberry plants”.⁴⁵ Apparently these were planted by James White.⁴⁶

In 1866, finding the noise and bustle of this location undesirable, James White bought eleven acres, north of the Sanitarium.⁴⁷

Greenville

On 16 August 1865, James White suffered a stroke, which turned out to be the first of several strokes. This stroke was brought on by stress and overwork.⁴⁸ Doctors “declared that unless a miracle were wrought in his behalf, he would never regain either his physical or mental vigor. They declared that they had never known of an instance of recovery from so severe a case of paralysis.”⁴⁹ Attempting to regain his health, he went with several other Adventist ministers (called by some “the Seventh-day Adventist invalid party”), to Dr James Jackson’s “water cure” institution in Dansville, New York, known as “Our Home on the Hillside”. While he gained considerable help there, Ellen lamented that the doctors “sought to impress upon my husband the necessity of avoiding all exertion, both mental and physical; that unless he did this he would surely place himself beyond recovery. These ideas had been so often presented that a continual fear was upon his mind that if he should do anything it would prove disastrous.”⁵⁰

While very appreciative of the help they received at Dansville, James and Ellen White could not agree with all that they saw and heard there. When after some time James showed little improvement, Ellen took him back to Battle Creek. Of course, in Battle Creek James was once again near the denominational headquarters, and people from the General Conference and the publishing house would come to him with various problems.⁵¹ Seeing that this constant pressure was adversely affecting his health, Ellen determined to take him away from Battle Creek.

On 19 December 1866, they went to stay with Adventist friends at Wright Michigan, about 80 miles from Battle Creek. Some time later they bought a 45 acre farm at Greenville, on which they had a house built. Here they could be away from the constant pressures of Battle Creek. On 2 May 1867, James reported in the *Review and Herald*

To-day, May 2d, we start the plow for garden. We hope, with the blessing of God, to prosper in our new home.⁵²

⁴³ Hickerson, S.D and Campbell, M.W. “Homes of James and Ellen G. White”, in *Ellen G White Encyclopedia*, p.879.

⁴⁴ Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.92

⁴⁵ Advertisement in *Review and Herald*, 19 March 1867, p.180

⁴⁶ The Battle Creek Church, *Defense of Elder James White and Wife*. p.12

⁴⁷ Hickerson, S.D and Campbell, M.W. “Homes of James and Ellen G. White”, in *Ellen G White Encyclopedia*, 879-880

⁴⁸ Wheeler, G. “White, James Springer”. In *Ellen G White Encyclopedia*, p.559: Wheeler, G. *James White*, pp.159-162.

⁴⁹ Robinson, D.E. *The Story of Our Health Message*, p.134.

⁵⁰ Manuscript 1, 1867. (Written early in the 1880s, but for convenience filed with the documents for 1867.)

⁵¹ Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.166

⁵² White, James. “Report from Bro. White”, *Review and Herald*, 14 May 1867, p.271

They returned to Battle Creek occasionally. They attended the General Conference Session, which was held from May 14 to 19, 1867.⁵³ When they returned to Greenville, they took strawberry plants with them to plant on their property. A little later, James White wrote

May 28, we returned from Battle Creek with strawberry plants for our new garden.
July 4, by the wayside, we enjoyed ripe fruit from the plants.

He went on to urge that

Our Western people need not go without fruit when the transplanted strawberry will gather from the soil that which is most delicious in the short space of thirty-six days. Every Western farmer should have one fourth of an acre of berries to twenty-five acres of wheat or corn. Then dry and dry and can them and have fruit the year around. Spend one fourth you used to for pork, beef, mutton and poultry, and you may have strawberries and raspberries the whole year.⁵⁴

As stated before, the doctors at Dansville had warned James not to engage in physical or mental activity. With this in mind, he was avoiding any physical exertion. Ellen felt that he needed physical exercise, if he was to regain his health. She said “while presenting our case to God with great earnestness I believed that I must use all the powers God had given me to bring about the result desired”. About this time they visited Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Howe. James wrote “Sixth-day the 14th [June 1867], self and wife went to Orange, about thirty miles, and spent the Sabbath.”⁵⁵ One the Sunday,

James asked the Howes to place a couch by the front door, so he could look outside and rest. Soon he saw Mrs Howe begin to hoe in the cornfield. After a few minutes his embarrassment at lying on a couch while Mrs Howe worked in the field began to overcome his fear of another stroke. He asked his wife to bring him his clothes, and a few minutes later he joined the farmer’s wife and hoed a row of corn.⁵⁶

Ellen later wrote

My husband walked out in the field and found Sister Howe, with hoe in hand, hoeing corn. He provided himself with a hoe and kept pace with her. When he came into the house he looked very well pleased. Said he, “I helped Sister Howe hoe corn, and for the first time in months perspiration has started.” That night he seemed to be more hopeful in regard to his recovery, and our supplications to the throne of grace were most fervent and mingled with living faith.⁵⁷

James triumphantly wrote “For the first time in two years, first-day morning, I hoed a roe [sic] of corn ten rods in length.”⁵⁸ Franklin Howe considered this to be a “turning point” in James’s recovery.⁵⁹

Ellen did what she could to encourage James to engage in physical activity. She wrote

⁵³ <https://www.adventistarchives.org/gcsessiondates> Accessed 23 October 2019

⁵⁴ White, James. “Report from Brother White”, *Review and Herald*, 16 July 1867, p.72

⁵⁵ “Report from Bro. White”, *Review and Herald*, 25 June 1867, p.28. Note that “sixth-day” referred to Friday. For some years early Adventists used this terminology for the days of the week, rather than using what some considered to be Pagan names.

⁵⁶ Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.168

⁵⁷ Manuscript 1, 1867 (Written early in the 1880s, but for convenience filed with the documents for 1867).

⁵⁸ “Report from Bro. White”, *Review and Herald*, 25 June 1867, p.28

⁵⁹ Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.8

I knew that he must have a change. I encouraged his trying to do something upon our place. This was the object we had in view when we purchased the little farm. His once active mind could not be at a standstill. Unless occupied with something it would center upon himself and he would never recover. He must become interested in something besides himself.

I sent to Greenville for three light hoes. We encouraged my husband to come out of doors and help Willie and me in planting and in hoeing about our berries and vegetables. He did a very little in this line. My hands blistered. I pricked them, let the water out, and kept at my work. This was to provoke my husband to good works.⁶⁰

The outdoor life on the farm, with gradually increasing physical activity, enabled James to regain his health. Before long he was able to report that he was well enough "to be able to harness and also put out my horses and go to town on business for our builders."⁶¹ Soon he was able to do even more:

Again we must express our gratitude to God for sustaining grace and strength. Fifth and sixth days I was able to prepare a farm-wagon with wooden springs, go to town for lumber, to the woods for wood, and on sixth-day P.M. was one of two to handle nearly three thousand feet of heavy lumber just from the river. I stood upon my feet handling this lumber more than two hours in the hot sun. I was just tired enough to sleep well all night and feel well the next morning. To God be all the praise.⁶²

A well-known story from this time involves Ellen's attempt to get James involved in gathering in their hay:

Our hay had been cut with the mower and I knew my husband would send for his neighbors to help him get the hay in. We had no barn, and must stack the hay. I sent [word] to my accommodating neighbors that on such a day my husband would send for them to get in his hay. "You are driven with your own work, are you not?" I asked. Yes, they were behind, but designed to leave their work to help Mr. White. "When Mr. White sends for you," I said, "just say what you have just said to me. You are behind with your work; it will suffer if you leave it; it will not be convenient for you to come."

They were, in the kindness of their hearts, desirous to do all for us that they could do, and this they could hardly consent to do. But I presented it in the proper light before them, and although they said it was the hardest thing for them to do, they would follow my directions, however trying it might be to them. They respected Elder White as a grand and noble man and would not be guilty of manifesting indifference or neglect to his wishes.

My husband sent to his neighbors for help, but they returned word that they could not conveniently come. My husband was disappointed. I said to him, "Do not be troubled in regard to this. Let them know we can attend to it ourselves. Willie and I will rake up the hay and pitch it into the wagon, if you will only drive the horses and load it." After some encouragement he consented to do this. Then the next matter to settle was how to make the stack. I said, "I will arrange the hay, make the stack, if you will pitch it onto the stack." Thus we accomplished this job, and my husband looked pleased that he had been able to do this much.

⁶⁰ Manuscript 1, 1867

⁶¹ "Report from Bro. White", *Review and Herald*, 25 June 1867, p.28

⁶² "Report from Bro. White", *Review and Herald*, 9 July 1867, p.57

While making the stack, our unbelieving neighbors who had attended my appointments passed in their carriages. They looked with curiosity and wonderment to see the woman who was speaking to a houseful of people every week treading down hay and forming a haystack. I felt not at all troubled. I was succeeding far beyond my expectations. Little by little I was, by the help of God, able to lead my husband to exercise and thus lead him to forget himself.⁶³

James wrote in the *Review and Herald*

Since my last report I have, through the blessing of God, been very active. I have worked front six to twelve hours each day, and have enjoyed blessed sleep from six to nine hours each night. Fifth and sixth days, July 18 and 19, I did more haying than for twenty years. I mowed some, helped Willie and Mrs. W. rake an acre, and pitched three small loads, in all more than a ton, and put it into a stack.⁶⁴

Writing of events that occurred a few days later, he contrasted his improved state of health with what it had been like earlier:

Six hours' sleep without a disturbance, dream or pain! As I awoke and saw the crimson eastern horizon, my exclamation was, Thank God for sweet sleep! One year since I might obtain an hour's imperfect sleep in the night, in naps, (with long hours between them) of ten or fifteen minutes each, broken by what is called the "nightmare." God only knows the physical and mental agony of such a condition. I take the liberty to be thus particular in my own case for the information of many friends, whose prayers and sympathy I have shared.⁶⁵

The following year, writing to her son Edson, Ellen was able to describe James's active farm life:

Your father is out helping Corliss plough. He is very active. ... Edson, this is just the place for us exactly. We can write, then run out and work or walk. Father has something to call him away from his writing, which compels him to physical exercise.⁶⁶ Your father is very busy out of doors holding plow and making hen coop and doing a little of everything.⁶⁷

The farm life at Greenville, together with his wife's careful and continual care, saw James White restored to health, "from the point of such weakness that he felt he could carry neither purse nor watch, to an active, aggressive ministry."⁶⁸ Ellen later wrote

After eighteen months of constant co-operation with God in the effort to restore my husband to health, I took him home again. Presenting him to his parents, I said, "Father, Mother, here is your son." "Ellen," said his Mother, "you have no one but God and yourself to thank for this wonderful restoration. Your energies have accomplished it." After his recovery, my husband lived for a number of years, during which time he did the best work of his life.⁶⁹

⁶³ Manuscript 1, 1867

⁶⁴ "Report from Bro. White", *Review and Herald*, 30 July 1867, p.104

⁶⁵ "Report from Bro. White", *Review and Herald*, 30 July 1867, p.104

⁶⁶ Letter 11,1868. Ellen White to J.E. White, 30 March 1868

⁶⁷ Letter 12,1868. Ellen White to J.E. White, 3 April 1868

⁶⁸ White, A.L. *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years*, p.185

⁶⁹ Manuscript 50 1902, Quoted in Dysinger, J. (compiler) *Counsels on Agriculture*, pp.164-166

After telling of James's recovery, she added a word of encouragement for her readers:

I have given you this brief recital of personal experience in order to show you that I know something about the use of natural means for the restoration of the sick. God will work wonders for every one of us, if we work in faith, acting as we believe, that when we co-operate with Him, He is ready to do His part. I desire to do everything I can to lead my brethren to pursue a sensible course, in order that their efforts may be the most successful. Many who have gone down into the grave might today be living, if they had co-operated with God. Let us be sensible men and women in regard to these matters.⁷⁰

By the time James sold the farm some years later, he was able to say that 20 of the 45 acres were improved, and that it had "one hundred young apple trees, four hundred grape-vines, in good bearing order, one acre of strawberries, and a large amount of raspberries and blackberries. The soil is especially adapted to growing small fruit" "in every way right for a fruit and nursery farm."⁷¹

Mention has already been made of the strawberries that James grew . It seems that strawberries were to be a feature of James White's farm at Greenville. In September 1867, when James and Ellen were away, she wrote to son Willie

Willie, set out all the strawberry sets that are strong on our place and get some of the best kinds from Brother King. Don't get any chileans. Don't move the downing, the old plants, only the sets, for we wish to get all the berries from them we can.⁷²

A few weeks later, when they were away at Battle Creek and other places, James wrote to Willie

You may set out all the ground to strawberries within forty feet of the road fence, if you can get good plants. If not, let it go till spring. I can get all the plants we want in Battle Creek.

Please carefully fix the grapes as follows:

1. Cut off all the little -----
2. Cut off from three to six inches of the ends of all the grapevines.
3. Cut off every other leaf from all the vines.

When I get home we will cover them with coarse manure.⁷³

The next year, when they were away at Wright, Michigan, for meetings, she wrote in her diary

visited Brother Edgar to get strawberry vines and raspberry bushes of a choice kind. ... Got strawberry plants and raspberry bush.⁷⁴

By July the next year, she was able to tell her son Edson "We have sold two hundred quarts of strawberries. Good market for strawberries in Greenville."⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Manuscript 50 1902

⁷¹ *The Health Reformer*, 1 February 1871, p.171

⁷² Letter 9, 1867. Ellen White to W.C. White, 19 September 1867

⁷³ James S. White to W.C. White, 30 September 1867. (From Pilot Grove, Indiana)

⁷⁴ Manuscript 15, 1868. Diary, 27 April 1868

⁷⁵ Letter 8, 1869. Ellen White to J.E. White, 6 July 1869

White's Nursery

James White's interest in, and experience with growing fruit led him write a small book on the subject. In 1871 his booklet *Small Fruits—How to Cultivate and How to Can* was published. His writing on the subject was prompted by a desire to help those who were attempting to adopt a more healthful, vegetarian diet. In that era, before the advent of rapid transport, and refrigeration, the diet of most people was limited to what they could obtain locally. James wrote

With the discarding of flesh-meats as food by Health Reformers, has come a need of something to take its place. We know of nothing so eminently adapted to supply this need as fruit.⁷⁶

He went on to explain his rationale in writing this booklet:

With the extended call for small fruits in the past few years has arisen a demand for practical information upon the manner of their growth. The object of this little work is not to go into the subject for the benefit of the green-house, or the professional cultivator, but to meet the wants of every family. Every one who owns a rod of ground, whether in city or country, should know how to cultivate small fruits. Hence we have ventured to give practical hints in regard to the cultivation of the Strawberry, Raspberry, Blackberry, and Grape, studiously avoiding intricacies, or anything that would not be beneficial for the people to carry out.⁷⁷

To further assist those who wanted to adopt the "health reform", he began selling plants and rootstocks. In the *Review and Herald* and the *Health Reformer*, James placed a number of advertisements for plants of various varieties of fruit. These were sold by mail order. For example, in the *Review* of 29 March 1870, he advertised "Strawberry plants, Raspberry, Blackberry, and Grape roots", at "discount prices". He wrote

Those who know anything about the business, very well know that there is nothing to be made at above prices. Our object is to instruct the people, to encourage the cultivation of small fruits, especially in the West, where fruit is scarce, and assist them to pure plants and roots, at cost [sic].⁷⁸

Willie White, Nurseryman and Horticulturist

James White's sons Edson and William (Willie) were involved in this nursery enterprise.⁷⁹ Willie seems to have played an especially important role in the nursery. Willie had gained a good deal of practical experience caring for the Greenville farm, while his parents were away in on their ministerial travels.⁸⁰ After the Whites left the Greenville farm and returned to Battle Creek, Willie continued to be involved in this work. After a bout of severe sickness in 1870, Willie took an active role in the nursery trade.

By spring, 1871, Willie had gained sufficient strength to become the manager of the Hygienic Institute Nursery connected with the Health Institute in Battle Creek. At

⁷⁶ White, J.S. *Small Fruits—How to Cultivate and How to Can*, p.3

⁷⁷ White, J.S. *Small Fruits—How to Cultivate and How to Can*, p.3

⁷⁸ James White, *Review and Herald*, 7 March 1871, p.96

⁷⁹ Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.170.

⁸⁰ Moon, J. *William Clarence (W. C.) White: His Relationship to Ellen G. White and Her Work* p.10; Letter 9, 1867, Ellen White to W.C. White, 19 September, 1867

sixteen he was doing a brisk business in strawberry, raspberry, and cabbage plants, acquiring at the same time a practical knowledge of horticulture.⁸¹

Several advertisements for Willie White's nursery appear in Adventist publications over the next few years. For example, in *The Health Reformer* of June 1871, under the heading "Hygienic Institute Nursery" James inserted a notice about the nursery:

Willie C. White, our son, is manager of this young nursery, which he desires to increase in variety and amount of stock, until it shall meet the growing demand for the best varieties of the grape, the raspberry, the blackberry, the strawberry, and fruits generally, small and large, flower shrubs and plants.

Willie is a thorough health reformer, and wishes to labor in the cause by encouraging the cultivation and liberal use of the precious fruits which God has given as food for man.⁸²

A notice in *The Health Reformer* of February 1872 states

W. C. White is a youth of integrity, well acquainted with his business. He does not employ canvassing agents, and works for small profits; therefore can furnish best Plants, Roots, and Vines, at very reduced prices. He promises entire satisfaction. He will furnish good stock with directions how to manage it that it may live and grow well. He will send it in season, well packed, that it may not perish with heat and drouth.⁸³

In the *Review and Herald* of 23 April 1872, the "Hygienic Institute Nursery" offers four varieties of strawberries, six varieties of raspberries, two varieties of blackberries, five varieties of grapes, and also planting material for currants, gooseberries, and asparagus. The notice concludes, "Address W.C. White, Battle Creek, Mich."⁸⁴

Evidently his parents' travels took him away from Battle Creek, so the nursery must have been discontinued. James and Ellen White, with Willie, left for California, stopping en route at Colorado, where they stayed with a relative. In California, Willie was again involved in horticulture. While his parents were busy in their evangelistic work, "Willie stayed with hospitable Adventist farmers who taught him how to gather grapes and figs and dry them."⁸⁵ Ellen White recorded in her diary of 21 October 1872, that

We rode out five miles to Brother Grayson's. We found an excellent farm of four hundred acres. He has a large vineyard and large wheat fields. Willie has been gathering grapes and figs and drying them.⁸⁶

In her diary for the next day, Ellen noted that after breakfast they

Walked out with Willie to see his grapes. Willie has worked quite hard in this business since he has been here.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Moon, J. *William Clarence (W. C.) White: His Relationship to Ellen G. White and Her Work* p.12

⁸² *The Health Reformer*, June 1871, p.298

⁸³ *The Health Reformer*, February 1872 p.64

⁸⁴ *Review and Herald*, 23 April 1872, p.152

⁸⁵ Moon, J. *William Clarence (W. C.) White: His Relationship to Ellen G. White and Her Work* p.16

⁸⁶ Manuscript 5, 1872 (Diary, 21 October 1872)

⁸⁷ Manuscript 5, 1872 (Diary, 22 October 1872)

After returning to Battle Creek, and a period studying at Dr Trall's Hygeo-Therapeutic College in Florence Heights, New York,⁸⁸ Willie evidently continued with the nursery trade for some time. In her diary for 17 April, 1873, Ellen White records

It is cold, disagreeable weather again today. We took breakfast with Brother Abbey's family. After prayers we rode to the office. We went to the house for Lucinda Hall and rode up to Mott's and Chilson's nursery for roots to fill Willie's orders.

No doubt this rather extensive horticultural experience was of great value to Willie, when years later he was called to take a leading role in the establishment of Avondale College in Australia, which included significant horticultural and agricultural activities.

An Interesting Conversation

About this time James White reported an interesting conversation that he had, that expresses his views on agriculture and its relation to human mentality:

As the train was hastening on to Indianapolis, we fell into conversation with a fine-appearing young gentleman in the seat before us. We conversed a moment upon the crops and the country, then more particularly upon raising of small fruits. Here he talked well, and showed taste, in a sense more elevated than mere appetite. He spoke of the moral influence of cultivating small fruits, besides that which is the legitimate result of this most healthful food. Where is the man, unless he is as void of culture and sense as a horse, but knows that the influence upon the mind, and even the morals, of cultivating and securing the precious fruits in all their deliciousness and harmlessness, as God in nature produces them, is almost infinitely above that of feeding and butchering the filthy, squealing swine.⁸⁹

Washington, Iowa

Although perhaps not as well-known today as the other places where the Whites lived, in 1869 James White purchased a house in Washington, Iowa.⁹⁰ This house was "A refuge when problems became too stressful in Battle Creek. James would retreat to there and find it relaxing to work around the property."⁹¹ For example, in 1872 Ellen wrote

We are very pleasantly situated here and I am very well persuaded that this place in Washington should be our headquarters. Father works in the garden much of his time and rests well nights. He has been writing quite a lengthy piece for the Reformer. There are many things to interest and take his mind—the trimming of trees, improvements to be made. ...

I think this is just the place for Father. We are trying to rest up for camp meetings. ... This is a beautiful place. I shall feel at home here. ... I have not been very well. Hope to improve and be ready for camp meeting.⁹²

⁸⁸ Moon, J. *William Clarence (W. C.) White: His Relationship to Ellen G. White and Her Work* p.16 (PDF 49)

⁸⁹ *Review and Herald*, 1 November 1870, p.156

⁹⁰ Hickerson, S.D and Campbell, M.W. "Homes of James and Ellen G. White", in *Ellen G White Encyclopedia*, p.880

⁹¹ Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.96.

⁹² Letter 6, 1872. Ellen White to J.E. White, 20 May 1872, quoted in White, A.L. *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years*, (vol.2), p.339.

A was seen at Greenville, James White's health improved when working on the farm or in the garden. One of his biographers states that "When James was physically active, with something that did not involve administration, his health would improve."⁹³ Ellen also found recreation and recuperation in working in the garden;

We spent a very pleasant week in Washington. I wrote more in one week than I have written in six weeks at Battle Creek. We had no interruptions. Although I have not spent all the time in writing, I walked in the beautiful garden. Worked in the field weeding out strawberries until I became so lame I could not move without much pain.⁹⁴

She especially enjoyed the flower garden:

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.⁹⁵

Colorado

In the 1876, James White bought a property in Colorado. It is suggested that he bought this land from a family of relatives, the Wallings, to help them out.⁹⁶ He bought 160 acres for \$100, and later bought another 160 acres.⁹⁷ The Whites spent summers here during the 1870s. It is said that he "intended to raise hay, oats and potatoes, as well as gather wild berries."⁹⁸ Here he also planned to engage in growing berries. On 27 April 1879, he wrote to Willie, who was now married and living in Battle Creek, that

I wish to set not less than half an acre of strawberries and a full acre of raspberries on White's Ranches at Walling's Mills in May. I wish you to select best varieties, such as Wilson Agriculturist. Those in the garden at Battle Creek are good. See what Walters has, and at Sanitarium grounds. As for Raspberries, divide between Doolittle, Chiani, and Philadelphia.⁹⁹

Healdsburg

While working in California, James's health again began to decline. In an attempt to find an environment where his health could improve, during the winter of 1877-1878 the Whites bought a 30 acre farm at Healdsburg. Ellen wrote

We found a very nice location [on west Dry Creek Road] two miles from Healdsburg in the mountains. There are fifteen acres of land which gives us the scenery of Colorado and the advantages of the Greenville farm Father thought so much of. I never was on a place I was so much pleased with. ... This may look like a wild project

⁹³ Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.194

⁹⁴ Letter 9,1870. Ellen White to Emma McDearmon, 9 June 1870, quoted in White, A.L. *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years*,(vol.2), p.290.

⁹⁵ Letter 5, 1872. Ellen White to J.E. and Emma White, 19 June 1872. Quoted in White, A.L. *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years*,(vol.2), p.340.

⁹⁶ Hickerson, S.D. and Campbell, M.W. "Homes of James and Ellen G. White", in *Ellen G White Encyclopedia*, p.880

⁹⁷ Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.194.

⁹⁸ Wheeler, G. *James White*, p.194.

⁹⁹ White, James, to White, W.C. 27 April 1879.

to you, but if Father can be called away and out of thinking of himself and can enjoy work out of doors, it will be the best thing he can do and be the best investment of means we can make. We must have a place of retirement where we can step out of doors without being seen by our neighbors. We want chance to pray in the groves and mountains.¹⁰⁰

Writing in the *Signs of the Times*, James White wrote of how he longed for retirement, and “rest from perpetual mental strain.” He longed to “walk over the mountain sides, to ride on horseback and in our carriage, and to do light work in cultivating vegetables and fruits, and spend much time in reflection and prayer among the evergreens.” He added, “God blessed us greatly at a similar home at Greenville, Michigan, and in our mountain retreat in Colorado. We hope to enjoy the same at Healdsburg.”¹⁰¹

Ellen rejoiced in the improvement in health that she saw in James, when they moved to their little farm:

Father is so happy riding his twenty-five-dollar pony, being interested in his little farm, and enjoying his warm, bright fire. He does not feel inclined to leave it for uncertainties of poor beds and perhaps stove heat, and he chooses to stay in his humble little home. ...

We are seeing already the beneficial effects of this move from Oakland. Father's mind is diverted. He eats more liberally and it does not injure him. He sleeps like a baby from the time he retires till 5:00 or 6:00 A.M. He is cheerful. He is so pleased with his home. He tries to do what he can and is busy from morning till night about something. He spends some time in writing. His mind is very happy dwelling upon Bible subjects. I am glad for every step he advances, climbing the hill of health.¹⁰²

After James's death, Ellen wished to return to the Healdsburg farm, describing it as “a place that pleases me and that I want to live in.”¹⁰³ Later, wanting to be nearer the newly-established Healdsburg College, Ellen sold the farm and bought a house on 2 ½ acres in the town.¹⁰⁴

Last House at Battle Creek

Eventually the Whites returned to Battle Creek, and James started moving into retirement. As Ellen put it, “Our time must now be in production of books, before we get unable to use the pen.”¹⁰⁵ In November 1880, James bought a house on 32 acres, a mile from Battle Creek.¹⁰⁶ Ellen White described the property:

Tonight Father closes a trade with real estate agent Peavy for property on Goguc Road, that brick house sitting up so high, large, with cupola. We rode up there one day and we decided it was just the place for the old folks. It is on a prominence

¹⁰⁰ Letter 40, 1877. Ellen White to W.C. and Mary White, 5 December 1877. Quoted in White, A.L. *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years*, (vol.3), p.78

¹⁰¹ White, James. *The Signs of the Times*, 20 December, 1877. Quoted in White, A.L. *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years*, (vol.3), p.79.

¹⁰² Letter 43, 1877. Ellen White to W.C. and Mary White, 25 December 1877. Quoted in White, A.L. *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years*, (vol.3), pp.80-81

¹⁰³ White, A.L. *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years*, (vol.3) p.194.

¹⁰⁴ White, A.L. *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years*, (vol.3) p.203

¹⁰⁵ Letter 43, 1880, quoted in White, A.L. *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years*, (vol.3), p.149

¹⁰⁶ White, A.L. *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years*, (vol.3), p.149

overlooking all Battle Creek. We purchased about thirty acres. There is a large, young, thrifty orchard containing the best of fruit, and about ten acres of oak grove.¹⁰⁷

The “large, young, thrifty orchard” contained “225 trees – apples, pears, peaches, and cherries”.¹⁰⁸ It also had “plenty of land to cultivate, [and] pasturage for cows and horses”.¹⁰⁹

They moved into this house on 19 December 1880. Describing the move, Ellen White wrote:

Yesterday was a very busy day moving and settling our furniture. Father had several men at work for him chopping wood in our oak grove, taking out useless trees and where trees stood too thick. This grove is prized to be of the value of \$1,000. It is as romantic a place in a mild way of speaking as some parts of Colorado.¹¹⁰

It is interesting that James was involved in what could be described as forest management, or more precisely, silviculture.¹¹¹

A little later she wrote “We have the most beautiful situation in Michigan...”¹¹² She went on to write that

Father has excellent health. He has worked hard on the place here; put in more than one acre of strawberries, some raspberries, more than an acre of potatoes, several acres of corn, fifty hard maples, many peach trees, pear trees, and two long rows of pie plant. I have been gathering up shrubs and flowers until we have quite a garden.¹¹³

Unfortunately, James did not live to enjoy his farm for very long. After years of rather precarious health, he passed away on 6 August 1881. As mentioned previously, Ellen moved back to their house at Healdsburg, California.¹¹⁴

Thus ended James White’s agricultural activities, in which he had been involved for many years. His experience is a warning to others about the dangers of working too hard. As his brother John said, James “was a man of wonderful energy” but “There are some men who can’t retire and God takes them.”¹¹⁵ James White’s experience is also an illustration of the benefit of agricultural work to ministers, to balance their mental activities. Ellen White wrote

Those who are engaged in constant mental labor, whether in studying or preaching, need rest and change. ...

If they worked intelligently, giving both mind and body a due share of exercise, ministers would not so readily succumb to disease. If all our workers were so situated that they could spend a few hours each day in outdoor labor, and felt free to do this,

¹⁰⁷ Letter 45b, 1880. Ellen White to Willie and Mary White, 3 November 1880

¹⁰⁸ James White to WC White, 3 November 1880, quoted in White, A.L. *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years*, (vol.3), p.149

¹⁰⁹ Letter 45b 1880, Ellen White to Willie and Mary White, 3 November 1880, quoted in White, A.L. *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years*, (vol.3), p.149

¹¹⁰ Letter 51, 1880, Ellen White to White, W. C. and White, Mary, December 20, 1880

¹¹¹ Silviculture: “the cultivation of forest trees, forestry” – *Macquarie Dictionary*, 1981 edn., p.1605.

¹¹² Letter 4a, 1881. Ellen White to Children, 15 May 1881.

¹¹³ Letter 4a, 1881. Ellen White to Children 15 May 1881.) (Also in *Manuscript Releases*, vol.6, p.306)

¹¹⁴ Hickerson, S.D and Campbell, M.W. “Homes of James and Ellen G. White”, in *Ellen G White Encyclopedia*, p.881

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Wheeler, G., *James White*, p.247

it would be a blessing to them; they would be able to discharge more successfully the duties of their calling. If they have not time for complete relaxation, they could be planning and praying while at work with their hands, and could return to their labor refreshed in body and spirit.

Some of our ministers feel that they must every day perform some labor that they can report to the conference, and as the result of trying to do this, their efforts are too often weak and inefficient. They should have periods of rest, of entire freedom from taxing labor. But these cannot take the place of daily physical exercise

*Brethren, when you take time to cultivate your garden, thus gaining the exercise you need to keep the system in good working order, you are just as much doing the work of God as in holding meetings. God is our Father, He loves us, and He does not require any of His servants to abuse their bodies.*¹¹⁶

Educators and Agriculturalists

Agriculture has been an important element of the Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of education. Indeed, Ellen White said, "I have been shown that study in agricultural lines should be the A B and C of the educational work of our schools."¹¹⁷ This paper now considers two early Adventist educators who were active in agriculture.

Goodloe Harper Bell

Goodloe Harper Bell is best known for teaching the first Seventh-day Adventist school. Bell was already a successful teacher when ill health brought him to the Health Institute at Battle Creek. While there he accepted the Seventh-day Adventist faith. Edson White, son of James and Ellen, met him, and finding that he was a teacher, asked him to teach grammar and writing to Edson and some of his friends. This led to Bell setting up a small school, first under the auspices of the Battle Creek church, and later as a private venture. Eventually, when Battle Creek College was established, Bell became a teacher there. Later he went to establish South Lancaster Academy, in Massachusetts.¹¹⁸

Having been reared on a farm, and having been a farmer himself, "His love of farming and growing things was to be one of his most satisfying interests until the very day he died."¹¹⁹

In 1872, Ellen White wrote her first article on education.¹²⁰ The concept of education that she promoted, included the education of the whole person – not only the mental powers, but also the spiritual and the physical. She urged that "a portion of [the students'] time should be spent in physical labor", and that "In connection with the schools should have been agricultural and manufacturing establishments."¹²¹

¹¹⁶ White, E.G., *Gospel Workers*, p.240. Also *Counsels on Health*, p.564. (Emphasis supplied)

¹¹⁷ Manuscript 105, 1898, also in *Spalding and Magan Collection*, p.134.

¹¹⁸ Schwarz, R.W., *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, pp.122-132.

¹¹⁹ Lindsay, A.G. *Goodloe Harper Bell, Pioneer Seventh-day Adventist Christian Educator*, p.16.

¹²⁰ Douglass, H.E. "Education, Ellen White's Role in Adventist" In Fortin, D, and Moon, J (eds) *Ellen White Encyclopedia*, p.794

¹²¹ White, E.G. *Testimonies to the Church*, vol.3, pp.138,153

While some early Adventist educators had difficulty accepting her educational concepts, which seemed so different from the conventional education wisdom of the day,

Bell's [agricultural] background had opened the way for him to accept it. He was not a college graduate. He came from generations of farmers and had himself farmed in Lisbon, enjoying the opportunity for agricultural labor. It is true that he was guilty in his own life of devoting too much time to the study of books to the neglect of his need for rest and physical labor, yet he saw the wisdom of Ellen White's counsel and later was to be among the first to put it into practical operation when he became principal of the South Lancaster school.¹²²

While teaching at Battle Creek, Bell had his own garden. A student at the time wrote in his diary

After school I had the honour of planting sweet corn and string beans in company with Prof. Bell, working for him until sundown. ... After school Arthur Daniells and I worked in Prof. Bell's garden planting bean and pumpkin seeds, etc., and having an invitation to stop, I did and had some assistance in my grammar lesson.¹²³

In 1884 Bell retired from South Lancaster, and returned to his little farm at Battle Creek. He also tutored students. In a letter to one of his former students, he related the challenges he had faced that year on his farm:

Last year was almost a failure. I had my ground in fine condition, procured the best seed, and planted everything in good season. I cultivated betimes, and scarcely a weed was allowed to grow. The whole seven acres was like a well-kept garden. ... The drought came on, and stayed on. The dust rose in clouds, the soil was like a bed of hot ashes, and nothing would grow.

We set out seventy-five fruit trees. The holes for them were dug six feet across, and about twenty inches deep. The subsoil was thrown aside, and the hole filled with good surface dirt. No trees were ever set out with greater care or painstaking; yet nearly half of them died, and most of the others might better have died; for a sickly growth is worse than no growth at all. ...

I bought three hundred feet of pipe, with pieces of hose to join the different lengths. This I attached to the windmill tank, and watered enough sweet corn to yield us all we wanted for family use. It was the finest I ever saw. Some of the ears were eleven inches long, and I never tasted anything equal to it. I had a quarter of an acre of strawberries, and picked three hundred and fifty quarts. ... These were near the windmill and got water...

As soon as the strawberries were ripened, I turned my watering pipes on the raspberries. But as fate would have it, we just then had a whole week of weather with so little wind that the windmill scarcely moved. The raspberries were almost literally cooked on the bushes.

One afternoon I set out 135 tomato plants. I shaded them with shingles and they came up finely [sic]. Neglecting them for two days, I went back to find that the cutworms

¹²² Lindsay, A.G. *Goodloe Harper Bell, Pioneer Seventh-day Adventist Christian Educator*, p.90

¹²³ Vande Vere, E.K. *The Wisdom Seekers*, p.270

had gnawed off all but eight or ten of them. One patch of our cabbage was so infested with cutworms that they beat us entirely. ... The worms had possession, and kept it....

My teaching this year has been as pleasant as my gardening has been unprofitable.¹²⁴

G.H. Bell was a true pioneer of Adventist education. It is clear that his agricultural background and interests were an important factor in the acceptance of the educational counsels given through Ellen White, which were to have a defining influence in the establishment of an educational system that was to span the globe. Without the influence and contribution of Bell as both a teacher and an agriculturalist, her counsels may not have been accepted as readily as they were.

Joseph Haughey

Joseph Harvey Haughey has been described as the protégé of G.H. Bell. In 1874, at the age of 17, Haughey worked on the construction of the original Battle Creek College building “carrying water and mixing mortar”. He would later say that “Battle Creek College helped me lay the foundation of my life, and I helped lay the foundations of the college.”¹²⁵

Educated at Battle Creek College, he became a teacher. He earned a Masters degree in mathematics from the University of Michigan, and eventually returned to teach at Battle Creek College.

Gifted intellectually, there were few courses in the old college curriculum that Professor Haughey could not teach, and the record of the years shows him presiding with equal facility in the chair of astronomy, of ancient languages, of mathematics, and in several other fields. Keenly analytical, yet mellowed with a quiet humor, he found enjoyment as the mystification of his students in an abstruse problem yielded to the clarity of his own demonstrations at the blackboard.¹²⁶

However, as well as being gifted academically, Haughey was also a very energetic practical agriculturalist.

All this, too, was carried on while he was following his earnest convictions that teachers should be leaders in the manual labor program of the institution. Sometimes students marvelled how he could spend so many hours in the vineyard, the garden, or the orchard and yet come to his classes with a fresh challenge in the form of new and interesting class tasks next day.¹²⁷

In 1900 he wrote that “Having a fruit farm of 1,100 fruit trees and 1,500 grape vines, I am independent of the college for income”. In this way he donated three or four years’ wages to the college debt-reduction campaign.¹²⁸

Like Bell, he also served as Principal of South Lancaster Academy for the years 1894-1899, but returned to Battle Creek each summer to work in his orchard.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ In Vande Vere, E.K. *The Wisdom Seekers*, pp.272-273

¹²⁵ Holden, W.H., “Joseph Harvey Haughey” (obituary), *Review and Herald*, 30 January 1936, p.20; also quoted in Grey, M.J., *As We Set Forth*.

¹²⁶ Tippet, H.M., “A Memorial Tribute to Joseph H. Haughey”. *Lake Union Herald*, 17 December 1935, p.1

¹²⁷ Tippet, H.M., “A Memorial Tribute to Joseph H. Haughey”. *Lake Union Herald*, 17 December 1935, p.1

¹²⁸ Vande Vere, E.K. *The Wisdom Seekers*, p.278

¹²⁹ Vande Vere, E.K. *The Wisdom Seekers*, p.277

Haughey had a reputation as a “prodigious worker”. “The story circulated that one day he hired a man to work for him and warned him not to try to keep up with his pace. But a few days later the man died from overexertion and pneumonia.”¹³⁰

When Battle Creek College was moved to a rural location in Berrien Springs, where it was re-named Emmanuel Missionary College, Haughey moved with it. There, as well as his teaching duties, he was involved in the care of the orchard,¹³¹ nursery, and vineyard.¹³² Later he became heavily involved in beekeeping, operating ten apiaries in that orcharding district.¹³³

Haughey was an outstanding example of Ellen White’s ideal of all-round, “wholistic” education, in which the academic, and practical abilities, along with the spiritual aspects, were equally developed and balanced.

Lessons We Can Learn from These Early Adventist Agriculturalists

There are many lessons we can learn from the stories of these early Adventist agriculturalists.

One lesson that we can learn from the lives of Miller and Edson is that God can and will use ordinary people, not only ministers and theologians, to carry his special messages to the world. Indeed,

Those who are the most willing to toil and show industry in business lines, and who, themselves, plan and devise to be a help to others in branches of common toil, are the men who will be chosen by God to do Him service wherever their lot may be cast.¹³⁴

As in the time of Christ,

In the common walks of life there is many a man patiently treading the round of daily toil, unconscious that he possesses powers which, if called into action, would raise him to an equality with the world’s most honored men.¹³⁵

William Miller and others like him are examples of this truth. It is especially significant that these men were farmers. Inspiration tells us that “many of the world’s greatest men, its real nobility, have been tillers of the soil.”¹³⁶ The lessons learned from agricultural work and the agricultural environment, were of inestimable value in the more public role that they were called to fill:

How many useful and honored workers in God’s cause have received a training amid the humble duties of the most lowly positions in life! Moses was the prospective ruler of Egypt, but God could not take him from the king’s court to do the work appointed him. Only when he had been for forty years a faithful shepherd was he sent to be the deliverer of his people. Gideon was taken from the threshing-floor to be the instrument in the hands of God for delivering the armies of Israel. Elisha was called to

¹³⁰ Vande Vere, E.K. *The Wisdom Seekers*, p.277

¹³¹ Grey, M.J. *As We Set Forth*, p.105

¹³² Vande Vere, E.K. *The Wisdom Seekers*, p.278.

¹³³ Vande Vere, E.K. *The Wisdom Seekers*, p.278.

¹³⁴ Letter 10, 1897, Ellen White to Brethren, 2 September 1897 (Quoted in White, E.G., *Manuscript Releases*, vol.19, p.26.)

¹³⁵ White, E.G., *The Desire of Ages*, p.250 (see also *Education*, p.85)

¹³⁶ White, E.G., *Education*, p.219

leave the plow and do the bidding of God. Amos was a husbandman, a tiller of the soil, when God gave him a message to proclaim.¹³⁷

These agriculturalists also benefited from the many spiritual lessons that can be learned from the various aspects of agriculture.¹³⁸ Perhaps the best summary of these lessons is seen in the following paragraph:

In the cultivation of the soil the thoughtful worker will find that treasures little dreamed of are opening up before him. No one can succeed in agriculture or gardening without attention to the laws involved. The special needs of every variety of plant must be studied. Different varieties require different soil and cultivation, and compliance with the laws governing each is the condition of success. The attention required in transplanting, that not even a root fiber shall be crowded or misplaced, the care of the young plants, the pruning and watering, the shielding from frost at night and sun by day, keeping out weeds, disease, and insect pests, the training and arranging, not only teach important lessons concerning the development of character, but the work itself is a means of development. In cultivating carefulness, patience, attention to detail, obedience to law, it imparts a most essential training. The constant contact with the mystery of life and the loveliness of nature, as well as the tenderness called forth in ministering to these beautiful objects of God's creation, tends to quicken the mind and refine and elevate the character; and the lessons taught prepare the worker to deal more successfully with other minds.¹³⁹

Inspiration tells us that "The cultivation of the soil will prove an education to the soul."¹⁴⁰ Could it be that the Lord saw that this was the very education needed by His end-time messengers, and chose these men accordingly?

From the life of James White, especially, we can learn something of the benefits of agricultural and garden work for ministers. As discussed previously, James White's health suffered from the demands and pressures of his work, but when he was able to work in the garden and on the farm, his health improved markedly.

Another lesson that we can learn from the work of James White, is the practical value of agriculture, in helping people adopt a healthful diet. Realising the difficulties that many people were encountering in trying to live healthfully, James White offered them practical help by providing plants, and advice on how to grow them.

The experience of Willie White with his nursery business illustrates how young people can be involved in agricultural work. In this way they can not only help others, but also gain experience will be useful to them later, in their service for the Lord.

The lives of G.H. Bell and Joseph Haughey demonstrate that education and agriculture are not incompatible, but are complementary, and together can help provide students with an all-round training. Bell was "the right man at the right time" to facilitate the adoption of Ellen White's counsels

¹³⁷ White, E.G., *Gospel Workers*, pp.332-333

¹³⁸ For a more comprehensive coverage of the spiritual lessons that can be learned from Agriculture, see Dysinger, J. (compiler), *Counsels on Agriculture*, pp.107-156.

¹³⁹ White, E.G., *Education*, pp.111-112

¹⁴⁰ White, E.G., *Christ's Object Lessons*, p.88.

on agriculture in education, while Haughey provided an outstanding demonstration of how these counsels could be carried out.

Conclusion

As we consider the lives of these early Adventist agriculturalists, and consider the implications for our lives and work today, there are many lessons that we can learn. As we apply these lessons to our lives and work, may that which was said of Joseph Haughey be applicable to us:

Peace-loving, courteous, kindly, he plowed his furrow of life with his eye ever fixed on the promised kingdom. Four decades of students and teachers associated with him have followed that furrow and found it a good way, for it was the way of Life.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Tippett, H.M. "A Memorial Tribute to Joseph H. Haughey". *Lake Union Herald*, 17 December 1935, p.1

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