

Revised edition, 2013

Mission to Black America

The True Story of J. Edson White and the
Riverboat Morning Star

By Ronald D. Graybill

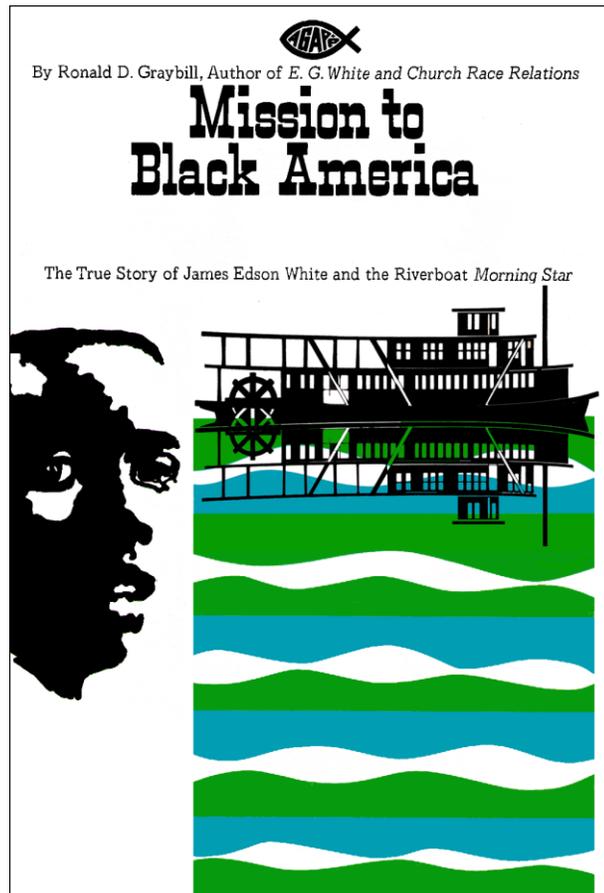


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I have revised the text at various points to clarify, or where new evidence has come to my attention or and to bring statements that originally described situations in 1970 up to date to 2013. I have also added many illustrations, often reproducing photographs which were originally printed in Edson White's journal, *The Gospel Herald*.

Preface

In 1902 Ellen G. White wrote the following to her youngest son and constant helper, W. C. White:

“I realize that the first thing I ought to do is to prepare matter for the books that should be brought out; but there are other things that I must do. The attitude of some of my brethren in regard to the Southern field, and the reports that are being circulated—reports that I know to be untrue—make it necessary for me to take up this matter.

“I can no longer allow false impressions to be made, without saying what I know to be the truth. I shall publish in book form what I have written in regard to the work in the Southern field. I shall no longer handle this matter with the tips of my fingers. Our people shall have in book form the facts of the history of the work in the South. When this book is out, I shall know that I have done my part to undeceive minds.” —Letter 206, 1902.

Other sources indicate that Ellen White’s expression “the Southern field,” as used in this letter, meant primarily the work among Black people. By “history” she meant primarily the work of James Edson White, her oldest son, and those associated with him in beginning aggressive mission work in the deep South.

A little later W. C. White wrote, “For some time we have been struggling with the problem as to how we could fulfill Mother’s instruction to publish what she has written in time past about the work for the colored people in the Southern States.” —J. E. White Letter Book.

In preparation for the book, Edson White’s letters were collected, thousands of contemporary newspaper clippings were gathered, Ellen White’s relevant writings were organized, and A. W. Spalding, called to assist in the task, made a trip to Mississippi, conducting numerous interviews. He also visited with Edson White living in retirement in Marshall, Michigan.

The book was never published. Perhaps other duties delayed preparations so long—until 1913—that its timeliness had passed. Some evidence suggests that the financial and interpersonal difficulties enmeshing Edson White in the years after he left Mississippi may have made the publication of a book praising his work a rather awkward undertaking. Now, however, the story can be told.

In the 1960s and 1970s, interest in Ellen G. White’s writings regarding the gospel to Black Americans in the South revived. As author I hope that this book, in telling a portion of the history of the work in the South, may meet at least a part of the need as seen by Ellen White in 1902. To this end I have included certain relevant, previously unpublished Ellen G. White statements.

This is not a biography of Edson White, for it focuses only on his Mississippi years. However, events before and after are introduced to put the story into proper context.

This book would not have been possible without the work done by W. C. White and Clarence Crisler, Ellen White’s secretary, in collecting J. E. White’s letters. Spalding’s unpublished manuscript provided additional color, details, and insight. See “Lights and Shades in the Black Belt,” at www.adventistarchives.org, Online Archives>Manuscripts. Fortunately, the manuscript was never published as it contained elements of paternalistic racism that would have haunted the church in later years.

The trustees of the White Estate graciously opened the files to provide the primary sources of the story, and granted permission for the use of previously unpublished Ellen G. White material.

The late Arthur L. White (1907-1991), Ellen White's grandson and the former Director of the Ellen G. White Estate, contributed from his own vast knowledge of the persons and events involved and provided invaluable editorial help. Mrs. Hedwig Nagele Jemison (1912-2005), who handled the affairs of the Ellen White Estate at Andrews University when this book was first written, helped collect relevant Ellen G. White statements.

Chapter I

“The water in the hold is gaining very rapidly!” Palmer shouted.

“Aren’t the pumps working?” yelled Edson.

“Yes! I don’t know what to do!”

“You come up here and take the wheel, and I’ll see what I can do.”

“That man is no pilot!” growled Captain Reed from the pilot house. “I won’t have him up here.”

“You stay and see how he does it,” shouted Edson, bolting out of the pilot house and clambering across the reeling deck toward the stairs.

He quickly surveyed the situation. The steam tubes were throwing out steam, not water. That meant they were clogged. Stripping, he grabbed a lantern and crawled down into the hold. The area below deck was now half filled with water, and Edson sloshed twenty feet to the tubes. The water splashed over his lantern, extinguishing it. But he moved on through the black murk.

The tubes were clogged with debris. He cleared them out, crept back shivering to his stateroom to get warm, and then went back to the pilot house.

The little steamer tossed helplessly in the huge waves of Lake Michigan. The furniture had to be tied down to keep it from thrashing around inside the cabin and staterooms as water pounded over the decks and roared in through the doors. Will Palmer crawled out over the slippery deck, hoping to fasten a canvas at the bow to ward off the heavy waves, but the wind wrenched it from his grip and hurled it into the night. With stiffening fingers Edson clutched the wheel, keeping the bow straight.

Edson’s boat was being towed by a 200-yard cable attached to the lake boat *Bon Ami*. And the *Morning Star*, built for the river and not for this treacherous inland sea, was threatening to disappear beneath the raging waves.

Edson knew that somewhere in the darkness on the deck of the larger boat huddled a little group of anxious watchers including his wife Emma, Palmer’s wife, and the captain of the *Bon Ami*. As the little paddle-wheel steamer, tossing and pitching, mounted a great wave and then pointed its nose downward, the *Bon Ami*’s captain saw the ladies cover their faces with their hands.

It was perhaps just as well that the ladies could not see their husbands, for they were in real danger. At the boiler B. F. Richards, between fits of seasickness, was staggering to feed the furnace. Finally he routed out Professor Hafford to help him. But Hafford was also seasick; so eventually the two managed to persuade the reluctant Captain Reed to leave his inexperienced steersman at the helm and help them. When the steam tubes had been cleared four times, the water gained no more.

After seven hours the storm subsided. And fourteen hours after leaving the Michigan shore the haggard company stepped onto the pier at Chicago. It was morning.

“It’s something besides human power that has kept that boat,” said Captain Reed. “Here’s a thank offering.” He handed Edson a \$10 bill.

James Edson White was finally heading South. The fulfillment of his dream had begun with difficulties, and it would end with difficulties. The storm on Lake Michigan was to prove but an omen of the storm of prejudice, misunderstanding, and violence he would meet during the next five years in Mississippi. But he would meet it with the same

determination with which he met the storm on the lake. For the next five years he would make one of the most valuable contributions to the cause of God made by the early Advent pioneers, the first to bring the Advent message to the Black people of America in a sustained and systematic way. And, although plagued with difficulties and defeats, his work would ultimately triumph because it, too, would be attended by “more than human power.”

Chapter II

As the first issue of *Present Truth* came off the press, on the twenty-eighth of July, 1849, in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, James Edson, the second son of James and Ellen White, was born.

It was a constant trial to his mother that because of her frequent travels she had to leave Edson in the care of others. At nine months he was left with a Sister Bonfoey while his parents visited Vermont and Maine.

After five weeks' absence, Ellen White returned to her infant son. "The child was very feeble. A great change had taken place in him. It was difficult," she wrote of herself, "to suppress murmuring thoughts." —*Life Sketches*, page 135.

The baby grew worse. Three times a day his parents prayed for him. "Sometimes he would be blessed, and the progress of disease would be stayed; then our faith would be severely tried as his symptoms became alarming." —*Ibid.*, p. 136.

A few days later Edson's screams awakened his parents and Sister Bonfoey at midnight. They rushed to him. He would cling to the nurse, then fight the air with both hands, crying in terror, "No, no!" then cling to his mother.

"We knew," Ellen White said, "this was Satan's effort to annoy us, and we knelt in prayer. My husband rebuked the evil spirit in the name of the Lord, and Edson quietly fell asleep." —*Ibid.*, p. 138.

The boy recovered gradually. His mother continued her travels, but wrote: "We had to make some sacrifice in order to separate from those who were bound to us by tender ties; especially did our hearts cling to little Edson, whose life had been so much in danger." — *Ibid.*, p. 139.

Sometimes, however, Edson went along with his parents. Once, just as they were ready to leave for a meeting, he became sick. His parents still felt it their duty to go; so Ellen carried Edson in her arms as they rode the thirty miles.

Although it was midwinter, he was perspiring when they arrived; but he seemed better. During the course of the meeting, he worsened. Ellen said he was suffering from an "inflammation upon the brain." All night they watched and prayed with him. By morning he had recovered enough to travel home.

On another occasion the parents returned to get their child and were met at the door by his distraught nurse: "Your babe is struck with death," she said.

"We hastened to the child who lay unconscious. His little arms were purple. The death dampness seemed to be on his brow, and his eyes were dim. Oh, the anguish of my heart then!" —*Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 2, p. 136.

James went to call a nearby fellow believer for special prayer. He had to drive his buggy five miles to overtake the man, who had just begun a journey on a canal boat. They returned together and anointed the baby, and soon Edson began to recover.

When Edson was almost three, his parents moved to Rochester, New York, and before long they found themselves engulfed in a cholera epidemic. All night the carriages rumbled by, bearing the dead to Mount Hope Cemetery. At every corner wagons stood loaded with plain pine coffins.

Edson soon had the disease. For three days he ate nothing. His parents had two months of appointments in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Planning to travel by

carriage, they told God that if the child did not eat, they would take this as a sign they were not to begin.

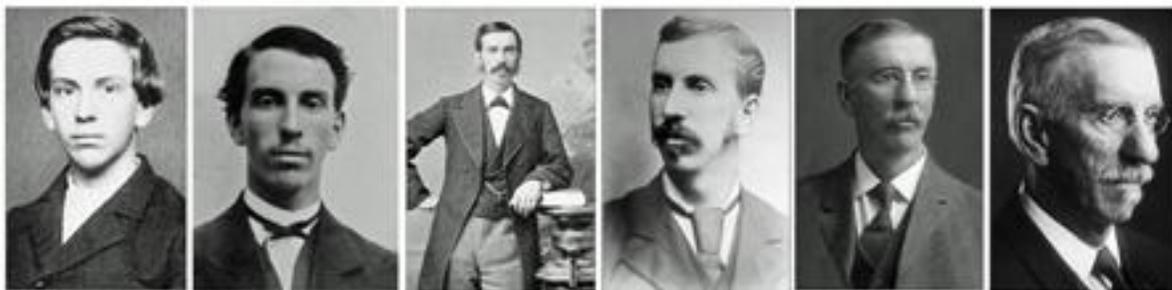
Edson ate. Friends warned that if they began their journey they would bury the boy by the road, but his mother took him on a pillow, and rode twenty miles.

That night he seemed very nervous, unable to sleep. Ellen held him the whole night. By morning, both were exhausted. Their friends' warnings haunted the young parents. They had 100 bumpy miles to travel in the next two days.

But Ellen told her husband: "If we go back, I shall expect the child to die. He can but die if we go forward. Let us proceed on our journey, trusting in the Lord." —*Life Sketches*, page 145. But the mother was so exhausted she feared she would fall asleep and drop the baby. She laid him on her lap, tied him to her waist, and they both slept most of the day.

Miraculously, with each mile, Edson seemed to recover; and when the trip was over, Ellen remarked that he was "quite rugged."

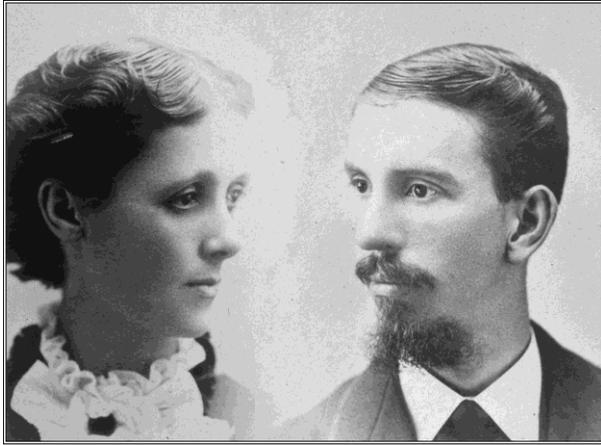
Such accounts, which make up almost all we know about Edson's childhood, indicate that God evidently had some purpose in preserving him through so many bouts with death.



James Edson White at various periods of his life.

At fifteen Edson was employed at the Review and Herald Publishing Association at Battle Creek. He learned his trade thoroughly and became a master printer. His publications, even when printed on a small press aboard the *Morning Star*, always had a snappy, clean look to match his clear, simple writing.

Following his childhood sicknesses and weakness Edson grew to a height of five feet nine inches and a weight of 165 pounds. With his black hair, dark eyes, and dark complexion he looked reasonably robust. During his years in the South noticeable white streaks appeared in his hair. He kept a bushy moustache that filled most of his upper lip, and for a while he sported a salt-and-pepper beard. His nose was large and unflared and his ears enormous, making his eyes look small behind his gold-rimmed glasses. Though he looked plain, he was not ugly.



Edson's father, James White, baptized him, and later, in 1870, married him to Emma MacDearmon. The couple had no children.

Edson once admitted that he was "never the diplomat" as was his brother, the steady, solid, cautious William. But Edson richly shared his father's enterprise and drive. He could also be—at times—a bit eccentric. He was creative, resourceful, and energetic. However, when it came to business, he was unpredictable. His

businesses, chiefly publishing enterprises, grew at various times to considerable proportions, but were, in Spalding's words, "liable to explode."

As was his cousin Frank Belden, he was a composer; two hymn tunes composed by Edson White were still in use in Adventist circles in the 1941 *Church Hymnal* (numbers 203 and 235). Only one survived into the 1985 *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, the tune for Hymn 281, "I Gave My Life for Thee." In most Christian hymnals, that hymn is set to P. P. Bliss' tune, *Kenosis*. Edson's tune, called *White*, bears some similarities to *Kenosis*, but has a more open and emotive air about it.

By combining his printing skills with his considerable musical talents he was instrumental in publishing *Song Anchor and Temperance Songs*, the first Seventh-day Adventist hymnbook in which all the hymns were set to music.

In the early 1880's, after managing the Pacific Press for three years, Edson became interested in Sabbath School work, helping, as part of the Sabbath School publishing committee, to launch the *Sabbath School Worker* in 1885.

In 1886 the J. E. White Publishing Company brought out another songbook, *Joyful Greetings for the Sabbath School*, including several of Edson's own hymn tunes. His company also set the type for the words and music in the classic *Hymns and Tunes*.

But in the late 1880's and early '90's, branching out from Battle Creek to Chicago, his publishing work was leading him ever farther away from church work until 1893 found him in Chicago, burdened with debt and at a low spiritual ebb.

He kept telling himself, he said later, that he would go back into the Lord's work the day he got out of debt. But that day never came. Slowly he realized he could not wait for everything to be right before he made his decision. Finally, in August, 1893, going through a deep spiritual struggle, he wrote his mother:

"I have surrendered fully and completely, and never enjoyed life before as I am enjoying it now. . . . What I shall do in the future I do not know. . . . I want to connect with the work of the cause in some way as soon as possible, and to connect again with a worldly business would make this impossible."

Two months later he wrote again: "Emma and I joined in earnest prayer that I might be kept from undertaking anything contrary to the will of God and in which His blessing could not attend." He investigated several other business ventures, but found "every one of the business plans I was laying was blocked as solid as a stone wall."

At this point a Professor C. C. Lewis, returning from a trip in the South, passed through Chicago. Professor Lewis was speaking to Black Seventh-day Adventists in

Chicago about the needs of Black people in the South. After hearing him, Edson began to ponder the possibilities of addressing the advent message to Black America.

Unknown to Edson, the Lord was already at work. December of 1892 witnessed an unplanned and unexpected revival among Battle Creek College students, continuing for several weeks and converting many of the indifferent and apathetic. It even spread to the publishing house and the church in Battle Creek.

Among those who had been brought up in Battle Creek was Will O. Palmer, whom Edson White had once described as “the wildest son of old Brother Palmer.” He had been a promising young man, but had left the faith and was engaged in business in Chicago, making what was at the time considered a good salary, over \$100 a month.

In the spring of 1893, Will received a letter from an old friend in Battle Creek who had recently been converted. The friend asked Will if he didn’t think it was time he made a change in his life, inviting him to return to Battle Creek and to join a Bible training class just then beginning.

Palmer showed the letter to his wife, who was not an Adventist, and asked her what she thought he ought to do. She read the letter over carefully, and answered with one word: “Go.” Within ten hours they had settled their business affairs in Chicago and were on their way to Battle Creek.

Meanwhile Edson White was still pondering what he should do. “In regard to the future, I do not know what to think,” he said. “I find that there will inevitably be considerable distrust and criticism in store for me. . . and I have been thinking of going down into Tennessee to work among the colored people under Brother Kilgore. I feel that I can come nearer to him than I can to most of the others. But I cannot decide at once. I shall go into the work somewhere in the spring, even if I have to go out on my own hook and expense.”

In Battle Creek on business, Edson found Will Palmer a new man. “If there ever was a thorough conversion,” Edson later said, “his is one. It seems to me that some of those we called ‘black sheep’ are come out among the brightest workers we have.”

Palmer convinced Edson and Emma that they ought to come to Battle Creek to take the Bible training class and to do the other things necessary to fit them for their work. Edson talked things over with some of the church leaders in Battle Creek, and they encouraged him to close up his business in Chicago and come to Battle Creek for study.

Chapter III

At the Bible Institute, Edson met Dr. J. E. Caldwell, who had been working for Black people in Knoxville, Tennessee, for several months. Two of his converts were with him. When Dr. Caldwell discovered that Edson was interested in going south, he told him of an appeal Ellen White had made to General Conference leaders in 1891, calling attention to the need for Seventh-day Adventists to work among Black people.

“I can give you a general idea of what it was about,” said the doctor, “and a few statements, but I either loaned or lost the manuscript.”

Edson had been pondering about work among Black people, but he could not decide. But after his conversation he wrote his mother:

“From him I learned of the condition of the colored people in the South, and got warmed up in regard to the work. We had several meetings with him in which the matter was considered, and it ended in Brother Palmer and myself feeling that the Lord had a work for us to do in this direction. I had a heavy burden on my mind in regard to the work for many days, as to whether this was really my duty, but one morning when we were praying about it, my mind was cleared up in regard to it, and I have not let myself have another doubt since. I have taken for my consolation in these matters the words of the Saviour in John 16:13, in speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit, ‘He shall guide you.’ I am relying fully on that, and intend to do so. If I can keep my mind there, I have no fears of being left to run wild in the work I shall try to do for the Master.”

After his talk with Dr. Caldwell, Edson started asking men in the General Conference office about his mother’s 1891 testimony. No one he talked to knew anything about it.

One day he fell into casual conversation with a painter working in the Review and Herald building. As they chatted, Edson mentioned his interest in the Black people in the South.

“Oh, said the painter, you ought to read a tract I saw about that.”

“What tract?” asked Edson.

“Well, I think it is something your mother wrote. I found a few copies of it scattered around the floor in that room upstairs where the International Tract Society used to be.”

Bounding up the stairs, Edson quickly found the room. There on the floor he found several copies of “Our Duty to the Colored People,” the appeal Ellen White had made to denominational leaders in a meeting in the Battle Creek Tabernacle on March 21, 1891. (See *The Southern Work*, pages 9-18.) It had been promptly forgotten at that time, but three years later it now found an eager reader. Edson leafed through the tract. Near the end these words seemed to stand out: “White men and white women should be qualifying themselves to work among the colored people.”

The words spoke directly to him. “You must have the grace and love of God in order to succeed,” he read on the next page. “Christians . . . will not, cannot, live in luxury and self-indulgence while there are suffering ones around them. They cannot by their practice sanction any phase of oppression or injustice to the least child of humanity.”

He turned back to the beginning. As he read, he saw more clearly that the future he had been contemplating was the one God had chosen for him. He was astounded that such stirring testimony could lie unnoticed for three years. He read on:

“The black man’s name is written in the book of life beside the white man’s. All are one in Christ. Birth, station, nationality, or color cannot elevate or degrade men. The character makes the man.” . . .

“Those who slight a brother because of his color are slighting Christ.”

In his mind a plan was forming. He knew he might have difficulty persuading the church leaders to support him. But his mother’s testimony had anticipated his predicament:

“Not all can go through a long course of education, but if they are consecrated to God, and learn of Him, many can without this do much to bless others. Thousands would be accepted if they would give themselves to God. Not all who labor in this line should depend upon the conferences for support. Let those who can do so, give their time, and what ability they have; let them be messengers of God’s grace, their hearts throbbing in unison with Christ’s great heart of love, their ears open to hear the Macedonian cry. . . .

“There is altogether too much dependence upon machinery, on mechanical working. Machinery is good in its place, but do not allow it to become too complicated.”

Edson shared the tract with Will Palmer. They were committed to their plans now, and when they heard of a three-week conference for concerned workers in the South to be held in January, 1894, they decided to go.

The only trouble was that the meeting was to be held in Atlanta, and the two would-be missionaries had almost no money. Noticing, however, that the students in the Bible class they attended spent a lot of time copying Ellen White’s manuscripts by hand, Edson decided to print them.

It was a great idea if Edson could get a press. Providence was again at work. Edson was staying in a building owned by a Mr. Clapp, a lumber dealer. A local printer, who owed Clapp a good deal of money, had gone broke and lost his printing equipment to him.

Clapp was hauling the presses and type to his own building when his horse, in a sudden scare, bolted and scattered the type in the dusty street. He shoveled it up, and then gave Edson and Will permission to use his press if they would sort out the type.

Soon they were turning out copies of *Special Testimonies for Ministers*. Although the little book sold well, it did not at first sell fast enough to finance the trip to Atlanta. But Elder A. O. Tait, then in charge of the International Tract Society, in one transaction bought enough of the stock to send Edson and Will on their way.

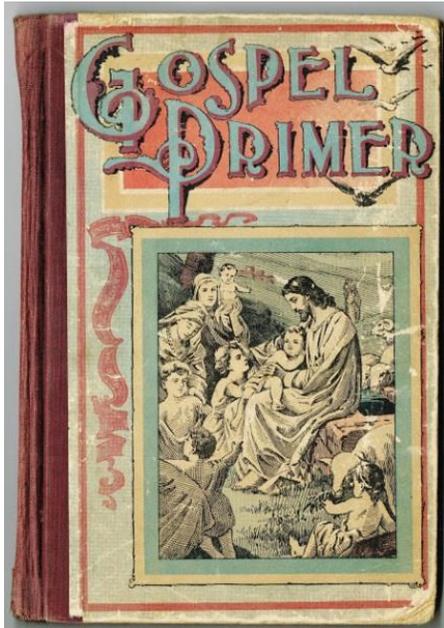
On the second of January, 1894, Elder Tait wrote to Ellen White: “I wrote you some months ago in regard to your son Edson. I wish you could see him now, as he is bending all his energies to the study of the Word of God, and to labor in His cause. Matter that you have sent him from the Lord in the past, and that he has not appreciated because he was all swallowed up in worldly business, he is now getting out and studying, and feasting on it richly. He tells me almost every time I meet him of some rich treasures he is getting from the manuscripts that you have been sending him.”

Edson himself wrote the next day: “The thing which does me as much good as anything else is the cheerful, hopeful, helpful spirit that Emma manifests. She is ready to do anything that is best and duty. She will go south with me in the spring and take hold with me in teaching and assisting the colored people. It will be new work to both of us, and it will undoubtedly be unpleasant in many of its features, but from the testimony that has been given in regard to the Southern work, I feel that there will be a special blessing attached to it, and I want it.”

He and Will Palmer went to the Atlanta institute, arriving on the twelfth of January, in time, he said, “to take what Brother [A. T.] Jones had for us, and I tell you it was grand.”

From Atlanta he laid his plans before his mother: “There are in the South more than ten millions of colored people. And while I will not go into a statement of their condition, there is one thing that is certain,—they MUST be warned as well as the whites in the earth. I have read carefully the testimony in regard to the work among the colored people, and there is no question in my mind in regard to my duty in reference to it.”

He emphasized the necessity of educating as well as evangelizing the Black people, and of training workers among them. He realized that in order to minister efficiently to the Black people of his time he must not only aid them along educational and spiritual lines, but in economic lines as well. While in Atlanta, he spent all the time he could studying the agricultural methods of the South.



He didn't realize it, but his interest in agriculture and economic aid for those he sought to reach was later to bring him into dangerous straits.

While he was in Atlanta, Edson had other concerns as well. There he conceived a book he would call *The Gospel Primer*. The book would serve three purposes: It would make money to finance his missionary venture. It would be useful in teaching illiterate people to read. And it would convey in a clear, simple way the messages of the Bible.

When Will and Edson got back to Battle Creek, they went to work on the book at once. Palmer managed to talk the Review and Herald office into letting them use some old stock cuts for illustrations, and Edson wrote a text to go with each cut.

Mr. Clapp allowed them to trade his old type for some new material from Chicago, and by writing as much as possible, sometimes until midnight, Edson soon had *The Gospel Primer* ready.

At first no one apparently thought the *Primer* would make much money, but Edson and Will went industriously to work promoting the book anyway. They sent circular letters to Seventh-day Adventists all over the country, asking them not only to buy, but also to sell the *Primer* and turn the full amount over for the work among the Negroes.

The idea caught on, and the orders came in so fast that White and Palmer were soon knocking on the Review office door asking for another and larger press run.

The missionaries had their message and their mission, and now they were beginning to get a little money. But once they got to their field, where would they stay?

They had learned enough from Dr. Caldwell and others in the South to realize that not everyone was going to welcome them with open arms, much less open doors. They were Northerners, Yankees—a fact which in itself was bad enough. But they were also planning to work for Black people, and this would be considered an affront to white supremacy. What was more, they were promoting what seemed to be an off-beat sect, teaching people to worship on Saturday in the heart of Sunday-law country. Most white

people, they knew, would refuse them lodging. On the other hand, if they dared to accept the hospitality of Black people, they would probably be mobbed.

It didn't take Edson long to come up with a solution. Sometime during his years in Chicago, Edson had worked on the riverboats on the upper Mississippi River. He loved boats and water, and it was only natural that he should think of building a riverboat.

He looked around Battle Creek and found a boat-builder, Captain A. T. Orton. At that time Orton wasn't much of a Christian, but Edson persuaded him to take on the job. So while the snow still lay thick on the Michigan field, Captain Orton in the basement of his shop put together the frame for a paddle-wheel steamer.

When spring came, Orton shipped the pieces to Allegan, Michigan, on the Kalamazoo River. On March 10, 1894, work began on the steamer *Morning Star*.

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Chapter V

It took only five months to complete the *Morning Star*, and then she headed down the Kalamazoo River to Saugatuck Harbor. From there she sailed down the shoreline of Lake Michigan about three miles to Douglass, where the *Bon Ami* waited to tow her across to Chicago. Making the journey to Chicago were J. E. White and W. O. Palmer and their wives; Engineer B. F. Richards; Captain Reed, an old seaman from Saugatuck; and Professor F. S. Hafford.

The weather was threatening, and soon developed into the storm already described.

Of the group that left Michigan, only the Palmers and the Whites stayed on the *Morning Star*. Mr. Richards, with his passion against Catholics, attacked them so severely that Edson felt he might do better in some other enterprise. He left Edson with equipment for making stereopticon (“magic lantern”) slides, a business Edson would tinker with from time to time for the rest of his life.



In Chicago Edson received a donated organ worth \$140 from the Storey and Clark Company and acquired three young helpers: Walter Cleveland, Walter Halliday, and Louis Kraus. Kraus became engineer on the *Morning Star*, working under Palmer, who had not yet received his papers. One of these young men was a strict Catholic and another a Presbyterian.

The steamer passed through the Illinois and Michigan Canal to LaSalle and then down the Illinois River toward the Mississippi. Stopping first at Ottawa, Illinois, the men waited for a canvas awning they had ordered, to shade the hurricane deck during public meetings on the boat. While they waited, they decided to sell *The Gospel Primer* in town.

Walter Halliday stopped one morning at a house whose owner, a young man, recognized the canvasser as a Seventh-day Adventist.

“What’s your name?” he asked.

“Walter Halliday.”

“Mine’s Fred Halladay,” said the young man. “Where are you staying?”

“On the boat.”

“What boat?”

“The *Morning Star*. It’s a missionary steamer on its way south to work for Negro people.”

Halliday asked Halladay if he wouldn’t like to visit the boat. He would indeed. And when he did, he became so interested in the work that he decided to go with them as far as Peoria. His mother, also fascinated with the project, donated an old melodeon to go with the newly acquired organ.

While in Ottawa, a report reached the *Morning Star* that in Battle Creek opposition to the project had renewed. It seemed to Edson that “the devil has been hot on our track ever since the boat was completed.”

According to the report, a General Conference secretary had charged that Edson had raised money for the boat by misrepresentation and that his claims to have received encouragement from his mother, Ellen White, were false. An elder of the Battle Creek church who was going to tell about Edson’s work and solicit funds for its support was supposedly told to keep quiet.

Edson’s source of information was not altogether reliable, and whether or not the report was actually true may never be established; but it did serve to test Edson White. He wrote back to Battle Creek:

“So long as we feel assured that God is with us as we feel it now, we know that all the devils in the universe, combined with all the men who are blinded to the interests of this work, cannot overthrow it, and we shall press forward in it knowing that God will care for it as He has cared for it in the past, and He will bring it to a glorious termination.”

These were years of crisis for the whole denomination. Matters were not always as they should have been in Battle Creek. Ellen White wrote many pointed and sometimes painful testimonies to church leaders during this period, some of which have been published in her *Testimonies to Ministers*. Elder A. V. Olsen wrote of the period 1888-1901, titling his book *Through Crisis to Victory*. Edson White was not the only one with difficulties.

On the day after his letter to Battle Creek, Edson wrote his mother:

“It has seemed that some of the people in Battle Creek would prevent us from entering this field if they possibly could, but we have relied on God and He has given us the victory. . . . I have no warfare to wage with them. I want to be allowed to work in the cause of God for the salvation of souls, and shall not give up that idea for any human being on the face of this earth.”

In what appears to be a reply to this letter, Ellen White wrote:

“You have written to me expressing the fact that at times you are sorely tried because your brethren do not encourage you or give you the kind of help that Christians expect from each other. Let not any course that your brethren in the faith may pursue towards you, however much it may try your soul, have any influence upon you to lead you to distrust your Saviour. . . .

“Your only course is to lean your whole weight on Christ. Ever bear in mind that we are now upon trial. In this life we are to form a character either after the divine similitude, or after the similitude of the rebellious one. . . . You will meet with prejudice, you will meet with opposition, if you are seeking to serve God you will meet with treatment that will be contrary to your natural disposition. Paul said, ‘I die daily.’ Do not become provoked when you suffer wrongfully. Hold fast your integrity in Jesus Christ.”—Letter to Edson White, Nov. 6, 1894.

But the stay in Ottawa was brightened by the first public meeting held on the *Morning Star*. The churches of Ottawa and Sheridan met on the upper deck and listened to Edson preach on the “Mystery of Godliness.” Then Will Palmer read some of Ellen White’s recent letters. “The interest was excellent,” Edson observed, “and the reading was followed by a praise meeting in which all took part.”

During this praise meeting the Negro cook on the *Morning Star*, Albert Green, took his first public stand as a Seventh-day Adventist, bringing to three the number of the boat's crew that had decided to join the advent movement.

A brand-new group of workers was heading south to Black America. Commenting on Edson's enterprise, a critic remarked that "everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him." Some of them most certainly were discontented with what they had been doing before; but as they all met together for worship each day, they seemingly grew in God's grace and contentment. Perhaps as much as any of them, their leader was growing. He wrote to Elder R. M. Kilgore, the leader of the church's work in the South:

"I have felt that we had God with us, and so have stuck to the determination that we will not fail or be discouraged, and we have pushed through all obstacles until we have, by the blessing of God, got this outfit ready for its mission and on its way to its field. But through all this burden we have been carrying, there is one mistake I have made; and that is, I have felt it my duty to vindicate our cause and correct those who were misjudging us. And I verily believe the devil would about as soon drive me into this kind of work and feeling as to drive me out of the work. . . .

"The last letter from Mother has been one of the greatest revelations to my heart that I ever had in my life. For as soon as it opened up to me my danger in this direction, it also gave me, as I began to take in its real meaning, an insight into the love, the pity, the tenderness, the forbearance of my Saviour. He has endured all my indifference, rebellion, and wickedness for these many years, and yet, with all the power at His command, He has not laid His hand on me in chastisement, but in pitying love and tenderness has He called me year after year."

By no means did this realization end Edson's inclination to defend his work and to brood over the injustices done him, but it does show that without his mother's interest and her counsel from God, his own impetuous nature might have caused him much more trouble and pain than it did.

When the group finally left Ottawa on the 100-mile trip to Peoria, Fred W. Halladay (1868-1948) spent his time getting acquainted with the boat's crew and their mission. Each day he grew more impressed with what he learned. At Peoria, while everyone else went into the town to sell *The Gospel Primer*, Halladay stayed on the boat to study a tract Edson White had given him: "Our Duty to the Colored People."



Workers' barge, "Dawn," towed by *Morning Star*, in which six workers were brought from Ottawa, Illinois, in 1894.

When the group got back to the boat in the evening, Halladay, instead of bidding them good-bye, said, "Boys, I'm going south with you." Everyone shook his hand, and the group shouted its welcome.

Halladay would prove a God-sent asset to the work. He would serve in every capacity from mechanic to preacher and teacher, and in his quiet, earnest way would earn the respect of hundreds of the people to whom, on that afternoon, he dedicated his life.

There were six young men in the company now, and to house them Edson obtained a cabined barge, 42 x 9 feet, to tow behind the *Morning Star*. Because it followed the *Morning Star* they dubbed it the *Dawn*.

Chapter VI

After Peoria the next objective was Havana, Illinois, where the boat had to face government inspection. Edson planned to leave the barge and most of the workers in Peoria while he steamed the fifty-five miles to Havana, then to come back up the river to retrieve them before heading for Saint Louis.

The Havana board had the reputation of being the most rigid and exacting of all boards in the United States. The crew worked feverishly to get the boat in order.

For all his pride in the boat, Edson knew that the inspectors could demand that their three-quarter-inch fire hose be replaced by a one-inch hose. He knew that his four-inch signal lanterns might have to be replaced by six-inch lanterns. Adding up everything that might be demanded of him, he figured he might have to pay as much as \$75 in improvements.

But when the dreaded inspection was all over, Edson wrote a relieved letter to his mother:

“Everything was as nice as we could ask for. When they came on board, we told them of our work and mission, and found that they were Christian men, and were at once interested in our work. I knew of a number of things which the rigidity of the law could call us to get, and we were only waiting to see just what they would require. But they were so well pleased with our mission and the general appearance that they accepted everything we had and discreetly refused to see whatever there was that they might have demanded of us.”

All the inspectors asked was that the *Morning Star* be equipped with a dozen four-foot planks for use as floats in case of accident—about \$4 worth of material.

The inspection board further cooperated by helping Palmer obtain his engineer’s papers (a favor refused him both in Port Huron, Michigan, and in Chicago); by giving the *Morning Star* a letter to present to other ports along the way, saving expense and trouble; and finally by promising to ask the Saint Louis mayor to secure free wharfage at his town’s levees. This barrier out of the way, the boat headed south again at ten to twelve miles per hour, making 100 to 125 miles per day.

By this time *The Gospel Primer* was selling at a fantastic rate: Fifty-five thousand had been printed, and another edition would be needed soon, all in less than a year.

However, at this particular time, much of the royalty money was being used to pay debts owed by White and Palmer to the Review and Herald for books they had purchased. In spite of the large sales, very little money was reaching the *Morning Star*, and when Edson received \$100 from his mother in Australia, he was more than grateful.

It was Friday when the *Morning Star* reached Saint Louis, and Edson was invited to speak in the Adventist church in the evening. He spoke on the Lord’s Prayer, a sermon that became a favorite of his.

As he spoke that evening, he felt that if ever the Holy Spirit was with him, it was during that sermon. When he came to the passage: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,” he realized that in those words there was a special message for him, and that his hearers needed the same lesson.

The people seemed deeply moved by his appeal, and some asked, "Must we forgive before we are asked and our forgiveness is sought?" Edson showed them that the answer was a firm Yes.

Then the question came: "How can we love our enemies?" Edson remarked later that "candidly, on the subject of love, this has been the hardest problem for me to wrestle with."

But as he was struggling to answer the question in his sermon, the answer, "like a flash from above," came to him: "Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

Edson wrote later, "I went home and tried it, and I thank my God for the peace it has brought to my heart." Edson's sermon on the Lord's Prayer was one he preached again and again, and one he had occasion to apply to his own life at least as often.

Before October had passed, Edson had made peace with the General Conference secretary, L. T. Nicola, who had assured him that he was not opposed to Edson's work.

The *Morning Star* missionaries left Saint Louis and headed down the Mississippi for Cairo, Illinois, where they planned to wait about four weeks for Elder Kilgore and Elder H. S. Shaw. Elder Kilgore wanted to talk over their plans with them, and Elder Shaw was expected to go on with the boat to Vicksburg, Mississippi, where they would begin their work.

The missionaries waited six weeks in Cairo for Kilgore and Shaw and finally learned that the meeting was rescheduled for Memphis.

They were on the Mississippi now, and had to have a pilot on board at all times. They had been able to hire one for the trip from Saint Louis to Cairo; but when they were ready to leave Cairo, no pilot could be found. As they were searching, a Black teen-ager, Finis Parker, came asking for work. He helped them in their vain search for a pilot, finally telling Palmer he had worked on government snag boats and knew every inch of the river. He could take them safely down, even though he had no license as a pilot, since that was a "white man's job," and since he was underage anyway.

Finis climbed into the pilot house and soon proved his claim to know every inch of the river. But all along the 300-mile trip to Memphis, whenever another boat was sighted, he had to resign the wheel to Captain White and dodge out of sight until the danger was past.

More than a year later, when Parker was old enough, Edson did his best to secure pilot's papers for him. He wanted him as a permanent pilot on the *Morning Star*. He knew it would be impossible at any port south of Saint Louis, but since he was in the good graces of the Saint Louis inspectors, he hoped they would provide the papers. The steamboat union used every effort to prevent any Black man from getting papers as pilot or engineer, and even though the Saint Louis board seemed favorable, they eventually refused to grant the papers.

If getting down the river to Memphis was one thing, pleasing the Federal Government steamship inspectors in Memphis proved to be another. When the officers boarded the ship, Captain Edson White explained why the boat did not carry a regularly licensed pilot. Unmoved, the officers issued a reprimand and four days later assessed a \$500 fine for violation of marine laws.

Edson and Will Palmer set to work to get the decision reversed. They appealed to the Navy Department through Senator Burrows of Michigan, arguing that the laws applied to ships carrying passengers. A friend of Palmer's in Memphis introduced them to M. R.

Patterson, a Federal officer in the city (who later became governor). Patterson's father was a Senator, and an appeal was also made through him.

The failure of an order of *The Gospel Primer* to come through caused another delay in Memphis. The Review and Herald, although operating its bindery until ten o'clock every night, was still 6,000 copies behind on orders. It was mid-December, and since April 100,000 copies of the little book had been printed. Edson figured that if the present sales kept up for just two more weeks, he could clear all debts owed by the boat.

Waiting in Memphis for Governmental red tape to be cut and for the new *Primers* to arrive, the missionary crew did not waste time. Some canvassed the town with what books they had, while the rest began visiting Black churches in the community.

Edson met the pastor of the First-day Adventist Church in town, A. H. Freeman, who welcomed him into his pulpit. For several weeks Edson studied with the pastor and his congregation, and finally Freeman was convicted that the seventh day is the Sabbath and decided to become a Seventh-day Adventist.

In Memphis Edson began to receive a slender salary of \$8 per week from the General Conference. When he saw that Pastor Freeman would have no financial support at all, he arranged to give him \$2 per week out of his own salary. Then, writing to the Battle Creek Church, he arranged for a suit of clothes for his new convert.

The work of the *Morning Star* in Memphis was not confined to Black people alone. Years later when Edson was going through the type room of the publishing house in Battle Creek a young man stepped up to him and asked, "Do you remember me at Memphis?"

"No," said Edson, "I really can't say that I do."

"Well, I remember you very distinctly. I had been reading in the daily papers about the *Morning Star*, and was considerably interested in it. I came out of the customhouse, and stood on the steps and looked over the boat, and finally my curiosity was such that I went down. And when I came there, you people gave me some tracts and talked about your mission and your work. I began to study, and I made up my mind that it was the truth. Then I got other books and read them. I was engaged to be married. I took these things to the girl I was engaged to, and she read them with me. We both accepted the faith, and finally we came up here."

At last the matter of the fine was settled. The authorities at Washington had referred the case to Mr. M. R. Patterson at Memphis for settlement. He called the boarding officers before him and said, "I have received word that the matter is left for me to decide. I decide that there is no cause for action, and that the case is dismissed."

Since they had been waiting in Memphis for Elders Kilgore and Shaw, when word came from them that they could not make it to Memphis, the *Morning Star* began making preparations to leave for Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Some of the workers took the barge, *Dawn*, and set out down the river ahead of the rest of the group. One evening at dusk, opposite the mouth of the Saint Francis River, which flows out of Arkansas into the Mississippi not far below Memphis, they noticed a flock of geese come down on a sandbar on the Arkansas side of the river. Since they were not yet vegetarians, they decided to row over and shoot a few.

When they got about 200 feet from shore, the *Dawn's* bow struck bottom. It was dark now, and they feared they might never get off the sandbar if they waited until morning. They managed to shove off and started for the other side, but row as they might, they could not find land. They were only novices in river navigation, and the thought of drifting all night, perhaps into some bayou or swamp, held little appeal.

Kneeling down, they prayed for a port. Fred Halladay then stepped to the bow of the boat, and looking up, saw a bright star. "Boys, we'll row by that star." In less than half an hour the boat struck a bank. They jumped out, tied up the boat, and waited for morning.

When light came again, they found they had landed close by Friar's Point, Mississippi, twenty miles below the Saint Francis. They canvassed the town with very good results, and the next morning, as if by appointment, the *Morning Star* landed just below them.

The *Dawn* was towed down as far as Greenville, where a group was left to canvass the town and visit plantations along the river while the *Morning Star* steamed on for Vicksburg, arriving in early January, 1895, two or three weeks before the *Dawn* came down.

Chapter VII

Vicksburg, Mississippi, in 1895 still showed many reminders of General Grant's devastating siege more than thirty years earlier. The battleground was left much as it had been at the time of surrender. The miles of breastworks and trenches could still be seen, as well as the excavations where people had tried to hide. Cannonballs, shells, shrapnel, or grapeshot could be picked up almost anywhere.

One bit of the city's geography had changed, however, much to the convenience of the *Morning Star*. In Civil War times, Vicksburg had looked down upon the river. In a flood in 1876, however, the Mississippi carved for itself a new channel across a neck of land below, leaving the city two miles from the river. In the old riverbed, just below the bluffs of the city, Centennial Lake had formed. The southern end of the lake was connected with the Mississippi by a narrow waterway, and a canal connected the upper end with the Yazoo River. The *Morning Star* pulled into Centennial Lake just below Fort Hill, on which one of the principal Civil War batteries had been erected in 1863. Streets, some of them mere paths cut into steps, ran along the steep sides of the hill where perched the houses and cabins of Negroes.



High up on Fort Hill stood the Mount Zion Baptist Church, one of about twenty Negro Baptist churches in Vicksburg. The *Morning Star* missionaries made this church their first objective, and set to work. It wasn't until mid-March that Edson finally wrote to his mother about what happened:

“We began work in a little church on the top of a hill just overlooking the place where the *Morning Star* is moored. The pastor is an old man who had been a slave, and who at one time got 500 lashes for having a hymnbook, which, by the way, he could not read. . . . This man is, I believe, a good Christian man. . . . We have arranged with this church that we have the use of the church for one service on Sunday, and on Tuesday and Thursday nights. On these nights we hold first a reading class, followed by a short Bible reading or sermon.”

In 1970 an aged member of the Vicksburg Seventh-day Adventist Church, Mattie Erwin, still remembered the meetings in the Mount Zion church. She recalled that the church was lighted

with many hanging “coal oil” (kerosene) lamps. Sometimes the chimneys were so badly smoked by the end of an evening meeting that a person could scarcely see.

She remembered, too, that old Pastor Churchville, when the members of the Mount Zion church were trying to throw the Adventists out, had tried to defend them, although without much success.

As word of the Mount Zion meetings spread, Edson wrote his mother: “Then we have invitations from other churches which we give attention as we can. A week ago last

Sunday I first went two miles into the country to a little church in the morning to attend their Sunday School. I spoke to them on the raising of Lazarus. From there I went up to the Mount Zion church, and attended their Sunday School.”

White, Palmer, and company, however, were not the only white people interested in the Black people of Vicksburg. They were surprised to find that two white ladies, Miss Maggie Scott and Miss M. M. Osborne, had already been at work, one for six years, the other for two. They had been sent by the women’s Baptist Home Missionary Society. In the midst of myriad difficulties, poverty, and illiteracy, these two tireless missionaries had worked on, teaching practical piety and holding Bible classes.

They had organized mothers’ meetings, in which they taught homemaking, childcare, and sewing for the children. In their various classes throughout the city they had enrolled thousands of girls and boys. Since they were happy at last to have assistance, it wasn’t long until Will Palmer had begun to study the Bible with them too.

About a year before the *Morning Star* had come to Vicksburg, Alonzo Parker, an itinerant Black preacher, came to the town from Arkansas. He had no church or creed and was sent by no society. He simply came, impressed by the Spirit to preach the Word as he found it in his Bible and in the Adventist classic *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*.

Fearlessly denouncing evil living, licentiousness, drunkenness, theft, and lying, he attracted a great following even though he declined to induce the emotional orgies many preachers sought to achieve.

At first the churches opened to him, and he preached in many of them. But when he didn’t bother to spare the feelings of deacons or preachers, the doors were soon shut in his face. Next he hired a hall in the city and easily packed it. But that was shortly closed to him as well. Undaunted, he preached in the streets and walked from house to house, but as the fury of the people rose against him, his following grew smaller. Cold sneers and hateful glances met him until at last a mob grabbed him and beat him to death.

As he died, he said: “There will come to you people of Vicksburg just one more chance from God. He will send you other messengers, who will have a stricter message to bear than I have borne. And if you shall refuse to hear them, your fate will be sealed.”

Thus, when the *Morning Star* steamed into Centennial Lake on January 10, 1895, word went quickly among the city’s Black populace that Alonzo Parker’s prophecy had been fulfilled, that this was the last chance for the people of Vicksburg, and that a boat on the lake carried men and women to teach them the Bible.

This impression was so deep that some months later, after great opposition had grown up, when the *Morning Star* left her moorings for a short trip up the river, the hillside was quickly covered with men, women, and children, and the air was full of crying, “She’s going away! Our boat is leaving us! Oh, God, we have no more chance.”

Katie Holston, a deaconess and teacher in the Mount Zion Church, invited the *Morning Star* workers to her home to meet with a prayer group she held. Seventeen of her friends gathered, among them Hannah Washington, Livina Nash, Sylvia Cyrus, Louise Jackson, and Will Maxey with his sister and her married daughter Madaline Shipp. From the King Solomon Church came old Burrell Creecy, the shoemaker, whose large family had been gripped by a chance reading of the book *Bible Readings*. His son-in-law, William Street, a fireman on the railroad, had found the book with a family somewhere in Louisiana. Also came such young men as Grant “Pattie” Royston, who later studied in Battle Creek, and Tom Murphy the barber, who had despaired of the Baptist Church and gone over to the Presbyterians, hoping to find greater godliness there.

In 1970 two members of the earnest group still attended the little church that Edson White had founded from that group in Vicksburg: Madaline Shipp, who became Madaline Edwards; and Ruth Creecy, Burrell Creecy's daughter. Ruth Creecy, who became Mrs. Tom Murphy, was still the pianist for the Vicksburg church. Mrs. Edwards treasures a fading photograph of her distinguished-looking uncle, Will Maxey.

Not long after the first meeting Katie Holston's home became too small, and the scene shifted to the Mount Zion Church. Soon it was obvious that the time had come for *The Gospel Primer* to be put to work in a new way. Since so many of the Bible students could not read, Edson opened a night school on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

The night school was an instant success. The city had provided school facilities for Black children, but these were so overcrowded that hundreds of Black children were unable to attend; the city provided nothing at all for old people who were anxious to learn to read their Bibles. On the first night more than fifty scholars were present, and the number quickly swelled to more than a hundred.

The school began with forty-five minutes of reading and spelling, all taught from *The Gospel Primer*, followed by fifteen minutes of hymn singing. Edson, appalled by the quality of singing he heard in the church, complained that it was "depressing, to say the least," with "one drawling, snakelike tune for long meter, one for common, and another for short meter—a repertoire of three tunes to which all the words were fitted." After the hymns came prayer, followed by half an hour of Bible study.

Soon twelve classes flourished in the school, regular classes for children and other beginners, special classes for old people, and classes for advanced readers. The people were so eager to learn that the teachers had difficulty getting students to leave and go home after night classes.

Soon a request came for another night school to be held in a church two miles away. In this school, Edson asked one of his most advanced students from the Mount Zion school to serve as a teacher. And the young woman gladly walked the two miles twice a week to help.

On its later trips up the Yazoo River the *Morning Star* proved very useful, but moored as it was in the middle of Centennial Lake, it failed to be the home Edson had wanted for his wife. Emma, who was in poor health most of the time Edson worked in the South, found the boat in the middle of the lake confining. So Edson managed to find a house renting for \$5 per month.

With his usual flair for giving detailed information, Edson described the house to his mother:

"I got the upper floor of one of those before-the-wartime houses. . . . It has a hall nine feet wide running clear through it. In one side is a room with a fairly high ceiling, about nine and a half feet high, and the room is fourteen feet wide and thirty feet long."

The house was on the crest of Fort Hill, on the road that now leads to the National Military Park. Characteristically he described the various parts of the house, including the fireplaces and galleries. "There is always a breeze up here," he wrote, "and the rooms all have large windows. I do not think we could have found any place that would have suited us so well in all Vicksburg."

Edson discovered that his landlords owned a horse they seldom used, and he persuaded them to let him rent it and a two-wheeled spring cart for another \$10 per month. "He is a plump little fellow, and goes well. I find it is a great assistance to me in the work, for I have to go all over this hilly city, and it is doing Emma a world of good."

With the house came a garden, and in about three weeks Edson and Emma had new onions, radishes, and mustard greens to add to their diet.

Nothing was said about the Sabbath, the populace undoubtedly assuming that the *Morning Star* workers kept Sunday. They did regularly attend Sunday School, Edson himself sometimes attending five or six services on Sundays. They felt it unwise to hurry the matter of the Sabbath, but kept the seventh-day Sabbath themselves, gathering every week on the *Morning Star* in the middle of Centennial Lake.

One Saturday in February, as Katie Holston was hoeing in her garden, she heard the sound of singing drifting up from the lake. Will Maxey was working above her, patching her roof.

“We’re working on Sabbath,” she called up to him.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“Hear that singing?” said Katie. “They must be keeping the Sabbath down there.”

The hoeing and hammering stopped while they listened to the singing coming from the middle of the lake, discussing its possible meaning and concluding that these people must be keeping Saturday as the Sabbath.

After Sunday School the next day, Will Maxey stepped up to Edson. “How is it that we are keeping Sunday for the Sabbath?” he asked.

Edson, not wanting to arouse prejudice by talking about the Sabbath before proper groundwork had been done, immediately raised his guard. But he also felt anxious to share what he knew.

“I don’t know why you are keeping Sunday,” replied Edson. “Why are you?”

“I don’t know, but I’ve been thinking about it, and I thought I’d ask you.”

“Let me ask you, Will, when was the Sabbath made?”

“When God made the world.”

“What was it meant for?”

Will had to find his Bible to answer that question. He read Genesis 2 and saw the Sabbath was made to commemorate God’s creation, and that it was the seventh day.

“Have you ever read in the Bible of any change being made in it?” asked Edson.

“No, but why are we keeping Sunday, then?”

“We aren’t,” said Edson; “we’re keeping Sabbath down on the boat.”

“Then I’m going to keep it too,” said Will.

The next day Katie Holston approached Edson with the same question, received the same answer, made the same decision, and happily kept the next Sabbath.

But for Will Maxey, the test of his new faith came swiftly. Unemployed for a long time, the very week he decided to keep the Sabbath, he got a job in a shingle mill. On Friday afternoon he sweat hard to get his job done, but just before supper the boss came with a special order for a lot to be made the next day.

Unconcerned, Will simply planned to go back later that evening to finish the job. But on his way home he met Edson White.

“The boss asked me at the last minute to get out an order tomorrow,” said Will, “but I won’t work on Sabbath, so I’ll go back tonight and finish it.”

“That won’t do,” said Edson, “because the Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and closes at sundown on Saturday.”

Will was stunned. “But I’ll lose my job if I don’t do them,” he said.

Edson advised him to go to the foreman and ask to be let off. He did so, and to his surprise, the foreman granted his request with hardly a question. Sabbath found Will Maxey at the meeting on the *Morning Star*.

Katie Holston, who also had planned to come, was ill, although afterward she announced that she had “kept the Sabbath in bed.” When the second Sabbath came, she prepared to meet with the group on the boat. Just as she was ready to start, her friend Hannah Washington met her and asked her where she was going.

“I have learned that Saturday is the Bible Sabbath,” said Katie, “and I’m going to the meeting on the boat.”

“Then I’ll go too,” asserted Hannah Washington. But Mrs. Holston, afraid she might not be let on the boat if she came with an unannounced friend, waited for Mrs. Washington to hurry to get ready, then went off without her. Not so easily put off, Hannah Washington found a boat that would take her out to the steamer, and attended anyway.

Meanwhile the boat’s cook, Albert Green, had been talking to Grant Royston and Duncan Astrap, two young men about his age, about the Sabbath. And they decided to join the boat’s company this same Sabbath. So when Sabbath School finally began, five new members joined the group on board.

After the sermon that day, each new member expressed his desire to attend regularly. Edson, unable to contain his pleasure, stood again to close the meeting joyfully:

“It has been a wonderful day to us. For over a year we have been preparing to come down to do this work. We have had disappointments and hindrances at every step of the way, but at last we reached our field of labor. And now we have been toiling away here for weeks, not daring to open to you the Sabbath and many other truths, for we felt, as the Saviour expressed Himself, ‘I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.’ But we have found out that the Lord has a hand in the work, and when His time came He pressed the question upon us through you. And now to see so goodly a company of Sabbath keepers present on this day, who have come to a knowledge of the truth through our labors, is such a joy to us as you can hardly understand.

“To you, also, is given the privilege of being standard-bearers for Christ, showing by your lives—your every word and thought and deed—that you are the children of God. Let the Sabbath be over you a banner, the emblem of King Jesus whom you serve, and let no act of yours ever put a blot upon its sacred folds.” The little cabin of the *Morning Star* resounded with “Amens!”

But the day still held another climax. That Sabbath afternoon Will Maxey, Mrs. Holston, and Mrs. Washington met with Edson and Emma at their house for what was supposed to be a Bible study. Edson had started reading some new manuscripts on the life of Christ his mother had sent from Australia, no doubt material she was preparing for her book *The Desire of Ages*. His listeners seemed so pleased that he decided to explain the source of the material. He explained that his mother had written the material and had been instructed to write it by God. Then he read from his mother’s book *Early Writings*. All accepted Edson’s explanation at once, and told how happy they were that God was again speaking to His people through prophets, as He did of old.

Soon the new converts began to share their faith in whatever ways they could. Edson had no printing press, but he was able to duplicate a copy of each Bible lesson for each student. Making his own duplicator from materials which cost him fifty cents, he described the process:

“To six ounces of melted glue and thirty-six ounces of heated glycerine, add one-

third teaspoonful of carbolic acid. Take six common slates, and pour the mixture upon them. After standing twelve hours, they are ready for use. Write the copy with hectograph ink, and place it face down on the slate for two minutes, then remove. Repeat the process to the number of fifty or so, by lightly pressing sheets of paper on the slate.”

For results A. B. Dick could hardly have done better. The little sheets turned out in this way found their way far into the interior cypress swamps, carried by the husbands of women who had joined the boat company. Their groups of workers studied each lesson, and small groups of Sabbath keepers began to appear among the cypress gangs.

Chapter VIII

Not everyone was as happy as Edson White to see his students begin keeping the Bible Sabbath. Word that Baptists were leaving their church and joining these new teachers spread rapidly through the area. Before long, as someone put it, “the hill was on fire.”

Baptist pastors, suspecting that offering money would be given to the *Morning Star* instead of to their own churches, were less than elated to find some of their best members leaving. Declaring a boycott on the *Morning Star*, they told their people bluntly: “You haven’t got the education to know what the Bible means. That’s what we are paid for, to tell what it means. So you come to us for anything you want to know about the Bible, and we’ll tell you. And you stay away from those river rats, or we’ll church you. You’re not going to give your souls and your money to the devil while we’re around to get them.”

Suddenly every church was closed to the workers, some from animosity, the rest from fear of the majority. Edson wrote his mother:

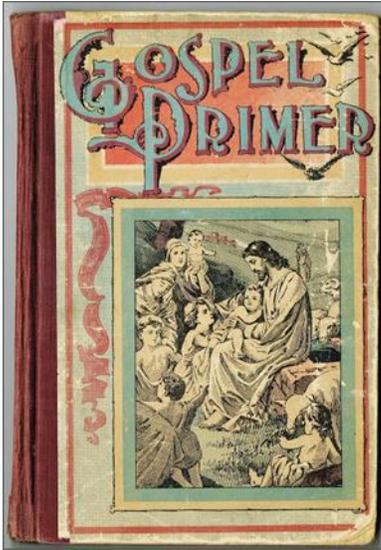
“The devil himself has entered into the ministers, and they are becoming wild and infuriated at the losses they have sustained in membership through our work, . . . but I am surprised at the firmness of those who accepted the truth. They have all been subjected to the most trying influences I ever saw imposed upon new converts. . . . In every case, so far as I have seen, they stick right to the Word, and are able to give an ‘It is written’ to the persons who are pressing them.”

The meetings on the boat grew rapidly. Within a month Edson could count four classes made up of those who had taken a definite stand for the Sabbath. To continue night classes, Edson rented a hall in town for \$10 a month until a church could be built. As usual, the group had no money with which to begin a church.

The gratifying numbers attending the meetings tended to obscure the financial trouble threatening behind the scenes. After she had addressed the General Conference session of 1891, Ellen White in her diary had soberly predicted what would happen in the Review and Herald Publishing House if the men who managed it were not men of faith, piety, and deep experience:

“Perplexities will arise. Religion will be erased from the souls of some of the workers. Selfish plans will be laid, and engagements entered into, that will blot out the principles which God has specified should rule every department of this institution. Voices will be heard making resolutions and propositions which are not wise, and which come from unsanctified, unholy human minds. These will be accepted. In many hearts the truth of God will cease to be a living, all-pervading, sanctifying principle. High-toned integrity will be supplanted by selfishness and a desire to lord it over others.” —*Through Crisis to Victory*, page 145.

Regrettably, these words were fulfilled, and the blow fell hard on the *Morning Star* workers. They had barely reached Vicksburg when Edson sensed that something was wrong. Even though the *Primer* was now selling at the rapid rate of ten to fifteen thousand a month, its royalty money seemed merely to trickle in. Palmer made an emergency trip back to Battle Creek. There the Review and Herald manager curtly informed him that they were not going to print *The Gospel Primer* anymore. He was flatly repudiating a written contract.



At first glance it seemed astoundingly stupid to cancel the best-selling *Primer*. But, seeing the success of the little book, another author had recently written a book strangely similar in price, size, and content, and since the Review and Herald would realize a greater percentage of profits from the new book, the *Primer* was simply dropped.

The situation was desperate. The weekly salary of eight dollars that the workers received barely covered their living expenses, leaving nothing to pay boat-operating expenses. Furthermore, the missionaries found that they were often faced with other unexpected expenses.

“Here we have to go into the homes and work,” Edson wrote to Elder O. A. Olsen, president of the General Conference. “Our canvassers visit from house to house and learn where work can be done. We follow with

Bible Readings, and such other work as the case requires. Many are found who are sick, and we feel that the best way to reach them is to minister to their sick bodies first. Then there are many cases where there is absolute want for food, and I cannot feel easy to leave such. It is little we can do in the aggregate, but we cannot pass them by without doing something for them. . . . They have a very hard lot, and no mistake. Some who take hold of the truth, we find are destitute of shoes or some other articles of clothing. . . . Now, I am not saying this to show up how good we are . . . but to show the work that WILL HAVE TO BE DONE by the successful worker among this people. . . . We simply do what we feel compelled to do for the sake of common humanity.”

As Edson was writing to the General Conference president, explaining their plight and the details of *The Gospel Primer* deal, a man named More interrupted him, asking about the Sabbath. He had been studying in the Mount Zion evening school until it had to be disbanded. Now, as Edson opened to him the truth of the Bible, he accepted it at once.

The experience reminded Edson of another reason why money was so desperately needed. Two months before, More had come to Edson in distress. Behind in his rent, he was notified that his furniture was about to be seized. He said \$1.50 would keep him out of trouble, because the landlord would accept that and wait for the rent.

At the time, although Edson had a total of only \$3 to his name and More was a perfect stranger to him, he felt he could not refuse. More had mentioned that he was painting a house, and he promised that as soon as he finished he would return the money. True to his word, he had been punctual in returning the money. And now, two months later, he came seeking truth.

On many occasions Edson found people needing small loans to care for some emergency. In all the time he had been in Vicksburg he had lost only fifty cents, lent to a minister who, he concluded, probably kept it in vengeance.

The expenses of the colporteurs also worried him. If they spent most of the year selling books full time they could support themselves, but they would have little time for Bible readings and other work. Furthermore, as the summer came, their book sales dropped to zero because their customers earned almost no income during those months.

To make matters worse, Walter Cleveland got sick on one of his canvassing expeditions and lay for two weeks in a cotton house, unable to travel. When he finally did make his way back to the *Morning Star*, he was severely emaciated. It took six weeks to nurse him to a condition strong enough to enable him to travel back to Battle Creek.

In Battle Creek seeking financial relief to avert the disaster facing the Vicksburg work, Will Palmer turned to the General Conference for help. Dissatisfied with the management of the Review and Herald, the General Conference had recently begun to publish some material independently.

Palmer hoped to persuade the General Conference Association, which handled the printing, to take over the contract for *The Gospel Primer*. However, some of those involved in printing for the General Conference Association were also involved in the Review and Herald. It finally took the intervention of the General Conference president, Elder Olsen, to persuade the Association to take over the contract. And when a contract was at last written, it was limited to a small edition of 20,000, barely enough to cover the remaining costs on the *Morning Star*.

Under such circumstances this was the best Palmer could do. He forwarded the contract to Vicksburg. Deeply hurt, Edson at first refused to sign. He decided later to sign under protest, but when informed that the General Conference could not honor the contract under such conditions and realizing that the General Conference had saved him from even greater disaster, he withdrew his protest.

During this grueling period Edson received a letter from his mother:

“I was shown that you were in great trial, and I said, ‘Look up where there is light.’ God loves you, and will not leave you if you will only trust in Him. I know now what some things mean that have been presented to me. You are passing over the same ground that you have passed again and again in times past. I have not heard one word of anything discouraging about you, or of anything that would test your faith; but I saw that you were in great trial, and sorely tempted. The One who has been my Guide so many times said, ‘Fret not thyself in anywise to do evil. This test and trial is permitted to come upon you; but God lives, and you are to be strengthened and encouraged in the Lord.’”

Before she finished the letter, she was interrupted by her younger son, Willie. Then she continued:

“Dear children, Willie has just told me of some things that were related to him by Bro. Palmer in reference to *The Gospel Primer*. I had not heard one word of this from anyone, not even you; but the matter was presented before me in figure before this time. . . . Trust in the Lord, call upon God in prayer, and look away from men. God cannot make a mistake, He cannot err. If there is no chance whatever for you to cancel your debts, and as far as you can see there is no way open, if the means that would help you do this, and to be a blessing to others is taken away as it appears to be, keep at your work; God knows all about it, and He will open up some way which men will not be able to close. Our God is a God of justice. I know that these things that are not after God’s ordering will cut you to the quick.”—Letter to Edson White, June 19, 1895.

Perhaps the poverty and injustice inflicted on Edson and his fellow workers fired him to win more people to the advent message. It certainly brought him to a better understanding of the constantly suffering people for whom they labored. At any rate the *Morning Star* workers met with continuing success, but local opposition soon became so heated that they were eventually forced out of the hall they had rented.

Chapter IX

A church had to be built at once. Among Black people even in slavery days the church was the major social institution. Having a church building in which to meet was understandably of deep importance to them. Thus, when these new Adventists were taunted by friends, “You have no church, and these missionaries will go away pretty soon. Then where will you be?” the words cut.

Edson and Will Palmer had very little money, and their newly acquired parishioners had even less, but since they had assurance from the Lord that the way would be opened, they laid plans for a church.



No. 7. Front Elevation of New Church and School Building at Vicksburg.

They decided on a building 20 x 40 feet which would cost \$100 and made arrangements to pay for the lumber in installments. With much difficulty Palmer and White managed to obtain a \$2 a month lease on a lot on the corner of Walnut and First East streets.

After two days of vigorous building, the missionaries realized that they had failed to secure a building permit. Will Palmer, sent off to find the proper consent, located the man in charge of issuing building permits, and discovered that he was also the alderman for the ward in which the church was being built.

“What is this building to be used for?” the man asked.

“We will use it as a church and a schoolhouse for our work among the Negro people,” replied Palmer.

The alderman’s face clouded. “Well,” he growled, “you might as well forget about it. I’m not going to have any midnight meetings with all that shouting in my neighborhood. If that church is for colored folk, I’ll fight it as long as I live.” Construction stopped.

The small company began praying that a way would be worked out for them to continue. For ten days they prayed. No results. Finally, Palmer went back to see the alderman.

He begged, pleaded, explained, and talked until the alderman, probably thinking he had found an easy way to evade the issue, agreed to a deal: “You get two people who own property near that church to sign a paper saying it’s all right to build,” he said, “and I’ll let you.”

For two days White and Palmer went from house to house. Palmer would go to the door to explain their mission while White would stay in the street and pray. They got the signatures and were soon back on the job.

In a letter to the General Conference Secretary, Leroy Nicola, Edson tells how the church was paid for.

“Bro. Palmer and I have each given \$10. Sister Osborne, the Baptist missionary whom we found here when we came (and who has accepted the truth intelligently on all points), gave \$5. This covers one-fourth of the first cost of the material, but the balance will be a millstone unless there is help for this poor people. They are willing, but every dollar they give means to go without shoes or clothing or proper food. That is sacrifice, and yet all have bravely come up and are doing their level best.

“We had a meeting at my house last evening after the Sabbath to consider the work, and the anxiety and desire to do on the part of these poor people were almost more than I could endure. For I knew every one of them, and the sacrifice that every cent given for this their church meant to them. Some of them hardly see 50 cents cash a week, and some have been kept from the meetings on account of being absolutely without shoes to wear. Others I have helped to get food to eat when I knew their cupboards were empty—and yet they all want an interest in their church.

“If this is not making a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice I do not know where it comes in. Women who have had to come to me for the loan of a little money to enable them to pay the rent of a little spot of ground on which their cabin is located, pledged themselves to assist in this enterprise, but in this way—‘I want a part in this work, and will do all I can, but cannot say now whether it will be.’ Of course not. They will have to pinch here, and cut there, and shave in another place, and by and by they will be able to give, some 25 cents, some 50 cents, and perhaps in rare cases \$1.

“And right here I want to say that I never saw a firmer body of Seventh-day Adventists than the little colored company in Vicksburg.”

The weather was so hot while they were building that unless the nails were kept covered, they were impossible to handle. Edson wrote that “This is a terrible time to remain in the South” and asked L. T. Nicola if he couldn’t get a job in Battle Creek for a few months.

Money became more and more scarce. At one point during construction Edson wrote to Battle Creek that he had only eighty cents for food the next week. But he said,

“We shall see this church through if we have to live on cornmeal mush and water.”

As the church neared completion, Edson was proud to announce to his little company that the president of the General Conference, Elder O. A. Olsen, would be on hand August 10, 1895, to dedicate the church. And on that date Elder Olsen consecrated the little church with a sermon on the worldwide outreach of the third angel’s message.



Church, School, and Mission Buildings, Vicksburg, Miss.

After the dedicatory sermon, church treasurer Will Palmer itemized all building and church costs, including lumber, paint, seats, pulpit, and a little labor that had been hired. The bill: \$160. Then Palmer calmly

announced that the entire bill had been paid and that the church could claim \$20 to its credit. After a short gasp, the little congregation responded with fervent hallelujahs. It was a happy surprise, since the members were expecting a long, hard, uphill pull.

At first they had planned to spend only \$100 on the church. There would be no battens to cover the cracks between the upright planks of the walls, no paint outside, no ceiling, bare rafters above, and only thirty-five canvas camp stools plus a few additional planks to sit on.

But they knew that since the Lord had opened the way for the church to be started, He would not let the job go half done. The General Conference sent \$25, the Battle Creek church \$46, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg \$10, Pacific Press workers \$10, a layman in Ohio named Smouse \$15, and George Lay \$5. All these contributions, plus what was raised in Mississippi from the workers and members, had more than paid for the church.

After the dedication Elder Olsen and Leroy T. Nicola looked over the premises. "This," commented Elder Olsen, "solves the problem of churches in small places in the South."

A few days later Edson happily wrote his mother:

"The influence of the dedication will long be felt in Vicksburg. I look for good results from it. We had some good consultations with Brother Olsen. He is a Christian and a wholehearted man. His visit was a great source of encouragement to us. I could also see that he was impressed with what he saw. There has always been something like a question in regard to our work. But we could see that this was all swept away. The last thing he said to us with his hands on both our shoulders was, 'You have our sympathy, our confidence, and our support.'"

God had moved hearts to provide money where there was none. And He was still working. Almost the same day Edson was writing to his mother about the new church's dedication, she was writing to him from a camp meeting in Australia:

"I am sitting on my bed in my tent, attempting to write to you. I sent a letter to go to you in the last American mail, but was delayed in writing until I fear it was too late to reach Sydney for that boat. But if it failed to reach that boat you will get it by this one. At that time I sent an order to have one hundred dollars paid to you at Battle Creek, to be used in such cases as you may meet who, if they embrace the truth, must have some help in the lines of food and clothing. This is my duty, and I dare not leave the work to others. They may not see the necessity of the case sufficient to act. They may be hemmed about by a prudence and caution that is not heaven-born. Said Job, 'The cause that I knew not I searched out.' But there is no need of particular searching on your part, and on the part of your fellow workers. The needs are on every hand. . . .

"I know it is impossible to remain in the field where you are bare-handed. God does not require this of any worker in the Southern States. All who engage in labor must have something wherewith they shall help the suffering ones at the right time."—Letter to Edson White, Aug. 16, 1895.

Chapter X

August, September, and October were dangerous months in Mississippi. Malaria ran rampant; and the heat, especially for those unused to it, was insufferable.

With the advice of Elder Olsen, Edson was only too happy to head for Battle Creek soon after the little church in Vicksburg was dedicated, while his wife Emma journeyed west to Colorado to visit her mother.

As soon as Ellen White got word that Edson was in Battle Creek again, she wrote:

“Dear Edson, I see by your letter that you are again in Battle Creek. God grant that every hour of your life may be spent to His own name’s glory... Ponder well the paths of your feet. Be swift to hear, slow to speak... You may be looked upon with suspicion and distrust, but I fully believe that in the providence of God your stay in Battle Creek will be a precious school for you. . . If you can do so in an unobtrusive way, try to help Brother Olsen, and stay up his hands. He needs sympathy, and words of hopefulness and courage. But please do not cast reflection upon the men who have not a living connection with God.”—Letter to Edson White, Sept 25, 1895.

Edson replied: “I am thankful for the words of instruction you gave in regard to my course of action while here in Battle Creek. I have tried to act as to show that I hold no hardness toward others. . .

“Brother Olsen has a terrible load on his shoulders, and I would be only too glad to assist him in it, but it is all beyond me. I want to get back to my little field, and go at the work again for souls that need help so very much.”

In Battle Creek Elder A. O. Tait hired Edson to simplify some doctrinal tracts. He stayed in a room owned by his mother, and in his spare time promoted the interests of his Southern work in Battle Creek, writing to his mother:

“I appreciate more than I can tell you the letters you have written in regard to the work in the South. I have been using these things right along since I have been north. I have given seven talks in the college in regard to the Southern work, four of them to the whole school. Then I have spoken twice in regard to it in the General Conference office chapel. The experiences there have seemed to interest the people very much. Your opening of the subject in its different phases has brought a flood of light on the work to be done.”

In these talks Edson used not only the letters his mother had addressed to him, but also those she had addressed to leaders in the church. In the midst of the controversy over *The Gospel Primer* she had written to “the brethren in America”:

“How much self-denial will our institutions manifest in binding about their imaginary wants? Will they continue to spread themselves and obtain more and still more conveniences for their better accommodations, while the means to be expended for the downtrodden colored race is so little and meager? Here are your neighbors, poor, beaten, oppressed; thousands of human beings suffering for the want of educational advantages; many, so many, who need to hear the gospel preached in its purity. . .

“We have been eating of the large loaf, and have left the suffering, distressed people of the Southern regions starving for education, starving for spiritual advantages. By your actions you have said, Am I my brother’s keeper?...

“In the past, some attempts have been made to present the truth to the colored people, but those among the white people who claim to believe the truth have wanted to build a high partition between themselves and the colored race. We have one Saviour, who

died for the black man as well as for the white. Those who possess the spirit of Christ will have pity and love for all who know not the precious Saviour. They will labor to the utmost of their ability to wipe away the reproach of ignorance from white and black alike. . .

“The nation of slaves who were treated as though they had no souls, but were under the control of their masters, were emancipated at immense cost of life on both sides, the North seeking to restrict, the South to perpetuate and extend slavery. After the war, if the Northern people had made the South a real missionary field, if they had not left the Negroes to ruin through poverty and ignorance, thousands of souls would have been brought to Christ. But it was an unpromising field. . .

“The colored people have been neglected because the vexed question of how to build a wall of distinction between the whites and the Blacks has been in agitation. Some have thought it the best way to reach the white people first, for if we should labor for the colored people we could do nothing for the white population. This is not the right position to assume. Christ’s followers are to learn all about the woes of the poor in their immediate vicinity and in their own country, be they white or black.”—Letter 5, July 24, 1895.

A few days after Edson arrived in Battle Creek he received another letter he could use:

“My children, you will meet with deplorable ignorance. Why? Because the souls that were kept in bondage were taught to do exactly the will of those who called them their property, and held them as slaves. They were kept in ignorance, and were untaught. . . .



ur Tait (1858-1941)

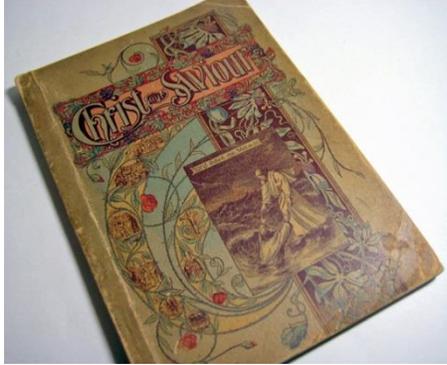
“Many have had no chance who might have manifested decided ability if they had been blessed with opportunities such as their more favored brethren, the white people, have had. But thousands may now be uplifted.”—Letter 80a, 1895.

Edson lingered in Battle Creek longer than he had expected. With his mother’s permission, he was simplifying some of her writings on the life of Christ for a book to be called *Christ Our Saviour*. Elder A. O. Tait, a firm friend of the *Morning Star* project and head of the International Tract Society, was to handle the publishing of the book, and Ellen White arranged that all royalties should be paid to Edson for use in his work.

The new income would clear the debts still remaining when difficulty arose about *The Gospel Primer*, and would finance the next phase of the Mississippi work, a trip up the Yazoo River. Edson White reviewed his plans:

“The work must go into the interior. But just as soon as you leave the cities, no white man can go and rely on the people for his place of living. The white people would not let a man in who was working for the colored, and if the white missionary lived with the colored, the white people would turn out and mob him. The Yazoo River and tributaries, which meets the Mississippi about three miles above Vicksburg, has 1,500 miles of navigable water, and all thickly settled with colored people. This is just the field for the boat. It can go up these places, supply a good home for the workers, and on the upper deck a place of meeting whenever needed.”

Edson saw his cause gain a great boost when about this time the General Conference voted \$8,000 to buy 360 acres of land and a large house to start a trade school to teach industrial skills to Black people in the South. This industrial school, near Huntsville, Alabama, grew into Oakwood College.



Finally everything was in readiness for the trip south. With orders for 40,000 copies already on hand, a first edition printing of 100,000 copies of *Christ Our Saviour* was planned.

Perhaps to avoid having to exist on cornmeal mush again, Edson had canned 225 quarts of peaches, pears, grapes, plums, quinces, sweet apples, crab-apple jelly, and marmalade and had purchased three barrels of apples, an equal amount of potatoes, and two or three barrels of flour, all expensive in Vicksburg.

Emma arrived in Battle Creek from Colorado eager to go back to work. They laid their plans. In Vicksburg, removable desks would be attached to the backs of the pews in the little chapel, and school would be resumed. There would be day schools for those who could not get into the overcrowded public schools, and night schools for any who wished to attend, including older people who had never learned to read. Once this was well under way, the *Morning Star* would head up the Yazoo.

Edson had hoped that his wife and Mrs. Palmer could operate a cooking school as well, but Will Palmer was asked to remain in Battle Creek to take care of the publishing interests of the General Conference Association. Since Palmer's daughter was not well and would suffer from the climate of the South, Edson knew this was best, but he said, "It is leaving me pretty much alone. Brother Palmer has a wonderful gift of winning the confidence of people and influencing them. I never saw his equal in his work as he meets people. . . . Brother Olsen is planning for someone to work with me there, in the place of Brother Palmer, but I fear it may be someone who 'does not know Joseph.'"

In early December Edson and Emma headed South again for what he called the "winter campaign."

Chapter XI

Approaching Vicksburg again, Edson grew anxious to know whether the new believers in Vicksburg had remained faithful. Critics in the North had assured him that he could not depend upon his converts, that they would accept the truth readily enough, but as soon as his back was turned would forget everything he had told them.

Arriving in Vicksburg, Edson and Emma found Fred Halladay faithfully working at his post. He had kept up the Sabbath School and church meetings, and continued Bible studies with the people. What about the members?

“Well,” said Edson, “we were very glad to find on our return that nothing had been lost to the work, unless we might mention two who had not been at all firm when we left, and their position is unsettled yet. The others we found very soon had been growing, and had advanced all the time we were gone. . . . It was a great pleasure to meet them on our return in a much better condition spiritually than when we left them.”

Among the group of believers in Vicksburg the year 1895 closed with a week of prayer; and when a special offering was taken at its end, the church collected nearly \$15. Within the first few weeks after Edson returned, he received an additional \$12 in tithe for the church treasury, evidence, as he put it, “that the pockets of the people have been converted.”

The company felt that the first challenge of the new season was to start adding to the group in Vicksburg and start a night school. Opposition to the Adventist workers had solidified long before, and local people were avoiding their meetings on pain of being put out of their churches.



THE FALLING OF THE STARS.

The workers talked the situation over and decided to meet every day at noon in Edson’s home for prayer. Soon they began meeting at 3 o’clock on Sunday afternoons. Edson had brought a small hand press with him from the North, and on this he printed handbills advertising the meetings. The first week they were in black and white, the next week in two colors, and each succeeding week in different variations.

When they discovered that the husband of one of their converts, Henon Shipp, was a cornet player, they added another special feature to their meetings. Persuading Mr. Shipp to take time off from his work as a popular entertainer and play his cornet with the organ in the little chapel, they not only added sparkle to the music, they also, and more importantly, got Mr. Shipp out to the meetings.

Little by little the attendance increased. The speakers used a blackboard for chalk talks on promises and prophecies. They used a wide

assortment of charts: "God's Law" charts, history charts, health charts, "2300 Days" charts. They used large illustrative pictures of the dark day and the falling stars; of healthy stomachs and drunkards' stomachs. Soon they acquired the reputation for being the clearest preachers in Vicksburg.

"Never mind," said an opposing preacher to one of his fellows, "they're only getting the scum."

"I'm afraid," said a fellow, "that they're getting the kind of scum that comes off of milk when it sets overnight. Some folks just naturally love that scum!"

In his sermons, Edson stressed what he called his "great theme," practical godliness. He showed how God requires implicit and unquestioning obedience. The Bible readings began with studies on the Word of God, then faith, love, and the mission of Christ here on earth, the basic truths of the gospel.

Slowly the people began to realize the greatness of God and the immutability of His Word. Edson felt that it would be absolutely useless to preach about the Sabbath until the people had grasped the meaning of moral obligation.

Medical missionary work began to play a larger role in 1896. Miss Ida Wekel, an undergraduate nurse from Battle Creek Sanitarium, had come south with Edson and Emma. Later, on New Year's Day, Dr. and Mrs. W. H. Kynett came to help as well and, a month later, were joined by their daughter, Lydia Kynett (later Dr. Kynett-Parmelee of New Orleans), a graduate nurse. All came at their own expense.

News of Dr. Kynett's work spread rapidly. Late in January he visited a Black woman who was very sick. Her husband was a tailor. The family, which had enjoyed affluent circumstances, had recently met with several misfortunes.

When Dr. Kynett arrived, he discovered that there was no fire in the little house. Using a horse and buggy that Edson had recently purchased for the work, he went to his own home to get some coal for a fire. Then he treated the woman. Inside half an hour it was known all over Fort Hill what the doctor had done, and suddenly prejudice began to melt.



On Monday and Wednesday evenings the group held night school. The first night attendance was 25; the second, 37; the third, 57; the fourth, 82; and the fifth, 92. Within a few weeks the chapel, built to seat 100, was crowded with nearly 150 scholars learning reading, penmanship, spelling, grammar, arithmetic, and Bible.

Dr. Kynett and Ida Wekel taught along with the others. By general consent the most

interesting class was the one taught by Emma White for the old women. Ranging in age from sixty to eighty years, they came to school each night, determined to learn to read their Bibles. They were usually so tired from a day of washing or ironing or scrubbing that they required a frequent change in subject. They would spend a few minutes with *The Gospel Primer*, and then take instruction in arithmetic. Then they would turn to their Bibles, and finally to some writing exercises.

Walter Cleveland had contacted a white lady the previous spring, and all through the summer she had studied with Fred Halladay. She came out for the dedication of the church, but, as Edson put it, “the array of colored people startled her, and I feared she would not come again.” Finally, she appeared again, however, and Edson noticed that she had overcome her “difficulty” about Black people, and even engaged in friendly chatting with some of the Black church members after the meeting. When she took her stand for the truth, she was the second white person to be converted, the first being the Baptist missionary, Miss Osborne.

Beauregard Lane, a college student home in Vicksburg on vacation, had visited Edson the summer before, had taken a tract on the New Testament Sabbath, and during the winter had written Edson frequently, accepting various articles of faith as fast as they were presented to him.

Once, when he was in financial straits, Edson had helped him with \$12 from the money Ellen White had provided for such emergencies. After confessing that he had “tried to run away from it, but couldn’t,” Lane accepted the Adventist faith, turned in a ministerial license he held from another church, and laid plans to go to Battle Creek to finish his education.

Thomas Murphy, who ran a barbershop in Vicksburg, had been studying for the ministry, and expected soon to enter Tuscaloosa Theological Seminary. He had left the Baptists and joined the Presbyterians, hoping to find a higher standard of Christian living.

One day another theological candidate, J. D. Grimes, persuaded Murphy to go down to the Walnut Street Chapel just to hear the music. Murphy was pretty good on the trumpet himself, and was pleased when he heard Mr. Shipp playing along with the organ. It wasn’t long until Tom Murphy added his own horn to the musical accompaniment.

In a few days these two and another would-be theologian named Grant Royston were attending night school and Sunday afternoon lectures. They asked Edson if he wouldn’t hold a special Bible class.

“I’ll be glad to do it,” said Edson, “but the only time I have is after night school closes at nine o’clock.”

Since they were all eager, a Bible class was soon under way. The group grew to about a dozen, and soon Edson was printing lessons on his hand press. They studied not only Bible doctrine, but healthful living as well.

When Edson lectured on “The Tobacco God,” in a series on the first commandment, he illustrated his lecture with graphic charts. “That was the last time I was thoroughly converted,” Tom Murphy remarked years later. “Elder White had a chart there with a picture of tobacco cancer in a man’s mouth, a great, red, raw patch that looked worse than a buzzard’s head. It looked awful to me. I went out without stopping to talk that night. A few steps down the street I met a young fellow who asked me for a cigarette; I gave him the whole pouch, and said, ‘You can have it.’ That was sixteen years ago, and I haven’t smoked since.”

Within a few weeks all but one of the young men in the special Bible class had determined to keep the Sabbath, and some began laying plans to attend the new school in Huntsville as soon as it opened.

J. D. Grimes, anxious to do Adventist work, began selling Adventist books part time. He had come to Vicksburg several years before. Unable to read or write, both he and his wife had managed to teach themselves and, while supporting their family of seven on \$3.50 a week, to acquire a home which they gladly opened for a second night school in

Vicksburg. And now Mr. Grimes wanted to send his two daughters to the new trade school at Huntsville as well.

Elder H. S. Shaw, whom the General Conference had placed in charge of the Negro work in the South, joined the Vicksburg workers for a time, taking charge of the school in Mr. Grimes' home.

Meanwhile, Edson wrote a general letter to all those he knew who might support his work:

“Dear Friend,

“It is probable that you have no idea of the poverty and needs of the colored people of the South. During the colder months of the winter there is much suffering for the want of proper boots and shoes for the feet, and for sufficient clothing to wear.”

He told how the newly organized Southern Missionary Society managed the various lines of work among Black people, providing schools, assisting the people in economic need, and starting businesses which would provide employment for them. Edson was president, Dr. Kynett, vice-president and business manager, and Lydia Kynett, secretary.

For more than two decades this organization continued to oversee Adventist Negro work. It became a branch of the Southern Union Conference in the reorganization of 1901, and was a forerunner of our present South Central Conference.

The new president listed the items that were needed to begin the Society's work: “Boots and shoes—thousands of these can be used to relieve a world of suffering. Even if worn, they are better than the makeshifts of old coffee sacks tied to the feet to protect them from the biting cold.



Sorting Clothing in Chapel of Morning Star.

“Patchwork—everything that can be made into patchwork for quilts can be used. Sewing schools will soon be started. We find many, even the sick, who suffer on account of insufficient bed clothing.”

To provide employment, Dr. Kynett planned a laundry, a bakery, and even a weaving business. For the weaving business the doctor manufactured a loom which he installed in the sixteen-room home he had rented, but he had so much difficulty getting rags that the business never got a fair start.

Edson closed his appeal with a plea that the freight be prepaid, and a note that dried fruit would also be a useful item, especially among the sick.

Within two months more than sixty barrels of clothing had arrived from the North. The newly organized Southern Missionary Society then formed a Dorcas Society to mend and distribute the goods, which they then sold for five, ten, or twenty-five cents apiece. If the people had no money to buy and no jobs to earn money, the organization provided jobs. Money gathered from selling mended clothing covered the costs of delivery to absolutely destitute families.

Among the many who responded to the plea was Ellen White, who wrote: “I was glad to receive your letters. They were encouraging. And if you shall get into a strait place

for money to help the poor to help themselves, you may draw upon me for one hundred more from the Review and Herald.”—Letter to Edson White, April 11, 1896.

Three months later she again responded with financial help: “Edson and Emma,” she wrote, “win all you can, and when you need one hundred dollars more to invest in the work you have been doing, you may draw on my account at the Review and Herald office. There are those in the world who are poor, yet who make many rich. I am glad Brother Kynett and his daughter have united with you in this blessed work. God bless you and them is our daily prayer.”—Letter to Edson White, July 31, 1896.

From November 1895, through February 1896, Ellen White had been publishing almost weekly in the *Review and Herald* articles about Adventist work among Black people. These articles did much to alert church members everywhere to their duty and to remove the prejudice against Edson’s project.

Before January, 1896, was over, Edson began to drop hints to Elder Olsen that more space would soon be needed. In February the pleas became more pointed. Although the twenty little pews in the church were designed to hold one hundred people, attendance at the night school was running as high as 142. Even the Sunday afternoon meetings were growing. Edson would print and send out as many as 600 handbills. By early February attendance neared 150.

By February 20, Elder Olsen received a letter with a floor plan for an addition to the church sketched on it. Said Edson, “Our house is full and generally from fifteen to twenty are standing about the door who cannot find room. One old man came a mile and a half and found the house so full that he did not dare come in, and so went clear back home.”

Before long the Walnut Street Chapel exhibited a new addition, 26 x 30 feet, attached at one end, so that the two structures joined to form a cross. Double folding doors divided the two sections. Inside, the addition was wallpapered except for cherry-stained wood paneling about four feet high.

In March, Edson, on a quick business trip to Battle Creek, took advantage of the opportunity to promote another idea, a library for his little school.

Dr. J. H. Kellogg gave a full set of his health books, and other donated religious books. Before long a library of over a thousand books had been gathered. Edson also collected illustrated magazines: *Harper’s*, *Scribner’s*, *Century*, *Harpers’ Weekly*, *London Illustrated News*, and the *Youth’s Companion*. Other donations provided a pair of fine oil paintings and two good carpets.

Part of the carpet went to cover the pulpit platform in the addition, and the rest to cover the floor in another little room, 12 x 16 feet, which served as the library. The library, with its beautiful paintings, its carpet, and its many colorful books and magazines soon became a popular place. School discipline was kept by simply withdrawing library privileges from disorderly students. The night school had become such a success that the General Conference sent E. W. Carey to open a day school.

At the end of March, the Vicksburg workers reported their progress for the past three months:

Visits	289
Treatments	109
Medical prescriptions	66
Office consultations and examinations	34
Barrels of garments distributed	14
Dorcas meetings	5

Cooking schools	4
Bible readings	117
Sermons preached	26

The work in Vicksburg was stabilizing, and Edson itched to venture out into the Delta. Expecting his financial status also to improve, he set to work overhauling the *Morning Star*.

He ordered a new engine, a new boiler, and new shafting for the boat, for which the freight alone cost \$150, lengthened the boat to 105 feet, and added an entire new upper deck, which included a 10-foot-square study for Edson. "It is well lighted and ventilated," he said, "as the room has nine windows and two outside doors."



He also added a 12-foot sitting room, an 8 x 12-foot bedroom, clothes closets, and a bathroom to complete the living quarters. Behind this Edson built a chapel and reading room, where half of the books from the Vicksburg library would be placed during excursions up the river.

On the lower deck the addition left room for the main cabin, a printing office, three staterooms, a large dining room, a kitchen, the engine room, a storeroom, and a bathroom.

Edson was eloquent in describing the advantages of the boat:

“You see we have almost a village collected together and always available for all parts of the work, wherever we are. I tell you, the more I have to do with this plan, the more faith I have in its efficiency. One has the privacy and comforts of home, and in fact, the facilities of one of our missions, and wherever he goes it is always at hand.



“Then, it would be a terrible thing for me to try to

go from place to place in this work, and depend on the accommodations of the country. The white people would not accommodate one engaged in this kind of work, and if we accepted the accommodations of the colored people, the whites would drive us out of the country.”

But the newly confident Edson was to be severely tested. About \$500 Edson had expected from his revision of *The Gospel Primer* arrived late. Edson wrote in anguish: “I cannot understand it, but God does. I can only leave it with Him. I am crying to Him with my might, and praying that I may not be left to give up in discouragement.”

The only bit of financial encouragement Edson had was the faithfulness of his own members in Vicksburg. For the first quarter of 1896 these newly prospering people turned in over \$50 in tithe, and the mission offerings of these poor Southern Blacks amounted to double the per capita rate of the great Battle Creek church in the North.

But by June the little book *Christ Our Saviour* yielded \$800 in royalties, which helped relieve the pressure of the boat’s expenses. Captain A. T. Orton, from Battle Creek, had come down to oversee the refitting of the boat, and by mid-July the paddle-wheel was turning again.

Edson took the boat on a trial trip up the Yazoo as far as Haines Bluff, where a giant International Paper plant now stands. Edson discovered that they could make seven miles per hour upstream with only half a head of steam. And for all its bulk, the boat drew only twenty inches of water.

As work on the boat neared completion, Edson began a new book, destined to be another best seller in denominational literature, *The Coming King*. Work on this book and visiting the people kept him busy far into the summer.

The summer of 1896 was one of the hottest in the memory of the old-timers around Vicksburg. The heat viciously oppressed Edson and Emma, and by August fever struck them both. Emma was so sick that Edson feared she would die, but they both managed to get away, Edson to Michigan and Emma to her mother’s home in Boulder, Colorado.

Fred Halladay kept things running smoothly in Vicksburg, assisted by two or three others, until Edson was able to return in December. But Emma was so weakened that she

was unable to return until spring.

Back in Vicksburg, Edson wrote his mother:

“There is one thing I have learned, and that is, it will not do for me or Emma to try to stay down here during the hot summer months. For while the thermometer does not range so high at any one time as it does occasionally in the North, there is no let-up to it, day after day for months. In time one gets debilitated. My brain seemed baked, and I could not think or study or do much of anything for some time after I went North, and for weeks before going.”

Then he added:

“It is lonesome work down here without Emma. She was a great aid in the work. Her influence with the people was most excellent, and they thought as much of a visit from her as if it were from the queen. I am thankful that her life has been spared, and that she is recovering, although slowly.”

Chapter XII

Adventist historian A. W. Spalding has described the Yazoo region as it appeared in this century:

“The Egypt of the South is that great spindle-shaped territory between the eastward bowing bluffs and the westward bending river, sixty miles broad in the middle and two hundred miles from its tip at Memphis to its foot at Vicksburg. A land is netted by rivers and bayous and lakes and swamps, left behind by the great river in its millenniums of lazy wanderings from bluff to bluff; a land whose deep, black, silty soil, the gift of that great river from the plundered lands of the North, has never shown signs of exhaustion from the corn-and-cotton monotony of generations of planters. [Its fertility, however, was being slowly depleted by improper treatment.] Standing on the bluffs that make its eastern boundary, one sees, stretching away to the horizon, a vast level floor, wooded so thickly that, despite the open fields in the foreground, it is difficult to think of it as anything but a great primeval forest. The forest, indeed, is no small part of the great domain, furnishing, in its cypress brakes, one of the most profitable lumber industries of the nation.

“The Yazoo River, which empties into the Mississippi about four miles northwest of Vicksburg, gives its name to this section, the Yazoo Valley or Delta. [The Yazoo River has since been diverted through Centennial Lake and passes right in front of Vicksburg.] That river, in fact, as it hugs the bluffs to the east, forms almost as complete a boundary on the one side as does the Mississippi on the other, winding a sinuous course of four hundred miles from the northern border of the state. All the important streams of the Delta flow into the Yazoo rather than the Mississippi, and as a number of them are navigable for long distances, practically the whole of this territory is opened to river travel through the Yazoo system.

“Almost all of this great land lies below the high-water mark of the Mississippi, and when, in the spring floods, any part of the great system of levees guarding the valleys gives way, or when the high water backs up the sluggish Yazoo, there is devastation on the plantations—lands drowned and houses invaded, crops damaged, stock lost, and human lives endangered, until the river retires, leaving injury incalculable. If the season is not too late, the crops may be replanted, and perhaps with several years before him ere another failure of the levees, the planter can expect to weight the credit side of his ledger.”

Spalding’s description remains reasonably accurate. Of course, the levee system is now much more secure, and the “great primeval forest” has been largely stripped away.

Still, forest products compose one of the biggest industries in Mississippi. The fields left behind by the chain saws today will more than likely be planted in soybeans rather than cotton. But comparatively the tenant farmer is still as poor as he was in Edson White’s day.

Mississippi has thirty-five of the 255 “hungry counties” in the entire United States as designated in a recent Government study. Yazoo and Warren counties, where Edson White did all of his work, are among those “hungry counties.”

On the seventh of December, 1897, the *Morning Star* set out up the Mississippi to the mouth of the Yazoo and on up into the Delta. On board were Elder G. A. Irwin, who had recently taken over the supervision of the Southern district from Elder R. M. Kilgore; Captain A. T. Orton; and E. W. Carey, who had recently closed his day school in Vicksburg.

Traveling the twisting waterway for 110 miles, they finally reached Yazoo City, a town of 6,000 inhabitants, the largest in the southern part of the Delta, and destined to be the site of both dangerous and rewarding experiences for these Northern missionaries.

Once he got into the interior, Edson quickly learned to say "Vicksburg" whenever anyone asked where he was from. This expression seemed to command more respect than did "Battle Creek."

Elder Irwin had just come from Birmingham, Alabama, where the director of the Negro Mission had given him an address in Yazoo City. When they arrived, the workers found a lady who had accepted the Advent message in Alabama, but had come home to Yazoo City to visit her sick mother. The family welcomed them, invited a few friends in, and Elder Irwin spoke on the "Love of God." The work in Yazoo City had been launched. When the *Morning Star* left the next day, E. W. Carey was left to keep it going.

Edson found the Black people of Yazoo City in a much better situation than those in Vicksburg, seemingly blessed with much greater educational and economic advantages.

"There will soon be workers all along this river," he wrote his mother enthusiastically, "and the boat will ply from place to place where there is no possible way of getting in and out except by steamer. In this way the country can be opened to the work as it could in no other way. There are nearly two thousand miles of navigable water on the Yazoo River and its tributaries, the heaviest population is at no great distance from the water, and the most of it entirely cut off from outside communication except by steamboats. I am so glad that I have the facilities for reaching such a country."



"Please, Mr., will you give me some clothes?"
Photograph of a group of boys who came to the boat at
a landing along the river.
Taken on the bank by our *Morning Star* artist.

About two weeks later, the *Morning Star* again made its way up to Yazoo City. This time Edson towed the workers' barge, the *Dawn*, with him, intending to haul wood back down to Vicksburg to cover the expenses of the trip. But for some unknown reason, links began breaking in the chain that transmitted the power from the engine to the paddle wheel. Again and again the chain snapped and the paddle wheel slogged to a stop. Finally, with several links cracked, they added the last of their ten spare links, and decided not to finish their trip. They sent a messenger to a telegraph officer two miles away with an urgent order to the Link-Belt Co. of Chicago, and then cautiously edged up the river another seventeen miles to Bliss's Landing where they planned to wait until the new links came from Chicago.

With the nearest church ten miles away, many Bliss's Landing people hadn't been to church for fifteen years. On Sabbath, Edson began thinking of holding a meeting on the boat the following day. He talked it over with the plantation owner, Mr. Bliss, and he agreed it would be a good idea. Edson and Bliss had intended the meeting to be for the white people nearby. However,

Albert Green, cook on the *Morning Star*, who had heard a meeting was scheduled, set out to invite all the Black people he could find as well.

Edson was just a bit edgy all morning, but when meeting time came, he held one of the first “integrated” church services in that area since the Civil War, but not without conceding to custom enough to ask the Black members of his congregation to sit in the back.

The meetings at Bliss’s Landing continued for several months. Probably few Black persons today would submit to the situations in which some of the meetings were held, but in those days it was something of a miracle that the two races would come together in a religious service at all. After a few meetings, Edson ran a long curtain lengthwise through his little chapel, simultaneously preaching to the Black people on one side and the white people on the other.

Although in 1908 Ellen White approved of separate church services under certain conditions for the two races (see *Testimonies*, Vol. 9, pp. 206, 207), in 1900 she wrote to a worker in Africa and mentioned the situation:

“In regard to the question of caste and color, nothing would be gained by making a decided distinction, but the Spirit of God would be grieved. We are supposed to be preparing for the same heaven. We have the same heavenly Father and the same Redeemer, who loves us and gave Himself for us all, without any distinction. . . . Ask yourself if Christ would make any difference. In assembling His people would He say, ‘Here, brother,’ or ‘Here, sister, your nationality is not Jewish; you are of a different class?’ Would He say, ‘Those who are dark-skinned may file into the back seats; those of a lighter skin may come up to the front seats’?”

“In one place the proposition was made that a curtain be drawn between the colored people and the white people. I asked, ‘Would Jesus do that?’ This grieves the heart of Christ. The color of the skin is no criterion as to the value of the soul. . . . God has taken us, all classes, all nations, all languages, all nationalities, and brought us into His workshop, to be prepared for His temple.”—Letter 26, 1900.

Edson did not like the curtain idea. He would rather preach to the Black people alone, he said, so that he could talk to them more directly. But, he asserted, “I am unwilling, until I try it further, to let go one particle of the hold I have in bringing the two races as near together as we are now doing. Of course I cannot see yet what it will grow to, but when we come to build a church I may want just the vantage ground which these services on the boat may give me. They are becoming familiar now with having both races attending the same service, and when we move into our church, when the time comes to have one, it will not seem so strange”

Eventually the curtain idea was abandoned, and separate services were held. A night school was opened on the other side of the river from Bliss’s Landing. It served a large Black population that had no schools at all.

But prejudice ran deeper than Edson imagined. About a week after the night school opened, as the *Morning Star* was heading up the Yazoo for the evening classes, word came that Edson was wanted at a certain landing.

There he was confronted by the deputy of the County Superintendent of Schools:

“Are you Edson White?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Well, you’ve got a choice to make about which class you want to work among. If you work for the whites, we’ll give you our support. The whites need preaching to, and it

don't matter what denomination you're from, we'll take an interest. But if you do that, you'll have to quit preaching to and teaching these Blacks. The Blacks outnumber us sixteen to one in this section. We've always succeeded in keeping them down, and we intend to keep it that way."

"Am I to understand that I cannot work for the colored people?" asked Edson.

"Well, that wasn't really the intention, but we had a mass meeting over the matter, and if you do work for the blacks, you'll be ostracized, and people will have nothing to do with you, in any shape or manner."

It was a grim disappointment. Edson soon discovered that the plantation owners had warned their workers not to attend any meetings on the boat, and, as Edson said, "the colored people are so terrorized by the whites that but few would dare to do so."

The workers met on the *Morning Star* for prayer and careful consideration of the situation. Letters went to Battle Creek asking the General Conference to have special prayer over the matter.

Edson later discovered that some had threatened to dynamite the boat, and one of them, a man named Chris Dose, had offered to "hold the Winchester on old White while you-all fetch the rope."

During an earlier flood the great stern-wheel steamers that plied regularly between Yazoo City and Vicksburg would go by this fellow's house as it stood in the water and make such waves with their speed that his house would almost collapse.

When he yelled at them to slow down, they laughed at him. So the next time they came by, he took a pot shot at the pilothouse. The bullet went through the pilothouse, but hit no one. So when Chris Dose volunteered to help with White's lynching, he wasn't just talking.

For the time being the missionary work at Bliss's Landing came to a standstill, but there was another kind of work going forward there. While the *Morning Star* had been waiting for new chain links, Edson and Captain Orton inspected a 24-acre plot of timberland near the landing. It was a tempting piece of real estate.

Chapter XIII

The timberland, with half a mile of waterfront, ran back from the river for three-quarters of a mile through what Edson described as “as good land as there is in the State of Mississippi.” The land was also highest around for miles, and during floods animals were often taken there for refuge.

The land promised to provide an abundance of valuable lumber. The lower land, back away from the river, was forested with cypress. The rest of the property was rich with the typical trees of the Delta: water oak, sweet gum, white oak, and red maple.

Captain Orton, experienced in sawmills, urged Edson to buy. Elder Irwin also favored the purchase. The land promised a place where church members could be given profitable employment, and perhaps might even furnish the foundation for an industrial training school. The land cost only \$4 an acre, so on the \$960 value Edson put \$50 down and went to work.

Dr. Kynett and his family came up from Vicksburg to help clear the land. The timber had been cut from two or three acres, but the spot was nothing but a tangle of brush and small logs. Before long they had built a barn and put a carriage and horse into it. Edson planted two thousand strawberry plants he had brought from Michigan, along with some raspberries and fruit trees. A cow was an absolute necessity. To get milk one had to travel fifteen miles by water or five miles by land from Bliss’s Landing.

Since Edson had three years to pay, it looked as though the timber income would cover all property costs. The men busied themselves cutting cordwood to be hauled down to Vicksburg. The heavy cypress timber on the back of the lot could only be cut and then left on the ground until it could be floated out on the crest of a flood. The cypress supplied blocks for a shingle mill that was soon in operation.

About this same time two more helpers, Louis A. Hansen and his wife, arrived in Vicksburg. Shortly before his death in 1969 Mr. Hansen described his life in the South in a book he titled *From So Small a Dream*. A licensed minister in Indiana, he had taken nurses’ training at Battle Creek Sanitarium; then, under the recommendation of Dr. Kellogg’s Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association, had come with his wife to Vicksburg to enter self-supporting missionary work.

Since Mr. Hansen proved to be not only an able medical missionary but a good speaker as well, Edson left him in Vicksburg with Miss M. M. Osborne to care for the work there; he moved Fred Halladay to Yazoo City. Mr. Carey’s health had been failing, and in March he returned north for treatment. Dr. Kynett and his wife also left the South about this same time.

By mid-March, word came from Colorado that Emma had recovered and would soon return to Vicksburg. The *Morning Star* steamed down to meet her, but as the missionaries waited, threatening news came from another direction. The spring floods were on, and the water in the Delta was rising dangerously. When they finally headed up the river again, they found themselves running with the Mississippi current surging for thirty miles upstream into the Yazoo.

They made it to their farm, and every night they measured the water as it crept up the thirty-five-foot bank. Each day they gave less and less credit to the story that said their

land never overflowed. Hastily constructing a platform up in a tree, they stacked it full of cordwood, dismantled the wagon, and put it on top along with other farm implements.

Finally another levee broke along the Mississippi, and water rose seven feet in a single night, dooming the precious strawberry bed and vegetable garden. But all around they witnessed a more serious disaster. Sharecroppers saw their whole year's income destroyed by the rising water. Horses, mules, cattle, sheep, and hogs were drowning everywhere. The only exposed land for fourteen miles around was an Indian mound, formed over the centuries as Indians buried their dead one atop another.

To this place the planters had driven hundreds of their cattle and work stock. Since their animals were without food on the Indian mound, the owners had to boat up and down the river, cutting the budding willow boughs to feed the miserable beasts.

Before long the *Morning Star*, a square face built on its bow with a barge lashed to it, was steaming from place to place, picking up cows, mules, and horses and hauling them to Vicksburg. One plantation owner had thought his land safe enough, but when the ominous water rose to a point within inches of his mules, he called for the *Morning Star*.

"The trip was a little perilous," Edson recalled, "as we had to leave the river and go over his farm for nearly a mile, right among the standing timber." Sometimes there was as little as six to ten feet to spare between the boat and the trees.

"The steamer and barge together were 160 feet long," Edson wrote. "To get in there, we had to have a man stand at the bow with a pole. We would stop the machinery; he would shove the boat off, and sometimes we had to send men out with a skiff to take a rope and attach to the trees and draw ourselves along with a rope."

When the steamer tied up at the dooryard of the farm, the mules, in their mad haste to get on the barge, had to be driven back with clubs to keep them from jostling each other off into the water.

Once the planter's own mules were loaded, he urged Edson to wait until his sharecroppers could bring their rented mules in to the barge. The planter would send skiffs out to the sharecroppers and bring in the mules one by one, the sharecropper in the skiff, the mule swimming behind. As the tediously slow operation dragged on, Edson began to worry.

"We can't wait any longer," he finally told the planter. "We've got to get out of this forest before night comes. If a breeze should spring up, we never could get out of this place. We wouldn't have a chance of handling the boat."

Just as Edson was ready to leave a shout, "There he comes now!" made him pause. There was a skiff with two men in it, and one final mule swimming behind. The animal was so exhausted his head would sink beneath the muddy brown water, then bob up again. He couldn't even climb into the boat, but had to be hauled in with planks and ropes. When the straining men finally got the animal over the edge, a board slipped and men and mule tumbled into the slimy mess inside the barge. Fortunately, the mule was also too tired to kick.

Heavily loaded, they headed down to Vicksburg. Here and there along the way house roofs appeared, sometimes with tenants sitting on top begging to be taken off. Often trees and shrubs in the swirling current were seen covered with writhing masses of snakes.

Vicksburg was a city of refugees. The water covered the railroad tracks at the foot of Fort Hill, and the bank above was lined with furniture and household goods of every description, piles of bedding, quilt-covered bundles full of clocks and spoons and photographs, family Bibles, and jewelry. Big-mirrored dressers and fine new sewing

machines stood exposed to the weather while their unhappy owners huddled nearby.

With housing impossible to find, the Southern Missionary Society opened its 20 x 40 foot chapel to the refugees. Soon thirty-six people—with their trunks, beds, and other salvaged household goods—were crammed into the tiny church. The Methodist church did the same, along with several other churches, but hundreds of homeless, starving people went without shelter or food. Finally the Government sent army tents and rations.

Needless to say, in the minds of the white people around Bliss's Landing, the help rendered by the *Morning Star* during the flood altered its image. But the flood climaxed a bitter lesson for Edson.

Again and again since his conversion, his mother had written him to keep from entangling himself in business ventures. In October, 1895, she had written: "Make no unwise investments. Owe no man anything. Do not bind up borrowed money, making future calculations too abundant to repay, for this has ever been your weakness. Your only safety is in walking softly before God, holding forth the word of life, receiving the precious light given you of God, for He has chosen you as a light bearer."—Letter to Edson White, Oct. 7, 1895.

The purchase of the farm near Bliss's Landing had been a mistake, and Edson soon learned it. Although the enterprise started off with every promise of success, it soon became apparent that Captain Orton could not make it prosper. Edson had found himself spending more and more of his time promoting and organizing the financial interests of the farm. And each new problem had discouraged him more.

Then came the flood. On May 6, 1897, Edson wrote his mother in Australia of his trouble, confessing that he had been wrong to go ahead with the business enterprise when he had received warnings from God on the very point. A few days after he had mailed his letter, one came from Ellen White dated a month before, on April 6: "I was conversing with you in the night season. We were having some serious conversation together. You opened before me freely that which you intended to do. We conversed very pleasantly, and you proposed many things. But after we had canvassed these things thoroughly, you said, 'Mother, the only safe path for me is to follow out implicitly the light the Lord has given me in the testimonies you have sent me. . .

'I cannot serve God with a divided heart. I can see that I must not take financial matters upon me, if I would have my mind fruitful in the Scriptures.'"—Letter to Edson White, April 6, 1897.

When Ellen White received Edson's letter, she wrote him again:

"In the night season I was conversing with you, as I stated to you in my letter of two or three months since. Before that letter could have reached you, I received one from you, stating in substance the things I was talking over with you. You said that you had decided to heed the instruction given you by the Lord not to mingle temporal financial enterprises with your work. This, I know, has ever been your danger."—Letter to Edson White, May 30, 1897.

The fact that God would reveal his case to Ellen White, together with the encouragement of his mother, helped Edson. He wrote:

"In regard to the letter you wrote before the last, in which you record a conversation you had had with me. Mother, you have little idea of the good that letter did me. I was feeling my mistake so keenly, and the results of my error were so plainly pressed home to me, that I hardly knew what to do or how to turn. A few days before your letter came I had written you a long letter in regard to the situation; and when I read your letter to me, I

turned to the copy of the letter I had written you, and was surprised to see how accurately you had brought out almost every idea I had expressed in my letter to you, although your letter had been written just a month to the day before my letter to you was written. These things have been a very great encouragement to me, and have helped me to break through the difficulties which were surrounding me. I have cut loose from all business relations.”

Although Edson sustained considerable loss in the flood and the failure of the businesses on the farm, a delay in the clearing of the title allowed Edson to drop his plan for the purchase of the land. God had been at work, overruling man’s mistakes, but not letting the lesson go unheeded.

On March 7, 1897, the General Conference voted to replace Elder Irwin with Elder N. W. Alee as superintendent of the Southern district, and to ordain Edson as a minister. “While I see so much in myself that is so far short of what it should be, and see so many things that must be changed in me,” Edson said, “yet the real needs of the work here are such that I can but rejoice that this action has been taken.” Edson immediately put his new credentials to use in Vicksburg with the celebration of the ordinance of humility (footwashing) and the Lord’s Supper.

Chapter XIV

From the moment Fred Halladay had joined the *Morning Star* on its maiden voyage at Ottawa, Illinois, he had proved an invaluable asset to the work. In the South he had fallen in love with Ida Wekel, the nurse who came to Vicksburg in 1896. She evidently felt much the same way about Fred and just before Edson sent him to Yazoo City, they announced their engagement.

But when the date they had set for their wedding arrived, Fred had no money to come to Vicksburg for his bride. Ida had only enough money for train fare to Yazoo City, where Fred met her. There the couple, completely alone except for each other and God, went directly to get married, then home to Fred's rented room.

"This is a heathenish way to do," remarked Edson wryly, "but under the circumstances they can do no better."

The couple continued their daily Bible studies in many homes; they conducted night classes and Sunday classes at the Wilsonia Baptist Church and in Annie Smith's house in Lintonia. These two places, Lintonia, across the railroad tracks to the west, and Wilsonia, across the river to the south, were "suburbs" of Yazoo City, excluded from city jurisdiction to relieve the city of the responsibility and cost of educating the inhabitants.

The meetings in the Wilsonia Baptist Church continued until Edson began preaching against tobacco and thereby alienating some of the younger deacons.

Coming up the river one week, he learned that his Sunday evening church appointment had been given to another preacher in town. Edson promptly set the type for a small handbill to advertise a meeting in the chapel of the boat, and his helpers had soon scattered hundreds of announcements.

When the hour came, the bell on the *Morning Star* began to clang, and its rival in the church steeple took up the challenge. The boat, with the advantages of novelty and advance planning, was soon filled, while two old women convened to listen to the preacher in the church. Even the church's deacons followed the crowd onto the boat, and before long the two old women hobbled down to the boat as well, followed finally by the reluctant preacher, who leaned against a pole on the bank to listen to the sermon he had tried to prevent.

Edson's plain style of preaching, with many illustrations, captivated his audiences. Fifteen years later, when A. W. Spalding visited Yazoo City, Adventists still remembered Edson.

"White's the man! White is the great man," said one tall fellow who had heard him. "He can do anything: preach, teach, and work. One day he had us all guessing how long a certain stick was. He was showing 'em how guessing wouldn't do. They guessed everything—ten inches, twenty inches, and two feet. Then he took his rule and measured it: it was eight and one-fourth inches. So, he said, are the Ten Commandments the rule of our lives? You can't just guess at what is right; you can't just come somewhere near what is right. You have got to lay down the Ten Commandment rule to measure your living."

When Spalding met the Joe Miller family, he found a portrait of Edson and Emma White still on their wall. "I learned to read at Brother White's school," the aged Mrs. Miller told him, shuffling her apron through trembling fingers. "I was 'bout fifty years old. Never had no chance to read nor nothing. But I started, an' in a month I could read, but I couldn't

understand. I used to cry over it, but then Sister White—she’s a blessed woman!—she’d encourage me. Come set right down by me, she would, an’ help me. An’ in two months I could read an’ I could understand. Sister White sure was a good woman. An’ she could sing. Brother White an’ she certainly could sing. They sang good together. I reckon she was the best singer that ever went out.”

“Where’s Brother White now?” Joe Miller asked Elder Spalding. “I don’t reckon I’ll never see him no more! Long time after he went away, he came back once. Joe Lee told me he was going away that night. I said, ‘I can’t see him then, less maybe if I’ll stay at the station this evening.’ And I went down to the station. By and by he came in with another white gentleman. He walked right past me. I touched him on the arm. He dropped his grip and grabbed me; like to knock me down. We sat down and talked till he plumb had to get up on the train. After he was gone, some white people come by and say, ‘Miller, who was that old man look like he love you so?’

“I said, ‘Well, I do love him.’

“Well, who was it?”

“Oh, that’s Brother White.’

“What? That old Advent preacher used to be here?”

“Sure, that’s the one,’ I said, ‘but I don’t reckon I’ll never see him no more.’”

Such was the love and warmth Edson developed in those years of patient preaching, teaching, and working in Mississippi.

But the summer heat was closing in on the Delta again. Emma was not strong, and Edson was worn down by the problems and setbacks of the farm business. The couple began to lay plans to go north again. At this time Louis Hansen and his wife were called away from Vicksburg to Nashville where at an exposition they presented a display for the Battle Creek Sanitarium Food Company.

With a touch of malaria, Edson reached Battle Creek on July 14, 1897. Meanwhile, Emma visited her sisters in Chicago. Willie White, Edson’s younger brother, was home from Australia to attend the General Conference session and to oversee the publication of *The Desire of Ages*. Edson worked with him, helping to choose illustrations and to supervise the printers.

At the same time, Edson busied himself with his own new book, *The Coming King*. He knew he could not depend on the General Conference, in serious financial straits, to provide money to expand the Southern work. It was essential that Edson have an income of his own. In 1913 Edson estimated that he had put \$10,000 of his personal earnings into the work in the South, virtually all of it from book royalties.

Dr. Kellogg, who displayed continuing interest in Edson’s work, favored a plan for the Southern Missionary Society to produce health foods, and promised to help.

A children’s home was also proposed. As soon as papers could be drawn up to make the Southern Missionary Society a legal body, some of these proposed projects would, hopefully, begin. Edson planned to establish contact with such men as Armour, Pullman, Rockefeller, and Vanderbilt. “Their men are lifting in works of this kind,” Edson wrote, “and we are assured that aid will come to us from such persons.”

Most of those bold plans never were put into action, but only an outbreak of racial hostility in Port Gibson, Mississippi, prevented the Southern Missionary Society from founding a health food factory there.

While Edson was busy in Battle Creek, Miss Anna Agee from Knoxville took charge of the school in Vicksburg. But, with attendance sometimes ranging as high as one

hundred fifty, another teacher was obviously necessary. Anna Jensen was sent from Battle Creek College.

As the year wore on, Fred Halladay and his new wife in Yazoo City sent encouraging reports. Bible readings and night schools were under way, and a large number of girls met for Ida's sewing class.

But Edson began getting some distressed letters from the Huntsville school. About six of the students there had come from Vicksburg, and their accounts of life at the school reflected its pioneer status. They existed on corn bread, pumpkin, and beans cooked in water without seasoning. The whole school boasted only one copy of the reading textbook.

"It almost makes my blood boil," Edson wrote his mother, "when I see such enormous institutions in the North, with such large sums of money piled up in them, and then see such griping work in regard to the same lines of work among the colored in the South."

Nevertheless, the students reported a healthy morale and thankfulness to have even an opportunity to study. Edson sent a dozen copies of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, twenty-four of *The Gospel Primer*, and eighteen hymnbooks. He sent maps of Palestine, the United States, and the world, and five physiology charts ("on rollers, like a window curtain") to Huntsville.

When notified that the school furniture factory had burned, Edson secured a large stock of supplies for almost nothing. He sent nine blackboards, some to Vicksburg and some to Huntsville. For \$20 he picked up three 300-pound bells, one for the Vicksburg church, one for the *Morning Star*, and one for a movable chapel being prepared for Yazoo City. Finally he included thirteen sets of wooden apples, all sliced in different-sized slices, to illustrate fractions.

A yellow fever quarantine in the South kept Edson busy working in Battle Creek before returning to Mississippi in February, 1898. With him this time came Frank Schramm, a former Grand Rapids furniture store employee, and a Mr. Duxbury, an excellent printer who had walked the more than four hundred miles distance from Saint Louis to Battle Creek to go to school.

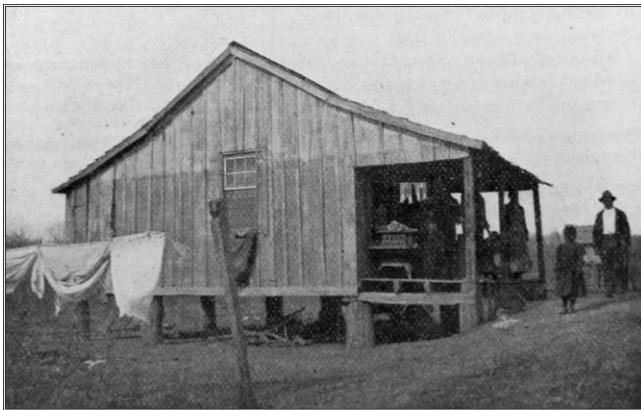
Before leaving Battle Creek, Edson and his new assistants shipped the pieces of the movable chapel South. The chapel cost \$250, the freight, \$350. Fred and Ida Halladay had a spot near Yazoo City picked for it.

It was badly needed. Although the Baptist church was still open to them, the community was throwing up ever-larger obstacles to keep them from renting halls for their work. The white people refused to let Black people into their halls, and the halls owned by Black people were usually controlled by church organizations hostile to the new missionaries.

Chapter XV

With 100 now in the night school and seven ready to sign their “covenant” with the Lord, Edson found the work in Vicksburg still thriving. The total number of members, however, had declined, but not due to apostasy. Five of the young people were studying at Huntsville, and nearly twenty had moved to other places where they had at once begun telling what they had learned. Two of the most faithful members had died.

There were some surprises too. One day a man and his wife appeared out of the cypress swamps of the Delta and announced that they had been keeping the Sabbath for over a year. They had learned of it from tracts that the *Morning Star* missionaries had distributed. They also presented Edson with \$20 in nickels and dimes—their tithe.



Home of Albert Jones, the First Person to Accept the Truth at Calmar.

Another man, Albert Jones, had also learned of the Sabbath on his own and had, with his family, begun to keep it. Mr. Jones owned several acres near Calmar, where the Little Sunflower River empties into the Yazoo about halfway between Vicksburg and Yazoo City. The Jones family had come to the boat only to enlist help to meet their friends’ opposition.

Albert Green talked with him and then armed him with an ample supply of tracts. Several Negro farmers living near Mr. Jones owned their own land, and they encouraged Edson to start a school as soon as possible in their community.

By April the plans were drawn: “We found a very central location,” Edson reported, “where we can buy ten acres for \$35 and have four years in which to pay for it. Here we expect to erect a chapel that will also do service as a schoolroom. . . . This is a section of the country owned and controlled by colored people, where the whites will not interfere.” Edson was wrong only in supposing the whites would not interfere.

The work blossomed on all sides. In Yazoo City Edson found the Halladays conducting Sunday Bible classes for more than fifty people in one place, forty-five in another.

Early in April, Edson bought the lot the Halladays had picked out for the movable chapel. It was 50 x 142 feet, and cost \$150—\$37.50 down and the same each year until it was paid. The Lintonia Seventh-day Adventist Church in Yazoo City still stands on the same lot.

Edson purchased another, slightly smaller lot, in the main part of the city on which to erect a permanent church. This lot cost \$200 at \$50 down and \$50 notes due in six, nine, and twelve months. But in order to get work started before the church could actually be built, Edson rented a Negro schoolhouse next door for \$5 a month. This could be used on weekends and for night schools.

From a Baptist church about a mile out in the country came another call for a night

school. "This will make three night schools to be held in this vicinity," Edson said. We dare not neglect the interest in this place, for it is great."

The financial strains of these new adventures taxed the imagination of the workers, but up in Mount Pleasant, Iowa, a Mr. C. W. Smouse, who had already given some gifts to aid the work in the South, applied some imagination of his own. Advertising a line of "German Leatherette Wall Pockets" that "sell almost at first sight," he offered to send these out by the dozen, and for each dozen sold, he would credit the salesman for \$1 sent to Edson for missionary work. "Remember," Mr. Smouse told them, "you pay nothing for the articles. They are sent to you to be sold to aid the Lord's work. Even children may have a part."

Convinced that the work in Vicksburg was going smoothly, Edson docked the *Morning Star* in Yazoo City to help the expansion there. Ida and Fred Halladay moved out of their rented room onto the boat, saving them \$1.50 a month rent and adding a housekeeper to aid Emma. Edson was proud of the Halladays. "Ida and Fred," he wrote to his mother, "make an excellent couple."

Along with keeping house, Emma helped as Edson's secretary. He had bought a "Graphophone" in Battle Creek, and could now dictate his own copious (up to thirty pages) letters for Emma to type later. He also employed the Graphophone in his meetings. "It gives band music, sings songs, and talks, all from cylinders I have for it."

The month of May marked another first for the Mississippi missionaries. Edson began publishing a small paper, the *Gospel Herald*. With the General Conference struggling for funds, and with many in Battle Creek unfriendly or even hostile to Edson's work, he determined to send word of the rapidly developing mission program to the people directly. Before the 1901 reorganization, "regular channels" for contributions to mission enterprises were usually anything but regular, if they existed at all.

Edson remodeled a room on the main deck of the *Morning Star* to serve as a printing office, installing two small power presses turned by a small steam engine powered by the ship's main boiler.

Edson, who rarely underestimated the possibilities of his projects, turned out 10,000 sample copies of his first issue and calmly announced he wanted 5,000 subscriptions before the next issue went to press.

"Gospel work will be well represented in the columns of this paper," proclaimed the first issue. "Our Saviour went about doing good. He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, gave sight to the blind, made the lame walk, and preached the gospel to the poor. This was a whole gospel. If this paper can bring education to the ignorant, aid and comfort and healing to the sick, and the truths of the gospel to the needy, its mission will be fully met." That was the goal. Dateline: Yazoo City, Mississippi, May, 1898.

The paper's printing quality paid deserved tribute to Edson's printing expertise. The *Gospel Herald* was tastefully illustrated with line drawings and photographs and rarely showed a typographical error in its clear, strong print.

THE "MORNING STAR."
 MANHATTAN, 1864, the work of building the northern missionary steamer, "Morning Star" was begun at Allegan, Michigan, on the banks of the Kalamazoo River.
 In July she was completed, and the chased by his partner, J. E. White, who then became sole owner.
 Not being considered suitable for the work to be done, she was rebuilt the following winter being lengthened to 105 feet over all, with a width of half of sixteen feet on the bottom.
 An upper cabin was built as shown in the second engraving, and a pilot house eight and one-half feet square placed on the hurricane deck.
 A brief description of the interior: On the lower deck, beginning at the bow, comes first the boiler room, with an upright, submerged fire, steel mounted boiler, 5 1/2 inches in diameter and nearly ten feet high, which is allowed two portable steam engines for the government inspectors.
 Back of the boiler room comes a room 12 x 16 feet. This was once used as the main cabin of the boat, but is now the type setting room of the printer.
 Next comes the press room. In this room are two steam power presses. One is an 8 x 12 Challenge Gordon press, which has been one the best for ten years, and has done good service in printing announcements of meetings, tracts, letters for titles and school work, etc. The other is a large Chandler and Price Gordon, on which the *Course, Herald*, is printed, four pages at an impression. These presses will be run by a six horse power stationary engine.
 Back of this come three compartments, well appointed staterooms, occupied by the missionary workers who accompany the boat. Next come a dining room 9 x 12 feet, and a kitchen ten feet square.
 In the stern of the boat are the bath room, stove room, and engine room.
 On the upper deck, again beginning at the bow, the study of the owner comes first. This is a room about 6 x 10 feet, with nine windows and two iron side-chairs, fitted up with study desk, book shelves, etc. Next come the cabin, 12 x 12 feet, staterooms 7 1/2 x 12 feet, and both rooms of the upper deck.
 Back of these is the business office of the boat, 10 x 12 feet. This is also the photographer's room, opening out of which is a small but well appointed dark room for developing photographs of scenery and making stereopticon slides.
 Next come the new main cabin of the boat, 10 x 12 feet. This is also the photographer's room, opening out of which is a small but well appointed dark room for developing photographs of scenery and making stereopticon slides.
 Next come the new main cabin of the boat, 10 x 12 feet. This is also the photographer's room, opening out of which is a small but well appointed dark room for developing photographs of scenery and making stereopticon slides.

Its pages carried selections from Ellen White's recent letters, detailed accounts of the *Morning Star*'s activities, articles on health and farming, advertising copy for Edson's books, lists of contributors to various projects, and appeals for subscriptions and donations.

Late in June all the workers boarded the *Morning Star* for a trip down to a happy reunion in Vicksburg. Fred Halladay had worked long in Vicksburg, and this was his first visit back in a year and four months. There he joined the others in his first Communion service in four years.

On the way the group stopped at Bruce's Landing, near Albert Jones's home. Mr. Jones introduced them to Mr. Bishop, a white man with whom Mr. Jones had shared his literature. Mr. Bishop was very much interested, and agreed to meet the missionaries again on their return trip. Later, after he had accepted the advent message, he was promptly driven out of his community and forced to move to Vicksburg to earn a living.

At three in the morning the next Sunday, the *Morning Star* steamed out of Centennial Lake on its return trip to Yazoo City, and, stemming a stiff current, made Bruce's Landing by 10:30 the same morning.

A meeting had been scheduled at four that afternoon, and since only a small group was expected, only about thirty chairs were set up in the chapel. By two o'clock the people began coming, Black and White alike. By three the chapel was filled, and other spaces on the boat were opened up. Finally, 125 people had crowded onto the boat, and more stood on the bank.

"It is the custom in this country to be from one to four hours late to a service," Edson reported, "but all the space was occupied early, so we began early."

The sermon that day had three practical and well-illustrated points. The first part was on "The Rule," showing that the Bible is the only rule and guide, and illustrated with a carpenter's rule. With a pair of scales, Edson showed how God weighs men's actions just as He did in the time of Belshazzar. Finally a mirror illustrated the text of James 1:23, 24, where those who hear God's Word and do not do it are compared to a man who sees himself in a mirror and then turns, away forgetting what he looks like.

At this meeting William H. Casey, superintendent of the 800-acre Bruce plantation, accepted the Sabbath. And here N. W. Olvin, one of the sharecroppers on the plantation, first took the stand that was to win him whip welts and a trumped-up murder charge.

There were 300 children in the area with no school to serve them. But about half a mile above the landing and two miles inland was a little grove on land purchased for a chapel and schoolhouse.

From Palo Alto, a little community six miles downstream from Yazoo City, came still another call to "come over and help us." With Fred Halladay, Edson made a trip there. "It was a very angry night," he wrote, "with a high wind and rain, but there were fully thirty present. They were anxious for more, and we promised to come down next week."

Chapter XVI

The cost of coal and wood to run the *Morning Star* plus the living expenses of seven workers prompted Edson to request urgently that the General Conference send his regular allowance on time.

In response to Ellen White's earnest appeals in *Review and Herald* articles, the Sabbath Schools had, during the first two quarters of 1896, collected a special offering for the work among Black people. Initial results looked extremely bright—\$10,878 was raised. In the following months, the fund was supplemented by another \$527, bringing the total to \$11,405.

Aside from the Huntsville School, which had just been opened, Edson's missions and schools constituted virtually the only systematic work under way. Naturally, he expected this work to receive a substantial portion of the funds.

But as the months went by, his happy anticipation began to turn to uneasiness, his uneasiness to fear, and his fear to dread. At last he received the word. The entire \$11,405 had been appropriated for other denominational work.

Edson's despair mounted with his sense of outrage. He wrote his mother, explaining his plight as best he could.

"You ask me what you shall do," she wrote back, "for so little help is given to that portion of the field where you are working. Trust it all to the Lord. There is a way open for you in regard to the Southern field. Appeal to the people. This is the only course you can pursue under the circumstances. Send no statement of the situation through our religious papers because it will not be honored. Send direct to the people. God's ways are not to be counterworked by man's ways. . . ."

"Human beings in their suffering humanity are crying unto God, and their prayers are just as surely coming up before God as did the blood of Abel. Christlike men will not employ their time in devising to profit self, and promote their own interest. God is not indifferent to the pressing need of white or black in any place where they may be. Who is saying, 'Be thou warmed, and be thou fed and clothed,' yet do nothing to relieve the situation?"—Letter to Edson White, Aug. 14, 1898.

Before the reorganization of the work of the General Conference in 1901, the International Sabbath School Association, with offices at Pacific Press, then in Oakland, California, directed the Sabbath Schools. Mr. C. H. Jones, general manager of Pacific Press, was for many years also president of the International Sabbath School Association. Until 1893, Pacific Press also served as the treasury of the Sabbath School Association, assigning the office of treasurer to one of its employees. Sabbath School offerings for specific mission projects were a relatively new innovation.

During the first two quarters of 1896, North American Sabbath School offerings were earmarked for the work among the colored people of the South. The sum of \$10,878.72 was received, deposited at the Pacific Press, and credited on their books to the General Conference Association account. This association, it was assumed, would disperse the funds to their proper objective, the work among the Black people in the South.

For various reasons, perhaps the pressures of work in preparing for the General Conference session, or some uncertainty concerning the relationship between the General

Conference and Edson's work among the Blacks, or prejudice on the part of some General Conference men, or dishonesty by someone in a position of trust, these monies were not dispatched South. The General Conference had just made a heavy investment in Oakwood College at Huntsville, Alabama, for Black students. But there was every reason to assume that a substantial portion of the Sabbath School offering would be assigned to the work being done by Edson White and his associates.

Apparently the General Conference, operating without budgets, hounded by heavy indebtedness, and oppressed by a severe national financial recession, dispensed the money to meet other pressing needs of the advent cause.

Except for a vision given to Ellen White, the matter would have probably gone unredressed. She made no effort to avoid the issue, calling the transaction dishonest and fraudulent. After she called attention to the matter, the newly elected General Conference leaders were horrified to discover the fact that indeed the funds had not reached their intended destination. In the careful investigation that followed, the General Conference officers set about to restore what they could and in spite of dire financial circumstances did manage finally to restore probably from a third to a half of the offering.

The whole incident made clear the urgent need for church reorganization. This did take place in 1901, when all interests drew together in the General Conference and its departments.

Meanwhile in Mississippi the work went on. Edson had to find some way of raising the money to feed the missionaries and help the people for whom they labored. Ellen White had said, "Appeal to the people," and appeal he did.

In a flurry of promotions and appeals the *Gospel Herald* urged the reader to buy "Albright cloth" for cleaning mirrors and silver, a "Twentieth Century New White Sewing Machine No. 4" for which Edson had secured some sort of discount rate, puzzle maps, rubber stamps, and a large assortment of other items.

When yellow fever broke out in Yazoo City and Vicksburg, Edson began to appeal in the *Gospel Herald* for a relief fund to help those who were struck down. He set up a fund for the new church in Yazoo City and a fund for chairs in the Lintonia chapel.

Every Adventist in the North was asked to help, if not with money, then with food. The *Morning Star* workers needed wheat, beans, potatoes, honey, graham flour, strawberries, cherries, raspberries, grapes, peaches, dried fruit, "and we would not fail also to call attention to dried sweet corn." Mississippi was basically a "one-crop" state; and the workers, having left Michigan's lush fruit basket behind, found the spare diet there unsuited to their palates. Edson was also waging a vigorous campaign for diversified agriculture in the Delta; and, though his agricultural principles were sound, he learned too late that his politics were poor. His efforts contributed to the violence he was soon to face.

The same letter in which Ellen White told Edson to appeal to the people, had further counsel concerning the situation which he faced:

"I do not know, Edson, how many things ought to be said and how many things should be left unsaid. I know you have had a hard time. I know that you are in a difficult and a most dangerous field, made thus because of the prejudice of the whites against the blacks, and because our brethren have not interested themselves personally in that field to decide how it should be worked. Our brethren do not yet have correct ideas, and they button up their coats over their hearts, hearts that should go out in sympathy and tenderness and encouragement to the laborers in that poor, destitute, neglected field. . . .

"It was presented to me that God in His providence was measuring the temple and

the worshipers therein. There are those who, in the providence of God, have been placed in positions where they have received many blessings. With self-denial and self-sacrifice these could do a good work, in imparting to the most needy and suffering ones, to those who have few blessings and but little encouragement. This is the work that God has laid upon every saint to do, and for the neglect of which they will be held accountable. The Lord marks the longing of many souls for privileges that they might become better informed and better clothed. . . .

“In the Southern field, small churches are to be built. If they are burned, this act will stand as a witness against the men who oppose the work of God when the judgment shall sit and the books be opened. . . .

“If the work is made dangerous in one place, go to another and labor. But move discreetly, so that the work shall not be destroyed.”—Letter to Edson White, Aug. 14, 1898.

Ellen White counseled the church’s leaders as well: “I inquire of my brethren, What are you doing for the colored people, who, as it were, are in the very shadow of your doors? Why do not your enterprises embrace those who have suffered so greatly through oppression? God claims of our brethren in America much more than they render to Him in service. They are to work in behalf of those who cannot help themselves”—Ms. 101, 1898.

Emma went north for the hot season, but Edson determined to brave the stifling heat. To him the work seemed on the “eve of victory” regardless of the lack of funds.

He knew that his mother could make good use of him in Australia, where she, too, was undergoing the trials of pioneer work. She even invited him to come. But he determined to stay in Mississippi: “I am not a young man,” he said (he was forty-nine), “and am getting gray and on the shady side of life.” He had thought of going to Australia, but said: “It would be a beginning all over again and learning the work all over again. I dread it unspeakably.”

To his mother he wrote: “In your field you have a strong band of workers. You have ministers and teachers and canvassers. We are absolutely destitute in nearly everything of this kind. . . . There are seven millions of black people here who must have the truth; and, outside our company, where are those who are sacrificing and working for this people?”

But at this point too much was happening for him to indulge in self-pity. The chapel in Lintonia was erected, built in panels made at the *Morning Star* landing, then brought up to Lintonia and bolted together. The Black people were fond of saying: “It was just like the Jerusalem temple; put together without the sound of hammer and ax.”

The General Conference sent a tent for meetings at Bruce’s Landing. It was only “eight-ounce duck” and leaked badly in rainstorms, but the people crowded in. Edson rigged up an acetylene light, and the meetings went on.

Chapter XVII

Mr. Smouse's "Wall Pockets" were bringing returns by now, both in cash and in heartwarming letters from those who sold them.

"I am a very needy one," wrote an Adventist lady in Pennsylvania. "Half the time no bread in the house, and I feel very weak too. I have four children. I haven't a cent in the world; but I want to do something, so send me some of the wall pockets."

"I have sold them all," wrote Johnnie Robison of Colorado. "If you will send me more and let me have half of the profits I can sell them all the time. Mamma canvasses for *The Coming King*, and I go with her. She is a widow woman and makes her living by her work. I want to help her some too. I am eight years old."

When Edson told his mother about Mr. Smouse, she replied, "Brother Smouse is engaged in a good work, and the Lord will freely give to all who will receive to impart. I thank the Lord for this work. . . . believe the Lord has put it into his heart to do this work. Your father would have instituted ways and means to have helped the work in a field for which anyone had a burden and was doing so much as you are doing in the Southern field. But let me tell you, there are warm hearts that beat in sympathy with the work in this field.

...

"When means which is raised in answer to appeals made in behalf of the Southern field is otherwise appropriated and not sent to that field, the Lord will send means through other sources. Praise His name! Whenever other efforts to raise means fail, it is your privilege to create an interest wherever you can."—Letter to Edson White, Aug. 14, 1898.

Edson, encouraged by his mother, hit on still another idea. Gathering together the *Review* articles she had published in 1895-1896, her initial 1891 testimony, and other testimonies she had sent out concerning work among Black people, he printed a little book he titled *The Southern Work*.

The title employed the common term used at the time to designate the Adventist work among Black people in the South. Later some confusion arose over it. When money sent for the "Southern [Black] work" ended up in white work, Ellen White took time at a General Conference to clear up the misunderstanding:

"In writing in regard to the Southern field, I have said, 'The Southern work,' supposing that our people would certainly understand that I meant especially the work for the colored people. I wish it now to be understood that this is what I have meant."—*General Conference Bulletin*, 1903, pages 202-205.

Soon the pages of the *Gospel Herald* carried regular advertisements for the new compilation of Ellen White's writings. (The little book was reissued in 1966 and is now available as a regular denominational publication and readable online at egwwritings.org)

Meanwhile, Edson's new book, *The Coming King*, was selling at an astonishing rate, 8,000 copies in its first ten weeks of circulation. To add a final touch, Edson made a quick trip to Battle Creek to include the recent news of the Spanish-American War in his chapter "Wars and Rumors of Wars."

Six months after the book had been released, it had gone through eight editions and 75,000 copies. Edson, with his usual interest in odd details, noted that for that many books the paper alone weighed over fifty-one tons. The price in a cloth binding, embossed in gold: \$1.30. The price seems small except when we remember that Fred and Ida Halladay were renting an apartment for \$1.50 a month. The royalties could not flow to the South, however,

until Edson paid off \$2,500 he had spent on engravings and plates for the book.

But on another front, things began to look more threatening. By September it was obvious that the cotton crop had nearly failed. The floods had been worse than usual, and the soil hard to work. Although the plants were very large, the cotton bolls were small. Worms attacked the crop in many places, and late rains rotted much mature cotton.

The sharecroppers, unable to beat the sharp bookkeeping of their bosses, and forced to borrow seed, equipment, and food from the company store while their crops were growing, faced total privation when their crops failed.

Edson never ignored the physical and economic realities of the people for whom he worked. As far as he was concerned, no gospel was complete that did not materially help poverty-stricken people.

“As men and women embrace the truth in this field,” his mother had written in 1895, “there will be abundant opportunity for relieving their pressing necessities. Unless this can be done, the work will largely prove a failure.”—*Review and Herald*, Dec. 24, 1895.

Edson kept a close eye on the agricultural situation, and, when autumn came early with a biting frost, he knew deep trouble threatened.

The *Gospel Herald* kept urging farmers to care for bees, raise chickens, plant peanuts, strawberries, tomatoes, cabbage, Irish and sweet potatoes. But it would be years before these advanced ideas would take hold. Meanwhile winter drew on.

Edson worked furiously thirteen to eighteen hours a day, speaking three to five times a week. The Yazoo was running low and swift, a pale green ribbon among the willows. The current was too strong for a large riverboat, and the *Morning Star* had suffered a near disaster already. Edson began to use a little tug, the *Glad Tidings*, put at his disposal free of charge.

In mid-September Edson sustained an injury that probably contributed to the severe headaches he suffered the rest of his life. Coming from the post office to the boat one evening, he was caught in a storm so dark that he failed to see a pile of heavy timbers left by workmen in the road. As his foot struck the pile, he tripped and fell forward. He put out his hands to check the fall, but his hands went between two timbers, and his head doubled back onto his shoulders as he struck the timber above.

“I thought every muscle was torn loose, and my neck broken. I could not rise for a time, and when I did so the blood was running down from my forehead. . . . All night I could sleep little, for I could get into no position that would give me any ease or relief. I have not been free from headache since, although it has been nearly ten days.”

In November, when the Lintonia chapel was finished, F. R. Rogers, his wife Minnie, and their small son Chester arrived in Yazoo City from Walla Walla, Washington, to begin teaching. For F. R. Rogers this was the beginning of fourteen years of ministry for Black people that would end only when, his health broken by too many malarious summers, he went to Michigan to die.

Little Chester would grow up to serve as secretary to many of the prominent Seventh-day Adventists of his day: Dr. David Paulson, A. G. Daniells, I. H. Evans, W. A. Spicer, J. L. McElhaney, and C. H. Watson.

F. R. Rogers was a stocky, rather good-looking fellow with a slick black moustache. A few years in Mississippi, hard work, and a slim salary took off some of his polish and added an almost shaggy little beard, but evidently he maintained his daring and adventurous qualities throughout the ordeal.

The frost of autumn finally stopped the wave of yellow fever that threatened epidemic proportions, and G. A. Irwin, now president of the General Conference, sent word that he would visit Yazoo City early in December. Visits from General Conference leaders were crucial events in the developing work, for to a considerable degree they determined the amount and regularity of the funds that followed.

But as the men waited for these important visitors, an unusually heavy winter's grip tightened on the Delta and conditions worsened. In Vicksburg a woman froze to death on the steps of the Mount Zion Church, presumably trying vainly to get inside. Another, trying to keep warm, got so close to the tiny fire in her own home that her thin dress ignited and she burned to death.

The *Gospel Herald* urgently appealed for fifty barrels of clothing—blankets, coats, socks, boots, hats, and all other necessary items.

Describing the little cabins in which some of his believers had to live, Edson wrote: "They are nearly all put together very loosely, admitting the cold winds in a hundred places. The floors are usually made of common twelve-inch rough boards, not matched. These soon shrink, leaving cracks all the way from one eighth to half an inch wide. The sides are made the same way.

"It is easy to see that no amount of fire can make such houses comfortable."

Before long, fifty-five barrels of clothing were secured on board the *Morning Star*, and word came that twenty-five more were on the way. The boat made its way down to Calmer, and Edson announced that clothes and bedding were available for the needy.

Within an hour, destitute families nearly mobbed the boat. Not knowing the people, Edson found it necessary to send the people first to Brother Olvin, who would give orders to the families he knew to be most destitute.

Months before, when Brother Olvin had first begun keeping the Sabbath, his church had thrown him out, and his minister had warned him that he would soon be hungry, that his stock would be taken from him, and that he would have no clothes to wear. Then, the minister had assured him, Olvin would come begging from the members who had stood by the "right."

The first part of the prophecy came true enough. Brother Olvin did find himself, along with almost everyone else, destitute. But the last part was now ironically turned upside down, for there sat Brother Olvin, writing out orders for the members of his former church so that they could obtain clothes to keep their naked children warm.

Not only did the *Morning Star* supply the community with clothes, but it also distributed meal, flour, and molasses.

"Women would come bringing their families of almost naked children," Edson wrote, "and it was a joy to see the gratitude expressed in their countenances as they received the relief which we had for them."

Elders G. A. Irwin and I. H. Evans, arriving in Yazoo City Thursday night, December 8, on the 6:03 train, were given a grand tour aboard the *Morning Star*, which could now be floated on the Yazoo.

The two leaders spoke to the believers in Palo Alto, inspected the movable chapel in Lintonia, and participated in its dedication. Mr. Rogers explained his early success with the school, which, beginning with fifteen students, could claim fifty before scarlet fever closed it down for three weeks. In the partially completed chapel at Calmer, Elder Irwin spoke again to the few who braved the cold weather to hear him. In Vicksburg the elders visited the flourishing school taught by Miss Agee and Miss Jensen. At noon, Thursday,

December 15, they caught a train for Keene, Texas. “We look for good results from this visit in many directions,” Edson told the readers of the *Gospel Herald*.

But he could hardly have printed what he wrote to Elder Irwin after he had left: “I think I have never felt such utter desolation, and almost hopelessness as I have felt for a few days after you left. Sick, and discouraged, and failing in health, money gone, two mortgages on the property, no financial interest of any particular note from the General Conference, opposition from publishing houses, and then the care of all this great work.”

By Sabbath, December 17, two days after Elders Irwin and Evans had left, Edson was preaching in Vicksburg, unaware of even worse trouble which loomed immediately ahead.

Chapter XVIII

Brother Olvin's experience illustrated the second type of prejudice Edson faced in Mississippi. Not only were his relations with white people constantly strained because of his work for Black people, but Black people, fiercely proud of their church affiliations, resented a white man (whose very name was White!) invading their territory and stealing their members.

As Christmas approached, Edson felt the blast from both barrels of this gun of prejudice. While he was preaching one Sabbath in Vicksburg, a messenger slipped up and handed him a telegram from Yazoo City: "MAIL OF GREAT IMPORTANCE COMING."

By evening a letter from Brother Rogers arrived: "Satan is loosed here. We are in trouble. Today, [Tuesday, December 13] at 1:30 p.m. two men rode up to the chapel where we were holding school and called me out and asked my name and told me:

"This business must stop. We went to the river last night to sink the boat *Morning Star*, but could not find it. It will never land here again, SO BEWARE!"

"Another one spoke up: 'Ya, and we hunted for you till late last night.'

"Well, Brother White, we are resting in the Lord and have left the case to Him. However, I applied to the mayor for advice as to leaving the organ and other things in the chapel, as burning was threatened. The mayor said all was safe and he would see me protected. Write us immediately and act as impressed about landing the steamer here."

After the men had left, the children had been dismissed at once from school, but within half an hour were coming back accompanied by their parents. Young and old they came, sobbing, with whatever money they could find in their hands—five, ten, twenty-five cents, sometimes a dollar, until enough was raised for the Rogers family to leave town. Rogers had already planned the escape.

"Children, mothers, and grandmothers," wrote Rogers, "were crying and praying for our safety and for the school."

The same mail brought a letter from a white physician in Yazoo City, J. A. Crisler. Although not an Adventist, Dr. Crisler had secretly befriended Edson, asking that his name not be revealed so that his usefulness would not be destroyed.

His letter informed Edson that evidently a Black minister hostile to Adventists had hinted that on Christmas Eve the Black people were going to rise and slaughter the whites in Yazoo City.

This clever—and totally false—bit of information was accompanied by another to the effect that white teachers and preachers were stirring up the would-be murderers.

Without bothering to investigate the report, certain local white people, already prejudiced and looking for an excuse to strike at the *Morning Star*, had formed a "committee" which had set out to bomb the boat and, failing that, had given Rogers their ultimatum.

Still, in spite of all the difficulty, Edson could be thankful. The mob had come looking for the *Morning Star* on Monday night, December 12, just hours after Edson had left Yazoo City with Elders Irwin and Evans aboard. Had the mob come on Sunday night, it might have killed those two prominent church leaders as well as Edson, Emma, and their helpers. Years later Edson wrote concerning this incident in an undated manuscript he titled, "Southern Missionary Society."

“We had taken Irwin and Evans to Vicksburg,” he wrote, “and the very night after we had gone, they came down, Monday night, to mob us, and we were gone. When we came back [to Yazoo City] my wife told me afterward she would lie there and listen; and she would hear a song, and chills would run all over her, thinking it was the mob. [I would get up to look but] it seemed there was nothing but moonlight; I dislike moonlight to this day. I would see every shadow on the bank as a man. We had a skiff always fastened to the outside, at the stern, so even if they came into the room where I was, I could jump into the skiff and get away. The mob incident was in December. When we came back to Yazoo City we would stay sometimes a week at a time. It was our headquarters till the next May. But there was not much pleasure after that.”

By the following Monday, December 19, things had quieted down, and Rogers, ready to open school again, wrote Edson with great confidence and calmness. But Edson was unconvinced. In her letters his mother had warned him to exercise great caution in situations like this, so he ordered Rogers to close the school until after the holidays and to have the organ hauled from the chapel to his home.

Rogers, however, who had received his orders from Edson late, satisfied himself with the assurances of the city authorities that he would be protected, and opened the school on Monday. An outbreak of scarlet fever closed it down again on Tuesday.

Edson later learned that before Christmas a large stock of arms and ammunition had been shipped from Vicksburg to Yazoo City.

Edson decided to print an “extra” edition of the *Gospel Herald* that would include many illustrations of Adventist institutions around the world and an explanation of why they were working for Black people and what they were trying to accomplish.

“The general impression is that we have some kind of a hocus-pocus religion that we cannot get the white people to accept,” he wrote, “and so have come down to try to get it off on the Negroes. They want to know why we do not take it to the white people and not make a business of working among the Negroes. This extra will show that we are taking it to all classes and races, and the branch we are carrying is only part of a great worldwide work.”

Provisionally the city authorities kept their word, posting guards around Rogers’ house for two nights, arresting the leader of the “committee,” and putting him under \$500 bond.

Edson meanwhile was fighting chills and fever that racked and enervated him. And Emma, stricken with malaria on Christmas Day, still lay sick on New Year’s Day, leaving fourteen people to feed on the *Morning Star*. The Southern Missionary Society had managed to weather the holiday season, but the money situation remained desperate. “At Calmer and Vicksburg,” Edson wrote to the General Conference, “I find that we shall now have to take hold and aid people who are in poverty and suffering. But how can we do it? People in this place are almost naked in some houses. With cotton sacks for bed ticking, and a few old rags for quilts, they *suffer* during the cold weather we are now having. God has said we must help such. Why, in lots of cases the only way they can get along is to stay up all night to keep fires burning to prevent serious suffering. And in Vicksburg I found some of our own uncomplaining church members that were suffering for simple bread to eat.”

After New Year’s Day Emma did not improve. Five days later death from pneumonia, malaria, and stomach troubles loomed over the brave woman. Edson, almost as sick, had lost twenty-five pounds in a few weeks.

“My wife is but little better, if any,” he wrote the next day. “As soon as she is able I think I shall take her north and then arrange for a home there. I see no hope for the future. My heart is very heavy—and it is sore with the indifference and injustice of my brethren. I see no light ahead. All is dark. I feel that the limit has been reached. I entertain grave fears as to her recovery, and I have nothing with which to meet any crisis.”

In the same letter he had to meet three charges: The old criticism that his boat idea had never been approved by the General Conference, a new complaint about the “crowd” he was trying to keep on the boat, and an accusation that he had begun printing the *Gospel Herald* without advice or authorization from church leaders.

Finally, while Edson was sitting one day in his chair in his living room on the boat, the bitter irony of the whole situation crushed down on him. He felt unable to hold up under it. Suddenly the thought came over him that his whole Mississippi effort had been a mistake, and that no help would result from Elder Irwin’s visit. He broke down, cried, “Oh, my God!” and wept like a child.

Edson had reached his lowest point. But something held him, kept him from giving up. Perhaps it was the obvious suffering and need of the people all around him. Perhaps it was the memory of their tears of gratitude, the sight of a wrinkled black face beaming with pride because an old woman, born a slave, had learned to read. Perhaps it was simply the dogged determination of a man who knows he is doing right when everything seems to be against him. No doubt his mother’s letters provided a great source of strength. Certainly his conviction that God, who felt every throb of pain, had sent a Comforter, carried him through this personal ordeal.

He refused to give up, and the outlook began to brighten. In a few days Emma began to improve, and by mid-January she was well enough to travel to Battle Creek, where Edson put her under the care of two excellent Sanitarium nurses. A committee finally met to consider making restitution to his work for the losses he had sustained both with *The Gospel Primer* and in the misappropriated Sabbath School offering setback.

“The ground was gone over,” Edson wrote his mother, “and a pretty good understanding of it gained. There was a good feeling all around.”

Chapter XIX

By early February, when Edson and Emma were able to return to Mississippi, they found Brother Roger's school still in Lintonia bursting with over a hundred pupils. Word had gone around that in the Adventist school the children learned more in a week than they did in a month in the public school.

"I assure you," Edson wrote to Elder Irwin when he added up his finances, "I was very much rejoiced on my return to find matters in such good shape as they are."

At Calmer the buildings were getting their final touches, and Dan Stephenson, a native Mississippian, was eager to open classes. Because of the good work Brother Olvin and his fellow believers had done, the whole Black community was more friendly.

Edson, eager to defend the Black farmers of the Delta, used the pages of the *Gospel Herald* to do it: "The question is often asked," he wrote, "'Why is the Negro farmer in the South so poor? Why cannot he succeed as well as white farmers?'" Then he gave a detailed analysis of the agricultural economics of the area and summed up the "chances of the renting, store-bill farmer: He pays about one-half the value of the land each year for rent. He pays fully double price for whatever he buys through the season in the way of clothing, food, et cetera. He is obliged by his rent and store-bill contracts to raise cotton which at present prices will seldom pay the cost of raising, even if the producer makes no account of his time. Now, how much better can the energetic Yankee do under such circumstances?"

Edson, being careful not to attack plantation owners or the conditions he saw, simply observed that the system made it virtually impossible for the Black farmer to be anything but poor.

Such explanations helped Northern readers understand the situation better, but in Yazoo City the post office workers who combed every column of Edson's paper didn't find his ideas particularly congenial.

Students at Battle Creek College were beginning to show a great deal of interest in the Southern work, and their two illustrious leaders—E. A. Sutherland and P. T. Magan—decided to travel to the South to see what contributions the college might make to Edson's work.

At Calmer, Magan lectured on diversified agriculture for a group that included several local planters. One of the planters was so convinced that he declared himself ready to raise potatoes, peanuts, beans, and perhaps broom corn, also announcing that he was going to let his sharecroppers pay their debts in cash, thus giving them an opportunity to get out of debt.

E. A. Sutherland reported all this to Ellen White in a letter, admitting that at first he was somewhat prejudiced against Edson; but he said, "I came to the conclusion that he was doing more to develop the work in the right way in the South, and has already accomplished more, than any other person who is there."

But when the planters along the Yazoo, who had evidently been receiving regular reports concerning Edson's ideas on farming, learned that now one of their own number had declared himself ready to try them out, their previous irritation turned to hate. To worsen matters, the advice and assistance Edson had been giving to the sharecroppers heightened the planters' fears that the Blacks might rise. Also, Edson's religion had its

inevitable effect. Remembering the incident, an old-timer said, "You couldn't get a Black man to work around here on Saturday." The planters decided it was time to act.

One evening Dan Stephenson, sitting quietly at his desk, was interrupted by the clatter of more than two dozen horses galloping down the road. The hoofbeats stopped in front of his door.

"Stephenson, come on out. You're going to Redwood."

Dan Stephenson knew better than to argue. The planters, with all politeness, took him to the railroad station in nearby Redwood, put him in a car, and paid his fare to a station up the line.

Then they rode back to Calmer, looking for Brother Casey. But Casey had got word of what was happening and had hidden.

The frustrated planters next rode to Brother Olvin's house and called him out. Olvin, a powerfully built man, made no attempt to answer the planters' questions with "proper" humility.

As he argued with them, they dismounted, and gradually formed a circle around him in the yard. Suddenly all was quiet. The yelping dog trotted off behind the house.

One of the planters reached into his saddlebag and jerked out a long rawhide whip. Olvin made a dash at the side of the circle, but three strong men threw him back as the whip whistled through the air and coiled around his neck. Olvin's hand reached his neck and felt the warm sticky flow of blood. Then the whistling sound came again, like a sickle slicing through the air, and with a sickening pop the blow sliced across his back, cutting through one suspender of his denim overalls.

As the whip descended again he lunged at a clear space among the surrounding legs, only to catch a heavy boot thudding against his jaw. Suddenly a shot rang out, and through his pain Olvin could hear his wife screaming: "My leg! My leg! Oh, my leg!" but her cry was choked off with a sob. When the woman, realizing she would be next, had tried to slip out a window to escape, the bullet stopped her.

Then suddenly another voice, husky and forceful, boomed out: "Stop that whipping!" The mob ignored the command until the stranger pulled out a revolver and repeated his order. The whipping stopped.

Slowly Olvin rolled over and wiped the dirt from his eyes. The mob quickly mounted their horses and rode away. His benefactor turned, mounted, and was also gone.

The students coming to school the next morning found in front of the schoolhouse a pile of ashes in the yard. A few scraps told them their books, maps, and papers had been destroyed. On the door they read a notice saying that the school was never to be opened again, nor was the *Morning Star* to land between Vicksburg and Yazoo City.

The next day Edson met Brother Olvin on the street in Vicksburg carrying a Winchester rifle and a box of shells. It took a bit of persuasion to convince the giant Black man that such an approach would only result in the closing of all Edson's work, and probably a great deal more violence and bloodshed.

Edson paid the \$3 Brother Olvin lost when he returned the rifle. "It is the Ku Klux days all over again," Edson wrote his mother, "and we are in the midst of it." Before long, to avoid persecution Brother Olvin moved away from Calmer, but his troubles had only begun.

The visitor to Vicksburg today can tour an elegant antebellum mansion known as Cedar Grove. The great house boasts eight bedrooms and fifteen marble mantles. Over the outside library door is engraved the name John A. Klein, and the date, 1852, when slaves

finished building the Klein mansion.

A cannonball, lobbed through the front door during the Civil War siege of Vicksburg by one of General Grant's gunboats, is still lodged in the wall of one of the sitting rooms.

According to Edson White, it was John A. Klein's grandson, George M. Klein, Jr., who led the mob that whipped Olvin. The Kleins owned what was then (and still is) known as the Ballground Plantation, just a few miles below the site of the Calmer chapel and school.

George M. Klein, Jr., lived in a sixteen-room house on the plantation at the time, and the state archives list him as a sergeant in the Mississippi Volunteer Infantry during 1899, when this incident occurred.

A couple of years later, George Klein, Sr., sold the Ballground Plantation to the Simrall family, which still maintained it in 2013. Five generations of Simralls bore the initials B. N., and in 1970 the patriarch of the family still remembered hearing, as a boy, about how the Adventists started a school for the Negroes, and how they were run out the night of the "whipp'n spree"!

In the light of situations such as this one at Calmer, Ellen White repeatedly cautioned against "agitating" the racial hostilities of the people of the South. It was not simply a matter of reaching white people with the gospel. The very lives of workers and Black believers alike were in danger.

Edson saw that at the present it would be impossible to do anything further in Calmer. And since trouble also impended in Yazoo City, he decided to make another trip North and wait for things to cool down.

From Battle Creek Edson sent a letter to George M. Klein, Sr., to explain what the Adventists were trying to accomplish in Calmer, reminding him that in his *Gospel Herald* article he blamed the "system," for the poor condition of the sharecroppers and pointing out that papers all over the South daily made the same complaints.

Chapter XX

While in the North, Edson became increasingly aware of the fact that a turning point had come in his work. He knew he needed more and more Black workers to handle the task in places where prejudice ran high. And he began to search for a new place from which to direct the activities of the Southern Missionary Society.

He also improved every opportunity to promote the interests of the missions. Dr. Kellogg, who supported a Negro orphanage in Chattanooga and had reared several Black children in his own home, gave Edson opportunity to present his work at the summer school currently in session at the sanitarium.

The college also helped him, and in their gymnasium he set up his press to print the *Gospel Herald*. Plans for the health food factory in Mississippi were developing well, although racial hostility finally scuttled that project as well.

Professor Percy T. Magan had laid plans for a school in the South dedicated to preparing teachers for Black people, a plan which also failed to materialize.

After addressing the Michigan camp meeting concerning his work, Edson reported: "My talk was well received on the campground, and I know that a different impression was left with the people than they had ever had before in regard to this work."

However, envy and greed began to eat into the sales of his popular book *The Coming King* as they had previously done on *The Gospel Primer*. The book had been out only a short time when another author published another strangely similar book which cut into the sales. Then a third party claimed to have written *The Coming King*, when in fact he had only given it some minor editorial help. Both of these factors slowed the book's sale.

Ellen White knew of Edson's difficulties and wrote: "You might better suffer wrong than do wrong. If your book, *The Coming King*, does not have a sale which answers all your expectations, take the whole matter to God.

"Now, Edson, seek the Lord. Ask Him to teach you, to guide you. Do not talk much. Considering the existing state of things, silence is eloquence. Let your speech be guarded. As you do not wish to be criticized, be sure not to criticize anyone. Guard your mind. Guard your words."—Letter to Edson White, Aug. 11, 1899.

In Battle Creek Edson found two new Negro teachers willing to go to Yazoo City to help F. R. Rogers. Then he gave Rogers the title of "Superintendent of Education" to thwart those who claimed to be offended by a white teacher in a Black school.

The malaria Edson had suffered in January seemed to cling to him in the North. More and more he realized that his direct work in Mississippi was virtually over.

But the work continued to prosper under the direction of Fred Halladay and F. R. Rogers, and soon Edson was busy raising money for a new church in Vicksburg.

But he grew restless in the North. He had a new idea, and wrote his mother about it:

"I have no faith that I should remain at Battle Creek. I feel that I must be in some place where I can raise the standard of truth and be building up a work among the people. Where I am in the South this is not best. My health will not endure the climate. But I must be in touch with it. . . . My mind is now directed to Nashville, Tennessee. This is midway between North and South, and it is not malarious. There are between 40,000 and 50,000

Negro people in that city, but there is not the prejudice against such work that there is farther South. More than this, I believe that it will be best for the work on the Yazoo River to take the *Morning Star* away from that place. It is getting too prominent. Nashville is on the Cumberland River, and our steamer can be transferred to that field easily. . . . I like frontier work, and should enjoy opening the work among the colored people at Nashville.”

Ellen White herself enumerated similar reasons for urging that Nashville be chosen as a center for the church’s work in the South. In addressing the General Conference session of 1903, she mentioned that many had asked why Nashville had been selected as a center. She said that the Lord had directed such a move.

“There is not in Nashville the bitter opposition to the work for the uplifting of the downtrodden colored race that exists in many other cities of the South. . . .

“There are in Nashville large educational institutions for the colored people. In these institutions much excellent work has been done and is being done. The teachers and students in these institutions are to be given the privilege of hearing the message of present truth. It is for this reason that God directed that different interests for the advancement of our work should be established in Nashville.”—*General Conference Bulletin*, 1903, page 202.

Ellen White stressed this point again and again—in letters to General Conference officers, to private individuals, even to the white believers in Nashville.

Events pressed toward another crisis in Lintonia. The school was so successful that another room had to be added to the chapel. But ironically, the larger the school grew, the more attention it attracted. When Rogers walked down the main street of Yazoo City, a chorus of boys would hang onto his coattails, shouting: “Nigger lover! Nigger lover!” His hat was once shot off, and he was pelted with brickbats. Threats against his safety soon appeared, and Edson could see that the only way to save the school was to find Black teachers at once.

He selected a teacher, Frank Warnick, and Rogers began working behind the scenes to keep all the schools in Mississippi going.

In February, 1900, when Edson paid his first visit to Calmer since violence had flared there, he found nearly twenty-five believers still practicing their faith after three months without a preacher, a teacher, or the use of a church.

Work was progressing on the new Vicksburg church when Edson heard that his mother was returning from Australia. He was ready to move to Nashville himself when trouble erupted again in Yazoo City, this time from the local newspapers. The *Yazoo City Herald*, June 1, 1900, carried an editorial that began:

“The religiously inclined of our colored people—and most of them have a tendency toward religion—are becoming exercised at the influence certain Seventh-day Adventists are having over their race in Yazoo City.”

The editorial went on to say that the Adventists had made little headway until they threw in a large slice of “social equality” and introduced their seventh-day observance doctrine.

Reporting a Black mass meeting at St. Stephens church to discuss ways of combating the Adventists, the journalist noted that several white people were in attendance, “to assure the colored people of their sympathy.” Then attacking the Adventists as “outside agitators” the editor asserted, “These people are strangers to the Negro, and have no real sympathy with his material welfare.”

Steadfastly maintaining that the whites and blacks were living harmoniously

together, he declared that it would be the utmost folly for the Blacks to listen to any man or woman whose teachings would in the least interfere with this condition.

“No good can result from such a doctrine,” he predicted, “and the dangers are only increased when coupled with the practice of social equality. The *Herald* knows enough about the old Southern darky to know that they never expect to see the social barriers between the two races broken down, and it knows more than that, that the Negroes have no respect for the white man or woman who practices or teaches it.”

At just this point F. R. Rogers was moving to Vicksburg to teach for the next school year. The editor, assuming that his attack had driven out the Adventists, commented that with the departure of Rogers “the Seventh-day Adventist cesspool in Yazoo City has been cleared of much of its filth.”

But the battle wasn’t over. Seven days later another city paper, the *Yazoo City Sentinel*, unleashed an even more explosive attack. With allusions to “scalawags and thieves” and history written “in the blood of the best manhood of the state,” the editor insisted that a new element of discord had been introduced into local affairs.

Claiming that Rogers had adopted two Negro girls about sixteen, and that they were living as members of his family, eating at the same table, sleeping in the same house, sitting at the same fireside, and were, to all appearances, equal members of his family, the editor then announced that he would hate to see the history of 1875 (the end of the Reconstruction) repeated. “We greatly mistake the temper of the people of Yazoo County,” he said, “if they sit calmly by and permit this interloper to teach and practice a doctrine which is so repugnant to the traditions of her people.”

Edson White laboriously replied to all the charges, pointing out that the Rogers family had adopted no Negro children and had never taught “social equality.” The editors scoffed at this defense and asked why Rogers, if he were not guilty, had left town. The Rogers family had, in fact, taken in two homeless Negro girls. One of these girls, Cynthia Gertrude Johnson, later married and became the mother of the late Garland J. Millet, who had edited *Message* magazine and the *Journal of Adventist Education* and later helped recruit minority students for Loma Linda University’s medical school and other health science programs.

The fearless Rogers stayed on many years in the South, and when Spalding went to Yazoo City with him in 1913 he found him, not surprisingly, “fond of the back streets.” Rural Mississippi had become dangerous for whites who associated with Blacks.

Meanwhile the embattled Brother Olvin faced new trouble. A Mr. H. B. Aden gave a Vicksburg paper certain distorted and misleading details of a “murder.” The newspaper printed the story as fact. Edson questioned the reporter, who admitted that he had only heard the story from some Negroes whom Edson immediately recognized as Brother Olvin’s bitter enemies.

The persecution Brother Olvin had first felt when he became an Adventist followed him to his new home, and this newspaper headline was the result: “FIENDISH MURDER, Of a Little Negro Boy by a Negro Man.”

This story followed: “From Mr. H. B. Aden, who arrived in this city on last night’s 7 o’clock train, the following particulars of some of the most brutal and horrible murders ever committed in this section, are learned:

“Some months ago a Negro man giving the name of N. W. Oliver [*sic*] came to the Valley Park section, and located on the Dixie plantation where he taught school. A short time after his coming, he took up with a colored woman who had a child, a boy about five

years old. Oliver took a dislike to the child, and on many occasions treated him shamefully.

“A few days ago, Oliver whipped the child most unmercifully, breaking the flesh in many places. The mother dared not utter a word of complaint, fearing the anger of the brute Oliver.

“After Oliver had beaten the child until but little life was left, he spread grease over its body and limbs in great profusion and then held it so near a hot stove that the flesh was blistered. The victim of this most unhuman treatment died while in the hands of Oliver.

“The latter was arrested, and committed without bail. If the full extent of his crime had been known before he was sent to jail, it is probable he would never have lived to have a trial.

“A gentleman from that section in the city today states that Oliver’s life is in no wise secure even now.”

Edson commented that “the spelling of the name of Olvin is about as true and accurate as the rest of the statement.”

Edson’s only hope of saving Brother Olvin was to set the record straight in the *Gospel Herald* and to raise money to defend him in court. Olvin never taught school. He simply cultivated a piece of land like all his neighbors. He did not “take up with a colored woman who had a child,” but an orphan boy, wandering homeless, was taken in by his own family and treated as one of their own children.

The boy had previously been exposed to smallpox, and soon came down with the disease. And although Olvin was living in poverty, he nursed the boy back to health.

The boy did need correcting, for he was caught stealing from the neighbors, but the charges of cruelty were completely false.

After he had been nursed through his attack of smallpox, the boy came down with dysentery. One day he was lying on the porch, five feet above the ground. Brother Olvin was in the house lying down, himself sick with a fever. The boy tried to get up, but was seized with an attack of dizziness, fell off the porch, hit his head on the rim of a washtub, and fractured his skull. He died that night.

The coroner’s jury included some of the same enemies of Olvin who had invented the murder story.

It was months before Edson could post the \$1,500 bail and release Olvin from jail. The sick and frightened man stayed on board the *Morning Star* until his trial.

Edson advertised in the *Gospel Herald* to raise money for the “Olvin Defense Fund.” But Olvin’s enemies were taxed through their church to raise a fund to secure his conviction. Any member who would not pay was put out of the church. The difficulty in getting favorable witnesses from such a community is not hard to imagine.

Olvin’s case finally came to trial. The spurious name given him in the newspaper dispatch seems to have stuck, and court records always refer to him as N. W. Oliver. His judge was named, ironically enough, Patrick Henry. Henry was a former United States Congressman from Mississippi and a member of the state constitutional convention which wrote the laws designed to keep Negroes from voting.

However, in Olvin’s extreme circumstances, Judge Henry turned out to be his only chance for life. At first he pleaded “not guilty” to the charge of murder. Fifty names were drawn from which to select a jury.

The records indicate that Brother Olvin dropped his plea from “not guilty” to the murder charge. Perhaps realizing that with no one to witness in his favor, and with a jury stacked against him, he would certainly be convicted of the murder charge. The gallows

were built right into the jail where he had been held. The sketchy evidence seems to suggest that he pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of manslaughter to escape death and was sentenced to ten years in the state penitentiary.

Penitentiary reports follow him through the first four years of his sentence, but no reports were filed with the state governor during the final years of his sentence. What happened to him was not known when this book was first published in 1971. Now, however, with many historic Adventist periodicals online and searchable, we know that Olvin was later on the staff of Oakwood College and served as a colporteur for a number of years.

Chapter XXI

With Edson's move to Nashville, records of the Mississippi work become more general, and the color and passion of the work fades into the clichés of formal reports.

In August, 1900, Ellen White returned from her stay in Australia. In March, 1901, she visited Vicksburg to dedicate the new church, preaching on the fourteenth chapter of John, and titling her sermon, "Trust in God."

Then, traveling to Nashville, she met Edson during the convention of the Southern Missionary Society. They discussed the future of the *Gospel Herald*, a health food factory for the South, and plans for an industrial school for Black students. Then Ellen White journeyed on to the General Conference session in Battle Creek where she made a stirring appeal for the Southern work and issued the call for the reorganization of the General Conference. The new organization, placing responsibility on men in the Southern field, eliminated many of the harrowing problems Edson White had faced in his Mississippi years.

The *Morning Star's* work was almost done, but she had one more important voyage to make. On June 8, 1904, she left Nashville with a distinguished party on board: Ellen White, Percy T. Magan, E. A. Sutherland, Edson and Emma White, and others. For seven days she headed up the Cumberland River, while Magan and Sutherland searched for land on which to establish their new training school for teachers.

Ellen White, who enjoyed traveling on water, caught up on some much needed rest. "It proved to be a very great blessing," she wrote. "The rest and peace did me much good. The scenery was beautiful."

Sutherland and Magan found a favorable site, and there later established Madison College.

Both Ellen and Edson White still entertained hopes that the *Morning Star* might again see service along the Yazoo, but in 1905 the boat sank. Ellen suggested that it might be pulled up on dry land and kept as a memorial of the role it had played in starting the advent movement in the Southern field.

Edson did pull the boat up into a grove in front of his house and planned to use it for an office, but it was 1906, and he had already decided to retire and move back to Michigan.

The man who had lived near Edson in Tennessee wanted to buy the boat, saying he wanted it for a berry house, but Edson heard rumors that the man intended to put a horse-racing track on his property and use the *Morning Star* as a refreshment stand for his business. Edson, of course, would consider no such sacrilege.

Soon after, the *Morning Star* burned to the ground. But its boiler was sent to the Rock City Sanitarium (now Riverside Hospital) in Nashville, where it continued to serve its original purpose—bringing healing to Black people. The boat's emblem, a wooden star, and its bell were sent to Oakwood University.

In Nashville the press of other duties had gradually removed Edson from active participation in Mississippi. Although in 1901 he did manage to establish the Gospel Herald Publishing Company which was later to become the Southern Publishing Association. (In 1980 the Southern Publishing Association merged with the Review and Herald Publishing Association which three years later moved from Washington, D.C., to Hagerstown, Maryland.)

Edson seemed to find more and more difficulty handling his business affairs and getting along with associates. At times the record of his Nashville years makes rather painful reading. His Mississippi years were indeed his best.

His biggest contribution to the advancement of the Adventist Church was undoubtedly the opening of the church's work among the Black people of the South.

In 1911 Edson returned to Marshall, Michigan, where he busied himself making stereopticon slides for evangelists and Bible workers. As the newly attached appendix items will show, Edson became more and more embittered as the years went by and he reflected on all the opposition and unfair treatment he and his work had received.

Shortly after he moved to Michigan, Ellen White's staff hired A.W. Spalding, the premier historian of Adventist history at the time, to help Ellen White's leading literary assistant, C. C. Crisler, prepare a book that would set the record straight concerning Edson and his work. Ellen White shared, to some extent, Edson's feelings that his work and the work among Black people had been mistreated and neglected. A manuscript for the book was prepared, titled *Lights and Shades in the Black Belt*, but the book was never published. (The manuscript is online at: <http://www.adventistarchives.org/> Click on "Online Archives," then scroll down the left edge to "Manuscripts.")

Several possible reasons have been suggested why the book was not published. Perhaps by the time it was completed in 1914, Mrs. White came to feel that Edson's continued battles with church leaders and his continued financial difficulties simply made it untenable to publish a book praising him. The book is rife with the paternalistic racism of the time and there is some suggestion that Black ministers saw the manuscript and persuaded Spalding that it should not be published. Edson himself simply felt church leaders killed the project—in his mind this was just another indication of their implacable opposition and neglect.

Edson did receive a sustentation pension from the General Conference during the later years of his life, and when Emma died in 1917, the General Conference sent him \$150 to cover funeral expenses.

After six lonely years, Edson married Rebecca Burrill and moved to Otsego, Michigan. There he died in 1927, being tenderly cared for by Rebecca during his last months. E. A. Sutherland presided at his funeral in Battle Creek, and he was buried beside Emma, his first wife, in Oak Hill Cemetery in Battle Creek, where his mother and father also rest.

But the work he had begun went on. Within a few years, F. R. Rogers reported that the Southern Missionary Society was operating nearly fifty schools for Black people.

Before long a strong force of Black workers emerged from those small beginnings in Mississippi, and many members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today trace their first contacts with the Advent message to the *Morning Star* and to its little schools along the banks of the Yazoo River.

Much of what Edson White tried to accomplish in Mississippi still remains to be done—not only in Mississippi, but amid scenes of rural poverty and urban decay all across America and around the world.

What Ellen White wrote is still true: "Human beings in their suffering humanity are crying unto God, and their prayers are just as surely coming up before God as did the blood of Abel."

And much of the divine counsel she gave concerning helping people in poverty and loving people of other races still remains to be followed:

“The black man’s name is written in the book of life beside the white man’s. All are one in Christ. Birth, station, nationality, or color cannot elevate or degrade men. The character makes the man. . . . Those who slight a brother because of his color are slighting Christ”—*The Southern Work*, pages 12, 13.



MORNING STAR GROUP OF SOUTHERN MISSIONARY WORKERS.

The accompanying view is reproduced from a photograph taken at Adams Landing, near our Calmar chapel, Dec. 28, 1898. The group is standing on the second deck of the *Morning Star*, at the bow end of the boat. In front of the group can be seen part of the roof of the lumber barge belonging to the *Morning Star*. The camera was placed on the roof of this barge in taking the picture. The portrait cut into the upper right hand corner is of Bro. Schramm, who could not appear in the regular group, as he operated the camera in taking the picture. Beginning at the left of the picture we will describe the workers according to the numbers given.

No. 1. Isaiah Moore, of Pulaski, Iowa. Came to the boat Nov. 9, 1898, to take part in the health food business. Until the health food factory can be opened he acts as deck hand, aids in care of the boat, and teaches in night schools.

No. 2. S. W. Trump, from Salem, New Jersey. Reached the boat, Nov. 26, 1898. His position is that of printer and pressman in the *GOSPEL HERALD* printing office on board the *Morning Star*. He is also teacher in our night schools, and is under instruction in the engine room, so that he can obtain engineer’s papers as soon as he has served the time required by the U. S. Marine Inspection Service. We desire to have a reserve force of God-fearing officers for the boat so that we may never again be obliged to bring unconsecrated men upon it, and so are training as many as possible to fill every office required by law.

No. 3. Frank H. Bryant, of Yazoo City, Miss. Accepted the truth and joined the boat’s company in August, 1898. He is a young man of good education and soon learned to manipulate the typewriter. The correspondence from the boat is very large, often reaching twenty or thirty letters a day. These letters are dictated to a graphophone by the editor, and then are afterwards reproduced by the talking machine and written out by Bro. Bryant. In one-half an hour enough can thus be dictated to keep the typewriter busy half a day. Bro. Bryant also acts as fireman on the boat when running, teaches in our night

schools, and employs all spare time in studying present truth so that he can soon become an active missionary to his own people.

No. 4. J. R. Moore, of Vicksburg, Miss. Has been on the boat as pilot off and on for over two years. But when Bro. Halladay recently secured engineer's papers the boat was fully officered by active workers, and Mr. Moore was allowed to go.

No. 5. D. G. Stephenson. Was a photographer at Tchula, Miss. He felt it his duty to engage fully in missionary work, and so gave up his business and joined the boat's company early in December, 1898. At the last of the same month he was left in charge of the work at Calmar. Several have accepted the truth as the result of his labors at that place.

No. 6. F. W. Halladay, of Ottawa, Illinois. Joined the *Morning Star's* company on its way to the South in the summer of 1894. He holds ministerial license from the General Conference, is an acceptable public speaker, Bible worker, and teacher in night schools. His two years work in Yazoo City have been one of the greatest factors in disarming prejudice, gaining an influence with the people, and opening the way for the different lines of work now going forward at this place. He has also been a great aid to the work along the river as he has accompanied the steamer on its missionary trips. On the boat he holds the office of engineer, to which position he was appointed by the government inspectors at St. Louis, Aug. 10, 1898.

No. 7. Mrs. F. W. Halladay, formerly, Miss I. C. Wekell, of Farlington, Kansas. Joined the work at Vicksburg in 1896, removed to Yazoo City in the summer of 1897, and at this place was married to Bro. F. W. Halladay. Since that time has worked by his side as Bible worker and teacher in house to house and public night schools. Her influence has been excellent with the people, where her work has done much to root up prejudice and open the hearts of the people for the reception of the whole gospel of our Lord.

No. 8. F. R. Rogers, from Walla Walla, Wash. Reached Yazoo City, Nov. 21, 1898. Is principal of our mission school at Lintonia. His years of experience as a public school teacher have fitted him to bring to this school the success which it has already attained. It is a credit to the work and its influence is being felt for miles around the city. Bro. Rogers has charge of the night schools in this locality.

No. 9. Chester Rogers, son of Bro. and Sister Rogers.

No. 10. Mrs. F. R. Rogers. Assistant teacher in Lintonia school, and instructor in instrumental music.

No. 11. J. E. White, from Battle Creek, Michigan. Five years ago superintended construction of *Morning Star*, with which he has been connected ever since. In missionary work, is ordained minister, president of Southern Missionary Society, and editor of *GOSPEL HERALD*. In navigating the *Morning Star* he holds offices from U. S. government of master, pilot, and engineer, which enable him to fill any one position required by law as the circumstances of the case may demand.

No. 12. Mrs. J. E. White. Holds missionary credentials from General Conference. Teaches in night schools and visits with the people.

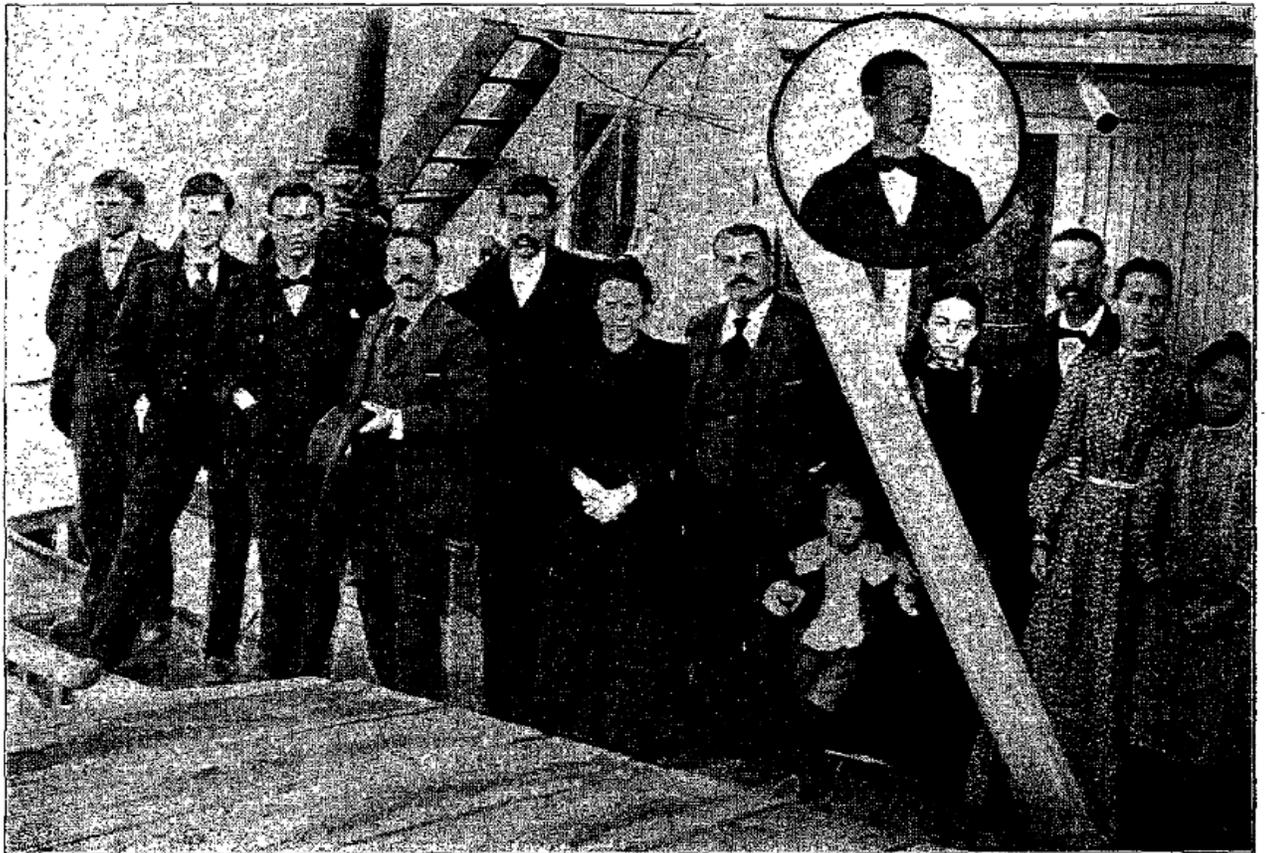
No. 13. Anna Slaughter, of Yazoo City, Miss., assistant in kitchen work on boat.

No. 14. F. H. Schramm, of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Joined the work on *Morning Star* in February, 1898. In missionary work holds missionary credentials from General Conference. Gives Bible readings and teaches in house to house and in public night schools. On the boat he is our photographer, attends to the press work and mailing of the *GOSPEL HERALD*, and is superintendent of the health food business. In navigating the

boat he has thoroughly learned the channel of the Yazoo River from Vicksburg to Yazoo City. In running, his position is at the wheel in the pilot house and we hope he can soon obtain government papers as pilot on the *Morning Star*.

From the foregoing it will be seen that our crew is composed of all young people. Thus there is no extra expense in caring for and navigating the boat. The missionary workers in going from place to place have the skill and experience necessary to perform all the duties required. We are sorry not to be able to present the workers from the Vicksburg mission, in this connection, but hope to be able to do so in the near future.

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—*Gospel Herald*, Vol. 1 #8, March 1899, p. 68