

# Jones, Charles Harriman (1850–1936)

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## DONALD R. MCADAMS

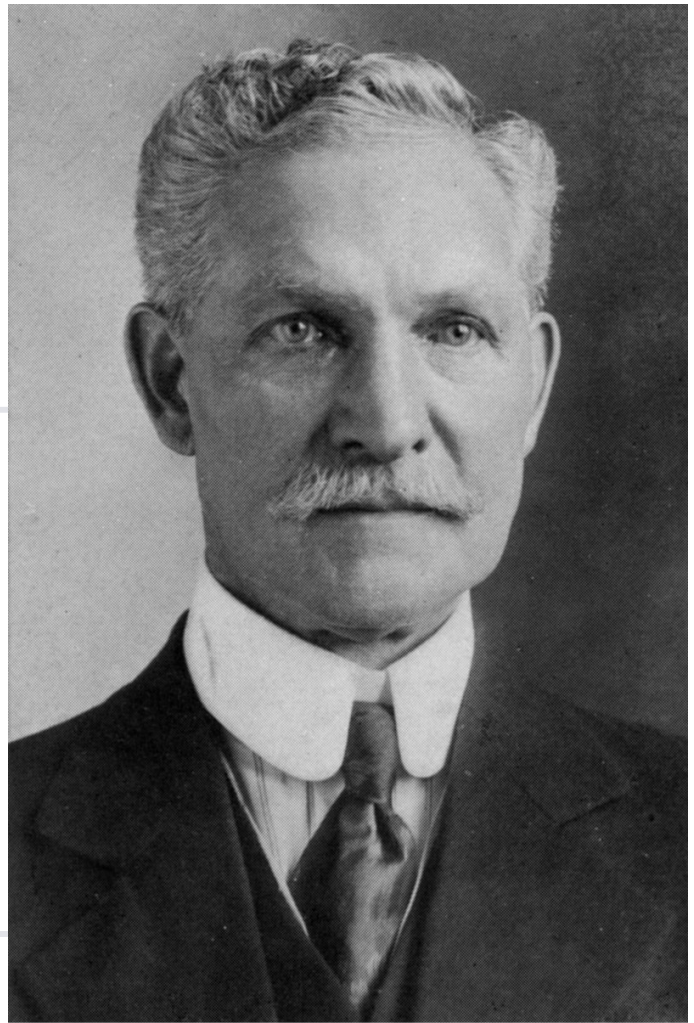
Donald R. McAdams graduated from Columbia Union College and received a Ph.D. in British history from Duke University. He taught at Andrews University (1967-1975), was president of Southwestern Adventist College (1975-1984), and in the years following served as president of the Texas Independent College Fund, executive president of the American Productivity & Quality Center, president of McAdams, Faillace & Associates, Inc, a productivity management consulting firm, executive vice president of Texas Southern University, research professor at the University of Houston, and 12 years on the Houston school board. As founder and president of the Center for Reform of School Systems (2001-2011), he provided governance training for over 100 urban school boards and wrote four books on urban school governance.

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Charles Harriman Jones gave his life to the publishing work of the Seventh-day Adventist church, from 1888 until 1923—with one short break—as the chief executive of the Pacific Press. His tireless fight for the independence of Pacific Press contributed to the organizing principles that govern the world-wide system of Adventist publishing houses to this day.

## Early Life

Jones was born on December 12, 1850, in Warner, New Hampshire, the sixth of eight children. His father, Enos C. Jones, died when he was young, so at age 14, to help support his family, Jones found work as a printer and soon held the job of state printer in Manchester. Four years later, he accepted an invitation to work for the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association in Battle Creek, Michigan. The job offer suggests that he was most likely raised in an Adventist family. Here Jones operated the power press, the first such press owned by the denomination. Later he became superintendent of the factory.<sup>1</sup>



Charles Harriman Jones.

Photo courtesy of Center for Adventist Research, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA.

At Battle Creek, Jones met Josephine Emerson Lunt, whom he married on April 27, 1873.<sup>2</sup> Her father, Noah Norton Lunt, had been one of the first Adventists in Maine to embrace the seventh-day Sabbath and had worked with James and Ellen White in their early years. Josephine Jones shared her husband's interest in publishing, serving for a while as an editor of the *Sabbath School Worker*.<sup>3</sup>

## Go West Young Man

In Battle Creek, Jones also met the Whites, working with James, who was president of the publishing house. In 1874, James and Ellen White moved to California and started a paper, the *Signs of the Times*, and soon thereafter, in Oakland, they established as a stock company the Pacific Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, referred to frequently as the Pacific Press.<sup>4</sup> In 1879, Jones accepted a six-month appointment to help in the factory. Before the six months expired, the directors asked him to stay as superintendent of the factory.

Jones's first decade at Pacific Press was a period of phenomenal growth. By 1888, a large new building housed a new boiler, steam engine, and nine-cylinder presses, making Pacific Press the most complete publishing plant west of the Rocky Mountains. At the center of this large operation stood Jones. In 1882, he became general manager of the plant and in 1888 president of the board.<sup>5</sup>

## Conflict with the Review and Herald

During the 1880s, the book work boomed. One of the biggest sellers was the 1884 edition of Ellen White's *The Great Controversy*. This brought the Pacific Press into conflict with the Review and Herald Publishing Association. Some of the leaders there had never approved of the *Signs* or the Pacific Press. They thought the *Signs* should be published in Michigan, and a press, if needed, should be a branch of the Review and Herald. Would the Review and Herald promote *The Great Controversy* in the East at the expense of its own subscription books?<sup>6</sup> On November 17, 1885, Jones reported to W. C. White, Ellen White's son, that the Review and Herald would not circulate anything that did not emanate from its office.<sup>7</sup>

The conflict came to an end in late 1888. The parties agreed that the Pacific Press would have the exclusive right to sell all subscription books published by either house in districts 1 (the East), 5 (the Great Plains and Southwest), and 6 (the West); and the Review and Herald would have exclusive rights in districts 2 (the South), 3 (the Midwest), and 4 (the Northern Great Plains). Both houses, for the costs of the book plates and five per cent of the wholesale price for every book sold, would furnish plates of any of its books to the other.<sup>8</sup>

## Attempted Control by the General Conference

Meanwhile the independence of Pacific Press was threatened by church leaders in Battle Creek. At the 1889 General Conference session, the delegates voted to bring all the denomination's publishing interests under one management. The General Conference Association (GCA) would become the denomination's publisher and the publishing houses would become mere printing plants. Jones reluctantly cooperated, accepting the GCA decision in February 1893 to buy the Pacific Press's London branch.<sup>9</sup>

Next, the GCA requested that Pacific Press turn over to the state conference tract societies its distribution organization. Conference tract and missionary societies, first formed in 1870, encouraged church members to distribute tracts and sell subscriptions to church periodicals. By the late 1870s, conference tract societies were supervising full-time canvassers, door-to-door salesmen selling subscriptions for books to be delivered later. By 1886, most conferences had appointed state canvassing agents. Finally, in March 1895, the GCA announced that, henceforth, it would furnish its subscription books, all published by the Review and Herald, directly to the conference tract societies, irrespective of any territorial lines or branch offices.<sup>10</sup>

The Pacific Press directors responded with a strong protest sent to the GCA on June 5, 1895, asserting that this policy would destroy the Press. Jones argued in the protest and in subsequent letters to General Conference president O. A. Olsen that if Pacific Press did not have a monopoly in its territories, its branch offices would go out of business and Pacific Press would either have to bring out its own books and launch into direct competition with the GCA or get out of the subscription book business.<sup>11</sup>

As a final argument, Jones appealed to the testimonies of Ellen White. As early as 1876, she had affirmed God's will that the Pacific Press was never to be controlled by any other institution, and in a letter written from Australia on April 8, 1895, to the General Conference Committee and the two publishing houses she stated that the present time was a time of great peril.

In 1890 and 1891 there was presented to me a view of the dangers that would threaten the work because of a confederacy in the office of publication in Battle Creek. Propositions which to their authors appeared very wise would be introduced, looking to the formation of a confederacy, which would make Battle Creek, like Rome, the great head of the work, and enable the office of publication there to swallow up everything in the publishing work among us. This is not God's wisdom, but human wisdom.<sup>12</sup>

Evidently, Jones's arguments and Ellen White's testimonies to the GCA convinced Adventist leaders that a mistake had been made. In late October 1895, the GCA, with Jones present and voting, rescinded its resolution of the previous March. The Pacific Press was confirmed in its monopoly for all subscription books in districts 1, 5, and 6.<sup>13</sup>

One last battle, however, remained to be fought. In March 1896, the GCA announced that, henceforth, it would be the sole agent for Dr. John Harvey Kellogg's health books and would deal directly with the tract societies. Jones protested to Olsen that this violated the agreement of the previous October. Throughout the spring and

summer, he kept Ellen and W. C. White informed. On November 3, at last, he reported that victory had been won. The GCA had voted to withdraw entirely from the publishing work in the United States. The publishing houses would once again have full responsibility to publish and distribute their printed material, untrammelled by any outside authority.<sup>14</sup>

Jones won his battles for Pacific Press's exclusive territorial distribution rights and independence, but he was to lose another, the battle for control of the canvassing work. The depression years of the 1890s more than halved Adventist book sales in the United States, and as the conferences served by the Pacific Press lost interest in canvassing, the press filled the vacuum with its own canvassers. However, book sales remained flat into the 1900s.

In 1901, the new General Conference president, A.G. Daniells, returning from Australia, determined to revitalize the book work by placing the responsibility for canvassing on the conferences, but with strong leadership and support from the publications committee of the General Conference. The man tasked for this job was Daniells' colleague from Australia, Edwin R. Palmer. Jones, with support from W. C. White, fought Daniells and Palmer on this point until 1906, when Palmer's vision for organizing the canvassing or colporteur ministry triumphed.<sup>15</sup>

## Resignation and Return

Jones had an unshakable conviction that Ellen White was an inspired messenger of the Lord. She was a frequent house guest and almost as dear to him as a mother. He wrote her often, informing her of church news and the progress of her books and sharing with her personal family sorrows and pleasures.<sup>16</sup> She was to play a central role in the biggest challenge of his life.

Because denominational printing continued to lose money, lucrative commercial contracts were required to keep Pacific Press solvent. By the late 1890s, commercial work was absorbing much of the Press's attention. Especially profitable was the checkbook business for the Carter-Crane Company.<sup>17</sup> In 1898, Ellen White said the time had not yet come to divorce all commercial work from the office. But she was so angry about some of the novels the press was printing, that at one point she called on typesetters to refuse to set even one sentence!<sup>18</sup> Finally, on June 25, 1901, she directed a testimony to the managers of the press. Complaining about the spirituality of Pacific Press, she called for a change of leadership: "It is not [good] for the spiritual health of men to always remain in one position. They need a change. For a man to have the impression that he will always be a manager injures the religious experience and hinders the formation of correct, sanctified principles."<sup>19</sup>

Jones responded twelve days later, acknowledging that the message applied to him, and offering to resign. A year later, he reported to Ellen White that the directors had decided to cease all commercial printing. The board proposed to form a new company unconnected in any way with the denomination to print checkbooks for Carter-Crane. Jones would resign from Pacific Press to become its president. He could leave at once. Ellen White, however, preferred that he stay until a replacement was found.

Events, however, took a different course. Pacific Press had an investment of over \$300,000 in Oakland, half of which was needed for the checkbook business. Without the checkbooks, half of the plant was redundant. Rather than try to sell a large part of its plant, the stockholders determined to sell the entire plant and move the press from Oakland, which had become a bustling urban community, to a less expensive rural location. At last, in November 1903, Mountain View, California, was selected as the new home for Pacific Press. Also, rather than form a new company to print checkbooks, in May 1904, the press sold the business to the Murdoch Company. By October 1904, the move to Mountain View was completed. Also, following the recommendations of the General Conference, Pacific Press began its transition from a stock company to a constituency company, a company owned by the church. These matters resolved, Jones wished to retire and move to Santa Barbara, California, where his oldest son was setting up a medical practice. But now, reversing her 1901 testimony, Ellen White insisted he remain at Pacific Press.

The following years, however, were not happy ones for Jones: debts were unusually heavy, workers had split into factions over the issue of commercial work, and some employees were accusing Jones of taking a bribe. When the Murdoch Company bought the checkbook business, it gave both Jones and J. B. Greenwood, manager of the checkbook department, 500 shares of stock, a customary gift in expectation for helpful business advice as needed. Though the gifts did not influence the terms of the sale, there was widespread criticism in the house.

At the annual stockholders' meeting in January 1905, Jones was under heavy pressure to resign and would have done so had not Ellen White, even as she rebuked him for his error, informed the stockholders that he should not leave office at this time. A year later, however, in poor health and suffering under constant criticism, Jones submitted his resignation and went south to be with his son in Santa Barbara.

Ellen White was not happy with Jones's decision. Just a few weeks later, on January 28, 1906, she wrote him in sympathy for his illness but insistent that in the Lord's name he return to Pacific Press.<sup>20</sup> Jones had wanted a year of rest, but his health was beginning to recover. And now it seemed that everybody wanted his services. The directors of Pacific Press wanted him to return to promote the circulation of the *Signs*. The new Southern Publishing Company wanted him to be its general manager. And A. G. Daniells, president of the General Conference, who in January 1902 had urged him to accept the leadership of the Review and Herald Publishing Association, now wanted him to be chairman of the General Conference publications committee.

Jones's future was settled when, on May 3, Ellen White addressed the leadership of the Pacific Press. No one else had the experience to take Jones's place, she said. The press needed his advice and counsel. And some had mistreated him and needed to rid themselves of their hard-hearted spirit.<sup>21</sup> On June 14, the directors formally requested that Jones return as a member of the board and general manager. Jones responded in a letter read to the board on July 1: "In view of the messages that have come to us from the servant of the Lord I dare not refuse."<sup>22</sup> Jones was back at the job he loved. He would not relinquish it for another 26 years.

## Golden Years

These years were by no means free from trials. Jones had barely gotten settled into his work when, on July 20 and 21, the beautiful new plant at Mountain View burned to the ground. The losses were over \$200,000, but with \$72,500 from insurance and \$66,500 from the sale of the Oakland property, a smaller plant was quickly built. Employees rallied to provide uninterrupted service, determined to put aside past squabbles, and committed to trust in the Lord while facing the press's huge debt without profitable commercial contracts. The years that followed proved to be the most profitable years in the history of Pacific Press.

The primary cause of the new prosperity was the tremendous growth of the subscription book business. Under the leadership of E. R. Palmer, the church's canvassing work had been placed on a solid foundation of local conference control, and a new scholarship plan was encouraging hundreds of students to spend their summers canvassing. In the decade 1895-1904 only \$3,144,000 worth of Adventist literature had been sold worldwide. In the next decade the number reached \$14,095,000. And from 1915-1924 sales nearly tripled to over \$38,483,000. Pacific Press could hardly keep up with the demand. The net worth of the press, which in 1907 had stood at \$21,000, increased to \$434,500 in 1917 and \$711,350 in 1927.<sup>23</sup>

Presiding over this prosperity was Charles Harriman Jones, the grand old man of Adventist publishing. In 1920, at a dinner marking a half century of service to Pacific Press, 300 guests gathered to honor Jones, then 78. Jones recalled his career in denominational publishing, going all the way back to the early years in Battle Creek, and gave credit to his co-laborers through the years. Jones served three more years as the manager of the Pacific Press before illness forced him to retire, but he continued as president emeritus until his death.<sup>24</sup>

Jones died on April 26, 1936, in Long Beach, California, at the medical clinic of his son, Dr. William Harriman Jones. His wife, Josephine, preceded him to the grave by three years. He left two sons, William, and Charles Floyd, an employee of the Pacific Press. His daughter, Lena, died at age 14.<sup>25</sup>

## Contribution

From pioneer days in Battle Creek to active old age in Mountain View, Jones had achieved a record of service to Adventist publishing unmatched in the history of the denomination. Though his travels in later years helped establish publishing houses and branches in other countries and his influence transcended publishing, Jones's most significant contribution was his leadership of the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Through years of trial and prosperity, he fought for its independence and by so doing helped establish the organizing principle that Adventist publishing houses would have their own territory and be responsible to their own independent constituencies. This principle set a precedent followed by other Adventist institutions and remains influential to this day.



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## NOTES

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4. Donald R. McAdams, "Pacific Press Versus Review and Herald: The Rise of Territorial Monopolies," *Spectrum*, August 1997, 13-15. The name of the press was officially changed to Pacific Press Publishing Association in 1888.
5. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook of Statistics for 1889* (Battle Creek, Michigan: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1889), 109; for a history of the Pacific Press see Richard B. Lewis, *Streams of Light: The Story of the Pacific Press* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1958).
6. McAdams, "Publisher of the Gospel," 25.
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10. *Ibid.*, 26.
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14. McAdams, "Publisher of the Gospel," 27-28; C. H. Jones to W. C. White, November 3, 1896, Ellen G. White Estate.
15. Donald R. McAdams, "Edwin R. Palmer: Publishing Secretary Extraordinary," *Adventist Heritage* 2, no. 1 (Summer 1975): 53-60; Benjamin McArthur, *A. G. Daniells: Shaper of Twentieth-Century Adventism* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2015), 144.
16. McAdams, "Publisher of the Gospel," 28-29.



17. The account of Jones's resignation and return is covered in more detail in McAdams, "Publisher of the Gospel, 29-31
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23. McAdams, "Publisher of the Gospel," 32.
24. Ibid.
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