



Knowlton Sanitarium in Quebec [people not identified].

Photo courtesy of Center for Adventist Research.

Knowlton Sanitarium

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Knowlton Sanitarium, a health-care institution located in Knowlton, Quebec, Canada, operated for about five years in the early 1900s.

At the General Conference session in Battle Creek in April 1901, Daniel Bourdeau, long-time pastor and evangelist among various French populations in North America and Europe, made an earnest plea on behalf of the French work in Montreal, Canada. Among other things, Bourdeau believed that Montreal was a good place to establish a branch of the Seventh-day Adventist health work. A few incidents had led some physicians in Montreal to be interested in Adventist health foods and journals, and he also believed that it would be a blessing to this city and to the work of the church if they could establish a sanitarium there.¹

Closely linked to their work on temperance, Adventists believe that it is the very nature of Christian life and faith to exercise compassion toward those who need help and medical attention. Only in a sound body can Christians render their most effective service to God and others. By 1901, this conviction had led Seventh-day Adventists to set up various medical and paramedical institutions throughout the world. Among these institutions are sanitariums, the most famous one was the Battle Creek Sanitarium. These extended-care institutions treated patients for various ailments with the help of a plant-based diet and non-intrusive therapeutic procedures such as hydrotherapy. In the later part of the nineteenth century, surgery and other medical procedures were also used but to a lesser extent.

Bourdeau sensed that one such institution would be beneficial in or near Montreal. Within two years, the first Seventh-day Adventist medical institution in Canada was dedicated in the village of Knowlton, approximately 70 miles (110 kilometers) east of Montreal, in the Eastern Townships region.

In 1903, after W. H. Thurston, president of the Canadian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, made an appeal to raise funds to buy a thirty-room hotel in Knowlton, the Quebec Conference bought the property for \$2,800. "Some of the leading physicians in Montreal have been talked with in reference to the enterprise," he explained, "and it has been their opinion, as well as that of other prominent business men in Montreal, that it will supply a long-felt need in this part of the field."²

The Knowlton Sanitarium was dedicated on July 22, 1903, in the presence of many local professional people.³ It was described as "a very comfortable three-story building, which can accommodate about twenty-five patients." On the first floor were found "the doctor's office, laboratory, parlor, library, dining-room, kitchen, laundry, and storeroom. On the second floor is our bathroom and patients' rooms. The third floor consists of the operating room, anesthetic room, two large wards, and patients' rooms." Also adjacent to the main building were a nurses' dormitory, which included a chapel, and a large barn.⁴

Within a year the sanitarium had established a good reputation, and patients were on a waiting list to be admitted. When A. G. Daniells, president of the General Conference, attended the second biennial session of the Canadian Union Conference held in Knowlton in September 1904, he visited the sanitarium. "The signal blessing of God has attended this branch of the work," he commented. "The institution has been filled nearly the entire time since it was opened. Several very serious operations have been performed with remarkable success. The citizens of Knowlton appreciate the institution very highly, and a good report of the principles followed and of

the work done has gone forth.”⁵ Also connected with the institution were a nursing school that graduated its first six students in 1905, and a small church organized by H. E. Rickard in January of the same year.⁶

The sanitarium operated for five years, from 1903 to 1908. Dr. W. H. White served as its superintendent for the first three years. But, in spite of its good beginnings and successes, the sanitarium encountered one major obstacle. Both federal and provincial governments passed laws in the early 1900s to regulate the practice of medicine and to license medical professionals, including foreign doctors serving in Canada. For some reason, White did not receive this license and had to relinquish the responsibility of the sanitarium in 1906. Another Adventist physician, Dr. Roy M. Clarke, replaced White at the Sanitarium, but he also being American, did not receive the necessary Canadian license. Since it was impossible to find an Adventist doctor who could meet the qualifications required for the medical profession in Quebec, Dr. R. McDonald, a non-Adventist, filled the position of superintendent for about a year. After his resignation, the board could not find a replacement and sold the institution to a local physician, Dr. N. Munden Harris, who continued to operate the Sanitarium for many years.⁷

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. D. T. Bourdeau, "A Plea on Behalf of the French in North America," *General Conference Bulletin* 4, No. 20 (April 25, 1901): 478.
 2. W. H. Thurston, "To Our Brethren in America," *ARH*, March 24, 1903, 18.
 3. W. H. Thurston, "Canadian Sanitarium," *ARH*, September 10, 1903, 13.
 4. R. M. Clarke, "The Knowlton Sanitarium," *ARH*, January 2, 1908, 21.
 5. A. G. Daniells, "The Canadian Union Conference," *ARH*, October 20, 1904, 16-17.
 6. W. H. Thurston, "The Knowlton Sanitarium," *ARH*, November 9, 1905, 20; "Field Notes," *ARH*, February 16, 1905, 21.
 7. "Findings," *ARH*, May 14, 1908, 21; Marion L. Phelps, *Yesterdays of Brome County*, volume 1: *Centennial Souvenir Edition, 1867-1967* (Knowlton: Brome County Historical Society, 1967), 80. See also J. Ernest Monteith, *The Lord Is My Shepherd: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada* ([Oshawa, ON]: Canadian Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1983), 148.
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