



Eva Bradford Rock.

Photo courtesy of Calvin B. Rock.

Bradford-Rock, Eva Gwendolyn (1912–2010)

CALVIN B. ROCK

Calvin B. Rock has served the Seventh-day Adventist church for more than six decades as pastor-evangelist, administrator, scholar and author. He has given leadership as president of Oakwood University (1971-1985) and as a general vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (1985-2002). He holds a D.Min. and a Ph.D. in religious ethics, both from Vanderbilt University. The most recently published of the several books he has authored is *Protest and Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity* (2018).

Eva Gwendolyn Bradford-Rock (1912-2010),¹ African American educator, musician, author, and activist for church unity and social justice, was born December 22, 1912, on the campus of what was then Oakwood Manual Training School in Huntsville, Alabama. She was the fourth of Pastor Robert Lee Bradford's (1882-1957) and Etta Elizabeth Littlejohn Bradford's (1881-1944) eight children. Her mother was one of the school's nursing instructors at the time of Eva Bradford's birth. Her paternal grandfather, Robert Lafayette Bradford, her younger brother Charles Edward Bradford, her son, Calvin Bovell Rock, and her nephew, Robert Douglas also became Seventh-day Adventist pastors, largely because of her father's influence. Her younger sister, Vera, became the wife of George Braxton, also an Adventist pastor.

Etta Elizabeth Littlejohn, a native of Vicksburg, Mississippi, became a Seventh-day Adventist in 1895 at age 14, after being taught the gospel from the decks of the *Morning Star*, the missionary boat built by Edson White, son of Ellen White. Etta Littlejohn was one of the original sixteen students enrolled at Oakwood Industrial Training School (the school's name at its origin) in 1896. Later, while fulfilling nursing duties at Melrose Sanitarium in the Boston area, she waited upon and at times traveled with Ellen White.²

Eva Bradford-Rock was a product of Christian education, attending church schools in her early years in cities where her father pastored, except in one locale that had no church school. She met her husband, George Lybron Rock (a native of Barbados), in 1929 while attending Harlem Academy in New York City. She was the mother of three children, Calvin, Etta, and Wanda. In 1937, she pursued the Bible worker's program offered at Oakwood and was convicted of the call to teach the gospel. She later, as strictures upon women preachers loosened in the United States, became a sought-after Sabbath speaker/preacher.

Prior to moving from New York to Los Angeles in 1941, Bradford-Rock was employed as teacher-director of the Little Brown School House of New York City. She served as the lead clerk of Harlem's well-known Ephesus Seventh-day Adventist church where her Sabbath reports were often given in the form of poetry, highlighting one of her many special gifts. Her abilities of organization and leadership were utilized over the years in church service as local elder, Sabbath school superintendent, secretary and teacher, youth leader, personal ministries leader, choir director, education secretary, pianist, organist, and women's ministry leader.

From the middle 1940s until the latter years of her life, Eva Bradford-Rock was active in pursuing racial harmony in the churches of the Southern and Southeastern California Conferences. She believed that regional conferences were not needed on the West Coast and played a significant role in the successful efforts between

1945 and 2000 to maintain status quo organizational patterns in the Pacific Union.³

Her career on the West Coast included thirty-three years as an employee of the Los Angeles School District during which time she pioneered in the development of a curriculum for early childhood education and served as a director, district parent coordinator, and mental health advisor. Her public service roles included membership in WAND (Women's Army for National Defense) during World War II, president of Watts Health Council, organizer of "Watts Positive," and assisting Ruth Temple, MD, prominent Seventh-day Adventist physician in southern California,⁴ in establishing the California-wide Community Health Week. Bradford-Rock also served as a trustee on the boards of Jordan High School and Markham Junior High School in Los Angeles. While in her 50s, she conducted a spirited candidacy for the 55th district of the California State Assembly.

Not to be deterred from intellectual advancement, in her adult years she attended Los Angeles City College and Compton Junior College. Then, at age 71, she earned a Master of Church Music degree at Pepperdine University and Eubanks Conservatory of Music and Arts in 1983. Her writings included several musical scores, two books of original poems entitled *Reflections*, her conservatory thesis, "Women in Hymnody," and a faith-building approach to the writings of Ellen White entitled, "Why I believe in the Spirit of Prophecy."

SOURCES

Lee, Harold L. (with Monte Sahlin). *Brad: Visionary Spiritual Leadership*. Huntsville, AL and Lincoln, NE: Bradford-Cleveland Institute and Center for Creative Ministry, 2005.

Rock, Calvin B. *Protest and Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2018.

NOTES

1. This article is based on documents held by the author and his personal knowledge as son of Eva Bradford-Rock, supplemented by sources cited in the subsequent endnotes.
2. Harold L. Lee (with Monte Sahlin), *Brad: Visionary Spiritual Leadership* (Huntsville, AL and Lincoln, NE: Bradford-Cleveland Institute and Center for Creative Ministry, 2005), 2-3.
3. Calvin B. Rock, *Protest and Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2018), 75-77, 94-95.
4. Ruth Janetta Temple became the first African American female to graduate from Loma Linda University Medical School (then College of Medical Evangelists) in 1918. See Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, "Ruth Janetta Temple (1892-1984)," Blackpast, January 22, 2007, accessed

November 26, 2019, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/temple-ruth-janetta-1892-1984/>.

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