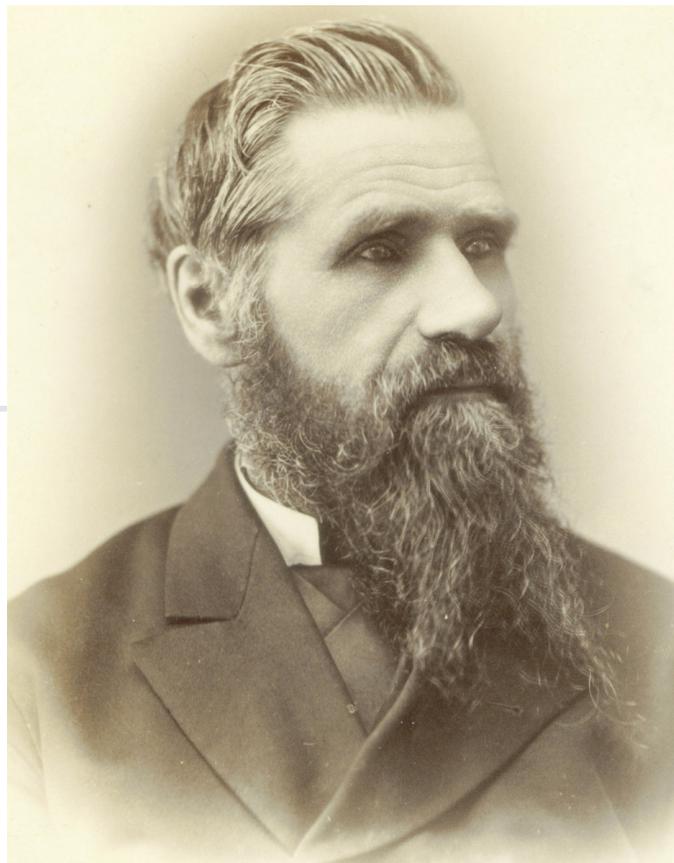


# Haskell, Stephen Nelson (1834–1922)

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## GERALD WHEELER

Gerald Wheeler, M.A. in religion (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan) and M.A.L.S. (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan), served the church for more than 47 years as an editor, first at Southern Publishing Association in Nashville, Tennessee, then at the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland, after its merger with Southern. He retired as head book editor. Wheeler has written numerous articles and books, including biographies on James White (2003) and Stephen Nelson Haskell (2016). He contributed to the first revised edition of the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1976) and *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* (2013) and continues to edit for denominational publishing entities.



Stephen Nelson Haskell.

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

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Stephen Nelson Haskell exerted leadership in almost every aspect of the early Seventh-day Adventist Church, including publishing ministry, world missions, urban evangelism, and conference administration. Self-educated, he helped found several colleges and authored widely-circulated books on doctrine and Bible prophecy.

## Early Life

Haskell claimed to have been born on April 22, 1833, in Oakham, Massachusetts, though town records list his birth in 1834.<sup>1</sup> As was the case with most children in nineteenth-century America, Haskell began work at an early age. Despite the fact that he lived in the more educationally progressive region of New England, he received little or no formal schooling. Like many of his fellow New Englanders, his work was varied. In a mood of reminiscence, he once wrote to Ellen G. White that he had “been in all sorts of businesses from a horse Jockey, Mastic roofer, Soap maker, Pickler, both honest and dishonest business.”<sup>2</sup>

In the course of these varied experiences, Haskell developed skills and insights that later proved valuable in his service for the denomination. The kind of perspectives he gained became increasingly scarce as the Adventist

ministry standardized educational and professional qualifications. His New England cultural background strongly shaped his leadership in the emerging Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>3</sup>

## Marriage and Education

During his middle teens, Haskell worked as a farmhand for Calvin Howe who was dying from a terminal disease. Howe asked Haskell to take care of his invalid sister, Mary E. Howe, after his death. Unable to think of any other way to fulfill the request, Haskell decided to marry her even though many considered her a helpless invalid. She accepted his proposal and they were married April 10, 1851.<sup>4</sup> He was seventeen years of age while she was about thirty-eight. Even with the age gap between them, the marriage endured for more than forty years.

Mary Haskell helped Stephen Haskell overcome his lack of formal schooling. Possessing teaching experience and a personal library, she used both to educate her young husband, teaching him how to write and speak well—though he continued to struggle with grammar and retained his strong New England accent. Haskell believed that studying algebra especially helped him learn to think logically and would later recommend it to young, would-be preachers.<sup>5</sup> He became a voracious reader.

Despite his otherwise frugal habits, Haskell, over a period of fifteen to twenty years, personally collected a library, primarily on biblical topics, that he estimated to be worth about \$2,000, an amount many times that in today's dollars. But his main reading matter was always the Bible itself. Near the end of his life, he reported that he had read through it seventy-six times. He collected all the English Bible versions that he could find—about twenty by 1914—and he made use of them. Because of his total lack of training in Hebrew and Greek, he considered them a way of discovering the nuances and depths of the biblical text, observing, "These I found to be the best commentary, as the texts are put in different words to convey the same thought."<sup>6</sup>

## Conversion and Lay Ministry

As a child, Haskell attended the Congregational church so prominent in New England, but soon joined the Methodist movement that was exploding across young America. Unlike older denominations such as Congregationalism, Anglicanism, and Presbyterianism that restricted clergy to those with a formal theological education and ecclesiastical approval, Methodism allowed those who felt a spiritual call to become "exhorters" and evangelists. Haskell took advantage of this new openness after he encountered the Second Coming doctrine trumpeted by the Millerite movement.

After hearing his first sermon about the Second Coming in 1852, Haskell talked about it so incessantly that a friend suggested in desperation that he preach on the subject himself. Haskell replied that he would if the person would get him an audience. To Haskell's surprise the individual assembled a roomful of people, compelling him to repeat the sermon that he had heard.<sup>7</sup>

Haskell kept on preaching, first in Canada, where he conducted a ten-day evangelistic series that resulted in the baptism of twenty-five individuals. The next year, 1853, he headed back to Canada to visit the little group of Adventists he had started, accompanied by two or three other neophyte preachers. After attending a first-day Adventist camp meeting in Winsted, Connecticut, the group stopped in Springfield, Massachusetts, on their way to Canada. There, Haskell asked William Saxby, a tinsmith who worked for the local railroad and was a seventh-day Sabbath observer, if he could leave his trunk with him until he returned. While they were in Saxby's presence, Haskell's companions began discussing among themselves the topic of Sunday observance. Haskell quickly concluded that they had no biblical support. Overhearing the conversation, Saxby attempted to broach the topic with Haskell, but Haskell rebuffed him. That evening though, Haskell accepted an invitation to Saxby's home. Saxby hung up a chart and began explaining Sabbatarian Adventist doctrines. Although Haskell did not believe anything Saxby said, he did decide that he would look into the Sabbath issue.

On his way to Canada, Haskell read and re-read a Seventh Day Baptist tract that Saxby had given him entitled *The Sabbath*,<sup>8</sup> comparing its contents with the Bible. To study the question without distractions, he interrupted his trip and hiked into the woods by himself. There he spent the day reading his Bible and praying for guidance. "Finally, before night," he wrote later, "I came to the conclusion that, according to the best light I had, the seventh day was the Sabbath."<sup>9</sup>

During the winter of 1854-1855, Saxby asked Joseph Bates to visit the Haskells. "Brother Bates preached to us (there were only two us) from morning until noon, and from noon until night, and then in the evening until the time we went to bed. He did that for ten successive days, and I have been a Seventh-day Adventist ever since."<sup>10</sup>

Although only a lay member, Haskell threw himself into Sabbatarian Adventist activities. Starting in the late 1850s, he later recalled that he "preached, organized churches and Sabbath schools, ordained elders, paying my own expenses, etc., but I was not even licensed." He added that he "[d]id not know it was necessary to have a license to preach. At that time, in the East, many of the Sabbath keepers were much as Brother [James] White described them, like an old bag of buttons, of all shapes and sizes. There were more different beliefs among them than heads or horns on any of the beasts in the Bible. But I was good to them all, so all were friends to me."<sup>11</sup>

In 1864, the Haskells moved to South Lancaster, Massachusetts, and joined a small group of Seventh-day Adventists that J. N. Loughborough soon organized into a church of eight members. The tiny group chose Stephen Haskell as its leader, and when attendance outgrew the space in its previous meeting place, he fixed up a room in his own home in which they could worship. Although, through the years he lived in many different locations, South Lancaster seemed to be the place to which he would always eventually return.

## Attitude Towards Ellen White's Testimonies

While Haskell's involvement in the work of the emerging Adventist church in New England grew to the point that it soon overshadowed his business affairs, his actions were not always constructive. Increasingly he found himself caught up in the factionalism that so frequently troubled Sabbatarian Adventists during the middle of the nineteenth century (a trait especially rampant in New England culture).<sup>12</sup> In the late 1850s, Haskell began to side with those hostile to James and Ellen White. She regarded his strong-willed behavior as disturbing and believed that if he had kept himself busy earning a decent living instead of traveling around stirring up trouble among the Adventist believers, God would be much better pleased.<sup>13</sup>

But trouble-making behavior and strong-willed tactics were not the only problems Ellen White saw in him. She also confronted his ascetic tendencies (he and Mary were denying themselves an adequate diet and thus endangering their health). Likewise, she opposed his campaign to convince Adventists to abstain from the consumption of pork, a practice the church was not yet ready to accept and was causing controversy. In addition, he apparently also endorsed individuals for church positions that Ellen White did not regard as qualified. Even worse, his personality tended to be dictatorial.

Haskell struggled with how to relate to Ellen White's testimonies. Looking back in 1910 he wrote her, "I know what it is to drink at the cup of despair 50 years ago or more. It was over your first testimony to me. I had to work my way out. I had no one to help me but my wife. But God set me free." He also acknowledged that at the time he had felt "enmity" toward James White and anyone else who had tried to confront him about his attitude, but he believed that God had touched his heart and erased the hostility, a transformation that would last the rest of his life.<sup>14</sup> In 1860, alluding to his previous attitude, he publicly expressed in the pages of the *Review* that he now supported her visions.<sup>15</sup> While Ellen White would again have occasion to warn him about a dictatorial attitude,<sup>16</sup> their correspondence became mutually supportive as the years passed. She wrote him more letters than anyone outside her immediate family. When Haskell married Hetty Hurd, his second wife, Ellen White addressed her letters to both of them. Her last letter to the couple was dated June 27, 1912.

## Administrative Leadership

Despite his faults, Haskell, especially as he took seriously Ellen White's counsels, would begin making positive contributions to Adventism. One of the foremost of these stemmed from an innovation, the success of which suggests that Adventists shared in the growing American interest in statistics. He created a report blank for New England churches to fill out that collected such information as the number of the region's congregations and Sabbath Schools, the members who were making regular contributions to the Systematic Benevolence Fund (the predecessor of the tithing program), and various other data. This achievement would place Haskell among the top leadership of the new denomination.

When Adventist church leaders convened a meeting in South Lancaster in December 1868 to consider the denomination's increasing growth in New England, Haskell passed around copies of his form. It greatly

impressed James White. A recommendation that emerged from the meeting to organize the New England Conference, comprised of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, also designated Haskell for ordination to ministry and for the office of conference president.<sup>17</sup>

However, Haskell's love of statistics could at times lead to excess. On one occasion Ellen White reprimanded him for making the organizational and procedural structure of the church's book and tract societies, including detailed statistical reports, too complicated and cumbersome, turning it into a "yoke of bondage."<sup>18</sup>

Haskell's service as president began when the New England Conference was organized in 1870. It was the beginning of a long, if intermittent, career of conference leadership. Besides the New England Conference (1870-1876, 1877-1887),<sup>19</sup> he served as president of the Maine Conference (1884-1886)<sup>20</sup> and the California Conference (1879-1886, 1908-1911)<sup>21</sup>. Not only did he simultaneously head conferences on opposite coasts, he would also be sent on extensive trips out of the country during his various terms.

In 1873, Haskell became a member of the General Conference executive committee and the influential publishing committee. He would serve on the GC committee almost forty-eight years. His name seems to appear everywhere in the minutes and reports of the various church organizations during those years. Whatever was happening in the denomination, Haskell was almost certainly in the midst of it.

## International Pioneer

On May 7, 1882, Haskell began the first of a long series of international journeys that would make him perhaps the most traveled early Adventist leader at a time when, apart from sailors and merchants, few but the wealthy traveled. He first went to Great Britain, then Europe. Later journeys took him to Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. Ultimately, he would spend 1889-1891 on a global survey of potential sites for future denominational mission activities, accompanied by a young Percy T. Magan, then a Battle Creek College student, as his assistant. The itinerary included India, China, and Japan, and visiting these Asian lands made Haskell clearly aware of the difficulty of taking Adventism to non-Christian cultures.

Haskell kept his fellow leaders informed about what he learned, filling his letters with detailed information and statistics. His correspondence and articles for the *Youth's Instructor* during the trip read like travelogues and encyclopedia entries. He felt that the insights gained from such extensive tours broadened one's outlook and understanding. At the March 1891 General Conference session, he gave a talk on "The Education of Missionaries" stressing that they must be willing to look at things from the perspective of the cultures that the church sought to evangelize. "In such fields as India, China, et cetera, we find customs which appear to us as nonsense, but not so," he pointed out, to those of that particular country or people. "And when they see in the foreigner a disposition to conform as far as possible to their ways, it disarms prejudice, and awakens a feeling of friendliness in their hearts. Many of the disasters which came upon the first efforts of the missionaries were due to the failure to appreciate this principle."<sup>22</sup>

Haskell's time in Asia made him realize the need not only to evangelize the people in their homelands, but also Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrants elsewhere. In 1907, he urged that the church begin work among Asians in California and start a school for the Japanese.<sup>23</sup> This was in an era when white Americans were passing laws against such immigrants and calling for their complete expulsion.

## Development of Educational Institutions

By the middle of the nineteenth century, it had become fashionable in America for each up-and-coming city or new religious denomination to want to establish its own college. The Seventh-day Adventist Church followed this trend, though it especially desired to train its young people for denominational service. Despite his own lack of formal education, Haskell participated in the founding or early stages of developing of several educational institutions including Battle Creek College (now Andrews University), South Lancaster Academy (later Atlantic Union College), Healdsburg College (now Pacific Union College), Avondale School for Christian Workers (now Avondale College of Higher Education) in Australia, and finally, Nashville Agricultural and Normal Institute (later Madison College). His attempt to start a school in Great Britain met with less success. Not only did he help establish schools, he also taught Bible at Avondale College. His around-the-world survey trip convinced him of the need for a worldwide system of schools to train people in their local area and culture.

Perhaps Haskell's greatest love for a specific educational institution was the one that church members at the time referred to as "that New England school," later Atlantic Union College. In 1882, at a time when conflicts over the purpose of Adventist schools led to the temporary closure of the denomination's first educational institution, Battle Creek College, Haskell announced at the quarterly meeting of the New England Tract and Missionary Society his desire to establish a Seventh-day Adventist school in the northeast region. The delegates supported the idea and the committee appointed to establish the school chose South Lancaster, Massachusetts, as the location. At the same time California Adventists also decided to create a second college. Ellen White's son, William C. White was active in the development of Healdsburg school. Haskell indulged in "a little rivalry" with W. C. White as to which school would open first. California church members purchased a two-story building that had formerly housed the defunct Healdsburg Institute, allowing the California school to open eight days before the one in Massachusetts.<sup>24</sup>

Because of Haskell's intense and continuing interest in South Lancaster Academy, even when out of the area he would leave behind detailed instructions on how its administration should operate it. Such guidelines reflected his sometimes-stern New England heritage. Although he liked young people, he did not always understand them, perhaps because he had assumed adult roles and responsibilities at such a young age as well as the fact that he had no children of his own. His attitude disturbed Ellen White. She felt that to follow his rules rigidly would greatly damage the students. In an echo of her earlier warning about his sometimes hard-nosed leadership style, she urged him to be gentler in how he dealt with young people. "I advise and exhort those who

have charge of the youth shall learn how to adapt themselves to meet the youth where they are," she wrote him. After counseling him about how he and the school staff should approach and deal with the students, she concluded, "Approve whenever you can; smile whenever you can; do not arrange your countenance as though a smile would bring the condemnation of heaven."<sup>25</sup>

## Publisher, Organizer, Marketer

Although Haskell struggled throughout his life with the intricacies of grammar, he became a prolific author, producing hundreds of periodical articles and news notes for the *Review and Herald* and other publications, as well as several books: *The Story of Daniel the Prophet* (1901); *The Seer of Patmos* (1905); *The Cross and Its Shadow* (1914); and *Bible Handbook* (1919). The books are still in print today. In addition, he published a periodical, *Bible Training School*, operated a small publishing house, and produced a number of Adventist books in braille. His self-publishing projects sometimes created friction with the denomination's three official North American publishing houses.

Besides writing articles for denominational publications, Haskell also developed methods to expand their outreach. Nineteenth-century America had few bookstores except in a handful of older cities, such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Books had to be ordered and shipped as freight. The United States postal system would not receive the legal right to deliver parcel post until January 1, 1913. As for periodicals, mail service was limited. People had to pick up letters and magazines at a local post office or general store. The recipient had to pay the postage. Even as late as 1887, a town had to have a population of 10,000 to qualify for free home mail delivery, and in 1890 three-quarters of Americans still had to journey to a post office to retrieve their mail. Rural free delivery was unavailable before 1906. In the case of Adventist publishing, James White had to haul stock from the Seventh-day Adventist publishing house in his luggage during his travels from one meeting to another and sell it himself.

Haskell developed a novel and efficient system for disseminating Adventist literature in conjunction with the emergence of a new organization to involve women in Christian work. Nineteenth-century society restricted what women could do outside the home, including the arena of religion. But gradually women's volunteer organizations began to emerge in the exploding evangelistic religious circles. One such group developed in the South Lancaster Adventist church. Stephen Haskell encouraged his wife, Mary, and several women to form the Vigilant Missionary Society, the first Adventist lay-organized ministry. The 10 women members, at their own expense, began sending out hundreds of tracts and booklets across New England and then to foreign countries. They donated Adventist books to local libraries. In addition, they wrote letters to people interested in Adventism. Some of the women even taught themselves other languages so that they could correspond with non-English speakers.

Impressed by what they were doing and expanding on the concept, Stephen persuaded the women to establish the first conference-wide Tract and Missionary Society on November 6, 1870 in the recently-organized New England Conference.<sup>26</sup> When James White heard about the program, he came to South Lancaster to study it. The tract society as well as Haskell himself greatly impressed James White and he convinced Haskell to accompany him to Battle Creek to improve and develop the system and then implement it church-wide.

In March of 1872, Haskell established the New York Tract and Missionary Society before presenting the concept to that year's General Conference session. Liking the idea, the delegates appointed him as its representative to encourage the formation of such societies in all the state conferences. The next year the General Conference again asked Haskell to visit all the state conferences to organize such bodies. For the next decade and a half, even while serving as president of as many as three conferences simultaneously, Haskell would visit individual churches promoting his beloved tract and missionary societies. Eventually, they would spread around the world, often becoming the basis of what would later grow into a publishing house.

Besides his creation of the book and tract society system, Haskell made another major if more indirect contribution to the church's publishing enterprise when he popularized a Bible study format among Adventists that was already circulating among American Protestants. When the downpour from a thunderstorm drumming on a camp meeting tent drowned out Haskell's voice during the 1883 California assembly, he took a position by the tent center pole and began asking questions and then answering them with scriptural passages, a form of catechism. When Ellen White learned what he had done, she expressed her approval, later declaring that it harmonized with her belief that he should spend more time teaching than preaching.<sup>27</sup>

Haskell taught a 10-day course on the method at Battle Creek before the next General Conference, followed by courses outlining it at Healdsburg College and South Lancaster Academy. That November the General Conference endorsed the question-and-answer approach by authorizing a monthly magazine that employed it, *The Bible-Reading Gazette*. The *Review and Herald* published it for one year, then bound left-over signatures into a book format that literature evangelists sold in the state of Ohio. The success of the project encouraged the publishing house to prepare another series of Bible studies, which it released under the title *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*. Widely sold, it went through a series of revisions, the most recent in 2008, and has sold countless copies.

## Loss of Mary Haskell and Search for a New Spouse

Haskell's constant travel kept him away from his wife, Mary, for long periods of time. In later years Ellen White encouraged him to spend more time with Mary as she became increasingly feeble.<sup>28</sup> Finally, he was able to move her near him in California. Then, after more than forty years of marriage, she died from a stroke January 29, 1894, at age 81.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps to help distract Haskell from his grief, the General Conference leadership asked him to attend camp meetings that summer in Europe. From there he went to Africa. Two years later, in 1896, Ellen White invited Haskell to assist her in Australia. Church leadership then officially requested that he conduct evangelism and teach at the new Avondale school that Ellen White was then establishing.

As Haskell worked closely with Ellen White, he began to develop a romantic interest in her. They would often take carriage rides together around the countryside. Eventually he proposed.<sup>30</sup> She declined his offer and instead encouraged him to marry Hetty Hurd, whom he had already met in Great Britain and worked with in South Africa. He did propose to Hetty, and they were married on February 24, 1897. They spent the first few weeks of their marriage in Ellen G. White's personal camp meeting tent near her home, Sunnyside, at Cooranbong, New South Wales. Hetty would be even more active in Haskell's work for the church than his first wife, Mary, had been (by this time Western society had changed to allow a wife to be more involved in a husband's profession).

Although Ellen White declined Haskell's offer of marriage, the experience may have given him a sense of empathy toward the courtship desires of the students at the newly established Avondale school. Ellen White felt that they should focus on their education for service in the denomination and avoid all romantic interests. Haskell, however, commented in a letter to her that "whoever has charge of dealing with colonial colts will not have an easy time of it."<sup>31</sup> He had learned more about understanding young people than when Ellen White had had to counsel him a decade earlier about how to relate to the students at South Lancaster.

Besides teaching at Avondale, Haskell served in a variety of administrative positions in Australia and served as Ellen White's agent to find and purchase property for the establishment of a number of churches. Then, after four years in Australia, the Haskells departed, along with General Conference president George A. Irwin, on August 5, 1899, for San Francisco. Back in the States, Haskell became Ellen White's eyes and ears as to what was happening in American Adventism. His letters kept her well-informed. He also became her voice to the American church, because she knew that he would share the theological discussions in her letters to him with his fellow leaders. She felt that it was providential that he returned to America at the time he did, once explaining to him that an angel in one of her dreams had said, "The Lord has a work for you to do in America."<sup>32</sup>

The late nineteenth century was a time in which holiness movements proliferated in American Christianity along with increasing interest in new conceptions of divine immanence—trends that affected Seventh-day Adventists. A variety of new ideas and practices began to circulate through the denomination, including faith healing, Pentecostal types of worship, and forms of pantheism. Perhaps the most prominent theological heresy in Adventism was what became known as the "holy flesh" movement. Among other things, it taught that the physical bodies of believers would become so transformed that they would not be able to die before Christ returned. Stephen Haskell went from camp meeting to camp meeting to confront the various theological aberrations. As he reported to Ellen White what he was encountering, she wrote back, "I am glad you are where

you are. Do not become discouraged. Meet the people with a courageous front.” Such church members, she said, were “confused. They are walking like blind men. Help them, for Christ’s sake, help them.”<sup>33</sup> The theme of his every camp meeting sermon was the “Third Angel’s Message.”<sup>34</sup>

But Haskell was dealing with his own personal struggles. For many years he had fought against depression and self-doubt, especially during the years Ellen White was in Australia. She wrote him many letters of spiritual counsel and comfort. Although he eventually believed that he had overcome the bouts of depression—and his correspondence seems to confirm that—she recognized that they remained a constant threat and continued to counsel him to avoid anything that might again trigger the depression and despondency.<sup>35</sup>

## Urban Evangelism

As the United States increasingly urbanized, Ellen White urged the church to expand its evangelism from its traditional targets of small towns and villages to the nation’s major cities, particularly New York. In response, the 1901 General Conference session officially asked the Haskells to work in the New York metropolis. At the time, the large city had only four Adventist churches, two in Manhattan and two in Brooklyn. Two were ethnic (German and Scandinavian) and the other two English-speaking. Vowing to “work among all classes of people” in the highly diverse city, the couple rented a sixth-floor suite of rooms at 400 West 57<sup>th</sup> St., a few blocks from the southwest corner of Central Park. Assembling a team of seven, they conducted a Bible instructor training school and began giving Bible studies to their apartment-house neighbors. Eventually the staff grew to twenty that included home-care nurses, Bible and cooking school instructors, and young people who sold books and magazines on the streets. The program combined instruction in health and nutrition with doctrinal teaching. Completely self-supporting (it only cost the local conference \$60, the first month’s rent on the apartment headquarters), the project was the closest example of the kind of urban evangelism that Ellen White had been calling upon the church to conduct for many years.<sup>36</sup>

Because of prejudice from white people who would stay away from the meetings if blacks attended, Haskell began holding separate sessions for the latter. In late 1902, he organized the first black Adventist church in New York City.<sup>37</sup>

The Haskells were not the only Adventist evangelists active in New York City. A younger man, E. E. Franke, had been doing evangelism there since the 1890s. He had greatly impressed Ellen White, and she felt that he was particularly suited for large-city evangelism. But his flamboyant personality created friction with the Haskells, though the two men had previously worked well together in Vermont. Franke spent large amounts of money on promotion and advertising and preached in what some church leaders regarded as a theatrical style. Haskell was much more frugal (having found ways to cut expenses and obtain inexpensive or even free promotion) and much more low-key in his presentations. Eventually the tension between the two men reached the point that Ellen White had to intervene, even visiting New York City in an attempt to calm the situation. The two men

eventually labored in separate parts of the city. Unfortunately, Franke later became alienated from church leaders and ultimately left the denomination.<sup>38</sup>

The New York experience set a focus for the Haskells for the next twelve years. They conducted major evangelistic series during these years in Nashville, Tennessee; San Bernardino and Oakland, California; and Portland, Maine.

Urban evangelism was just one more manifestation of how Haskell's life had become one of ceaseless evangelism, whether one-on-one personal interactions or through series of formal meetings. Always seeking to thoroughly immerse his converts into church teaching and life, he did not believe in short or quick evangelistic programs, but was willing to take the time to ensure that people knew what they were joining. As a result, it was widely recognized that his converts had a much higher retention rate.

## In the American South, then California

Having worked in New England, California, England, Europe, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, at the turn of the century Haskell turned his attention to a new region, the American South. He would spend several years working out of Nashville, Tennessee, often in concert with Ellen White. As previously noted, in his early life Haskell had followed the example of his New England compatriots and worked at a wide variety of jobs before he began full-time denominational employment. He thus gained a vast range of experience and a self-confidence that enabled him to shift back and forth between official church positions and more independent roles.

This practical versatility became especially valuable in the South. Adventism's first, tentative steps into the region lacked the backing of funds and other resources that had aided its growth elsewhere, necessitating the development of new approaches. Haskell and Ellen White began to establish a program of self-supporting entities under the umbrella of the Nashville Agricultural and Normal Institute (later Madison College) and its related institutions. At this time, Haskell declared that he and Hetty believed that they had a "calling to train workers to be self-supporting."<sup>39</sup>

Haskell's last post as a conference president was that of the California Conference, a position that Ellen White had strongly urged him to accept. Before he retired from the presidency, he had developed the plans that would break the large conference into several smaller ones. He organized the new entities along economic lines (such as regions based on agriculture or emerging oil fields), climate zones (ministers who did not like hotter climates would often try to get transfers to the cooler San Francisco Bay area), and available forms of transportation (California as yet had few good roads and most travel was still by railroad).<sup>40</sup> One of his last duties was to oversee the 1911 constituency session that divided the existing conference into three now ones: the North California-Nevada Conference, the Central California Conference and a restructured California Conference.

## The “Daily” Controversy and the Role of Ellen White

Haskell had accomplished much for the church and had often been an innovator, as with his development of the tract societies and exploring methods to establish more effective evangelistic outreach, especially in the varied cultures of the mission fields. As is often the case, though, in later years he became more conservative, particularly in certain areas of theology and how he viewed the role of Ellen G. White. He also became uncomfortable with the ideas of younger leaders such as W. W. Prescott.<sup>41</sup> Reflecting the growing influence of fundamentalism and its emphasis on verbal inspiration that was spreading through American Protestantism in the first decades of the twentieth century, he resisted new understandings of certain theological points, and encouraged others to do the same. This was especially true with regard to the new interpretation of the “daily” in Daniel 8 that differed from the interpretation given by Ellen White decades before in the book *Early Writings*.<sup>42</sup>

Although Haskell believed that he was defending Ellen White’s prophetic role, her son and other church leaders did not see it that way. William C. White told Haskell that some denominational leaders “feel that one of the most serious difficulties in holding their brethren loyal to the Testimonies is the fact that a few men of age and experience insist upon pressing on them the theory of verbal inspiration which Mother does not stand for, which the General Conference does not stand for, which my father [James White] never stood for. Some have expressed the opinion to me that the extreme and extravagant positions taken by a few men, including yourself, are doing more to bring the shaking over the Testimonies than any other element in the work.”<sup>43</sup>

With Ellen White’s death in 1915, Haskell’s close and decades-long relationship with her came to an end. Haskell preached at her funeral service in Battle Creek, Michigan. Mingling comfort for fellow church members and evangelism for the many non-Adventists present, he emphasized a resurrection that was more than the return of a vague spirit. Her works in life would not only live on after her, but she would be restored to those who loved and knew her in all her true and unique individuality.

Despite the fact that Hetty Haskell was nearly a quarter century younger than Stephen Haskell, he still outlived her. She died, apparently of cancer, on October 21, 1919. Besides their shared involvement in evangelism, she had particularly aided him in his publishing activities. Not long after her death he abandoned them.<sup>44</sup>

As the 1922 General Conference session honored Haskell along with several other surviving denominational pioneers, the fundamentalist forces that he had encouraged during the “daily” controversy were working to remove A. G. Daniells as General Conference president, and the denomination increasingly reflected the fundamentalist mind-set seen in contemporary American Protestantism.<sup>45</sup>

After the 1922 General Conference, Haskell’s health rapidly declined, forcing him to enter Paradise Valley Sanitarium. He died in National City, California, on October 9, 1922.<sup>46</sup>

## Contribution

Haskell's broad and practical background enabled him to institute programs and administrative approaches that greatly expanded and strengthened the denomination during its first century, especially in the areas of missions, publishing, education, and personal ministries. Many of his contributions continue to aid the church. Unfortunately, the controversies fueled by his advocacy of the Millerite position on the "daily" and his defense of a verbal inspiration position on Ellen G. White's writings, encouraged a developing fundamentalist streak in Adventist theological thought that has troubled the church to this day.

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White, W. C. to S. N. Haskell, January 15, 1913. Ellen G. White Estate Incoming Correspondence.

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## NOTES

1. Rowena Elizabeth Purdon, *That New England School* (South Lancaster, MA: College Press, 1956), 7.

2. S. N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, December 29, 1909, Ellen G. White Estate Incoming Correspondence.

3. On the extensive ways in which early Sabbatarian Adventism reflected its New England background and culture, see Gerald Wheeler, *S. N. Haskell: Adventist Pioneer, Evangelist, Missionary, and Editor* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2016), especially 33-60.

4. *Massachusetts, Marriage Records, 1840-1915*, "Stephen N. Haskell and Mary E. Howe," Ancestry.com, accessed September 14, 2019, <https://ancestry.com>.

5. Rowena Elizabeth Purdon, *The Story of a Church: Presented on the Occasion of the Diamond Anniversary of the Founding of the South Lancaster Seventh-day Adventist Church, April 28 & 29, 1939* (South Lancaster, MA: College Press), 8.

6. S. N. Haskell to J. L. Shaw, 1914, quoted in Donald R. McAdams, "Reflections of a Pioneer: An Autobiographical Letter of Stephen N. Haskell," *Adventist Heritage*, July 1974, 56. The article indicates the letter was written in 1914 but does not provide the month or day.
7. Ibid.
8. A later version of the tract published by the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association in 1862 has a note on the first page declaring, "This little work was placed in the hands of Eld. James White, in 1853, in tract form without date, bearing simply the signature 'Elihu.'"
9. S. N. Haskell, "How I Accepted the Sabbath," *ARH*, April 7, 1896, 217.
10. Ibid.
11. S. N. Haskell to W. W. Prescott, August 23, 1907, General Conference Archives. In the chronological outline of his life that he provided to the statistical secretary of the General Conference in 1918, Haskell wrote for the period 1854-1870, "For sixteen years labored as a self-supporting worker, organizing churches and helping to establish the work in New England." See E. L. Farnsworth, "Elder Stephen N. Haskell," *ARH*, December 14, 1922, 17.
12. Henry Ward Beecher wryly observed that "there is nothing that a New-Englander so nearly worships as an argument" (*Proverbs from Plymouth Pulpit*, 1887). The most common type of document surviving from the New England colonial period is that of court transcripts of law suits. Anyone reading early Adventist Church history will quickly realize that New England Adventists reflected their cultural heritage. Ellen G. White acknowledged that her husband, James, had always enjoyed a good "fuss" (see Ellen G. White to James White, September 2, 1871, Ellen G. White Estate).
13. *The Ellen G. White Letters and Manuscripts with Annotations*, vol. 1, 1845-1859 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2014), 570-571.
14. S. N. Haskell to E. G. White, December 24, 1910, Ellen G. White Estate Incoming Correspondence.
15. S. N. Haskell, "Self," *Review and Herald*, November 10, 1859, 198; "From Bro. Haskell," *ARH*, August 19, 1862, 95; "From Bro. Haskell," *ARH*, June 23, 1863, 31.
16. E. G. White to S. N. Haskell, November 8, 1880, Ellen G. White Estate.
17. S. N. Haskell to W. W. Prescott, August 23, 1907.
18. Ellen G. White, *Publishing Ministry*, 328-329; E.G. White to Brethren [G.I.] Butler and [S.N.] Haskell, June 20, 1881, Ellen G. White Estate.
19. In the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 1886 (16) and 1887 (15), no president is identified for the New England Conference but S.N. Haskell is listed on the executive committee for both years. Haskell is listed as president of the New England Conference, 1877-1887 in "Southern New

- England Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, rev. 1996.
20. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 1885 (12) and 1886 (16); "Northern New England Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, rev. 1996.
  21. See "California" in the "State Conferences" section of the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 1883-1887; and in the "American Conferences" section" of the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 1892, 1893; "California Conference" in *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 1908 (67-68); "California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Fortieth Annual Session," *Pacific Union Recorder*, March 2, 1911, 1-2; "California Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, rev. 1996.
  22. S. N. Haskell, "The Education of Missionaries," *Daily Bulletin of the General Conference* No. 3, March 9, 1891, 45.
  23. S. N. Haskell to E. G. White, January 13, 1907. Ellen G. White Estate Incoming Correspondence.
  24. Ella May Robinson, *S. N. Haskell: Man of Action* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1967), 52-53.
  25. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, 92, Ellen G. White Estate.
  26. J. H. Waggoner and M. E. Cornell, "General Meeting in New Ipswich, N.H.," *ARH*, November 22, 1870, 183.
  27. Robinson, 66.
  28. Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, January 4, 1887, Ellen G. White Estate.
  29. S.N. Haskell, "Mary E. Haskell obituary," *ARH*, February 20, 1894, 127.
  30. H. C. Lacey to A. W. Spalding, April 2, 1947, copy in author's possession
  31. S. N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, March 18, 1899, Ellen G. White Estate Incoming Correspondence.
  32. Ellen G. White to Brother and Sister Haskell, July 30, 1899, Ellen G. White Estate.
  33. Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, November 29, 1899, Ellen G. White Estate.
  34. H. H. Haskell to Ellen G. White, June 24, 1900, General Conference Archives.
  35. See Wheeler, 348-351.
  36. *Ibid.*, 231-237.

37. E. E. Franke and L. W. Graham, "Manhattan Borough, New York City," *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, October 22, 1902, 6; E. E. Franke, "New York City," *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, February 18, 1903, 5.
38. Wheeler, 237-242.
39. S. N. Haskell to W. C. White, October 5, 1907, Ellen G. White Estate Incoming Correspondence.
40. Wheeler, 292-293; S. N. Haskell to A. G. Daniells, January 19, 1911, General Conference Archives.
41. Gilbert M. Valentine, *W.W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 220-225, 231-235.
42. Wheeler, 250-255.
43. W. C. White to S. N. Haskell, January 15, 1913, Ellen G. White Estate Incoming Correspondence.
44. J. N. Loughborough, "Life Sketch of Mrs. S. N. Haskell," *ARH*, November 20, 1919, 24-25.
45. See George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 133-138; Michael Campbell, *1919: The Untold Story of Adventism's Struggle With Fundamentalism* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2019).
46. Farnsworth, 17.

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