

# Ruble, Wells Allen (1868–1961)

## BRIAN E. STRAYER

Brian E. Strayer, Ph.D. (University of Iowa). Strayer taught history at Jackson (MI) Junior Academy, the University of Iowa, Southern Adventist University, and Andrews University for 41 years. He has written 10 books, 120 scholarly and professional articles, 40 reviews and critiques in French and Adventist history and directed three Adventist heritage tours of New England. He writes a weekly column ("The Past Is Always Present") in the *Journal Era* and shares Adventist history at camp meetings, schools, and churches.

Wells Allen Ruble was a physician, college professor, college president, medical and health administrator, and medical superintendent.

## Early Life and Career

Wells Allen Ruble was born in May 1868 in Aetna, Illinois, to Isaiah Ruble and Maria H. Ruble. He was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1893 at the age of 25.<sup>1</sup> Between 1893 and 1897, Ruble attended Battle Creek College, preparing to become a physician. Following his graduation, he married Edith Davies in 1897. They had one daughter, Martha Jane.

In 1897, Wells and his wife, Edith, left for South Africa, where both of them taught courses at Claremont Union College (now Helderberg College) from 1897 to 1902. In 1901, Wells was appointed the third rector (president) of the college. The Rubles returned to the United States in 1902 so that Wells could study for the doctor of medicine degree at Dr. John Harvey Kellogg's American Medical Missionary College in Battle Creek, Michigan, where he graduated with a medical doctor degree in 1906.<sup>2</sup>

## General Conference Medical Leadership

Dr. Ruble was called to Washington, DC, in 1906 to serve as secretary of the Medical Missionary Council at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, which had recently been moved to Takoma Park, Maryland. Dr. Ruble also led the work of the Washington Branch Sanitarium on Iowa Circle in the District of Columbia as medical superintendent from 1907 to 1910. During this time, he was also a physician at the Washington Sanitarium in Takoma Park.

General Conference President Arthur G. Daniells became dissatisfied with the management of the Medical Missionary Council during Dr. Ruble's tenure and believed that the doctor was not doing enough to promote Adventist health and medical ideas in the wider sphere of camp meetings, Chautauquas, and temperance conventions.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Ruble was replaced as head of the council in 1910<sup>4</sup> but later called to lead the denomination's fledgling medical school in Loma Linda, California.

During his four years in Washington, DC, Dr. Ruble wrote a seven-page pamphlet titled "Liquor, Poverty, and Crime" and collaborated with W. A. Colcord and K. C. Russell in writing a 16-page tract, "Prohibiting the Liquor Traffic," which they presented to the District Committee of the United States House of Representatives in 1908.<sup>5</sup>

## College of Medical Evangelists' First President

In 1907, Dr. Ruble had heard Ellen White give a talk urging the church to establish a medical school in Loma Linda, California. He had serious doubts concerning the denomination's ability to finance and staff such a school. However,



**WELLS A. RUBLE**  
Secretary Medical Department, Re-elected.

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

he changed his mind three years later and was sent to establish the College of Medical Evangelists (now Loma Linda University) as a full-fledged medical school, serving as its first president from 1910 to 1914.

In 1911, Ellen White sent a letter to Wells A. Ruble, John A. Burden, and Irwin H. Evans, urging them to train more women in the medical profession, particularly as midwives.<sup>6</sup> During his tenure as president of the College of Medical Evangelists, Dr. Ruble was appointed once again to head the General Conference agency devoted to medical work, which was renamed the Medical Missionary Department, serving from 1913 to 1915.

## Service in England and New England

Following World War I (1914-1918), the Rubles went to England, where Dr. Ruble became the superintendent of the Stanborough Park Sanitarium (later renamed the Stanborough Nursing and Maternity Home) near London. During his nine years in England (1918-1927), he fostered the development of Adventist health institutions throughout Europe. Between 1917 and 1919, Dr. Ruble also wrote many articles and reports for the *Review and Herald* covering a wide range of topics such as: influenza, harvest ingathering, diet reform, general health principles, drugs, and the interrelationship of liquor, poverty, and crime.

Returning to the United States in 1927, Dr. Ruble served as medical superintendent of the New England Sanitarium (later the New England Memorial Hospital) in Stoneham, Massachusetts, from 1927 until his retirement in 1943 at age 75.

## Later Life

Between 1943 and 1957, Wells and Edith Ruble lived in Loma Linda, California. When the New England Sanitarium added a four-story brick building in 1952, it was named the Ruble Memorial wing to honor Dr. Ruble's 16 years of service. In 1957, following his wife's death, Dr. Ruble returned to Stoneham, Massachusetts, to live with his daughter, Martha Jane, whose husband, Dr. Roderick Carruthers, was a physician at the New England Sanitarium. Dr. Wells Allen Ruble died on June 26, 1961, in Stoneham at age 93.

## Contribution

Dr. Wells Allen Ruble's primary contributions to the Seventh-day Adventist Church lay in two areas. First, in the field of education, he served as a college professor and president at Claremont Union College in South Africa from 1897 to 1902 and at the College of Medical Evangelists in Loma Linda, California, from 1910 to 1914. Second, in the health field, he served as a medical and health administrator directing the Medical Missionary Council from 1906 to 1910 and the Medical Missionary Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists from 1913 to 1915 and was also the medical superintendent of Stanborough Park Sanitarium in England from 1918 to 1927 and of the New England Sanitarium in Stoneham, Massachusetts, from 1927 to 1943.

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## NOTES

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