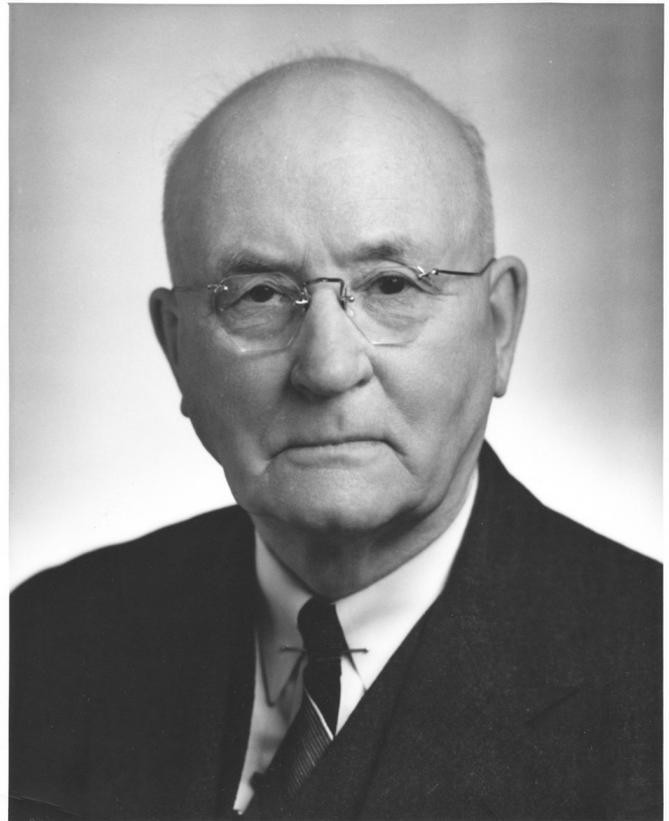


Sutherland, Edward Alexander (1865–1955)

ALBERT DITTES

Albert Dittes grew up in Portland, Tennessee, and graduated from Highland Academy. He attended Southern Adventist University and the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Dittes also earned a second Master's degree in journalism at Ohio University. He served in the pastoral ministry for twelve years. Dittes currently resides in his hometown where he is active in freelance writing and music, playing piano and organ for churches and teaching private lessons. He and his ex-wife have two grown children and five grandchildren.



Edward A. Sutherland.

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

Edward Alexander Sutherland was a teacher, college president, facilitator for the establishment of Adventist-laymen's Services & Industries (ASI), secretary of the General Conference Commission on Rural Living, organizer of ASI chapters throughout the North American Division, and founder of the school-sanitarium-farm model for Adventist education.

Early Life

Edward Alexander Sutherland was born on March 3, 1865, in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, to first-generation Seventh-day Adventist parents. His mother's large family became Seventh-day Adventists through attending evangelistic meetings, and his father joined the church several years later.¹

Education at Battle Creek and Early Career

Sutherland went to Battle Creek College in 1883 intending to enroll in the first pre-medical course taught by Dr. John Harvey Kellogg. The course did not materialize because only one other student enrolled. After taking some courses in English, Sutherland returned home to teach school. He started college again at Battle Creek in 1886, formed a lifelong friendship with brilliant young Irishman Percy Magan, and graduated in 1888.² Sutherland

married Sallie Bralliar and then, during the 1890-1891 school year, taught at the Adventist church school in Minneapolis, Minnesota.³

While teaching Bible at Battle Creek College in 1891, he told his Old Testament students that humans didn't start eating meat until after the flood. Because comparing the chapters before Genesis 9 with those that followed led him to conclude that eating flesh foods shortened life, he recommended that the college cafeteria not serve meat. This suggestion divided the school population with 25 of his students going vegetarian. The college administration resolved the situation by adding beans to the menu.⁴ This incident brought Sutherland to the attention of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, who had advocated vegetarianism for years without success.

W. W. Prescott, president of Battle Creek College and secretary of the General Conference education department, then sent Sutherland to preside over a new school under his jurisdiction in the state of Washington called Walla Walla College.⁵ The 1897 General Conference session delegates were so impressed by the industrial education program Sutherland started that the new president, George A. Irwin, selected him to serve at Battle Creek College as president with Percy Magan as dean.⁶ The two of them vowed to follow Ellen White's counsel as best they could, which led to conflict, unpopularity, and productivity.

Ellen White had said Adventist schools should be located on a farm, which Sutherland found difficult to establish in Battle Creek as the city had grown out to the school. He started by transforming a playing field into a garden and buying an 80-acre farm about a mile north of the campus. This attempt to combine college work with the cultivation of soil was unsuccessful mainly due to the detachment of the farm from the campus.⁷ He stopped granting degrees and wanted English, science, and bookkeeping to be taught solely from the Bible and Ellen White's writings. He also opened a broom factory and facilities for dressmaking, woodworking, carpentry, and printing for students to work their way through school and experience on-the-job learning.⁸

With agricultural education proving difficult in Battle Creek, Sutherland and Magan quietly started looking for a more rural location and found a suitable farm for sale along the St. Joseph River near Berrien Springs, Michigan. Following the recommendation of Ellen White, the 1901 General Conference session voted to move the college out of Battle Creek, and a site-selection committee chose to relocate it to the newly-found farm.⁹ Ellen White had also said that a sanitarium should be part of the school campus. Berrien Springs had the farm, but the board of directors would not allow the start of a sanitarium.¹⁰

Founding a School Complex in Madison, Tennessee

Sutherland, Magan, and M. Bessie DeGraw publicly resigned from their Berrien Springs positions at a contentious Lake Union Conference session on campus in May 1904. They decided to move south and operate a remote, rural school on their own in a region with a minimal Adventist presence. Ellen White told them they needed to establish themselves in an important center of influence and recommended that they locate to the site of a dilapidated farm in Madison, 12 miles from Nashville, Tennessee. The school started in earnest during

the fall of 1904 with 11 charter students agreeing to transfer from Berrien Springs to Madison.¹¹

Unlike his friend Dr. Kellogg, Sutherland did not put all his energy into one place but encouraged his students to go out and start self-supporting schools in the Southern states. Two of them started the first Madison extension unit in Cuba. Others went to various parts of Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi, and North and South Carolina. A few of these schools would later become conference academies. Before that, in 1908, their leaders started meeting annually in Madison for mutual encouragement and to share information. These meetings germinated the seeds of what became the Adventist-laymen's Services & Industries (ASI).¹²

Sutherland and his staff initially built their new enterprise around a farm with a sanitarium as part of their long-range plan. Some key donations made the opening of the Madison Rural Sanitarium in 1908 possible, and that brought Sutherland into the forefront of developing a medical school Ellen White had said the church should build at Loma Linda, California.¹³ The new Madison Rural Sanitarium needed physicians to attract patients. Percy Magan, a widower, had at that time married a former student, who was now a physician. One of their college friends, Dr. Newton Evans, joined their group to build a medical practice at the Madison Rural Sanitarium and teaching pathology at the University of Tennessee School of Medicine in Nashville.¹⁴

Dr. Evans felt he should accept a call to teach at the emerging College of Medical Evangelists in Loma Linda, California, established the year after Madison College, but he did not want to leave his Tennessee friends without an adequate physician base. Thus, he agreed to stay at Madison while Sutherland and Magan took the medical program he asked them to take. They spent the next four years attending medical school in Nashville. When Sutherland and Magan became properly certified to treat patients, Dr. Evans departed to California.

The medical school needed a teaching hospital in Los Angeles to become accredited, an expensive task. The board of directors selected Percy Magan to develop this campus. Magan had the ability but no money. The General Conference supported a fundraising effort but was slow to appropriate funds for Loma Linda. Sutherland had attracted the support of a wealthy donor in Montclair, New Jersey, named Lida Funk Scott. Her father, Dr. Isaac Funk, had cofounded the Funk & Wagnalls publishing company and left her a share in a million-dollar estate. She had become an Adventist at Battle Creek through Dr. Kellogg's influence during Sutherland's presidency at Madison College. Funk Scott wanted to help Madison College. Dr. Sutherland told her to support Loma Linda – particularly, their need for a teaching hospital – because Madison and its extension schools wouldn't survive without doctors.

Funk Scott complied and gave thousands of dollars to the College of Medical Evangelists – including \$30,000 to start the White Memorial Hospital – during the next few critical years of its infancy. The physicians' arrival steered Madison College into its golden age from 1920 to 1950. A 1937 *Reader's Digest* feature article brought the institution national acclaim and attracted many students willing to work their way through school in various campus industries, including the farm and sanitarium.¹⁵

Later Years

The success of the Madison extension schools inspired the General Conference leaders to train Adventist lay members to work in rural areas. Consequently, after Sutherland retired as president of Madison College, they chose him as secretary of the General Conference Commission on Rural Living to encourage Adventists to move out of the cities. As part of his work, Sutherland organized an ASI chapter in every North American Division conference. At the beginning, it mostly consisted of laymen affiliated with Madison and its self-supporting units but eventually broadened to include Adventist laypeople who owned businesses and wanted to use their money to advance the mission of the church. It now has chapters all over the world and attracts thousands of people to its annual convention.

Sutherland's first wife, Sallie Brallier Sutherland, died in 1952. He then married M. Bessie DeGraw, a longtime coworker, in 1954 and died at age 90 at Madison, Tennessee, on June 20, 1955.

Contribution

Edward Alexander Sutherland launched Walla Walla and Madison Colleges and established a campus that would later become Andrews University. He also had a part in accrediting the medical school at what is now Loma Linda University, basing his actions on principles he found in Ellen White's writings.

He also launched a great laymen's movement by training Adventist families to establish schools and sanitariums in the then-underprivileged Southeastern United States. The annual conventions of his self-supporting workers led to forming the international Adventist-laymen's Services & Industries (ASI), which now promotes marketplace witness in all parts of the world and has a major convention each year.

Edward Alexander Sutherland's school-sanitarium-farm model for institutions, which drew heavily on Ellen White's writings, had a powerful influence on Seventh-day Adventist education. Sutherland's views were controversial in some quarters at the time but shaped a number of institutions. Loma Linda University is a lasting legacy of Sutherland's influence, thanks to his encouragement of Lida Funk Scott to use her personal fortune to support Percy Magan in Southern California, which also resulted in many professional medical people focusing their work in the Southern Union Conference – a mission field in his time, but later the strongest union in the North American Division. Sutherland's industrial education program, kept alive by ASI, developed into one of the more significant lay movements in the history of the church.

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