

Loughborough, John Norton (1832–1924)

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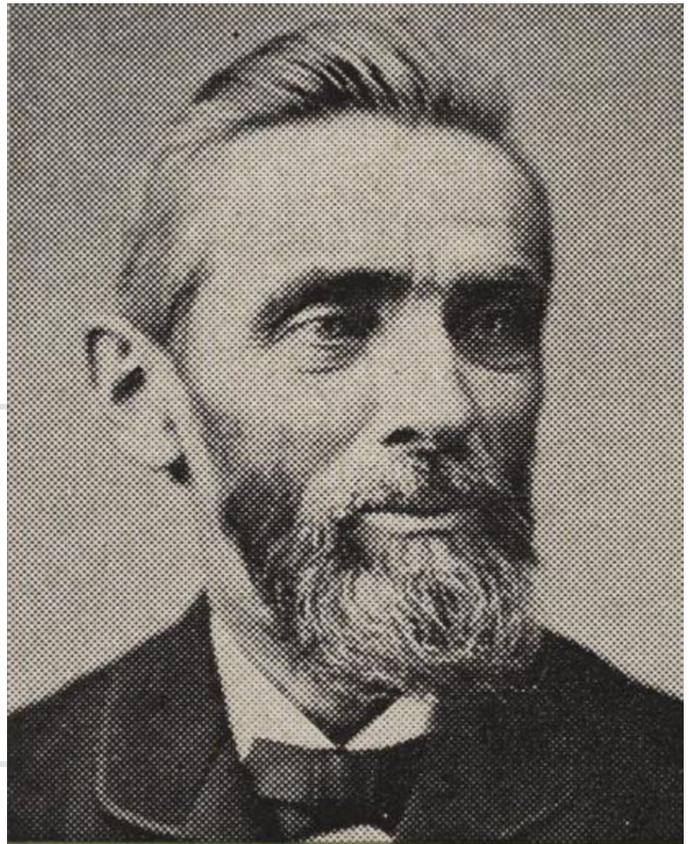
John Norton Loughborough's seventy-two years of ministry as a pioneering evangelist, missionary, author, organizer, and administrator had a major impact on the shaping Seventh-day Adventism.¹

Early Life and Education

Loughborough's ancestors, John and Hannah Loofbourrow, emigrated from England to America in 1684 and settled in New Jersey. By the early nineteenth century, their descendants, the Loofboroughs, moved to Victor Township in upstate New York.²

John Norton Loofborough was born on Main Street in Victor on January 26, 1832, the second son of Nathan Benson Loofborough (1802-1839), a skilled carpenter, cabinet-maker, and Methodist exhorter, and Minerva Norton (1801-1894), daughter of a wealthy local family. Together they had five children: William Kerr (b. 1827), Minerva Jane (b. 1829), John Norton (b. 1832), Eber C. (b. 1837), and Sarah Diantha (b. 1840).

Since John's grandfather and father were lay preachers in the local Methodist Episcopal Church (which they had erected in 1820), John received a thorough indoctrination in Methodist beliefs at home and in Sunday school, church services, prayer meetings, and singing classes. In addition, John attended two church-sponsored schools led by Miss Bibbins (Methodist) and Joseph Hollister (Presbyterian), where, in addition to reading, writing, and arithmetic, he learned to recite poetry and passages of Scripture.



J. N. Loughborough

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

In 1839 when John was seven, his father died of typhoid fever. Unable to provide for four children, Minerva sent John to live with his grandparents, Nathan and Sarah Loofborough, on their farm in East Bloomfield. During John's childhood, his grandparents taught him farming, carpentry, and blacksmithing skills. When the fieldstone District #10 School opened on Dryer Road in 1842, they sent John there to complete his elementary education. Since the secondary school in Canandaigua was too far away, John never received a high school education.

The Millerite Movement

In 1843 the Millerite evangelist James Barry held a series of meetings in Victor and Rochester which the Loofboroughs attended. Convicted by Barry's message of the imminent return of Christ, the entire family became Millerite Adventists.

In 1844 at the age of twelve, John peddled Millerite literature around the area, for which he experienced verbal and physical abuse. When the Methodist Episcopal Church expelled the Loofboroughs, John's grandfather built a small meetinghouse directly across the street where his family and other Adventists worshiped, enduring harassment by the Methodist pastor's son.

In 1845 John moved in with his older brother William and his wife Eliza to work in William's blacksmith and carriage shop. After attending Advent Christian meetings in Rochester in 1848, John was baptized in the Erie Canal. In January 1849, three weeks before his seventeenth birthday, he preached his first sermon in Kendall's Corners.³

Known as "the boy preacher," Loofborough, traveling about in ill-fitting, borrowed clothes, faced the taunts of bullies and opposition from the clergy. To pay for his self-supporting ministry, John painted houses, did carpentry work, and sold Arnold's Patent Sash Locks (window locks), which were manufactured in Rochester.

Marriage and Conversion

While attending Advent Christian meetings in Rochester, John met Mary J. Walker (1832-1867), a seamstress and dressmaker. When they married at nineteen on October 14, 1851, John, for reasons unknown, changed the spelling of his surname from "Loofborough" to "Loughborough." Within months, his mother and siblings did the same. For the next 73 years he would sign his name "J. N. Loughborough."

Discovering in 1852 that many of his Advent Christian parishioners were attending meetings sponsored by Sabbath-keeping Adventists at 124 Mount Hope Avenue in Rochester, John joined them on September 26, carrying in his pocket a list of puzzling texts. He recognized the speaker, J.N. Andrews (1829-1883), as someone he had seen in a dream; to Loughborough's amazement, Andrews explained all the texts on his list in the exact order he had written them down. After witnessing the faith healing of Harvey Cottrell from malaria and Oswald Stowell from pleurisy; seeing Ellen White in vision condemn an adulterous man hundreds of miles away in

Michigan; and observing the exorcism of a Mrs. Riggs, John and Mary Loughborough joined the Sabbatarian Adventist group in Rochester that fall.⁴ His conscience convicted after failing to sell sash locks for weeks, John joined the Review and Herald press staff and for several months, he punched holes in signatures so that the pamphlets and books could be stitched together.

Early Ministry in New York and Michigan

In the late fall and winter of 1852-53, Hiram Edson (1806-1882) took Loughborough on a preaching tour of the Southern Tier (northern Pennsylvania and southern New York), “breaking him in” (as Edson defined ministerial apprenticeships). Then in January 1853, Loughborough joined James and Ellen White and Merritt E. Cornell (1827-1893) in Michigan, helping them combat the dissident Messenger Party. Impressed with Loughborough’s talents and zeal, White and Cornell ordained him to the gospel ministry.⁵

That summer, Cornell and Loughborough embarked on a successful three-month preaching tour of Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. During 1854 Loughborough teamed up with Joseph Bates in Ohio and the Whites in Michigan. In July 1854 he and Cornell held the first tent meetings sponsored by Sabbatarian Adventists in Battle Creek, Michigan, where they pioneered the selling of 35-cent packets of tracts. John, believing his Methodist baptism invalid, had Cornell rebaptize him in the Kalamazoo River.⁶

While John preached in the Midwest, Mary still lived in Rochester, New York. But Ellen White, in a letter sent in the winter of 1854-1855, rebuked Mary’s critical, materialistic attitude and urged her to join John’s ministry in Michigan, which she did. Loughborough, combating Age-to-Come Adventists (a rival offshoot from Millerism) in New York, Michigan, and Wisconsin, needed his wife’s support. In 1855 Loughborough also helped build the first of many Adventist meetinghouses in Battle Creek in which he would preach.

Ministry across the Midwest

Discouraged by a lack of money (during the winter of 1857-1858 John had received only three ten-pound cakes of maple sugar, a peck of beans, one ham, half a hog, and four dollars in change⁷), the Loughboughs and thirty other Adventists moved to Waukon, Iowa in October 1856, where John earned a living by farming and doing construction work. In December, however, at revival meetings in which Ellen White presented the Laodicean message, Loughborough confessed his faults and promised to return to the ministry fulltime.

During 1857 he joined the Whites, Elon Everts, Josiah Hart, A. S. Hutchins, and J. H. Waggoner on preaching forays across Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Indiana. Among his converts were future ministers John G. Matteson, Moses Hull, and George I. Butler.⁸

With \$400 donated by friends, the Loughboughs bought a house on Wood Street in Battle Creek. Here they reared their children Delmer, Mary, and Teresa. In 1857 Loughborough helped build the second Adventist

meetinghouse in Battle Creek; he designed the unique windows and spoke at its dedication in November. During 1858-1859 he traveled with the Whites through New York, Pennsylvania, and New England, preaching, baptizing converts, and conducting interviews with former Millerites and early Sabbath-keepers which he would use in his books *Rise and Progress* (1892) and *Great Second Advent Movement* (1905).

Back in Battle Creek in February 1859, John and Mary hosted a Bible study session in their home at which the six participants developed the Systematic Benevolence plan of tithing annual increase (not income) to support itinerant ministers. When the infants Teresa Loughborough and Herbert White died in January and December 1860, respectively, the two families consoled one another and Ellen placed moss on Teresa's grave.

Role in Church Organization

Although Loughborough had only an eighth-grade education, he read his Bible through every year (76 times during his lifetime). He also taught himself some Greek, French, German, and phonography (shorthand, which he used in his diaries). In addition, his hundreds of articles in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* demonstrate that he read widely in history, biography, politics, and science.

As the movement adopted "Gospel Order" in the 1850s and 1860s, church leaders relied on Loughborough's wisdom and experience in forming various organizations. In June 1860 he served on a council of ministers and laymen to divide the preaching territory in Michigan. In May 1861 he assisted in steering the new Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association through the legislative process of becoming a joint stock company in Michigan and then served as its first auditor.

In October 1861, he helped establish the Michigan Conference, wrote its constitution (which became a model for other state conferences), was elected its president and went on to serve for five terms (1863-1868), and served on the Michigan Conference Committee for many more years. In May 1863 he participated in organization of the General Conference as a member of the committee that drew up its constitution, and served on its executive committee most of the rest of his life.

Between 1863 and 1865, Loughborough and Moses Hull traveled throughout New England forming local churches and organizing a conference there. In the 1860s Loughborough formed scores of local congregations into churches and wrote the standard covenant by which they became organized. He then went west, where James White relied on him to bring order in Iowa (against the Marion Party led by B. F. Snook and W. H. Brinkerhoff) and in Wisconsin (against the Age-to-Come proponents J. M. Stephenson and D. P. Hall). Loughborough met both threats with a novel idea: holding state-wide camp meetings – at Pilots Grove, Iowa in June 1866 and in Wisconsin in the summer of 1867 – to bring spiritual revival and unity.⁹

Role During the Civil War

As president of the Michigan Conference (which included northern Indiana) during the American Civil War (1861-1865), Loughborough faced many challenges. To combat rumors that Adventists were pacifists or pro-slavery advocates, he allowed army officers to use his evangelistic tent as a recruiting station during the day; in return, soldiers guarded the tent during meetings and protected it from vandals at night. Loughborough also prayed with departing soldiers at railroad stations.

In August 1864 he, George Amadon, and General Conference President John Byington sent a petition to Michigan Governor Austin Blair explaining the Church's position on the fourth and sixth commandments and requesting noncombatant status for Adventist men inducted into the army. Blair granted their request.¹⁰ Loughborough joined Byington in calling for days of fasting and prayer in 1864 and 1865 that God would bring an end to the war.

In the mid-1860s, Loughborough teamed up with Moses Hull, Daniel Bourdeau, and Stephen Pierce to strengthen the Adventist cause in the New England Conference. When Hull embraced spiritualism in September 1864, Loughborough was devastated. Overwork and depression sent him (with eight other ministers who wryly called themselves "the Seventh-day invalid party"¹¹) to Dr. James Caleb Jackson's sanitarium "Our Home on the Hillside" in Dansville, New York for six weeks of treatments and rest.

Health Reform Advocate

Responding to Ellen White's urgent call for a church-sponsored sanitarium, Loughborough took the lead in raising funds for the Western Health Reform Institute (later Battle Creek Sanitarium). In the spring of 1867, he and nine other men signed the Articles of Association legally incorporating the institution for thirty years (1867-1897); two weeks later the stockholders elected Loughborough president of its board.

While he did not become editor of its new paper, *The Health Reformer*, Loughborough wrote many of its articles regarding proper diet, hygiene, and health. He also compiled the first Adventist medical book, *Handbook of Health* (1868), which excerpted material from the writings of Drs. R. T. Trall, James Caleb Jackson, Sylvester Graham, and others, and supported the popular idea of vitalism.

John and Mary Loughborough had become strict vegetarians in response to Ellen White's health reform vision of June 6, 1863. However, this did not prevent Mary from dying on June 24, 1867 of scrofula and the effects of a bad fall; she was just thirty-five. John sublimated his grief in even more work, serving on a General Conference committee to compile a new Adventist hymnbook. Recognizing, however, that he could not rear two small children by himself, on June 12, 1868, John married Maggie A. Newman (1840-1875) who had also grown up in Victor, New York.

Ministry in California

In 1868 Loughborough was elected treasurer of the General Conference for one year. But in June of that same year, in response to James White's appeal for missionaries to labor in California, John, Maggie, and Delmer Loughborough, with Daniel and Marion Bourdeau, boarded a ship in New York City, beginning a three-week journey to San Francisco via Central America. Following a series of events that both Loughborough and Bourdeau interpreted as divine miracles, the two men established five churches at Petaluma, Windsor, Santa Rosa, Healdsburg, and Sebastopol. Despite being attacked as Mormons, facing opposition from local clergy and spiritualists, and battling epidemics of malaria, within three years Loughborough, Bourdeau, and Merritt Cornell had baptized 130 Adventists.

In 1871 Loughborough was elected president of the new California State Association; two years later in February 1873 he was elected president of the California Conference. As president, Loughborough used redemptive discipline with West Coast Adventists who danced, wore jewelry, drank wine, and resisted church authority, as well as with his colleague Merritt Cornell when he committed adultery with Sarah Harris in 1871. In addition, Loughborough created such innovations as laying out camp meeting grounds in grids with named streets (at Windsor in 1872); holding musical conventions (1872); introducing pump organs into churches and camp meetings (1873); and using lighted transparency signs at evangelistic meetings (Oakland in 1875).

James and Ellen White called upon Loughborough to serve as manager of new publishing enterprise in Oakland that began issuing *Signs of the Times* as Adventism's West Coast periodical in June 1874. He also served as the first president of the Pacific Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association (later called Pacific Press) when it was organized in 1875.

On March 24, 1874, John's wife second wife Maggie died at age thirty-five from tuberculosis she had contracted from a woman in her care. On December 7, 1875, John married Annie Driscoll (1839-1907), also from New York. As president and secretary respectively of the California Tract and Missionary Society, John and Annie placed literature racks in railroad stations; reported visiting 5,000 homes in San Francisco and Oakland with 50,000 handbills in 1876); printed evangelistic newspapers; and introduced children's meetings at camp meetings. In 1875 at San Francisco the Loughboroughs and George Drew (1835-1905) launched a ship ministry (distributing tracts aboard sailing ships) and sent the first box of Adventist literature to Pitcairn Island. Eventually the entire island population became Adventists.

In the spring of 1877 the Loughboroughs helped start the first Biblical Institutes—three weeks of intensive Bible studies, lectures, and discussions led by James and Ellen White, Uriah Smith, and J.H. Waggoner, in addition to Loughborough. John was also closely involved with initiating the Rural Health Retreat (later St. Helena Sanitarium), established in 1878 to replicate the health ministry of Battle Creek Sanitarium.

During 1877 and 1878, Loughborough and Isaac D. Van Horn (1834-1910) expanded West Coast evangelism to the north and east of California, into Oregon, Washington, and Nevada, where John was elected president of the

Seventh-day Adventist Association of Nevada.

Ministry in Great Britain and Europe

In December 1878 the General Conference sent the Loughboroughs to Southampton, England, where they established their headquarters in Ravenswood Villa, a seventeen-room rented mansion at 252 Shirley Road. In 1879, with the assistance of Maude Sisley (1851-1937), William Ings (1835-1897), and George Drew (1835-1905), they started Sunday and then Sabbath schools and held tent and hall meetings among the Seventh Day Baptists, Wesleyan Methodists, Plymouth Brethren, and Christadelphians. The Loughboroughs worked in Britain until 1883.

Loughbrough conducted evangelistic meetings with his usual vigor though without conspicuous success, and laid the foundations for effective literature ministry. Through his memberships in the Vegetarian Society, Anti-Narcotic League, Temperance Alliance, Christian Temperance Missionary Society, Band of Hope, and Anti-Vaccination Society, Loughborough cultivated friendships with upper middle class Anglicans and working-class Salvation Army members. Soon the staff at Ravenswood were mailing out 300 copies of *Signs of the Times* every week. Although progress was slow, by 1883 Loughborough and his colleagues had baptized 100 converts in England alone.¹²

From September 8 to 17, 1882, fifty delegates, including Loughborough, J. N. Andrews, John and William Drew, John G. Matteson, and Stephen Haskell, convened the General European Conference at Tramelan (near Basel), Switzerland. The delegates established the European Conference, for which Loughborough, with Haskell, and Andrews wrote the constitution. They also made plans to increase the sale of periodicals (like the American *Signs of the Times*, the Scandinavian *Tiderness Tegn*, and the French *Les Signes des Temps*) throughout Europe.

Return to California

In 1883 the General Conference called the Loughboroughs back to the United States. John was not immediately elected to any administrative positions and engaged in full-time evangelism, held revivals in Adventist churches, spoke at camp meetings, and opposed the threat of Sunday Laws in California. But in 1884 he was elected president of the Upper Columbia Conference (Oregon, Washington, Idaho) and president of the Rural Health Retreat board at St. Helena, California. Beginning in June 1885, he edited the Retreat's new bi-monthly paper, *The Pacific Health Journal and Temperance Advocate*, writing many of its articles on medical, health, hygienic, and dietary topics.

In 1886 Loughborough was elected president of the board for Healdsburg College (the forerunner of Pacific Union College), and the following year was reelected president of the California Conference (served 1887-1890). In this capacity, he began holding workers' meetings a week prior to camp meetings; created age-specific

Sabbath schools for children at camp meetings; and convened periodic ministers' councils. During his final two years as California Conference president, Loughborough was also elected president of the California Health and Temperance Society and was appointed to the board of the Pacific Press Publishing Company. By 1890 he had helped to establish press distribution centers (called "branches") in New York City, Mexico, Australia, and Great Britain. One of his final acts was to launch the new ship *Pitcairn* on July 28, 1890, dedicating its crew for missionary work among the islands of the Pacific Ocean during the next decade.

Back to the Midwest

In 1890, however, Loughborough was elected superintendent of General Conference District no. 5 (the Southwest of the United States) and president of the Nebraska Conference, where both of the other executive officers were women –Minnie Hennig, secretary, and Mary Beatty, treasurer.¹³ The following year he was elected vice-president of the General Conference Association.

In addition to his administrative and preaching duties, John, with the capable assistance of his wife Annie, researched, wrote, and typed four drafts of a manuscript for his book *The Rise and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*, published in September 1892. Over the next thirteen years, *Rise and Progress* would become the first denominational history textbook at the secondary and college levels.

From 1893 to 1895, Loughborough served as superintendent of District no. 3 (the Midwest) and president of the Illinois Conference. In addition, he was elected president of the board for the Seventh-day Adventist Education Society and was appointed to the General Conference Committee on Finance, the International Tract and Missionary Society executive committee, and the Board of Foreign Missions. In Illinois, Loughborough began work among the Hispanic and Chinese populations.

In October 1894, John lost both his son Delmer, who died of typhoid fever at 30, and his mother Minerva Rowley, who died of old age at 93.

Work in the Southwest

In 1895, when John was again elected superintendent of District no.5, the Loughboroughs moved to Topeka, Kansas. Before they had unpacked, he gave the dedicatory address to 180 students at the new Keene Industrial School (today Southwestern Adventist University). But he also faced Adventists in Arkansas who still practiced the 1859 Systematic Benevolence Plan of tithing annual increases rather than the 1879 giving plan of tithing annual income. Another challenge came from those who objected to his creating indexes to Ellen White's writings because doing so, at least to their minds, made them reference books instead of devotional study guides. In 1897 he and Annie also helped prepare a new German edition of his book *Rise and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*.

First European Tour

In 1896-1897 the General Conference sent Loughborough on a good will tour of Adventist institutions in Europe. During seven months he traveled over 1,150 miles, attended 372 meetings, gave 273 sermons and talks to 16 different language groups, and made 70 visits to Adventist families in England, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands. Accompanied by leaders of the Adventist work in Europe such as Ellet J. Waggoner, Louis R. Conradi, and H.P. Holser, Loughborough attended ministerial councils and camp meetings, dedicated churches and schools, baptized new converts, and sent regular reports of his activities to the *Review*. Along the way, he collected colorful leaves, shells, books, coins, and visited many Adventist sanitariums, schools, publishing houses, and churches. His presence strengthened the faith of scores of new converts; his advice helped make institutions more efficient; his genial humor and work ethic promoted a positive bond between European and American church leaders.

Minister without Portfolio

Although Loughborough retired in 1897 at age 65, he did not remain inactive. After his return to the United States, he served on the board of the new Haskell Home for Orphans in Battle Creek. Royalties from his many books and tracts enabled him to loan the General Conference \$500 when, due to the Panic of 1893 and ensuing depression, General Conference President George Irwin declared that the treasury was empty and the staff was living from hand to mouth. John's diaries show that he and Annie always operated in the black. They tithed not only their income but also the value of all gifts and hospitality extended to them. In addition, John gave thank offerings every year to mark both the day of his birth and the day of his conversion to Sabbath-keeping Adventism.

After 1897, following Ellen White's recommendations, Loughborough did not accept any administrative positions. Instead, he became a "minister without portfolio," traveling assiduously around the United States. In 1897-1898, he visited 13 states, covered 13,500 miles, attended 200 meetings, and preached 222 sermons at camp meetings, institutes, schools, and sanitariums.

During the late 1890s, by voice, pen, and giving, he supported the work among African Americans in the South and the progress of the Oakwood Industrial School (now Oakwood University), founded in Huntsville, Alabama, in 1896. His diaries show that he regularly prayed for specific black students there, subscribed to the school's newspaper, and financially supported two female students. In addition, he generously supported black Adventist canvasser James Buster in Louisville, Kentucky, and black evangelist Lewis Sheafe in Washington, D.C. A strong admirer of female preachers in the Salvation Army, he likewise encouraged, and went on the camp meeting circuit with, Adventist evangelists like Sarepta Myrenda Irish Henry, whom he called "Our Lady Henry," and Ida A. Higbie.

In 1899-1900, the General Conference once again sent Loughborough on a fifteen-month European good will tour. This time his wife Annie and his granddaughter Fannie Ireland accompanied him to England. From there he traveled to Wales, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, and Northern Ireland, accompanied by William W. Prescott, Drs. Daniel and Laretta Kress, Louis R. Conradi, Henry Schuberth, and Elmer E. Andross.

Active Retirement

After his return to California, Loughborough completed his books *Last-Day Tokens* (1898), a study of end-time prophecies, and *The Prophetic Gift in the Gospel Church* (1901), a historical survey of the gift of prophecy from biblical to modern times. At the 1901 and 1903 General Conference sessions, Loughborough strongly supported reorganizing the church and forming union conferences, but he opposed the congregationalist arguments advanced by Ellet J. Waggoner, whose cutting remarks about Ellen White at the Redhill, England meeting in February 1900 had deeply offended him.

Although he briefly served as assistant pastor at the Oakland Seventh-day Adventist Church, he remained largely free to attend camp meetings and constituency meetings. Valuing his administrative expertise, church leaders consulted him when the Southern California Conference and the British Conference were formed in 1902 and when the North Pacific Union was established in 1904.

Enjoying a regular income, in 1903 he began returning a second tithe and advanced the General Conference another loan of \$500 at five percent. In the summer of 1903, at age 71, he traveled 6,400 miles, attended 175 meetings, and gave over 100 sermons and talks. The following year, he and Oscar Tait built a house from the cellar to the roof in Mountain View, California. This was the first home Loughborough had personally owned and his first home with electricity and a telephone. He built it so well that it survived the 1906 San Francisco earthquake with minor ceiling cracks and still stands today (2017).

During his retirement, Loughborough also submitted monthly articles to such church papers as the *Review and Herald*, *Signs of the Times*, *The Bible Training School*, and the *Pacific Union Recorder*. Dozens of these articles were excerpted or republished whole in all of the North American unions' periodicals, and by papers in Great Britain and Australia.

In 1905 the General Conference asked him to update his *Rise and Progress* textbook so that it could be used to reach non-Adventists. Once again, with Annie's help at the typewriter, the couple spent five months researching, writing, and editing a manuscript that was fifty percent larger than the 1892 book and re-titled *The Great Second Advent Movement*, although it followed the same narrative format and apologetic tone.

Two years later, he finished *The Church, Its Organization, Order and Discipline* (1907) which became the unofficial church policy manual in Adventist churches across the United States until 1931 when the official *Church Manual* was published.¹⁴ Responding to requests, in 1907 Loughborough also created a recipe for communion bread by

adapting the ingredients for unleavened bread used by Jews during the Passover meal.¹⁵

On May 31, 1907, Annie Loughborough died at age 67 from pericarditis. Shortly thereafter, John moved in with his daughter Mary and her husband John Ireland, living with them first in Healdsburg and later (1910) in Lodi, California.

Adventists around the world wanted to hear Loughborough preach and tell stories about Ellen White and early Adventist history. So with Ellen White's support, Loughborough in 1908-1909 embarked on a sixteen-month global good will tour during which he traveled 47,500 miles by land and sea, attended 500 meetings, and preached 352 times in churches, missions, schools, and sanitariums in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Northern Europe, and Great Britain.

Loughborough's tour of Australia was remembered for the experiences he related about "pioneering days" and "the place of the Spirit of Prophecy in this message" and how these revived confidence in "God's leadership and the final triumph of the Advent movement."¹⁶ In South Africa, John preached to black, Afrikaner, and British audiences.¹⁷ In Europe, he visited the Roman baths, the Temple of Diana, the Coliseum at Nîmes, and the chateaux of Louis Napoleon, Mme. de Staël, and Arouet de Voltaire.

Defender of the Faith

Loughborough returned to the United States just in time to become embroiled in the debate over the meaning of "the daily" in Daniel 8:11-13 and 11:31. He took the side of those pioneers such as Stephen Haskell, Uriah Smith, and George Butler who cited the writings of William Miller and Ellen White in associating "the daily" with Roman paganism that had been "taken away" the papacy. The "scholars," such as W. W. Prescott and Louis Conradi, however, argued that the "removal of the daily" pointed to the papacy's substitution of penance and the Eucharist for Christ's death at Calvary and His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.¹⁸ Despite repeated requests from Ellen White for both sides to cease speaking and writing about this arcane subject, Loughborough refused to comply. Instead, when *Review* editor Prescott declined to publish his polemics, Loughborough in 1910 sent monthly doctrinal articles to Hetty Haskell's paper *The Bible Training School*. Eventually this tempest-in-a-teapot blew over, but Loughborough never altered his position.

In 1911 Loughborough, now in his eightieth year, was placed on the General Conference's new sustentation plan (a retirement program paying between one and two dollars a week), much to his annoyance. Refusing to sit idle, he accepted nearly every invitation to tell Adventist pioneer stories at elementary schools, academies, and colleges on the West Coast. Despite growing deafness in 1915, he also continued preaching at local churches and camp meetings and promoting the practice of giving birthday thank offerings for mission overseas. Seeing himself as the defender of the faith, Loughborough also spent large amounts of time combatting critics of the denomination such as Dudley M. Canright, Anna Garmire, Albion F. and Edward S. Ballenger, A.T. Jones, and John Harvey Kellogg, and he carried on an active correspondence with many of them.

In his spare time, he also updated his typed indexes to Ellen White's writings, including all her published books and 16,000 pages of her articles in the *Review and Herald* and *Signs of the Times*. Loughborough also compiled one list of 100 of White's fulfilled predictions; another list of the 3573 promises he found in the Bible; and yet a third list of the 2936 curses he found in the Holy Book. When Ellen White died on July 16, 1915, Loughborough also participated in two of her three funerals, the first at Elmshaven, her home near St. Helena, and the second at the Richmond, California camp meeting.

Final Years

When Loughborough's son-in-law, John Ireland, accepted the position of General Conference auditor in 1916 and he and Mary moved to Takoma Park, Maryland, Loughborough decided not to go with them. Weakened by pneumonia and influenza he had contracted in 1914 and 1915, he rented a room on the fifth floor of St. Helena Sanitarium on September 27, 1916. Here for the next seven years, Edith Barnes, a single schoolteacher-nurse, cared for him. Barnes took the aged pioneer for nature walks, read to him, did his laundry, and helped him with his correspondence. She also accompanied him to the 1918 General Conference session in San Francisco, where he was carried to the platform in a rocking chair and addressed the delegates in a shaking voice.

Loughborough combated the teachings of Margaret Rowen and Edward Ballenger by mailing hundreds of copies of his books, pamphlets, and sermons every month and by writing letters to concerned church leaders and members. To mark his 88th birthday in 1920, Pacific Union College artist Harriet Sherrill painted his portrait. In the fall of 1922 he attended his last General Conference session, addressing the delegates in San Francisco from his rocking chair for twenty minutes.

On May 21, 1923, Loughborough fell on the stairs on his way down to dinner and wrenched his back. Despite five weeks of hot fomentations and bed rest, he did not recover. Friends and family members secretly paid his remaining bills, and when Edith Barnes discovered him tearing up old papers, she rescued his 60 diaries (covering most of the years from 1859 to 1924) and saved them for posterity.

John Norton Loughborough died on April 7, 1924, in St. Helena Sanitarium at age 92. Following a funeral jointly led by former General Conference president Arthur G. Daniells and Milton C. Wilcox, book editor at the Pacific Press, he was buried beside his wives Maggie and Annie in the St. Helena Cemetery (Mary Loughborough was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery in Battle Creek, Michigan). Prior to his death, he had finished reading his Bible through for the 76th time; he was probably the only Adventist pioneer who had read every issue of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* from November 1850 to April 1924.

Contributions

Although he was only five feet four inches tall, John Norton Loughborough cast a lengthy shadow over the nineteenth-century Adventist Church. As an evangelist he pioneered the Adventist message in new territories such as the Midwest, the West Coast, and the British Isles, and sent the first Adventist literature to Haiti and Pitcairn Island. As an organizational innovator, he played key roles in incorporating local churches, the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, the Western Health Reform Institute, the Michigan Conference, the General Conference, the British Union Conference, and the Pacific Union Conference. As a progressive administrator, he served as president of conferences in Michigan, California, Nevada, Upper Columbia, Nebraska, and Illinois, and as a superintendent of multi-state districts in the Midwest and Southwest.

Throughout his life he served on the boards (sometimes as chair) of the General Conference, Pacific Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, the California Tract and Missionary Society, the California Sabbath School Association, the British Tract and Missionary Society, St. Helena Sanitarium, Healdsburg College, the Foreign Mission Board, the International Tract and Missionary Society, the Seventh-day Adventist Education Society, and the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, to mention a few.

Saturation evangelism in urban centers, a ship ministry, Biblical Institutes, communion bread recipes, the ministerial reading list (31,000 pages), workers' meetings, canvassers' and teachers' institutes, and the Chicago Bible School are only a few examples of his tireless innovation. Loughborough also deserves recognition for advancing Adventist music through the General Conference Hymnbook Committee and by promoting singing schools, children's choirs, and church organs.

Through voice and pen for half a century he effectively combatted opposition from Case and Russell's Age-to-Come views in Michigan, Stephenson and Hall's Messenger Party in Wisconsin, Snook and Brinkerhoff's Marion Party in Iowa, and much later, the dissidents Anna Garmire, Anna Phillips, Margaret Rowen, Dudley Canright, A.T. Jones, and E. S. Ballenger. Among his hundreds of converts were such future church leaders as John Matteson, Moses Hull, Nathan Fuller, George I. Butler, William Healey, Abram La Rue, and the African-American evangelist Charles Kinney.

Finally, in his books *Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists* (1892) and *The Great Second Advent Movement* (1905), Loughborough pioneered a narrative-apologetic style of presenting Adventist history that shaped the interpretations of influential twentieth-century writers such as Arthur W. Spalding, LeRoy E. Froom, F.M. Wilcox, and C. Mervyn Maxwell. In many respects, therefore, Loughborough deserves to be remembered as the first historian of Adventism as well as the last of the Adventist pioneers.

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NOTES

1. Though some particulars are more specifically documented below, this article is based on the author's biography *J.N. Loughborough: The Last of the Adventist Pioneers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2014).
2. Milton R. Lufborrow, "A History of the Loofbourrow, Loughborough, and Lufburrow Families" (Tampa, FL: typewritten manuscript, 1952), 1-2, 55.
3. J. N. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: General Conference Association of the Seventh-day Adventists, 1892), 148-149.
4. J.N. Loughborough, "From Bro. Loughborough," *ARH*, October 28, 1852.
5. Loughborough's obituaries in church periodicals give the date June 18, 1854; see Andrew Nelson, "J.N. Loughborough obituary," *Pacific Union Recorder*, June 19, 1924, 6; A. G. Daniells, "Elder J.N. Loughborough," *ARH*, June 19, 1924, 17. However, other evidence supports Loughborough's claim that he was ordained in 1853; W. A. Spicer wrote that Loughborough showed him an ordination credential dated 1853 in "Still New Burden Bearers Came Pressing In," *ARH*, June 6, 1940, 9. The fact that Loughborough was not only preaching but baptizing in the winter and spring of 1853 makes it probable that his ordination came in January of that year; see Strayer, *J.N. Loughborough*, 83.
6. J. N. Loughborough, "Sketches of the Past – No. 96," *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 28, 1910, 1.
7. J. N. Loughborough, "Sketches of the Past – No. 106," *Pacific Union Recorder*, October 10, 1910, 1.
8. J. N. Loughborough, "Sketches of the Past – No. 104" and "No. 105," *Pacific Union Recorder*, September 1, 1910, 1, and September 8, 1910, 1.

9. The 1868 camp meeting in Wright, Michigan, has long been considered the first in the denomination history. For evidence in support of the 1866 gathering in Pilot Grove, Iowa, as the first "general camp meeting," see J. N. Loughborough, "Report from Bro. Loughborough," *ARH*, September 11, 1866, 117 and Strayer, *J.N. Loughborough*, 158-159, 167.
 10. J. N. Loughborough, "Sketches of the Past," *Pacific Union Recorder*, March 21, 1912, 10.
 11. Editorial note, *ARH*, September 19, 1865, 8.
 12. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress*, 336; Harry Leonard, "Evangelizing in Tough Territory", in D. N. Marshall (ed.), *The Story of Seventh-day Adventists in the British Isles 1902–1992* (Grantham: Stanborough Press, 1992), 2–3.
 13. "Nebraska Conference Proceedings," *ARH*, October 28, 1890, 669.
 14. Walter R. Beach, "Why a Church Manual?," *ARH*, August 30, 1979, 12.
 15. "Bread for Communion," *Missionary Worker*, March 28, 1906, 56.
 16. "Death of Pastor J.N. Loughborough," *Australasian Record*, June 2, 1924, 2.
 17. J. N. Loughborough, "Report From Elder J.N. Loughborough," *ARH*, September 23, 1909, 17; Strayer, *J.N. Loughborough*, 415, 422.
 18. Strayer, *J.N. Loughborough*, 418-419; Gilbert M. Valentine, *W.W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), 215-217.
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