



Graysville Sanitarium, Graysville, Tennessee, U.S.A.

Photo courtesy of Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.

Graysville Sanitarium

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Initially called the "Southern Sanitarium," Graysville Sanitarium was the first Adventist health facility in the American South. It was located thirty-two miles north of Chattanooga on Queen and Crescent Road. The property was located between Waldon's Ridge and Black Oak Ridge on the south side of Lone Mountain.

Graysville became an important Adventist center dubbed "The Battle Creek of the South."

At the Southern Union meeting held July 2-4, 1901, a resolution was passed to establish a Medical Missionary Nurses' Training School in the American South under the auspices of the International Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association. It was recommended that this school and health facility should be located a short distance from the Southern Training School or Graysville Academy.¹

A piece of land located about half a mile from the Graysville Academy was selected by W. C. White. White visited Graysville in December 1901 and shared that his mother, Ellen White, believed there should be a sanitarium in that community.² A. Van Tassel from Battle Creek went to Graysville and purchased 25 acres for the purpose of starting such a sanitarium. The Southern Union Board accepted the gift of land at the base of Lone Mountain. Contributions were solicited from church members and the community in Graysville "who have reached deep down into their pockets for gold dollars and greenbacks with which to build this temple of health, almost the first institution constructed for this purpose in the whole South."³ Doctor Otis Hayward, Elder Smith Sharp (chairman of the Sanitarium Board), and Brother Jacobs worked to build the main sanitarium building. In the meantime, Dr. Hayward, with two sibling physicians, Drs. M. M. and Elsie Martinson conducted medical treatments in two cottages.⁴

The Southern Union leadership decided that they would take a no debt approach, so construction of buildings only continued so long as funds were available. When funds ran out, work on buildings would stop. The lack of resources meant that it took nearly three years to complete the main building. By 1905, the main building, 32 by 64 feet, was "nearly finished," and "several outbuildings—a laundry, engine-house, etc." were completed. Preparations were made to take in patients.⁵ The sanitarium was located on the side of a mountain adjacent "a beautiful spring of water" which more than supplied all the requisite water.⁶ J. H. Kellogg stated of its location: "There are few more picturesque valleys in the whole South than that of Graysville and vicinity."⁷ In 1906, an allocation of \$1,500 was set aside to help relieve the indebtedness of Adventist institutions, especially those in the American South, including Graysville Sanitarium.⁸ A serious lack of funds for this self-supporting institution meant that they frequently had to solicit money. At the time, the American South had lower real wages and higher poverty than other parts of the United States, making it difficult for a sanitarium to generate sufficient income to meet operating expenses. Yet, they carved out this new institution "amid the underbrush and wild growth" surrounded by "hills, ravines, and terraces."⁹ By the spring of 1906, the verandas on the main building were sealed and a second coat of paint was placed on the building enabling it to open.

The scenery is unexcelled. We have a four-story building, with verandas around the first three stories. The building will accommodate fifteen to twenty patients, and a corresponding number of helpers. Our land consists of about forty-five acres, most of which is on the mountainside. However, there is enough lowland for a good garden, and on the mountain we are starting an orchard.¹⁰

The sanitarium had its own electric plant to supply its power. It had two bathrooms equipped with “electric-light cabinets and a full line of hydropathic appliances.” They had a static machine, an actinic lamp, and X-Ray!¹¹ By 1907, they had a nursing class of seven students.¹² In 1907, Graysville Sanitarium was listed as an official Seventh-day Adventist sanitarium.¹³

By 1908, a lake was excavated by the lower spring and a “natural cave near the building” proved to be “an attractive feature” that they hoped to develop.¹⁴ The nearness of the Southern Training School helped them grow their nursing program. The second year they had 14 students spread over two nursing classes.¹⁵

By 1909, the main building was supplemented by several cottages scattered across the grounds. The four lower stories of the building had verandas. The basement had the treatment rooms. The first floor had the dining room, kitchen offices, and parlor; the remaining floors had accommodations for thirty to forty patients. Every morning and evening the staff had worship services. There was an additional worship service for patients.¹⁶

A lack of patronage and an inability to stay financially solvent contributed to the closure of the sanitarium. The institution appears for the last time in the 1914 *Year Book*. In late 1914, Dr. Martinson was listed as one of the institution's owners and medical superintendent when church leaders discussed how to deal with its financial losses. The Sanitarium closed for a time in 1915, and finally, on April 3, 1916, church leaders voted to sell the institution. Dr. C. C. Patch purchased it and re-opened the sanitarium as an independent health institution!¹⁷ Dr. Patch fell behind on payments for the property to the union, leading the Southeastern Union Conference Association to vote to dispose of the property on December 23, 1917. Any remaining furniture was donated to Southern Junior College, which had relocated to Collegedale, Tennessee. Various attempts were made to revive it by individual church members, but these attempts proved unsuccessful. The main sanitarium building burned in 1931.

Medical Superintendents: Otis Hayward (1902-1903); Albert Carey (1904); M. M. Martinson (1904-1907); A. J. Hetherington (1908-1909); A. I. Lovell (1909-1911); A. L. Gregory (1912); O. M. Hayward (1913-1914); M. M. Martinson (1915).

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. Milton T. Reiber, *Graysville: Battle Creek of the South* (Collegedale, TN: The College Press, 1988), 25.
2. Ellen G. White to R. M. Kilgore, June 11, 1902, Ellen G. White Estate. She wrote: "As regards the Graysville Sanitarium, I am glad that you have secured a location on the hillside. Time will demonstrate the value of having your sanitarium at considerable distance from other [school] buildings."
3. J. H. Kellogg, "Medical Missionary Work in the South," *The Medical Missionary*, January 1903, 21.
4. Ibid.
5. "Graysville Sanitarium," *ARH*, March 23, 1905, 18.
6. Ibid.
7. J. H. Kellogg, "Medical Missionary Work in the South," *The Medical Missionary*, January 1903, 21.
8. "The \$150,000 Fund," *ARH*, December 13, 1906, 7.
9. L. A. Hanson, "An Easy Way to Help," *The Welcome Visitor*, April 3, 1907, 1.
10. M. M. Martinson, "Graysville (Tenn.) Sanitarium," *ARH*, February 21, 1907, 21.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. "Seventh-day Adventist Sanitariums," *ARH*, August 22, 1907, 22. It also appears for the first time in the annual *Adventist Yearbook*, see *1907 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination: The Official Directories* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, [1908]), 136.
14. L. A. Hansen, "Graysville (Tenn.) Sanitarium News Items," *ARH*, February 27, 1908, 20.
15. Ibid.
16. W. A. Ruble, "The Graysville Sanitarium," *ARH*, February 10, 1910, 19.

17. "Graysville Sanitarium," *Field Tidings*, February 2, 1916, 8; "Institutional," *Field Tidings*, April 5, 1916, 2; "Graysville Sanitarium and Benevolent Association," *ARH*, March 16, 1916, 21.

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