Orton, Jonathan Trumbull (1810–1866)

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Jonathan Trumbull Orton was an early convert to Sabbatarian Adventism in Rochester, New York. A “hackman” (who drove a carriage for hire), he was brutally murdered in 1866. It was he who introduced his close friend, John N. Loughborough, to Sabbathkeeping Adventist meetings, which convinced the two of them to join the Advent
movement in 1852.\(^2\)

Jonathan, his wife Caroline (c. 1813-1873), and their son and daughter, Alva and Drusilla,\(^3\) were well acquainted with James and Ellen White. They often hosted Adventist meetings in their home, and Jonathan frequently transported the Whites in his carriage.\(^4\) However, during the time the *Review* was published in Rochester (1852-1855) the Ortons and several other families became estranged from the Whites, feeling James White had been too severe in his criticism of J. N. Andrews.\(^5\)

The family, along with J. N. Loughborough, moved to Waukon, Iowa, in 1856\(^6\) and there, during the Whites' visit, the Ortons and Whites were reconciled.\(^7\) Within a year the Ortons moved back to Rochester.\(^8\)

In December, 1865 the Ortons joined others in three weeks of daily prayer sessions for the recovery of James White from a major stroke. Three months later, Orton was bludgeoned to death in his barn.\(^9\) The murder occurred less than a year after the death of President Abraham Lincoln, and J. N. Loughborough reported his friend's murder in the *Review* as "The Assassination of Bro. Orton." The perpetrator was never found.

Years later, J. N. Loughborough recalled Mrs. White warning the company that had prayed for James White that Satan was angry with them and "determined to make a powerful attack upon them."\(^10\) But Orton's murder was likely a revenge killing. Orton had befriended a fellow hackman, Horace Paddock. The two had a falling out over a chest of drawers Paddock had given to Orton, then tried to recover. Lawsuits followed, Orton won them, but Paddock vowed revenge. Paddock had an airtight alibi for the time of the murder, but it is thought he hired an unknown perpetrator.\(^11\) In his 1866 report of the murder Loughborough noted that Orton feared violence at the hands of Paddock.\(^12\) But years later, when Loughborough linked the murder to Ellen White's warning, he claimed Orton had no knowledge of who might want to harm him.

**SOURCES**


"Shocking Murder!" *Rochester Daily Union and Advertiser*, March 9, 1866.


White, Ellen G. *Testimony for the Physicians and Helpers of the Sanitarium*, 1879

White, Ellen G, "Our Late Experience," *Adventist Review*, February 27, 1866.


**NOTES**


4. Alva H. Orton (c. 1845-1917) never became a Seventh-day Adventist, although his obituary appeared in the *Review* without any mention of his faith. J.C. Stevens, "Alva H. Orton obituary." *Adventist Review*, March 29, 1917, 21; Drusilla Orton Lamson (c. 1831-1919) married J.B. Lamson (1829-1870) and after his death became matron of Battle Creek Sanitarium. Publicly reprimanded by Ellen White (*Testimony for the Physicians and Helpers of the Sanitarium*, 1879, 77), she eventually left the church (according to D. M. Carright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced* [New York, N.Y.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1889], 64) and her obituary does not appear in church papers.? 

5. Ellen G. White, "Our Late Experience," *Adventist Review*, February 27, 1866, 98.? 


