

# Walker, Eli S.

## (1825–1907)

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### DEWITT S. WILLIAMS

DeWitt S. Williams, Ed.D. (Indiana University) lives in Maryland after 46 years of denominational service. He pastored in Oklahoma, served as a missionary in the Congo (Departmental and Field President), and Burundi/Rwanda (President, Central African Union). He served 12 years in the General Conference as Associate Director in both the Communications and Health and Temperance Departments. His last service was Director of NAD Health Ministries (1990-2010). He authored nine books and numerous articles.

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Eli S. Walker was the first and the fourth treasurer of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Born in Pennsylvania in December 1825, Eli Walker married Eliza Noble (1832-1916), also of Pennsylvania, in 1848. They had four children: Marietta, known as Etta (1850-1946), Enanora, known as Nora (1852-1929), Clara (1856-1860), and Arthur (1871-1950).<sup>1</sup> Around 1856 the Walker family migrated to southern Iowa.

As a young man, Eli had been a member of the Brethren Church and then a member of the Methodist Church. He and his wife united with the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Knoxville, Iowa, in 1858.<sup>2</sup> It seems probable that their decision to join the church resulted from attending one of the two series of tent meetings held in Iowa in 1858—the first conducted in Lisbon by J. H. Waggoner and the second in Iowa City conducted by James White.<sup>3</sup> In a letter published in the *Review*, Eli and Eliza expressed their profound grief over the loss of their four-year-old daughter Clara on May 19, 1860, along with a prayer that they remain faithful “so that we can meet her at the resurrection morn.”<sup>4</sup>

Later in 1860 James White called Walker from Iowa to Battle Creek, Michigan, to assist with business operations of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association (later named *Review and Herald*), which became the church's first legally incorporated institution on May 23, 1861.<sup>5</sup> Walker served for nine years as secretary and treasurer (sometimes one or the other and sometimes both).



Eli S. Walker

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

At the organizational meeting in Battle Creek on May 21, 1863, Walker was elected the first treasurer of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, with fellow officers John Byington, president, and Uriah Smith, secretary.<sup>6</sup> Walker held the treasurer's office for two years: May 21, 1863 until May 17, 1865. Then, in 1869 he was elected as the fourth treasurer of the General Conference<sup>7</sup> and served for a year (from May 18, 1869 to March 15, 1870).

Walker was never ordained as a minister and thus served in the capacity of a General Conference officer as a layman. Since he was already the treasurer at the publishing association for much of this time, it was natural for him also to take on similar responsibility with the General Conference. Probably his work at the Review and Herald was more time-consuming than setting up and keeping the books of the nascent General Conference. Walker later served as an officer of the Michigan Conference as well as the clerk of the Battle Creek church.

In 1865, Eli Walker's daughters, Nora and Etta, though only teenagers, became, along with Josie Lunt, the first female typesetters at the denominational publishing house. James White hired them for this skilled task after observing girls setting type during a trip to Philadelphia. Nora would marry Egbert C. Loughborough, a nephew of John Loughborough, and the foreman of the bindery, and Marietta would marry Homer Aldrich, pressroom foreman, and son of Jotham Aldrich, who was the president of the SDA Publishing Association for a time and served as chairman of the first General Conference session.<sup>8</sup>

Eli Walker became deaf in later life "which very greatly impaired his social privileges, he being naturally of a sociable and happy disposition."<sup>9</sup> In 1905 Eli and Eliza moved to Mountain View, California, to live in the home of their son-in-law and daughter (E. C. and Nora Loughborough), and that is where both went to their rest: Eli S. Walker died on September 16, 1907, at age 81; and Eliza N. Walker died on January 12, 1916, at age 83.<sup>10</sup>

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## SOURCES

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Tait, A. O. "Eliza N. Walker obituary." *ARH*, March 2, 1916.

Walker, E. S. and Eliza. "From Br. & Sr. Walker." *ARH*, June 5, 1860.

Wilcox, M. C. "Enanora S. Loughborough obituary." *ARH*, October 31, 1929.

## NOTES

1. J.O. Corliss, "Eli S. Walker obituary," *ARH*, October 31, 1907, 23; "Eliza Noble," *AncestryLibrary*, accessed January 18, 2022, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/family-tree/person/tree/24845563/person/5074836267/facts>; E.S. Walker and Eliza Walker, "From Br. & Sr. Walker," *ARH*, June 5, 1860, 22.
2. A.O. Tait, "Eliza N. Walker obituary," *ARH*, March 2, 1916, 22; Corliss, "Eli S. Walker obituary."
3. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. edition (1996), s.v. "Iowa Conference."
4. E.S. Walker and Eliza Walker, "From Br. & Sr. Walker."
5. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. edition (1996), s.v. "Review and Herald Publishing Association."
6. "Report of General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists," *ARH*, May 26, 1863, 205.
7. "Business Proceedings Of the Seventh Annual Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists," *ARH*, May 25, 1869, 173.
8. M.C. Wilcox, "Enanora S. Loughborough obituary," *ARH*, October 31, 1929, 29; R.F. Cottrell, "Homer M. Aldrich obituary," *ARH*, March 16, 1933, 21.
9. Corliss, "Eli S. Walker obituary."
10. Tait, "Eliza N. Walker obituary."

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