



Bralliar Hall at Madison College, 1930s.

Photo courtesy of Center for Adventist Research.

Madison Institutions

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The school-farm-sanitarium complex called the Nashville Agricultural and Normal Institute, renamed Madison College in 1937,¹ started in 1904 in Madison, Tennessee, 12 miles northeast of Nashville, as a serious application of the educational reforms Ellen White advocated.

That meant making the teaching of agriculture and medical care part of the educational curriculum and campus life. Students initially going there hoped to start similar institutions in the then-underprivileged Southeastern

United States upon completion of their training. To accomplish these objectives, the founders operated independently, yet with close ties to the organized Seventh-day Adventist Church, teaching the students how to support themselves by pursuing an education.²

Origin of the School

The roots of Madison go back to the first Adventist college started in Battle Creek, Michigan. E.A. Sutherland and Percy T. Magan roomed together there as students and became lifetime friends. In the late 1890s, Sutherland as president and Magan as dean wanted to follow Ellen White's inspired directive that "every school should be on a farm."³

This plan did not work out in Michigan. Training students in agriculture in Battle Creek was difficult because the city had encompassed the school. Purchasing a farm about a mile north of the campus proved unsatisfactory for preparing the students for mission service through soil cultivation. Sutherland and Magan followed Ellen White's counsel at the 1901 General Conference session and moved the college to a farm for sale near Berrien Springs, Michigan, naming it Emmanuel Missionary College. There they had a farm and school, but Ellen White had also said that a sanitarium should be connected to a school wherever possible.⁴ They included a sanitarium on the campus master plan, and even invited a physician to join the staff, but the board of directors refused to approve this undertaking.⁵

At a contentious May 1904 biennial session of the Lake Union Conference in Berrien Springs, Edward A. Sutherland, Percy T. Magan, and M. Bessie DeGraw resigned their positions and declared their intention to implement their educational reforms in the South.⁶

After the meeting, Ellen White traveled to Nashville, Tennessee, to visit her son, James Edson White, who lived there and operated the Southern Missionary Society, ministering to Black people. She then telegraphed Sutherland and Magan to come and explain their plans to her. They did so, and she told them that to operate in a remote area of East Tennessee or Western North Carolina was wrong. Adventists needed a strong presence in Nashville because it was a center of influence, and a farm for sale near Madison she had heard about would be an ideal location to train people for mission service in the underprivileged South as well as overseas.⁷

After much soul searching they arranged to purchase the Ferguson Farm, then returned to Berrien Springs to raise money and find students willing to go south to prepare themselves to start rural schools for poverty-stricken people in an area still recovering from the Civil War.⁸

They would have to begin with developing the farm, devoting half of the workday to agricultural work and the other half to the classroom. Their inspiration came from the Ellen White recommendations to dignify manual labor along with intellectual development. and from the philosophy of General Samuel Armstrong in developing Hampton Institute in Virginia and of his most famous graduate, Booker T. Washington, who believed newly-freed

African Americans needed, in addition to academic learning, a knowledge of useful practical labor.⁹

The characteristic feature of initial Madison education reform consisted of three-week short courses of practical classes taught four times during the year, combining textbook work and demonstrations. A short course in carpentry began work on two four-room cottages. Another taught how to make furniture in the cabinet shop, with students turning out a library table and several chests of drawers. The agriculture class taught about garden products and proper soil and plant preparation, then put these principles into practice. In addition, students learned livestock raising and blacksmithing. Sewing courses taught how to make dresses, aprons, and undergarments. Other domestic science classes included cooking and dietetics.¹⁰ Madison also taught its students how to meet the various conditions of rural community life with hygiene and sanitation, as well as simple, rational methods of treatment for the more ordinary diseases.¹¹

“The program of the Nashville Agricultural and Normal Institute is an adaptation of the school program to the normal activities of the farm and the home,” reported E.A. Sutherland in his 1916 annual report. That meant maintaining “a healthful social life on the farm conducive to physical, intellectual, and spiritual development.” Instead of growing one crop, the goal was to have the farm produce as much as possible of the food the school community consumed.¹²

Fully training its students to start self-supporting schools in the South required teaching them to support themselves while in school. Or, as Dr. Sutherland put it, “These students must receive here in the training school lessons in independent thought, in leadership, and in the power of initiative.”¹³

The students thus met their school expenses by work and participated in “a system of self-government which puts every student on his honor and encourages him to assist every other member of the institution in maintaining a high standard of Christian integrity and conduct.” The students and teachers worked together to handle everyday issues of school and farm management.¹⁴

Such a program required teachers not only to be expert in the classroom subjects but also skilled in the industrial arts. When Madison started, the staff found that to make it possible for students to work their way through school, they must work for \$13 a month (\$352.12 in today's dollars).¹⁵ Campus industries enabling the students to earn their keep included farming, gardening, fruit-raising, beekeeping, dairying, stock and poultry raising, tending sheep and goats, carpentry, tool-repairing, food-factory work, cooking, baking, laundering, sewing, tailoring, weaving, printing, nursing and staffing the Sanitarium.¹⁶

“I can sum up all the activities of the place by saying that all the work is carried on by the student body and its teachers,” said E. A. Sutherland in a 1920 annual report to the Southern Union constituency. “We hire no outside help. We build our own shelter, lay the brick, build the chimneys, the foundations, and the cement walks; raise the food, cook it, manufacture it for the market; train cooks for schools and cafeterias and send them out to

open establishments of their own. The only vegetarian cafeterias in the Southern Union Conference are conducted by Madison educated people; the same is true of city treatment rooms and rural sanitariums, of which there are three in this Union Conference."¹⁷

The Sanitarium

While the Madison pioneers had to start out by developing the farm, they always intended to add a sanitarium to their enterprise. While looking over the Ferguson farm property before purchasing it, a group of the pioneers and friends sat down under a grove of trees to eat a picnic lunch. "Sister White looked around and said, 'This would be a good location for your sanitarium.'"¹⁸ In the summer of 1905, a Nashville man suffering with some disease came to the campus saying he wanted a quiet place to recuperate with Battle Creek kind of treatments. While they had no place to take care of him, he insisted on staying, so they curtained off a portion of the front porch of the main house for him. He eventually recovered, went home and "gave the credit of his recovery to the healthful diet, the quiet surroundings and the cheerful atmosphere of the school farm."¹⁹

Serious planning for the sanitarium began in 1906, and donations from various friends made possible the dedication of the Madison Rural Sanitarium in June 1908, located on the very spot recommended by Ellen White, with business manager Nellie Druillard, aunt of E.A. Sutherland, serving as the sanitarium's manager and director of nurse's training.²⁰

Need for Doctors

In launching their sanitarium, the Madison pioneers found what James and Ellen White had discovered in starting a similar institution in Battle Creek 40 years before, namely that for the place to succeed they needed physicians. Dr. Lillian Magan, wife of Percy Magan, initially met this need. Later Dr. Newton Evans, a prominent physician, moved his family to Madison and served part time as medical superintendent for two years while also teaching at a medical school in Nashville.²¹

But Ellen White had also said that the denomination should operate a fully-accredited medical school, and one, called the College of Medical Evangelists, was being developed in Loma Linda, California. That school also needed physician teachers and called on Dr. Evans to join their faculty. He believed that he should accept that call and suggested that Sutherland and Magan study medicine in order to take his place at Madison. After much discussion, they both enrolled in the University of Tennessee medical school in Nashville in 1910 and completed their degrees in 1914.²²

Dr. Evans would not be the only sacrifice Madison would make to benefit Loma Linda and thus secure a source for needed doctors. The 1915 Fall Council of the General Conference, meeting at Loma Linda, voted to fully accredit the medical school, which meant developing a Los Angeles campus with a teaching hospital owned and

controlled by the school in a population center school. This would cost \$60,000 (\$1.625 million in today's dollars).²³ A week later, the CME board of directors elected Dr. Percy T. Magan dean of the Los Angeles division, his assignment being to develop this new campus.²⁴

To pay for this new hospital, a group of prominent Adventist women led by Mrs. S.N. (Nettie) Haskell volunteered to raise the needed money and name it in honor of Ellen G White. These ladies worked hard at fundraising throughout 1916, with the *Review and Herald* and the union papers in North America publicizing their campaign, but by October they had not raised enough, and the Fall Council discontinued their committee.²⁵

Loma Linda then called on Madison for its greatest sacrifice. The 1917 Fall Council voted to appropriate up to \$20,000 towards the hospital, if Magan could come up with the first \$30,000. In desperation he went to his friend Sutherland, asking if \$30,000 (\$639,850.78 in today's dollars) pledged to Madison could go to Loma Linda instead. Feeling the great need of Madison for doctors, Sutherland agreed. He and Magan presented this proposal to his major donor, Lida Funk Scott, heiress to the Funk and Wagnalls fortune. While hesitant at first, she gave this money to Dr. Magan. Church and community dignitaries dedicated White Memorial Hospital in Los Angeles on April 21, 1918.²⁶

From his position in Los Angeles, Dr. Magan encouraged students from Madison at the medical school to return South after they finished their training. That satisfied the need of Madison for giving its students sound medical training.²⁷

The hospital and medical program at Madison grew. The sanitarium started out in 1908 as a 12-room cottage, and key additions in 1927 and 1938 made it into a distinctive medical institution. Nellie Druillard initially managed the sanitarium and trained the first few nurses. The school of nursing turned out the first recorded graduates in 1910 from a one-year program. The nursing program became a two-year course in 1915 and added a third year in 1919.²⁸ The school of nursing functioned as a major part of the college program until the school closed in 1964. Other health-related programs offered through the years included X-ray, medical technology, medical records, dietetics, physical therapy, and anesthesia.²⁹

Making Work-Study Possible

"The medical work of Madison as represented by the Sanitarium is a factor of no small importance in the training of workers," Sutherland reported to a 1920 Southern Union Conference session. "Students come in contact with the outside world in a way that helps them build character and which is better for them than to remain wholly with our own people. At Madison, practically everyone has a nurse's training or the elements of that training in our courses in simple treatments, accidents and emergencies, etc. We are also following the plan of teaching men to cook and women to use tools."³⁰

As the college developed, about 20 other sources of on-campus employment emerged. Madison Foods, begun with a food factory purchased in 1917, produced vegetarian products sold commercially for many years. The cafeteria, store, press, bakery, garage, laundry, and heating plant also helped the students earn their expenses.

³¹ The sanitarium also brought in money that subsidized the school.

Madison College grew to maturity from the 1920s through the 1940s. The Tennessee State Department of Education recognized Madison as a junior college in 1922, and the Tennessee College Association accepted it as a senior college in 1933.³²

Later Years

World War II took away many of Madison's male students, and many of the postwar attendees trained for personal careers--many of them medical--rather than to start self-supporting schools. The sanitarium and hospital building began aging during the 1950s, with parts of the original 1908 building still part of the structure. Due to subsidizing the college, the sanitarium could not keep up its physical facility to meet state codes. Sanitarium earnings that had subsidized the college had to pay for a new structure, and that forced a closing of the college in 1964.³³

Madison Reproduces Itself

When the Madison pioneers began their work in 1904, their goal was to train families to go out and start similar institutions in other parts of the underprivileged highland South. George I. Butler, president of the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, summed up their mission: "These workers have fully declared to us that they do not expect any pecuniary assistance from the conference, but have come to do a self-supporting work,— to put up their own buildings, cultivate the land, go out and canvass for books, and thus pay their way; to take in those of more or less experience as assistants, to go through the preliminary work of education, and become self-supporting laborers to go out in various localities in the South, where poor educational facilities exist, procure land, start schools, invite in pupils, teach these how to raise crops, fruit, etc., and do work on intelligent plans. These teachers are to be thoroughly instructed in the work, and are to establish churches in these various localities, exerting an influence on behalf of morality, agricultural training, self-supporting industry, and the blessed truth of our Lord Jesus Christ, being true missionaries in this great Southern field."³⁴

After finding the place for their model school, Professors Sutherland and Magan invited their Berrien Springs students and staff to transfer to Madison. Among those responding were Charles F. Alden, O. A. Wolcott, Calvin Kinsman, Mr. and Mrs. George Alcorn, Ernest Dunn, E. E. Brink, and the Misses Shannon, Ashton, and Abegg.³⁵

The first students to go out on their own from Madison—Calvin Kinsman and Orin Wolcott—went to Cuba, despite the school leaders encouraging them to start a school in the Southern United States. In March 1906, Charles

Alden and Braden Mulford raised enough money to purchase 250 acres about 15 miles north of Nashville on the Highland Rim. This first extension school of Madison taught community children, and taught farming methods to adults in the community.³⁶

A year later, Mulford persuaded some friends and relatives to help him buy a farm a few miles away near Fountain Head, Tennessee. His sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Forrest West, joined him there, and he married Forrest West's sister Pearl, a school teacher. Their enterprise eventually developed into Highland Academy, serving the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference.³⁷

Other medical missionary enterprises started, such as a Polk Street settlement and cafeteria and treatment rooms in Nashville. A Hillcrest School for Black children began about four and a half miles out of Nashville in 1907.³⁸

Other early schools started in Sand Mountain in northern Alabama, and Mount Pisgah Academy near Asheville, North Carolina in 1913.³⁹ Glen Alpine Rural School also served North Carolina.⁴⁰ The Graves, Reese and Bechtel families started Madison-related medical, educational, and agricultural work near Lawrenceburg, Tennessee.⁴¹ The Martin family began working in Bon Aqua, Tenn., and later founded a sanitarium and then a nursing home named El Reposo in Florence, Alabama.⁴² A wealthy woman from California donated money for a school in Reeves, Ga., which later became Georgia-Cumberland Academy.⁴³

An institution 17 miles outside of Louisville, Kentucky began in 1924 and became known as Pewee Valley with a school and sanitarium.⁴⁴

Cafeteria work began in 1918, in Birmingham, Alabama, and a school and sanitarium started outside the city in the early 1930s.⁴⁵

Mrs. Lida Funk Scott took an interest in this extension movement after joining the Madison family in 1914 and eventually took charge of it. She transferred her entire fortune to the Layman Foundation, chartered on January 4, 1924, which made loans and held title to the properties of these institutions.⁴⁶

The work of Madison continued spreading. In the early 1920s, Madison co-founder Nellie Druillard used substantial money she obtained from a profitable real-estate transaction to start Riverside Sanitarium in Nashville, Tennessee, to train nurses and minister to the Black community.⁴⁷

Pine Forest Academy, near Meridian, Mississippi, began in the late 1930s, and two Madison families, the Straws and Goodges, started Little Creek Academy near Knoxville, Tennessee, in the early 1940s.⁴⁸ Harbert Hills Academy of Savannah, Tennessee--the last actual "unit" of Madison--started in 1954.⁴⁹

To help give mutual strength and encouragement to the workers in all Madison family institutions, the leaders started hosting annual conventions for workers after the close of summer school in 1908.⁵⁰ The November 6-9 annual convention in 1941 listed 52 representative self-supporting enterprises in eight states: Alabama, Georgia,

Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. The listing included eight treatment rooms and 27 institutions run by 171 families. Tennessee had the most representation with 17. North Carolina had the second highest with 14.

Association of Self-Supporting Institutions

The success of the Madison-affiliated units inspired General Conference leaders to use them as a model for encouraging Adventist families to leave the cities for the country. They invited newly-retired Dr. E.A. Sutherland to head up a Commission on Rural Living. The 1946 convention of self-supporting institutions at Madison approved a plan to form an association for mutual assistance, which self-supporting groups in any part of North America could join. "They called on the Fall Council to organize an Association of Self-Supporting Institutions."⁵¹

Representatives of the Southern Union self-supporting workers, along with lay persons from other parts of North America, met in Cincinnati on March 5, 1947, and organized the Association of Self-Supporting Institutions. The first officers were Dr. E. A. Sutherland, president; Dr. Wendell Malin, vice president, and Dr. J. Wayne McFarland, secretary-treasurer.⁵² The charter members were mostly Madison-affiliated, but the organization later broadened to include Adventist business people. The current official name is Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries (ASI), which holds an annual convention teaching many Adventist lay persons how to share Christ in the marketplace. While Madison College closed in 1964, the self-supporting model of establishing and operating rural centers of activity which combine agriculture, educational advantages, and medical institutions has never died. New self-supporting enterprises in the form of schools and clinics operate on the Madison model, even though their founders had not attended Madison.

An early example was an Adventist school in Hendersonville, North Carolina, named Fletcher Academy. Co-founder Arthur W. Spalding, never a Madison student, attended the 1909 self-supporting worker convention and then helped start the school,⁵³ which has remained self-supporting ever since. Wildwood Lifestyle Center in Wildwood, Georgia, Heritage Academy of Monterey, Tennessee, and Laurelbrook School of Dayton, Tennessee, also patterned themselves after Madison. Other newer schools outside the Southeastern United States drawing inspiration from Madison are Oklahoma Academy in Harrah, Oklahoma, and Ouachita Hills Academy and College in Amity, Arkansas. One of the newest enterprises calls itself "a 21st-century Madison College" and operates in Australia under the name of Madison Missions Australia Ltd.

The E. A. Sutherland Education Association, now known as the ISEI (Intersecting Scripture, Educators and Inspiration) Education Association with headquarters in Collegedale, Tennessee, was organized to accredit some self-supporting schools and now helps maintain the standards of 15 of these schools in four different nations.⁵⁴ So the Madison education model is still very much alive.

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