

Steward, Thaddeus Moore (1827–1907) and Myrta Elizabeth (Wells) (1832–1928)

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187-. [Thaddeus M. Steward]. Database on-line. Center for Adventist Research Image Database.

<http://centerforadventistresearch.org/photos> (accessed Nov 20, 2019).

Thaddeus M. (1827-1907) and Myrta E. (Wells)

Steward (1832-1928) became active in the

Sabbatarian Adventist cause during the early 1850s and were associated in ministry with a number of the movement's leaders such as Ellen and James White, Joseph Bates, J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith, J. N. Loughborough, and J. H. Waggoner.

Thaddeus M. Steward was born in Maine in 1827. He became a Baptist in 1843 and then joined the Sabbath-keeping Adventists in 1852. Soon after, Steward became a travelling minister and was one of the first Sabbatarian preachers to work in the state of Wisconsin. He seems to have been an ardent and zealous leader. For example, while in Lyndina, Wisconsin, he was imprisoned for two weeks for refusing to violate his convictions by taking an oath in court. The sheriff, nevertheless, allowed him to go and preach every night without anyone to guard him. It was also in Wisconsin that Steward met his future wife, Myrta E. Wells.¹

Myrta Wells grew up as a Seventh Day Baptist in New York state. Her family accepted the Millerite Advent message in the early 1840s, but after the Great Disappointment of 1844 returned to their Baptist roots. In 1852, the Wells family moved to Milton, Wisconsin. A year later, she became a Sabbath-keeping Adventist after attending meetings led by J. M. Stephenson and T. M. Steward. She married Thaddeus Steward in 1854. They had two children—Mary Alicia and John William. Mary later worked for the Review and Herald office as a proofreader.²

During the early 1860s, while working in Wisconsin, the Stewards became involved in extremism. Myrta Steward, among others, made spurious claims about receiving visions. When Ellen White criticized the Stewards and their supporters, they turned against her prophetic authority and James White's leadership. Since the relatively new believers in Wisconsin were not well acquainted with the Whites, the Stewards managed to prejudice many against them and divide the Sabbath-keeping group.³

Toward the end of 1863, however, the Stewards confessed their wrongdoings, reconciled with the Whites, and continued to work faithfully to advance the Adventist message. In a letter to James White, published in the *Review* on September 22, 1863, Myrta Steward confessed that although she had gone through many "dark" and "lonely" days, God in His goodness had brought her back through the revelations of Ellen White. She expressed her desire to be found "in perfect union" with God's people and "their closing work of mercy."⁴

Thaddeus Steward also reconciled with the church and was eventually elected to serve as the secretary of the newly organized Illinois-Wisconsin Conference in 1863 (the conference divided to form two separate state conferences in 1870). Thaddeus Steward wrote letters to the governors of the two states in 1864 appealing for "exemption of Seventh-day Adventists from serving as combatants in the Civil War." Steward worked in the conference until 1874 when he and his family moved to Battle Creek, Michigan.⁵

The Stewards continued their ministerial work in Michigan until 1902, when they retired and moved to Graysville, Tennessee. On April 23, 1907, after suffering poor health for several months, Thaddeus Steward died at his home in Graysville at the age of 79. Subsequently, Myrta Steward and their daughter, Mary, moved to St. Helena, California, where Mary worked as an editorial assistant to Ellen White until White's death in 1915. She then returned to the Review and Herald office in Takoma Park, Maryland, and served as a copy editor until 1937. Meanwhile, Myrta Steward died in 1928.⁶

Though Thaddeus and Myrta Steward opposed the Whites' leadership for a brief period in the early 1860s, they played a vital part in the Adventist movement through the decades of its progress from a small and obscure group to a worldwide denomination.

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NOTES

1. J. E. Tenney, "Thaddeus Moore Steward obituary," *ARH*, June 6, 1907, 31.
2. "Myrta Elizabeth Wells Steward obituary," *ARH*, November 1, 1928, 22.
3. Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Church, No. 8* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1862), 29-47.
4. Myrta E. Steward, "From Sister Steward," *ARH*, September 22, 1863, 135.
5. "Thaddeus Moore Steward obituary." See also T. M. Steward, "Meeting in Iowa," *ARH*, February 2, 1864, 78; idem, "Note from Bro. Steward," *ARH*, October 4, 1864, 152.
6. "Myrta Elizabeth Wells Steward obituary."

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