



Battle Creek Academy, 1903.

Photo courtesy of Center for Adventist Research.

Battle Creek Academy

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Charlotte Erickson has a bachelor's degree in business and has written articles for several Adventist publications and local newspapers and magazines. She served for several years as the communications director for the Battle Creek Tabernacle. Now retired, she volunteers for Battle Creek Academy (BCA) in various capacities. Charlotte and her husband moved to Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1986, so their two children could attend a day academy. Both children graduated from BCA.

Battle Creek Academy (BCA) is a K-12 Seventh-day Adventist day school located in Battle Creek, Michigan. The physical plant sits on 44 acres (18 hectares) of land and includes a three-room primary unit, eight additional

classrooms, a gymnasium, science lab, kitchen, chapel, elementary and high school media centers, teachers' lounge, music room, elementary and secondary computer labs, student lounge, two lunch rooms, fitness center, three-bay garage, administrative offices, and a large separate garage that houses equipment and the school vehicles. The high school and elementary school are in separate wings of the building.¹

The first church school in Battle Creek began operating in 1856 in the home of Calvin and Mary Osgood. Mary Osgood taught all the subjects and charged each student 25 cents. The school ran for several years and had a succession of teachers.² In 1867, public school teacher Goodloe Harper Bell, who was a recent convert to Adventism, was a patient at the Western Health Reformed Institute (later called Battle Creek Sanitarium). There he met young James Edson White, who asked Bell to start a school for him and several other boys.³ Soon after that encounter, Bell started teaching grammar and writing to twelve students. The "Select School," as it was originally called, operated privately for five years—first in a small cottage and later in a room in the Review and Herald building.⁴ Among Bell's early students were John Harvey Kellogg and his brother, William Keith Kellogg, Homer Aldrich, E. R. Jones, E. C. Loughborough, J. Byron Sperry, James Edson White, and William White.

On June 3, 1872, Battle Creek Industrial Academy, as it was originally called, formally opened as the first Seventh-day Adventist denomination-sponsored school with Bell as the denomination's first appointed teacher. The school included primary and secondary programs. It was housed in the print shop at the Review and Herald Publishing House. The word industrial was later dropped from the school's name, and it officially became Battle Creek Academy.

But church leaders had an even larger vision for Battle Creek. There was a large number of working young people who were taking morning and evening classes in penmanship and grammar, but who wanted to study Bible doctrines and the sciences. The year that Battle Creek Academy opened, leaders began discussing the idea of creating an Adventist college "to protect the young people from the immoral influences of worldly schools, to prepare them for working in the Adventist cause of spreading the Gospel, and to teach them prophetic and biblical truth in addition to the subjects commonly taught."⁵ "In addition . . . Battle Creek College was established, according to its founders, to train workers for the church and to teach religious truth. Both these goals involve issues of the curriculum as it was designed and practiced at the college."⁶

In 1874, the Seventh-day Adventist Educational Society was formed with the purpose of establishing a denominational college in Battle Creek. By that time, supporters had already pledged \$54,000 for the school. In the fall of 1874, the college opened under the name Battle Creek College. During that first year, enrollment grew to 289 students. As long as the denomination operated a college in Battle Creek, the secondary school—and even the elementary grades—were considered a part of Battle Creek College.⁷ In 1901, Battle Creek College moved to Berrien Springs, Michigan, and its name was changed to Emmanuel Missionary College (now Andrews University).

In Battle Creek, ground was broken for a new school building for Battle Creek Academy on September 3, 1903. The academy operated in the three-story building until it was destroyed by a fire on April 11, 1945. A new, modern school was built on what is now Parkway Drive. It was dedicated on September 6, 1948, and opened on September 9.⁸ The first principal of the new Battle Creek Academy was M. Dale Hannah. The school building was expanded, as a gymnasium (1953), chapel (1961), band room (1985), and more classrooms were subsequently added.⁹

BCA's mission states in part, "We serve by continuing a century-long tradition of providing Christ-centered education rich in the revelation of God's grace, and by emphasizing the integrated development of the whole person. . . We are intentional about developing servant-leaders who build the community and who are ambassadors for the Lord. We seek partnership with the homes and churches of our students in preparing young people for their eternal home."¹⁰

The motto—"The Pursuit of Excellence in Christ"—has been the school's goal since 1872.¹¹ This pursuit of excellence has resulted in students scoring on average one-and-a-half to two years ahead of their grade levels on national standardized tests.¹² The teacher-student ratio is approximately one to nine. At the 2005 Alumni Awards Foundation Annual Convention, BCA took second place for the Academy Award for Excellence, and the school received a grant for \$20,000.¹³ The school also has an active National Honor Society, an organization that helps grow leadership skills in high-achieving students in grades 10 to 12. Since 1989, 144 BCA students have been inducted into the society.

BCA also has a strong band program. Students begin learning an instrument in fifth grade and then move on to Cadet Band for grades 6 to 8. By the time they reach high school, they are well trained and accomplished on their instruments. The high school band performs in local churches and special Battle Creek events. Spring band trips have taken them to Boston, Massachusetts; Washington, District of Columbia; Atlanta, Georgia; St. Louis, Missouri; Chicago, Illinois, and other cities around the United States. The band has scored excellent or higher in Dixie Classics, Music in the Parks, Festival in Music, Six Flags Music Festival, and other band performance programs.¹⁴

In keeping with BCA's mission, outreach is an important part of the students' curriculum. Students conduct church services in Battle Creek and surrounding areas.¹⁵ Twenty-five hours of community service are required for high school students. Many of these hours are completed in group projects arranged by the school.¹⁶ School-sponsored mission trips have enabled students to serve on projects in the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Arizona.¹⁷ In recent years, the senior class has included a mission trip component. Senior students have participated in service projects in places such as Honduras, Puerto Rico,¹⁸ and Kenya.

Enrollment at BCA for the 2017-2018 school year was 104 students. The school employed five academy teachers, five elementary teachers with a teaching assistant, and five non-teaching staff.¹⁹ The academy offers strong college preparatory courses and instruction is given in Bible, English, history, mathematics, science, business,

physical education, music, and other fields.²⁰

BCA is supported by three constituent churches—the Battle Creek Tabernacle, Urbandale, and Delton Seventh-day Adventist churches²¹—with a total constituency of about 1,100 in 2018.²² It is under the umbrella of the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and the Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The school is operated by a board consisting of the Lake Union Conference educational secretary; the Michigan Conference president, secretary, treasurer, and educational superintendent; as well as the school principal, pastors, and other representatives from the constituent churches. It is accredited with the Adventist Accrediting Association and Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools—Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools.²³

Principals: Frederick Griggs, 1889-1898; J. G. Lamson, 1903-1904; B. E. Nicola, 1904-1907; Flora Williams, 1907-1908; C. A. Russell, 1908-1912; Harriet Eggleston Heffley, 1912-1913; Don Ludington, 1913-1914; W. J. Blake, 1914-1920; F. S. Everest, 1920-1921; T. S. Copeland, 1921-1923; J. G. Lamson, 1923-1924; B. H. Phipps, 1924-1928; C. Roy Smith, 1928-1932; A. J. Skeels, 1932-1934; H. J. Alcock, 1934-1940; V. E. Garber, 1940-1945; D. N. Hartman, 1945-1948; M. D. Hannah, 1948-1951; F. M. Miller, 1951-1952; Donald E. Jacobs, 1952-1953; D. Lorne Jones, 1953-1955; J. H. Rhoads, 1955-1956; Ralph P. Bailey, 1956-1958; Stephen W. Young, 1958-1964; La Rue L. Cook, 1964-1967; Erich Bekowies, 1967-1972; Ralph A. Darrough, 1972-1977; T. Alvin Astrup, 1977-1980; Robert M. Mead, 1980-1988; John M. Deming, 1988-1992; Sunimal Kulasekere, 1992-1996; Doug Hayes, 1996-1997; Don Perkins, 1997-2000; Kevin Kossick, 2000-2008; Eric Velez, 2008-2009; Elvis Agard, 2009-2012; James Davis, 2012-2018; Tevita Tameifuna, 2019-.²⁴

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NOTES

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