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## **Browne, Lambert Wellington (1883–1966)**

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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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Lambert Wellington Browne was a pioneer missionary to Sierra Leone.

## Early Years

Lambert Wellington Browne was born May 22, 1883, in Barbados, West Indies, to Samuel and Rosalie Browne. His father was a wheelwright who never became an Adventist. His mother was a member of the church. As a young man of twenty years of age, Lambert W. Browne became a schoolmaster in the East Caribbean Conference in British Guiana, South America. In 1906, he taught in Trinidad.<sup>1</sup>

Browne made plans to further his education in America and arrived at Ellis Island July 30, 1906. He went straight to Emmanuel Missionary College (EMC) in Berrien Springs, Michigan. After just a few months at EMC, he sailed from New York bound for Sierra Leone in early April 1907 to join Elder and Mrs. D. C. Babcock who had been in Sierra Leone since 1905 and had built a mission house and a school. Browne served there as a successful school teacher and evangelist.<sup>2</sup>

The work grew rapidly, and the first church in Sierra Leone was organized on Sabbath, July 20, 1907.

Elder Babcock spoke impressively of the benefits of organization, and of the duties that devolved upon the related members of an organized body... As points of interests were touched, "Amen" was heard from different ones, thus signifying the desire to comply with the principles presented... twenty persons entered into the bond of Christian fellowship and concord. Seven of these were accepted subject to baptism, which was arranged to be administered on the following day... Six of the seven baptized are young men who have expressed a desire to work for the Master... Officers were elected, their duties pointed out, and thus closed the experience of a never-to-be-forgotten occasion.<sup>3</sup>

C. E. F. Thompson, a Jamaican who was already living in Sierra Leone, and R. P. Dauphin were baptized in this tent effort. Both of these men became productive church workers. They accompanied Browne to Waterloo, a town about twenty miles from Freetown, to open the work there. A company of believers grew out of their efforts.

Babcock described the progress of the work in Waterloo.

On the morning of October 16 [1907], Brother Browne and the writer [D. C. Babcock] boarded the train for Waterloo. A limited amount of our literature had been sold among the people of this town; but aside from that, nothing had ever been done to advance the message in this town of more than 3000 souls... The following week Brother Browne returned, and through the kindness of Mr. Faulkner, the district Commissioner, he secured the town market, a spacious room not now used, in which to hold a series of meetings. The first of November, Brother and Sister R. P. Dauphin and Brother C.E.F. Thompson accompanied Elder Browne to Waterloo, and in a short time an excellent interest was manifest... A bitter opposition soon arose, and the minister of the leading church disfellowshipped several of his members for attending the meetings at the market.

On Sunday, March 14, our first baptism took place... twelve earnest souls were buried with their Lord in baptism... a meeting was called to consider the building of a church. . . Long before the hour appointed for the doors to be opened, the people began to come; and by the time the services began, every inch of seating room was occupied... On the platform were prominent lawyers and city councilmen.

The dedication of this new, neat building, the first Seventh-day Adventist church in all West Africa, marks an advanced step. While we have no haughty pride in the edifice, we do praise the Lord that we have a place of worship to which we can invite the public.<sup>4</sup>

The very first Seventh-day Adventist Church building in all of West Africa was dedicated in Waterloo, Sierra Leone, on March 29, 1908, just before L. W. Browne returned to America.

## Education

In May 1908, Browne returned to the United States because of ill health. He spoke to his fellow students and teachers at Emmanuel Missionary College about the work in Sierra Leone. He also enrolled in school to continue his studies. The General Conference voted that "the treasurer be authorized to loan him \$25 to help him in finishing his course at Berrien Springs." The enrollment form gives us a bit more information about him.<sup>5</sup>

## Pastoral Ministry

Having finished his course of studies at Emmanuel Missionary College Browne was assigned to pastor the colored church in Springfield, Illinois. The church building there was small and unattractive. He encouraged the members to paint it and did the other necessary repairs to make a beautiful edifice. Next the new pastor pitched a tent and conducted a series of meetings for six weeks. The church was revived and people were baptized.<sup>6</sup>

Browne was ordained to the gospel ministry in Springfield, Illinois on January 2, 1910. About a year later, he was sent to Indianapolis to pastor the colored church there. Here he became gravely ill and the tent meetings that he was holding had to be canceled. After recovering his health, Browne began his second tent effort. The first Seventh-day

Adventist church for colored people in the state of Indiana was organized in the city of Indianapolis on July 25, 1914. Browne reported that eighteen persons were a part of this new church organization and that others would be added in a future baptism.

On November 25, 1915, Browne married Lalla Vivian Poole in Indiana. A nurse, Lalla Poole was the daughter of Albert and Bettie Poole of Louisville, Kentucky, born on June 16, 1892.

In 1918, the Brownes were called to the Kansas Conference to grow the colored work. The Kansas City, Kansas, church had about sixty members and he went to work immediately erecting a proper church building. The final reference to Browne's professional life indicated he was still working in the Kansas Conference in 1921.<sup>7</sup>

## Later Life

In 1926, Browne became a naturalized citizen of the United States while he was living in Chicago, Illinois, where he took work in the post office.<sup>8</sup> The 1930 and 1940 census showed Lambert Browne and his family still residing in Chicago, Illinois. They had a daughter, Rosalie, and a son, Leon, both born in Chicago.<sup>9</sup>

The man who is credited with starting the work in Waterloo, Sierra Leone, and who had assisted with starting the very first church in Sierra Leone passed away December 2, 1966, in Chicago. He was also credited with starting the first black congregation in Indiana and advancing and increasing the progress of the Adventist Church among black Americans in Illinois and Kansas. Lalla Browne died in Illinois in April 1984 at the age of 92.<sup>10</sup>

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## NOTES

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