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Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE WISCONSIN CONFERENCE  
(1871-1877)

A Term Paper

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Course

CH 570 History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

by

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(1952- )

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INTRODUCTION

I have chosen to write on this topic because my wife and I will be serving in Wisconsin on completion of my seminary studies. A minister should have a historical appreciation for his field of labor.

A study of this period in Wisconsin Conference history has provided much interesting material. The early course of action often determines future growth. That is why I have decided to deal with the beginnings of this conference which was organized in 1871.

To my surprise there is no term paper on Wisconsin Adventist history in either the E.G. White Vault or the Heritage Room. However there is uncompleted research on the Conference covering 1850-1915 in folder DF 2089-w of the vault.

Other research has come from Spalding's Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists, The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, The Review and Herald, and from the writings of E.G. White. From these I have given a year by year description of prominent workers labor through annual conferences and evangelistic efforts.

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An introductory background to 1871-1877 is appropriate here. Though the Wisconsin Conference was organized until 1871, Adventist work began there in 1851. In the spring of that year H.S. Case of Jackson, Michigan converted Waterman Phelps's. In December 1851 a newspaper editor and publisher at Baraboo, J.H. Waggoner by name, was converted. Waggoner was to become one of the leading forces in the Advent Movement. Of all men, he would be considered as Wisconsin's leading contribution to the Advent movement. Other early day pioneers were D.P. Hall, J.M. Stephenson, Issac Sanborn, W.S. Ingraham, and T.M. Steward.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph Bates came in July of 1852 to visit a conference at the Seventh Day Baptist church "and preached in an adjacent grove to a crowd estimated at 400".<sup>3</sup> He made a speaking tour of the state in 1856. Waggoner baptized 22 at El Dorado where interest "was so great that threshing was stopped on the Sabbath so that people could attend the meetings."<sup>4</sup>

In 1855, Stephenson and Hall started tent evangelism which came into its own during the 1870's. Unfortunately these two had become fascinated with the non-Adventist Age-to-Come theory concerning the millenium which brought much error into the early church in the state. Both James White and Bates visited Wisconsin to counteract their wide influence.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the 1850's the advent message spread until groups were scattered throughout the state.<sup>6</sup> The 1860's along with the usual evangelism, was a decade of organization. The "S.D. Adventist Illinois-Wisconsin State Conference" was organized September 27, 28, 1862. In 1863 the newly formed conference elected its first officers with Issac Sanborn as president. The constitution was also adopted. At the time there were 390 members in Wisconsin.<sup>7</sup>

Organization brought on the second fanatical movement in eight years. Many felt organization would turn the church into Babylon.

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Waterman Phelps, the first SDA in Wisconsin left the church.<sup>8</sup> These 'fanatics' were in the minority however.<sup>9</sup>

In 1865 the Whites again visited Wisconsin visiting in various churches. It is said they were pleased with the progress of the cause.<sup>10</sup> This must have been a most reassuring trip for the Whites up until this time was a special "wrong to be corrected" in the state.<sup>11</sup>

But if in its early days Wisconsin had its share of fanatics it also developed its share of leaders for our church. Men such as Waggoner, John G. Matteson, and Ole A. Olsen. The latter two men did much to develop the Scandinavian work. Matteson's family had come to Wisconsin from Denmark about 1855,<sup>12</sup> Olsen's family several years earlier from Norway.<sup>13</sup> The Ole Serns family and the Johnson family, also Scandinavians, accepted the Sabbath in 1854 along with the Olsen family and in 1858 Waterman Phelps shared with them the Seventh-day Adventist message. They were all baptized some time after this. "These three families have furnished scores of workers in the Adventist ranks in America, in Scandinavia, and in every continent on the globe."<sup>14</sup> At Oakland the first Scandinavian church was organized in 1858.<sup>15</sup>

P.H. Cady converted John G. Matteson, a Baptist minister near Poy Sippi. His congregation was completely Danish and when Matteson joined our ranks most of his church did also,<sup>16</sup> from thirty to forty people.<sup>17</sup> This new congregation became the second Scandinavian church. The believers at Oakland also benefited a great deal from Matteson's ministry, "who joyfully welcomed a minister of their own language."<sup>18</sup>

Matteson not only preached but he published material in Danish. One of his first publications was "Det Nye Testamentes Sabbat" (The New Testament Sabbath). He later started a Danish monthly. Truly, the Scandinavian Adventists of Wisconsin were the start of all Adventist Scandinavian mission work throughout the world.

"In 1870 at its seventh annual session the Illinois-Wisconsin Conference was divided. The new Wisconsin Conference elected Issac Sanborn president."<sup>19</sup>



Perhaps the date 1870 should be used as the official date for the founding of the conference but The Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook and the Wisconsin Conference today use 1871 as the date, one reason perhaps is that 1871 was the first entire year of the Conference, another being that in 1871 the Conference held its first annual Conference session.

Issac Sanborn came from one of the pioneer families of the state. In 1855 he was converted to Adventism, in 1856 he began to preach and in the autumn of that year he was ordained by James White and W.S. Ingraham. At Battle Creek in 1863 he was one of twenty delegates who assisted in organizing the General Conference. He was one of a committee of eight that drafted the GC constitution and one of a committee of five to recommend a constitution for state conferences. Although most of his labors were in Wisconsin Sanborn traveled and labored in 19 states.<sup>20</sup> He was president of Illinois-Wisconsin, 1863-67 and of Wisconsin, 1870-73.<sup>21</sup>

The first annual Conference of SDA's of Wisconsin was held June 22-29, 1871 in connection with the campmeeting. President Sanborn was in the chair. Prayer was offered by Elder Matteson. A delegation of 22; representing 17 churches were represented, one church was not represented. Elders James White and W.H. Littlejohn were invited to take part in the conference deliberations. That first year of the new conference showed a membership of 526 in 18 churches. Of these, 260 were paying systematic benevolence at a rate of \$2,113.86 pledged for the year. During the conference it was also decided to have Sanborn and David Downer hold a summer tent crusade throughout the state.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout the coming months of that year, particularly in the summer Reviews the evangelistic efforts of these two soul-winners was the major story reported from the Wisconsin field. Nearly every week from the July 25 Review through September 12, reports are in "the Reviews" of each effort, attendance, prejudices against the efforts, baptisms and interests to follow up.

All but one of the articles is written by Sanborn. He surely was an evangelistic president!

Oh, that our presidents today could spend as much time in evangelism. Churches that were organized that year were Liberty Pole and Victory.<sup>23</sup>

On December 14, 1871 C.W. Olds started for Grant County to hold meetings. Olds had been president of the old Illinois-Wisconsin Conference from 1869-70.<sup>24</sup> He was active in evangelism of Wisconsin and lived until 1909 in the service of the Master.<sup>25</sup>

He states that he started the meetings "two miles east of Hazel Green" in a school house. Prejudice kept many from hearing but "two expressed a willingness to obey." In all Olds conducted 17 meetings.

On January 15, 1872 M.E. Crandall came to help Olds and they went to hold meetings in an unnamed place which lasted until February 20. In all 30 meetings were given and Olds wrote, "The people here generally believe we have the truth...three have commenced to keep the Sabbath."

Then they immediately went back to Hazel Green where they held meetings in an old deserted meeting house which had been offered. The first meeting 120 were present and the second meeting had 150 present. Crandall then had to return home but Olds was going to stay as long as necessary.<sup>26</sup>

John Matteson wrote from Busseyville, Wisconsin on February 23 that the truth was doing a good work among the Scandinavians of Chicago. In a years time a 26 member church was raised up, a \$2000 church built which was already half paid and Systematic Benevolence (sb) started amounting to \$260. He wrote that the Sabbath before six were baptized. Meetings were well attended with interest growing. He already had 80 subscriptions to the Advent Tidende.<sup>27</sup>

Matteson began publishing this Danish monthly in January 1872. It was the first SDA periodical in a foreign tongue. These monthlies even reached as far as Denmark itself.<sup>28</sup>

The mentioning of Chicago work under the title headings of Wisconsin, and the Chicago church in our SDA Encyclopedia led me to believe that this Chicago is the one of much fame and that the Conference boundaries included it at one time.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, Brother Olds sent another report to "the Review" on his work at Hazel Green. It apparently was not one of his more fruitful labors. He writes that he had held 15 meetings since his last report. The "congregation quite small most of the time." Part of that problem was that the ministers there were secretly working against the truth. Some were very interested but no one had decided to obey. But one did subscribe to "the Review" and four for the Health Reformer.

On March 12 he arrived home for the first time in 12 weeks for a 'vacation' of two days. Then on to Mukwonago "to find a place to hold meetings. The Congregational meeting house was offered me." These meetings started March 20 and continued through April. Twenty-four meetings in all. The congregations were not large, "yet some became interested and a few decided to obey." Three subscriptions for "the Review", one for the Youth's Instructor.

He then returned home for a few weeks expecting "to labor again in the great harvest field as the way may open."<sup>30</sup>

For Olds this must have been a time of trial. From December 14, 1871 until April 30, 1872 he had held 86 meetings. In all it can be said that only "a few decided to obey." He didn't set baptism records but he planted the seed and when arriving home for the first extended visit in four and one half months was looking forward to going out to the "great harvest field" again! How many of us would have such faith and zeal?

Another thing that comes to our attention is that wherever these preachers went they had the people sign up for our periodicals. They were colporters too! These magazines prepared the way for future evangelistic efforts. They were the seed to be reaped later.

G.I. Butler attended the 1872 campmeeting held at Lodi and entered an interesting article in "the Review". He made mention that it was in a "rather pleasant place". There were only 13 tents "besides the large sixty foot tent". About 300 attended the campmeeting but he makes mention that this was not as large of a group as had been at the Minnesota campmeeting even though Wisconsin had a "much larger" conference.

Perhaps more didn't come because the White's had not been able to come.

The preaching though changed the whole mood of the grounds from one of mere pleasure seeking to a "serious spirit of inquiry ...as to their real condition before God. Confessions were made, and brokenness of heart manifested...these meetings continued till near the close of the Sabbath, and were characterized by confessions to one another, which did much to heal differences which had long existed in some churches and among some individuals."

On Sunday from 1,000-1,200 were present to hear Elder Littlejohn speak on the Sabbath question. On Monday the Tract and Missionary Society was organized for the state and seven people were baptized.

Butler says that "leading brethren expressed themselves strongly that it was the best camp-meeting ever held in Wisconsin."<sup>31</sup> It appears that the campmeeting spirit got better as the days went on. They solemn preaching of the times in which this world is in had its effect for good. This appears to have been a consistent theme for the Adventist preacher in those early days, and also the Sabbath emphasis.

The second annual conference of the SDA's of the state was held in conjunction with the campmeeting. Elders Butler and Littlejohn as well as all members in "good standing" were invited to take part in the deliberations of the Conference.

Of special significance it was voted "that those wishing to take out license to preach should make application to the Conference Committee". A brief summary showed 24 churches at the time compared with 20 at the beginning of the year, 619 members compared with 526 at the beginning of the year, and 406 paying S.B.<sup>32</sup>

Rufus Baker wrote from Westfield on February 13, 1873 that he had been holding meetings there for three weeks. It was in thinly populated area with small attendance but a good interest was apparent from the beginning and more came as the meetings progressed.



A few had decided to keep the Sabbath, others though knowing it to be the truth had not. Baker to was a colporteur of sorts, "I have distributed quite a number of books, and obtained four subscribers for the Review, and one for the Health Reformer."<sup>33</sup> When you read reports in the Review such as this the realization comes back that in those days it was a real news letter, including in it only what the local Union papers do today. The Review in good part was like a Lake Union Herald (without pictures) except that it had several sermons, or articles on the first 4-6 pages.

Among the ethnic minorities of those days stood the French people. Probably one of our first missionaries to the French was Francis Depas who reports on the work that he was carrying on despite not knowing French. "We have not, up to the present time, had the pleasure of hearing the present truth preached among us in the French language...last November I started in the present truth hoping in the blessing of God whose promise has not been in vain. There are now four families keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and are strong in the message of the third angel of Revelation and in the faith of the soon coming of Jesus for the gathering of His people". Ten had decided to be baptized including a man over 70 who had been confined to bed for nine months.

"We have much opposition and persecution, but this is the way by which to enter the kingdom of God. The harvest truly is great and the laborers are few; and none among us. Pray for the success of the cause among the French in Wisconsin."<sup>34</sup> This truly sounds like a foreign mission report doesn't it! Wisconsin with it's Scandinavians, French and German speaking peoples was as much a foreign mission field back then as it is today to go overseas to a European country as a missionary.

Again in 1873 G.I. Butler came to the campmeeting. He writes this time of good attendance with some from Illinois but to his disappointment neither D.M. Canright who he had expected "without fail" nor Brother or Sister White could be in attendance.

He had telegraphed the Whites but they just couldn't come. The last time Sister White had come was in 1871. Butler wrote, "I regretted exceedingly that there could not have been more ministerial help present from abroad, which would have more truly represented our people in point of ability especially where so many of our Seventh-Day Baptist brethren were in attendance." This help was needed for Butler spoke eleven times besides a "large amount of other talking and labor and business. Brother Matteson spoke five times and Brother Sanborn once."

Elder Butler lectured to SDA's and SD Baptists on the visions of Ellen White which relieved the doubts of many. This particular broke down prejudice among the Seventh-Day Baptists.

Another forty foot diameter tent had been bought which made possible for two tents for the summers evangelistic campaigns.<sup>35</sup>

The third annual Session was held during the campmeeting there at Clear Lake. It was called to order for the third year in a row by President Sanborn with Elder Butler following with prayer. Butler was invited to join in the deliberations. P.S. Thurston was nominated to become the next president. He was elected.

In my opinion five important resolutions were made:

- 1) Thanksgiving for the institutions of the church and deep interest in their future prosperity "and also in the proposed school" (Battle Creek College). They recommended these institutions to the "liberal support of our brethren."
- 2) That the Lord had opened so many doors that it was their solemn obligation "to live in such a way that the Lord can work through us..."
- 3) "that no money shall be paid out of the several church treasuries and conference treasuries, except by an order from the Executive Committee."
- 4) A request for D.T. Bourdeau to come and work among the French people, and in other directions as the providence of God would indicate.
- 5) A request for S.W. Haskell to come as soon as possible to help along the T.&M. cause.<sup>36</sup>

Membership at the time was 713 as compared with 619 in 1872. This campmeeting-conference would be remembered for the ecumenical spirit between the SDA's and SDB's. Four or five of the Baptist ministers had even sat with the Adventist "in the stand, and took part like brethren."

Also it was the last time Issac Sanborn would hold the presidency and a fitting climax to that was his baptism of 17 during the convocation.<sup>37</sup> New churches during the were Burns Valley, Mt. Hope, and Plainfield, two more new churches than 1872 when Neenah was the only one.<sup>38</sup>

The year 1874 was to be one of unprecedented evangelism and growth in membership. Typical of the articles in "the Review" for the year was David Downer's report concerning Burnside and Modena. Brother Downer was one of the more prominent pastors of the period, also serving on the executive committee of the conference and being Sanborn's old partner in the evangelistic campaigns of 1870-71.

"There is a strong opposition against our faith. I feel pained to leave this field, where I have toiled and wept before God. I leave very many warm friends to the truth. There are now two churches organized here..." One church had 21 members, the other 27 member. Five hundred dollars were offered toward building a church. Each congregation had Sabbath School and "Bible class" and they contributed \$25 toward tent evangelism expenses. S.B. was organized amounting to \$200.<sup>39</sup>

Another prominent pastor whose 'diary' we will look at in a few moments was Ole A. Olsen. Born in Norway in 1845 he came to Wisconsin with his parents in 1850. He was baptized in 1858 as the result of the efforts of Waterman Phelps.

He attended a S.D. Baptist College in Milton, Wisconsin during the winters of 1864-69. In 1869 he received his ministerial license from the conference and for two years served as "tent master" for Sanborn and Downer. In the autumn of 1871 he conducted an evangelistic effort among the Scandinavians. 'Scandinavia' now had it's second evangelist among them, after Matteson.

This was Olsen's first endeavor 'on his own'. In 1873 he was ordained and continued work among his people. The next year he was elected president of the Wisconsin conference. He was nearly 29! He served until 1876 when he was permitted again to work among the Scandinavians then he was again elected president in 1880. He also attended Battle Creek College in 1876-77. At 43 he was elected president of the General Conference, serving from 1888-97. He later did work in Africa and again with Scandinavians in Europe and was Vice President for the GC for North America when he died in 1915.<sup>40</sup>

Back to the 'diary'! It was printed in the August 4, 1874 Review. He begins: "Since I last reported, I have been trying to work for the Lord." In brief it follows like this: May 14-27 at Plum Creek. A church of 12 organized in company with Brother Matteson.

May 30-June 8 at Maiden Rock. Meetings held in several places, partly in English, partly in Danish. Thirteen were baptized. On June 8 Matteson went to River Falls, Olsen to Plum Creek, on the way there he spoke to some Norwegians and Swedes. June 15 he went to Lodi to prepare for campmeeting. After campmeeting, on the 25th he returned home, held two Sabbath meetings with the church and one quarterly meeting.

July 11-18 he held meetings in Richland, Minnesota, three unite with the church, one to be baptized. At the time of writing the 'diary' for "the Review", which was July 21, he was on his way to Wells with Brother Grant.<sup>41</sup>

Two other prominent evangelistic workers who we will say more of later were John Atkinson, who I would like to call the 'Joseph Bates of Wisconsin' because of his being much older than any of the other workers, and H.W. Decker, two times President of the Conference.

They had a most interesting time in Neilsvelle a town of 1,000 residents in a lumber region. They reported that their meetings had started "rather discouragingly". No one seemed to care "about the Bible or anything pertaining to it".



But gradually interest increased and by the close of the meetings they said, "The whole town is now stirred up. Investigation is going on in the streets and in all places of business."

In all 25 "embraced" the truth and many more reported who would "probably embrace it."<sup>42</sup>

By 1874 the Tract and Missionary society which seems to have been the right arm of the gospel was going strong. Laymen were involved with the Society all over the state. In a note in "the Review" president Olsen drew attention to the quarterly meeting of the Wisconsin T.&M. Society at Lodi, October 3,4. He stated that all quarterly meetings in the districts of the Society should precede the general meeting by two or three weeks in order for proper reports at the general meeting. He stated that he would be at quarterly meetings in Fremont, Poy Sippi, and Raymond and he would like to meet all the Scattered Sabbath-keepers in the vicinity of the meetings.<sup>43</sup>

The September 1 Review carried a report by H.W. Decker of large crowds of 150-200 at night for three weeks in Leon with good prospects.<sup>44</sup> Such large attendance was not the usual case but for Decker, he drew the crowds.

The fourth annual Conference Session was held at Lodi beginning June 18 with President P.S. Thurston in the chair. Prayer was offered by I. Sanborn. There was 24 delegates represented. Elders Butler and Haskell invited to take part.

During the second session the Conference resolved to extend a "heartly invitation" to the Danish and Norweigen brethren to attend Campmeeting and that a "reasonable opportunity" would be given for them "to hold meetings during the campmeeting in their own tongue."

It was voted that the Executive Committee be empowered to chose a campmeeting committee. The Committee on Resolutions felt none were necessary. O.A. Olsen was elected president. It was seen that there were 875 members as compared with 713 in 1873.<sup>45</sup>

Of that years campmeeting Elder Butler wrote that it was a great success, with 300 in "constant attendance" it was called by the people "the best meeting ever held in this state."

From 1200-1500 were in attendance Sunday. These listened with close interest Mrs. White's discourse forenoon and evening. "These discourse's broke down considerable prejudice in the community."

It should be pointed out that with a conference membership of 875 that many of these 1200-1500 must have been non-Adventist, which is a good lesson for us today. Why aren't there more non-Adventists attending our campmeetings now?

Eight new churches were received, \$2500 pledged for a printing press on the Pacific Coast and 13 were baptized. Butler mentions eight churches of Norwegians and Danes in the Conference and hopefully the election of Olsen would more closely unite the church with that nationality.<sup>46</sup> Chances are it would, just as when D.T. Bourdeau came in 1873 to work with the French and established the Wequicoc church.<sup>47</sup>

"The Encyclopedia" mentions five new churches for the year 1874, Burnside, Fremont, Hixton, Loyal, Mapleworks.<sup>48</sup> The year 1875 showed another gain in membership up to 933.

This figure was given at the fifth annual session held at Monroe in connection with the campmeeting June 17-22. Five new churches were received, for the church year. For the calendar year 1875 "the Encyclopedia" mentions two, Hurricane Grove and Leon. But the Encyclopedia manages to be consistantly different then the official session reports. For instance Racine is mentioned as a new church granted admittance to the Conference in the 1875 church year according to the July 1, 1875 Review; whereas the SDA Encyclopedia says Racine's date is 1905 with a church mentioned in 1880.<sup>49</sup>

James and Ellen White with Uriah Smith and Brother Concord were invited to take part in the deliberations. The second year in a row Ellen White had been to the Campmeeting grounds. A systematic benevolence increase from \$3015 to \$3422 was also seen.<sup>50</sup>

One of the most interesting figures of those days was John Atkinson, born about 1809, the eldest pioneer to work in Wisconsin. He was the only one of the prominent pioneers that I could find who embraced the doctrine of the advent only to be disappointed with so many on October 22, 1844.

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It was not until 1864 that he embraced the SDA message and then not until 1872 that he began to preach about 63 years of age. He preached until shortly before his death from dropsy.<sup>51</sup> His "Dying testimony" is found in "the Review" of March 1, 1881. He died March 4 and his obituary is in the March 22 issue. In a written report of 1876 he tells of SB increase in some of the 24 churches he had visited. He visited isolated areas who had been brought out through T.&M. labor. He baptized 15. "I have been laboring of late at Liberty Pole. Gave 17 discourses...4 have embraced the truth...The cheering reports from all parts of the field are encouraging, progression being apparent almost everywhere. It would seem that the Third Angel's message is swelling into the loud cry. May God help me to keep pace with it, so that when called to give up my commission my work may be well done."<sup>52</sup>

Marshall Enoch writes from Green Bay on October 20. He had gone there intending to work among the French but that way did not open as planned so he soon was in the town of Scott, near Nequick. After 16 meetings 20-40 was the average attendance and these mostly young people. He said some knew the message was true but no one had accepted. "Some who came to hear were Catholics."

"One evening, after having spoken on the Little Horn of the seventh of Daniel, while on our way home we were greeted with a shower of stones. They fell thick and fast around us, but none touched us. Psalm 34:7."<sup>53</sup>

In the same Review the name of C.W. Olds appears once more with an informative 'diary' of his travels from August 10 through September 27. It is much the same as the one written by O.A. Olsen in 1874. Elder Olds was achieving marked success in his efforts. "In all, 30 have signed the covenant, and a goodly number have signed for the REVIEW, REFORMER, and INSTRUCTOR."<sup>54</sup>

At the campmeeting held at Ripon, Wisconsin that year Uriah Smith was present. The Ripon, press gave many columns of space to Adventist news and sermons. Following the initial report of the meetings...there appeared a lengthy statement of beliefs of SDA's submitted by Uriah Smith."<sup>55</sup>

According to "the Review" the sixth annual session was held at Sparta, Monroe Co. in connection with the campmeeting June 15-19. The session was important for two different resolutions. 1) "Ministers of the conference should counsel with the Executive Committee in all important labor...and in case they neglect to seek and follow the counsel of the committee, we recommend that the Auditing Committee do not take into account their traveling expenses or their time of labor." 2) That the subject of S.B. be referred to the Executive Committee, with the request that they take measures, by all in this Conference, in coming up to the figures adopted."

The White's and Smith took part in these deliberations. The membership claimed to 1,048 as compared with 933 in 1875. There were more than the average amount of new churches.<sup>56</sup>

At the sixth session H.W. Decker was elected president. He was born in 1837. It is recorded his father, a Baptist minister, performed the first wedding and the first funeral in Wisconsin. At 22 Decker accepted Christ through the efforts of Sanborn. In 1863 he entered the ministry.

He was one of a committee of three that obtained C.O. status for our soldiers in 1863. He was president in Wisconsin from 1876-1885 except for 1880-81. He also labored in Texas, Illinois, and many years in the Pacific Northwest where he was the chief promoter of locating and building Walla Walla College and the Portland Sanitarium. He was one of the first to introduce tithing to our people.<sup>57</sup>

During 1877 there are articles in "the Review" that tell of Atkinson and Decker working together in evangelism as well as individual labors. At Ordino they tell of a woman whose principal means of learning the truth has been through the SIGNS magazine, just three years old at the time.<sup>58</sup>

Issac Sanborn writes of labors in Mt. Pisgah, Sugar Grove, and Viroqua. Those at Viroqua who had even though "every possible effort has been made to overthrow them."<sup>59</sup>



David Downer writes a particularly inspiring article from Thompson's Valley where despite oppression from ministers of other denominations a baptism of eight took place before a crowd of 200, six miles from there. He left 25 keeping the Sabbath. Nineteen signed the covenant to obey the Bible teachings and this from replacing a Methodist minister in his pulpit Sunday night!<sup>60</sup>

Elder G.C. Tenney gives us a brief glance at the 1877 campmeeting in his article in "the Review". He later worked at the Battle Creek Sanitarium from 1903-1921.<sup>61</sup> Tenney says in his article that there were 45 tents on the ground, including three large ones, one of which was 60x100 feet.

On Sabbath O.A. Olsen had the church service speaking from I Peter 3:9. At two p.m. Elder Decker spoke on the second coming. Elder Sanborn followed with "an earnest exhortation to the unconverted and backslidden to prepare for that great event. Sixty five responded by going forward for prayers." It sounds like a good old fashioned altar call was made, praise the Lord for them. We need to have more of them today. They are nothing to be ashamed of. We shouldn't allow the Pentecostals to so warp their image that we are afraid to use this method for soul winning. This meeting "occupied most of the afternoon".

On Sunday Olsen spoke on the signs of the times, the crowd being "almost as silent as if in a church". At two p.m. Sanborn preached on the Sabbath. By that time an estimated 4,000 were present who paid good attention. It would seem that with a Conference of only about 1,000 that 75% of these listeners that day would have been non-Adventist! What a great evangelistic effort campmeeting was back in the 1870's. That was one of it's original purposes.

Thirty-two were baptized that afternoon, this also being used as an evangelistic tool to awaken interest in those that needed to make their decision for Jesus. In the evening Sanborn continued his preaching on the Sabbath question. On Monday 150 testimonies were given in an hour at the T.&M. Society meeting.<sup>62</sup>

The seventh annual session was held on the campgrounds at Portage. President Decker was in the chair.

Three general resolutions we passed, only one of far reaching significance. 1) That they acknowledged the hand of God in opening the way for ministry in Scandinavia, and that they prayed for God's blessing to be with Elder Matteson as he went overseas (he sailed for Denmark in the spring, becoming a pioneer missionary overseas).<sup>63</sup> 2) In order to prevent the impositions of unworthy persons upon the new churches, "the brethren, when traveling, should provide themselves with letters of commendation, with which they may be required to prove their standing among our people". 3) A special word of thanks went to the citizens of Portage "for their kindness and the good order they have observed during our campmeeting". Above all thanks went to the owner who had provided the grounds free of charge.

It was seen that the number of churches was about 45 with 990 members, a 58 member decrease. This may be because of a lack of church clerks reports at the time of the campmeeting. The figures in those days were merely estimates, not 'cut and dried' figures. The conference planned on sending our five tents of evangelism for the 1877 summer season.<sup>64</sup>

The Black Creek, Maiden Rock, and Scott churches were organized. They had formerly been "organized as a French-Belgian church by D.T. Bourdeau in 1873 known as Wequioc". The "Adams church was organized by H.W. Decker as the work of A.D. Olsen with 18 members". Fish Creek, organized by Decker and Sanborn in 1876 united with Plain field in 1877.<sup>65</sup>

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## CONCLUSION

The study of Wisconsin Conference development has been very interesting for me. Not only do I know things now which I didn't know before but this knowledge has already taught me lessons which I trust will make me better prepared to enter upon the work.

The study is one of varied cultural backgrounds, it was truly a mission field one hundred years ago, but it is no less of a mission field today. In proportion to state population there are not many more Adventists there today as then. The rate of growth was nearly 100 per year 100 years ago, today with five times as many members it is no higher, and we work in the cities, not just countryside as the pioneers.

One of them wrote in 1877 "we are full of hope and courage. There never were as many openings and calls for labor in this state as there are at the present time."<sup>66</sup> This is today a challenge for us not only in Wisconsin but everywhere. Are we full of hope and courage in the Lord? There was never a time such as the one we live in today to go out into the harvest for it is ripe for reaping. Let us pray to be fit instruments of His.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Neufeld, Don F. The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia. Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Ass.; 1966, p.1431.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1431.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 1431.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 1431.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 1431.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 1431.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 1431.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 1432.

<sup>9</sup>White, Ellen G. Testimonies to the Church. (Vol. I ) p. 326; 327, 311-314.

<sup>10</sup>SDA Encyclopedia., p. 1432.

<sup>11</sup>White, E.G. Testimonies. (Vol. 1), pp. 116-118.

<sup>12</sup>RH, April 14, 1896.

<sup>13</sup>RH, February 25, 1915.

<sup>14</sup>Spalding, Arthur W. Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventist. Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Ass.; 1961, p. 227, 228.

<sup>15</sup>RH, April 14, 1896.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Spalding, p. 228.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>19</sup>SDA Encyclopedia, p. 1432.

<sup>20</sup>RH, June 19, 1913.

<sup>21</sup>SDA Encyclopedia, p. 1434.

<sup>22</sup>RH, July 18, 1871.

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- 23 SDA Encyclopedia, p. 1433.
- 24 Ibid., p. 1434.
- 25 RH, January 6, 1910.
- 26 RH, March 5, 1872.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 RH, April 14, 1896.
- 29 SDA Encyclopedia, p.1433.
- 30 RH, June 18, 1872.
- 31 RH, July 9, 1872.
- 32 RH, July 16, 1872.
- 33 RH, March 4, 1873.
- 34 RH, July 1, 1873.
- 35 RH, July 8, 1873.
- 36 RH, July 8, 1873.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 SDA Encyclopedia, p. 1433.
- 39 RH, June 23, 1874.
- 40 RH, February 25, 1915.
- 41 RH, August 4, 1874.
- 42 RH, August 18, 1874.
- 43 RH, August 25, 1874
- 44 RH, September 1, 1874.
- 45 RH, July 7, 1874.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 SDA Encyclopedia, p. 1433.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid.

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- 50 RH, July 1, 1875.
- 51 RH, March 22, 1881
- 52 RH, May 11, 1876.
- 53 RH, November 2, 1876.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Vault Folder, DF 2089-W "Shining Light".
- 56 SDA Encyclopedia, p. 1433, 1434.
- 57 RH, November 18, 1926.
- 58 RH, May 31, 1877.
- 59 RH, June 7, 1877.
- 60 RH, May 17, 1877.
- 61 RH, December 22, 1921.
- 62 RH, June 28, 1877.
- 63 RH, April 14, 1896.
- 64 RH, June 28, 1877.
- 65 SDA Encyclopedia, pp. 1433, 1434.
- 66 RH, June 14, 1877.

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