

V. The New Land

By Kit Watts

By 1903 about two thousand persons had made their homes among the jack pines, oaks and chestnuts of Takoma Park, Sligo Creek, its water from clear cold springs, was pronounced by government inspectors "as nearly pure as can be found" and served as the city's water supply.¹⁶

Having picked Takoma Park as the place, the Adventist locating committee inspected property for sale. They came upon a forty-seven and two-thirds acre plot just over Sligo Creek which had belonged to a Boston physician, Dr. Flower.

The wealthy doctor envisioned a sanitarium on the land. To that end he invested more than \$60,000 to buy the tract and clear it of underbrush. However, financial misfortune overtook him. The land passed into the hands of a gentleman who held the mortgage on it at a cost to him of \$15,000. He was willing to sell for \$6,000.

A. G. Daniells was to say, "The providence of God opened the way before us."¹⁷

In December 1903 Daniells sent a sketch of the property, marked with the proposed sites for college and sanitarium buildings, to Ellen White. Willie later recalled that she read the letter twice and noted that two buildings were set just 300 feet apart. The two of them walked out onto the spacious lawn at Elmshaven. Willie paced off 300 feet while she watched. "Too close," she said, but otherwise she approved the plans.¹⁸

In April 1904, she herself came to Takoma Park, lodging at the Carroll House, to show her keen interest in the new headquarters' development. By horse-drawn carriage she toured the area. She liked the town, its houses set well back from the lanes, not too close together and partially hidden in the forest-like foliage.

On May 13 she wrote, "I have several times gone over the land which has been purchased for school and sanitarium purposes, and all that I have seen is most satisfactory. The land resembles representations that have been shown me by the Lord."¹⁹

That same day Daniells and the committee completed negotiations with the city of Takoma Park for an improved sewage plant. No sewer extended east of the creek. Daniells reported that the officials offered to install the most modern sewer plant possible some distance down the Sligo, and they would remove a small sewer outlet which lay just above the sanitarium land.²⁰

The GC brethren estimated that \$100,000 would put up new administrative offices, the sanitarium and small college Ellen White had envisioned. Fund raising began and building materials were assembled. By June lumber for the college had arrived at the Takoma Park railroad sidings.²¹ (Researcher Ron Graybill discovered that a disastrous fire in Baltimore four months earlier had resulted in cheap lumber. During a 30-hour fire, 2,660 buildings in an 80-block area had been destroyed. Lumber was rushed to the scene to help rebuild. But supply exceeded the demand and dealers were still having trouble disposing of it. So Adventists got it for just about half price.)

On July 27, 1904, the Washington Training College was incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia.

About two weeks later, on August 7 denominational leaders called a Grove Meeting--an all-day affair with speeches, music and picnicking on the "Sanitarium Grounds on the Banks of the Sligo."

According to the broadside that advertised it, the purpose of the meeting was to set before the public "the Objects and Aims of the institutions now being established by Seventh-day Adventists at Takoma Park." Willie White, Judson Washburn, and Ellen White were among a long list of speakers.²²

About 300 people showed up, having followed the board walks to the edge of the town, picked their way through mud and mire to the creaking old bridge across the Sligo, and trudged up the hill to the grove. Some came from as far away as Baltimore.

During the speeches, young men were urged to attend the college and rally to erect the new buildings.

According to one account of the day, a feature of the morning was having 25 young men from 18 states and countries line up before the assembly and testify to the valuable experience they were already gaining by working on the college and sanitarium.²³

As work progressed the boys often assembled at the Carroll House by 5:30 A.M. for a devotional before they began work with ax, pick and shovel. As often as she could, Ellen White met to pray with them.²⁴

Since the working crew was quartered in tents, building a men's dormitory was first priority. In quick succession a girls' dorm and dining hall were erected. Classes began November 30, 1904, meeting for the most part in the Manor House which stood in the center of the Manor Circle of today.

Footnotes:

16. The Call of God, The Development of the Work in Washington, D.C., p. 2, A. G. Daniells, E. G. White; booklet at White Estate.
17. Review & Herald, August 20, 1903, p. 5.
18. Summarized from Graybill.
19. The Call of God, p. 19, 20.
20. Ibid, p. 17.
21. "A Vision Which Materialized," Gordon Rhodes, Sligonian, April 29, 1952.
22. Photo of broadside, Sligonian, December 3, 1943, p. 1.
23. "Leaders Study Objectives," Beatric Keith, Sligonian, December 3, 1943.
24. "The Work for This Time," Ellen G. White, Review & Herald, May 25, 1905.