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## TELLING THE STORY

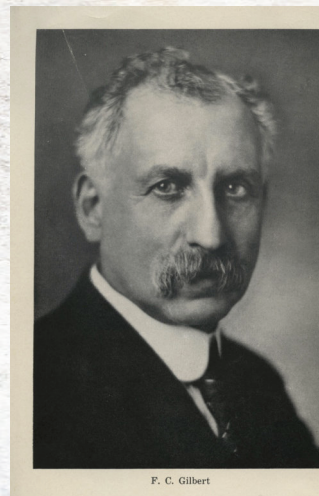
Archives, Statistics,  
and Research (ASTR)  
Newsletter - Issue #15



### Spring 2023 Greetings from ASTR!

Friendly greetings from the ASTR team! We hope the Spring season offers you many opportunities to enjoy some fresh air and sunshine. Yet, while we do sincerely hope you find time to enjoy nature's beauty as life returns to it, we also share a warm welcome to those that are drawn to the knowledge that archives alone can offer. So we hope you enjoy this new issue of the ASTR Newsletter!

In this issue you will read about our latest finding aid for F. C. Gilbert; our first President, John Byington; the level of commitment and satisfaction Adventists have toward and with the Church; an article on J.N. Andrews's delegate credentials; and a history of ASTR! As always, we look forward to your feedback and continuing support of Adventist history!



F. C. Gilbert

The bulk of the collection was donated by Miriam Tymeson, one of Gilbert's daughters, in several donations between 1974 and 1984. More material was added to the collection in 1975 by Kenneth H. Wood while he was editor of the *Review and Herald*. At the time of its original arrangement, books and pamphlets were transferred out of the collection and into the general holdings of the Library. Diaries and a photo album, belonging to Gilbert's aunt-in-law, Jennie

Thayer, were removed from this collection in 2015 and 2022 and added to the existing Thayer Collection (MS 7).

### Gilbert Collection Finding Aid

One of the newest finding aids that we have produced is for one of our oldest manuscript collections. The Frederick C. Gilbert Collection, 1855-1950 (MS 8) contains correspondence, diaries, photographs and photo albums, slides, cloth charts, pamphlets, sermon and article notes, and books created or collected by Frederick C. Gilbert, who was an Adventist evangelist, author, and administrator.



F. C. Gilbert and family

Some of the interesting items in the collection include Gilbert's account of his survival during the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, cloth charts, book manuscripts, photographs of his travels as one of the very first General Conference field secretaries (a role he filled for twenty or so years), and appointment journals. While the materials have not been digitized, they are open to scholars and other visitors who make research appointments to the Archives.

You can read about F. C. Gilbert's life at the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* [here](#) and check out the collection's finding aid [here](#).

Ashlee Chism



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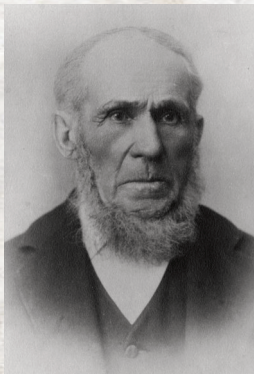
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## John Byington (1798–1887): First President of the General Conference of SDA Church

Did you know that John Byington was a circuit-riding preacher and fervent abolitionist before becoming an Adventist and later first General Conference president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? The following account of his life has been adapted from an [article](#) by Brian E. Strayer in the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* at [encyclopedia.adventist.org](http://encyclopedia.adventist.org) (all photos from ESDA).



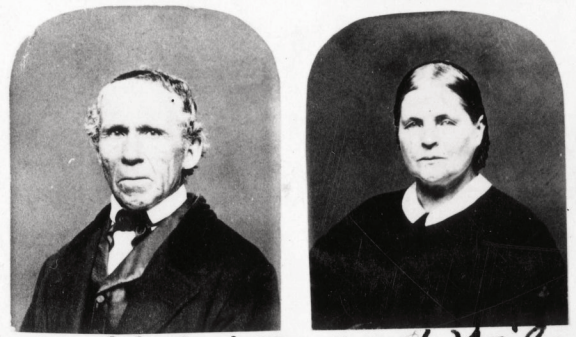
John Byington, 1860s

### Early Life

John Byington was born on October 8, 1798, in Hinesburg, Vermont, to Justus Byington (1763–1839), a Revolutionary War veteran and circuit-riding Methodist-Episcopal preacher, and Lucy (Hinsdale) Byington (1759–1852). Because of the nature of Justus Sr.'s peripatetic ministry between 1803 and 1820, the family of twelve moved frequently around Vermont and northern New York.

In 1816, at age 18, John experienced conversion; the following year he received a license to preach for the Methodist-Episcopal Church in Vermont. After completing his probationary period, John was ordained to the gospel ministry and assigned a preaching circuit in northern Vermont and New York. On October 15, 1823, John married Mary Priscilla Ferris (1803–1829), and together they had two daughters, Julia (who died shortly after birth in 1824) and Caroline (born in 1826). When Mary died of unknown causes in 1829, John married Catharine Newton, a school teacher, on January 25, 1830, and together they had six children: Laura (born in 1831), John

Fletcher (born in 1832), Martha (born in 1834), Teresa (born in 1837), Luther Lee (born in 1838), and William Wilberforce (born in 1840).



Eld. John Byington and Wife.

Center Adventist Research

John and Catherine Byington

### Farmer, Preacher, Reformer

In 1832, the Byingtons moved to Potsdam Township in St. Lawrence County, New York, where John purchased 82 acres of farmland along the banks of the Grasse River near Bucks Bridge. Within twenty years, the Byingtons' commercial farm, which had grown to encompass 200 acres, contained horses, oxen, cows, sheep, pigs, and many grain crops; it annually produced 800 pounds of butter, 800 pounds of cheese, and 200 pounds of maple sugar for sale in New York City and Boston.

In the 1820s, contention over the bishops' autocratic power and other issues in the Methodist-Episcopal Church inspired 200 members and fourteen ministers—including John's father Justus Byington—to form a dissident movement called the Associate Methodist Reformers, which by 1830 had become the Methodist Protestant Church. While John sympathized with many of the positions taken by the Methodist Protestant Church, during the 1830s he continued preaching for the Methodist-Episcopal Church. Yet because neither the Methodist-Episcopal Church nor the Methodist Protestant Church opposed slavery in the 1830s, scores of Methodist ministers—including John Byington—seceded from these two denominations and in 1843 formed the Wesleyan Methodist Church. John supported the new Church's refusal to admit as members anyone who owned slaves or sanctioned slavery.



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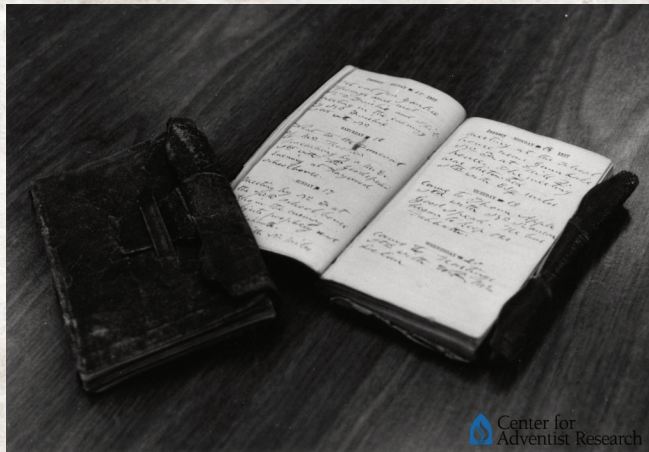
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These are two diaries of John F. Byington

### **Sabbatarian Adventist Innovator**

In March 1852, shortly after burying their daughters Laura (age 21) and Teresa (age 15), who had died of smallpox, John and Catharine Byington accepted the Adventist message. On July 3, George Holt baptized them, their daughter Martha, and their son Fletcher in the Grasse River.

Between 1852 and 1856, Byington frequently joined James White, C. W. Sperry, and August and Daniel Bourdeau in holding meetings throughout St. Lawrence County and Vermont; he also served as the *Review* agent for northern New York. During meetings in the Byington home in 1854, the family witnessed Ellen White in vision. In 1854, the Byingtons formed a Sabbath school in their home, with Catharine teaching the children, whose number grew to 44 by 1855. To provide for an expanding membership, in the summer of 1855, John built the first Sabbath-keeping Adventist meetinghouse in New York. In October James White held what may have been the first church dedication service there in what he called "this House of Prayer."

### **Preaching Ministry in Michigan**

In May 1856 John Byington moved to Michigan. Between 1857 and 1887, Byington followed the life of the circuit-riding preacher, crisscrossing Michigan and northern Indiana in a buggy, carriage, or sleigh pulled by his favorite horse, Dolly, in all kinds of weather, preaching, visiting in homes, and holding Sabbath school, church, prayer, testimony, and baptismal meetings. "No one knows Michigan like John Byington" became a byword among believers.<sup>2</sup>

While Byington sometimes received reimbursement for his travel expenses, he never accepted a salary either from the Michigan Conference or the General Conference. Instead, income from his 99-acre farm paid for his part-time ministry. However, in her June and July 1859 letters, Ellen White implored him to do full-time ministry, which he eventually did.<sup>3</sup>

### **General Conference President**

Byington's experiences in New York as a religious and political organizer served him well in Michigan during the 1860s. Although he originally favored the name "Church of God," Byington accepted the consensus in 1860 that

### **Anti-Slavery Activist**

Between 1844 and 1852, John Byington was an active participant in the anti-slavery movement both at the county, state, and national level. He joined the American Anti-Slavery Society (formed in 1833) and chaired meetings of the St. Lawrence Anti-Slavery Society, the Abolitionist Convention, and the Friends of Freedom in Bucks Bridge, Potsdam, Parishville, Lawrence, and Canton, New York. He served as a delegate to the New York Anti-Slavery Society conventions. Between 1839 and 1854, he signed petitions calling on the United States Congress to abolish slavery.

In 1840, several abolitionists and evangelicals formed the Liberty Party, the first truly anti-slavery and libertarian national political organization. Members pressured legislators to take anti-slavery positions and end the interstate slave trade. They favored separation of church and state and universal suffrage (including voting by women and blacks). John Byington played an active role in this political party.

Members of the Byington family were also active in the Underground Railroad, helping fugitive slaves escape from the South and find new lives in Canada. In New York state, John Byington served as one of the Underground Railroad agents for St. Lawrence County. He built secret "hidey holes" to conceal black fugitives in the Methodist chapel in Bucks Bridge and in the parish house in Morley; he might have built one in his home in Bucks Bridge.<sup>1</sup>



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the name "Seventh-day Adventist" better reflected the Church's cardinal beliefs. That same year he also helped incorporate the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association. During 1861 and 1862 he organized more than twenty local churches in the state and helped form the Michigan Conference. In October 1862 he became an ordained minister of that Conference and was elected to the Michigan Conference Committee.

When the General Conference was formed in May 1863, John Byington was chosen as its first president when James White declined to serve for personal reasons. During his two one-year terms (1863–1865), Byington traveled hundreds of miles throughout Michigan and Indiana establishing churches, preaching, baptizing converts, ordaining deacons and elders, and visiting families in their homes. *Letters to the Review* praised Byington for bringing unity, revival, and harmony wherever he went. In 1864 he was instrumental in securing noncombatant status for Adventist men inducted into the army. Byington chaired the 1865 General Conference Session when James White, who had been elected as the next General Conference president, was too ill to attend.

ministry. Thanks in part to the labor provided by his grandchildren and hired helpers on the farm, he kept preaching part time. In May 1880, while plowing a field, John cut his foot so badly that it festered, leaving him lame for months. Recognizing (at age 82) that his farming days were over, John sold the farm in November 1880. He spent his time doing good deeds for others and attending services at the Dime Tabernacle. Catharine died on February 22, 1885, and was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery in Battle Creek. John Byington died on January 7, 1887, and was buried beside Catharine, his wife of sixty years.

**Contribution**

While John Byington is remembered as the first president of the General Conference (1863–1865), many of his other contributions have been forgotten. Prior to his conversion to Sabbath-keeping Adventism in 1852, he played leading roles in reforming the Methodist Church, shaping the anti-slavery movement in North America, promoting abolitionism through the Liberty and Free Soil parties, and helping fugitive slaves escape to Canada via the Underground Railroad. During his thirty-five years as a Seventh-day Adventist minister (1852–1887), Byington baptized hundreds of converts, established dozens of local churches, and helped to form the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, the Michigan Conference, and the General Conference, and participated in securing noncombatant status for Adventist inductees during the Civil War.



Grave of John Byington

Brian E. Strayer, adapted by Dragoslava Santrac

<sup>1</sup>Brian E. Strayer, *John Byington: First General Conference President, Circuit-Riding Preacher, and Radical Reformer* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2017), 80–86.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur W. Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1961), 1:222.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White to John Byington, June 21, 1859, and c. June–July 1859, Letters 2 and 28, 1859, accessed May 3, 2018, [egwwritings.org](http://egwwritings.org).



Home of George and Martha Amadon in Battle Creek, MI, where John spent the last years of his life

**Later Ministry**

During the 1870s, as the Michigan Conference renewed his ministerial credentials and the railroads granted him half-price fares, Byington continued his peripatetic



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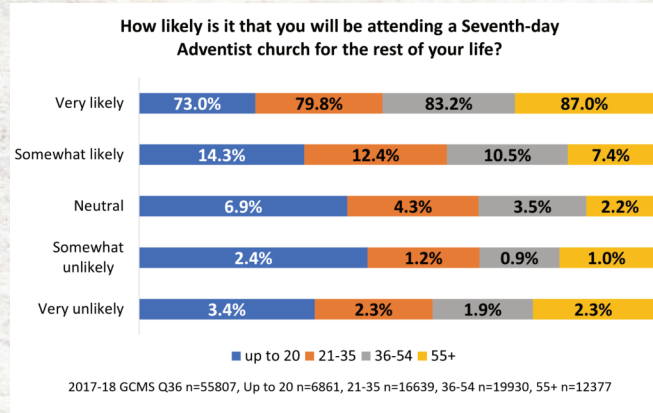
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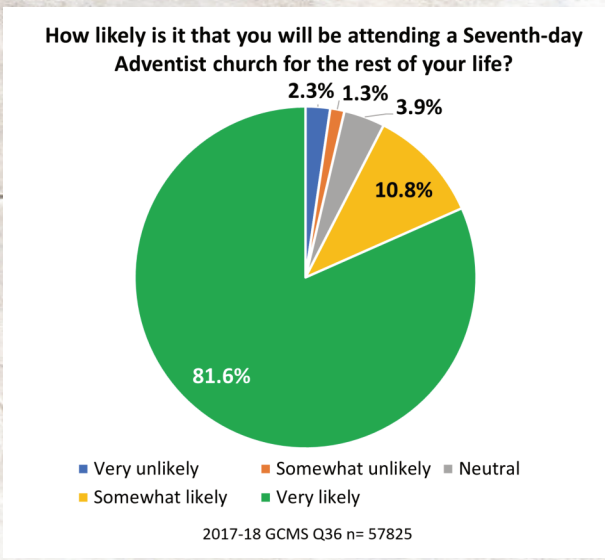
### Commitment to the Adventist Church and Satisfaction with the Local Church

As we are nearing another milestone in Adventist history, the 160th anniversary of the birth of our Church, we like to look at the commitment and satisfaction of Adventist church members from around the world. While the Church has grown significantly during the last century, especially in Latin America and Africa, how do church members feel about the Church as an organization and locally?

During the 2017-18 Global Church Member Survey, church members were asked how likely they would be to attend the Adventist Church for the rest of their lives. A majority (82%) stated that it was very likely, while another 11% stated that it was somewhat likely. Overall, the data showed that Adventists are committed to the Church.

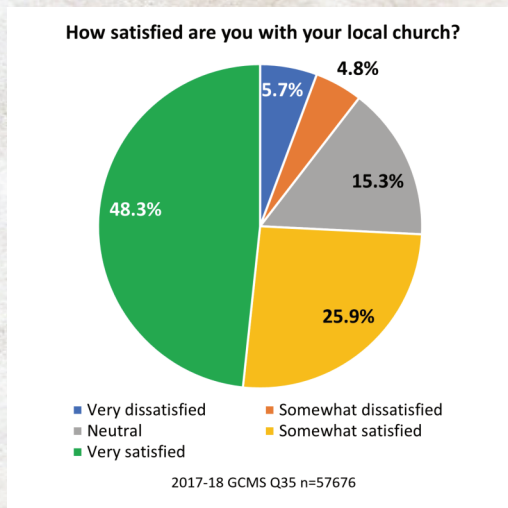


While a majority of each age group stated it was committed to the Church, it should be noticed that less than 75% of the up to 20-year-old respondents stated that it was very likely and only 1 out of 7 stated that it would be somewhat likely to for them to attend an Adventist Church for the rest of their lives. Almost 6% of them stated that it was somewhat unlikely or very unlikely for them to attend an Adventist church for the rest of their lives. Is it possible that the experience with their local church and their satisfaction with it, has an impact on their commitment to the Church overall?



When the respondents were asked about their local church and how satisfied they were with it, less than half (48%) stated they were very satisfied, and another quarter stated they were somewhat satisfied. More than 10% of the respondents stated that they were very dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with their local church.

Do all age groups feel the same way about their commitment to the Church? In order to find out the answer to this question the data were cross-tabulated with four age categories: up to 20 years old, 21-35 years old, 36-54 years old, and 55 and older.





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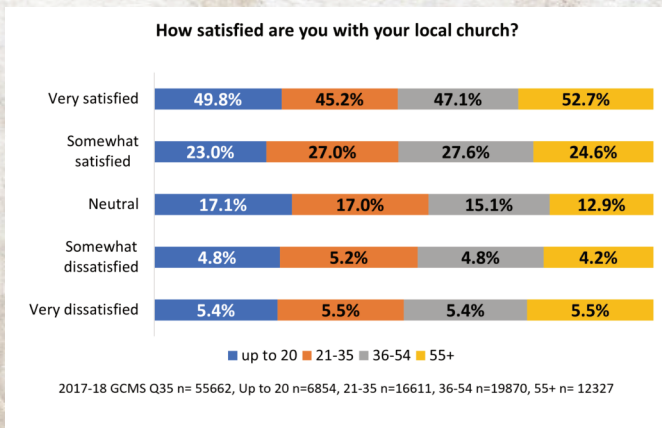
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In order to find out what age groups were more dissatisfied than others, the data were again cross-tabulated by the age group categories. Surprisingly, the data showed that there was not one singled-out group that was more dissatisfied than the others. About 10% of the respondents in each age group were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.



While some might assume that the younger generation (up to 20 years old) would be the group least satisfied with their local church, the data showed that the 21-35-year-old respondents were the ones that were least satisfied with their local church.

It is encouraging to see that almost 3 out of 4 respondents in each age group were very or somewhat satisfied with their local church experience. Nevertheless, the question arose, how can the local church experience be more positive? Is your local church inclusive? Is every age group able to be involved in church programs and church life? Is each age group involved in the decision-making in your local church? In other words, do we acknowledge the talents and gifts of our church members no matter their age?

We all are the body of Christ! We may all have different gifts and talents, but everybody wants to belong. Let us be an inclusive and warm church that sees the potential in church members, is willing to mentor them, and helps them to belong.

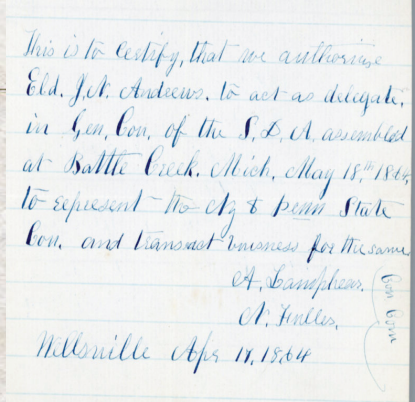
Manuela Coppock

## A Single Record is Worth a Thousand Words

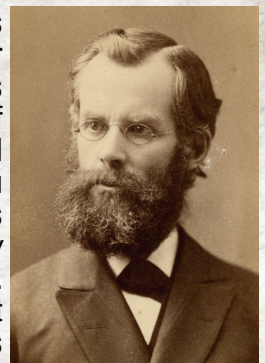
The General Conference Archives and the Rebek Memorial Library each have a variety of records, all capturing events and interactions within the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some of the earliest materials we have are the folder of delegate credentials for the second General Conference Session, held from May 18 to May 21, 1864. These credentials were issued for John N. Andrews, William S. Ingraham, James Harvey, J. H. Waggoner, Joseph Clarke, and Washington Morse. Let's look at a single set of credentials—a single record—and see what stories it may have to tell.

Two men wrote a short note on a palm-sized piece of paper on April 17, 1864, authorizing John N. Andrews to represent the New York and Pennsylvania State Conference of Seventh-day Adventists at the General Conference Session. The credentials read:

This is to certify, that we authorize  
 Eld. J. N. Andrews to act as delegate  
 in Gen. Con. of the S. D. A. assembled  
 at Battle Creek, Mich. May 18th, 1864,  
 to represent the Ny & Penn State  
 Con. and transact business for the same.  
 A. Lamphear  
 N. Fuller  
 Wellsville Apr. 17, 1864



A note to the side of the two names notes that Lamphear and Fuller were the "Con Com", or members of the Conference Committee. Of course, one story that the record points to is that of Andrews. (You can read Gil Valentine's *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* article on John N. Andrews [here](#).) But what about those who authorized his credentials?



J.N. Andrews  
(Ellen G. White Estate)



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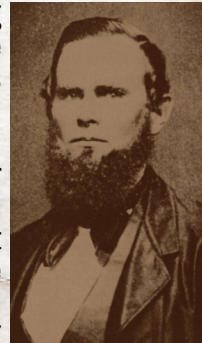
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Avery Lanphear (or Lamphear; it appears that both spellings were used) was in his late forties. Although born in Rhode Island in 1815, Lanphear grew up and lived in New York. His family were Seventh Day Baptists, and at age thirteen he joined his local church. In 1851, he was made deacon of his local church, a position he held until 1858, when he became a Sabbath-keeping Adventist. He was soon made a deacon, and in 1863 he became a local elder. Lanphear was elected in late 1863 to be the president of the New York Conference. In 1864 he had become a ministerial licentiate, and at the third constituency meeting of the New York and Pennsylvania Conference, held in September 1864 and attended by James and Ellen White, he was re-elected as president and recognized by the conference as a preacher, "to labor in the cause as Providence may open the way".<sup>1</sup> It was also at this meeting that the New York and Pennsylvania Conference voted the following three important resolutions, which Uriah Smith promptly printed in the *Review*, commenting "They are such as will commend themselves to every enlightened conscience throughout the land."

"Resolved, That in view of the fact that the national administration is doing a great work toward the suppression of slavery, we consider it a criminal act to cast our votes for those whose business, we have reason to believe, would be to restore to slavery the many thousands already delivered therefrom."<sup>2</sup>

Avery Lanphear was president of the New York and Pennsylvania Conference until his untimely death in 1866. On his way to that year's conference meeting, Lanphear was thrown from his wagon and badly injured; nearby strangers took him in and cared for him, where he lingered for nine days before succumbing to fever and his injuries on October 5, 1866.<sup>3</sup>

Nathan Fuller is the other man issuing John N. Andrews credentials to the General Conference Session, and he was elected to the conference's presidency in the wake of Lanphear's death. Brought up in the Methodist Episcopal church, Fuller became a Sabbath-keeping Adventist in 1857 and soon was preaching the Advent message. He was even a delegate to the very first General Conference Session in 1863. However, within years of becoming New York-Pennsylvania Conference president, Fuller had what is called a "moral fall", the result of which was that he had his ministerial credentials removed and was disfellowshipped. (You can read more about his life [here](#) in Brian Strayer's article about him in the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*.)



Nathan Fuller  
(Adventist Heritage Journal)



Lanphear Brothers (Google)

"Resolved, That we regard slavery as the great sin of our nation, and the prime cause of the existing rebellion; and that we regard Southern slave-holders, and Northern sympathizers with slavery, as alike guilty in this matter.

"Resolved, That in the present crisis of our national affairs, this Conference, though holding non-combatant views, deem it their duty to say that we are a thoroughly loyal, as well as anti-slavery people; and that our sympathies are with the national government in its struggle against this wicked rebellion.

The Archives is happy to preserve these credentials (as well as many other records) and to share the stories that such records have to tell.

Ashlee Chism

<sup>1</sup>A. Lanphear and J. M. Aldrich, "Third Annual Report of the N. Y. and Northern Pa. Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventists", *Review and Herald* 24:22 (October 25, 1864), 174-175.

<sup>2</sup>"The N. Y. Conference—Important Resolutions", *Review and Herald* 24:21 (October 18, 1864), 168.

<sup>3</sup>[athan] Fuller, "Death of Bro. Lanphear", *Review and Herald* 28:22 (October 30, 1866), 175.



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## As always, remember to help us Tell the Story!

As a reminder, our purpose here at ASTR is to tell the Adventist story. We want to inform and inspire church members toward a renewed commitment to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church by sharing our history.

You can help us to tell the story in two ways:

**First**, help us to preserve the story: your stories and the Church's story! Letters and other documents, memoirs, photographs, tape recordings, audio and video cassettes, films, and historic books and magazines: all enable us to recover the story of how, in the words of Ellen White, "the Lord has led us . . . in our past history" and of how God has worked in the lives of individual church members. They are the raw materials from which Adventist history can be researched by scholars and without which parts of that history will be lost. So please, [contact us](#) about sending your family's documents, photographs, and other historic materials to us so that they can be preserved and used to help the great Second Advent Movement fulfill its prophetic mission.

**Second**, help us to conserve and to share the story—to pass it on to the next generation. Historic Adventist photographs and movies allow us to connect with our past in a way nothing else can, because we look into the eyes of those who sacrificed to make this Church. We want to digitize those precious resources, scanning them electronically so they can be accessed by everyone. We especially want to connect with young people. By digitizing photos and movies, we can help them to understand "the way the Lord has led us and His teaching in our past history"—we can help them to connect with our pioneers and be inspired to service.

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### Your gift of at least \$25 could:

- Digitize 100 feet of film = five minutes viewing time, or
- Conserve, digitize, and publicize one historic Adventist photograph from our collection of thousands, or
- Contribute to our continuing effort to preserve and digitize rare Adventist books, pamphlets, and magazines

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- 1) Mail your remittance to:  
GC Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research  
12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD  
20904
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