


Mahlon Ellsworth
Olsen



Health Reformer,
Educator, and Historian


Olsen Family Name

Prominent in Seventh-day Adventist history

Most visible:

Ole Andres Olsen

- Well-known denominational leader and General Conference president (1888-1897)



M. E. Olsen

- A respected health reformer
- An administrator of Adventist educational institutions
- A pioneer in alternative educational modalities
- A prolific writer
- A denominational historian

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Relative
Obscurity

Purpose

1. Recreate the memory of MEO as a person

- ✓ Sketch a biographical account
- ✓ Define the inner man
 - Examining his literary productions
 - Incorporating recollections

2. Highlight MEO's contributions to the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Health Education Literature History

Chronological Approach

1. The Early Years (1873-1900)
2. Years in Europe (1900-1909)
3. Years in Colleges (1909-1923)
4. Years at Fireside (1923-1946)
5. The Closing Years (1946-1952)

Themes

1. The importance of good health
2. A confidence in the inspiration of Ellen White
3. The need for an efficient use of time
4. The role of fine literature and of the arts in personal formation

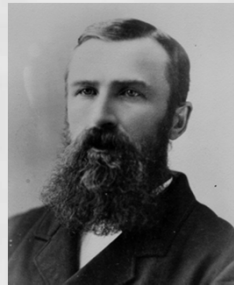
5. The importance of adult education
6. The need for pastoral training
7. The maturing of an educational philosophy

The Early Years

1873-1900

O. A. Olsen

- Born in Norway in 1845 to Lutheran parents
- Five years later, the family emigrated to the United States and settled in southern Wisconsin
- In America, the Olsen family began to attend the Methodist church
- A few years later, they were among the first Scandinavians to join the Adventist church



O. A. Olsen

- Four of the sons, including OAO, would become Adventist ministers
- James White took a special interest in OAO and often referred to him as “my boy.”¹



¹M. M. Olsen, *Memories and Experiences* (Copenhagen: c. 1936, translated by Dyre Dyresen in 1978), p. 9, AUHR.

O. A. Olsen Family

- In 1868, OAO married **Jennie Nelson**, who was frequently in delicate health due to a sunstroke in her youth
- A son, **Alfred Berthier**, was born in 1869
- On March 28, 1873, a second son, **Mahlon Ellsworth**, was born in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin



O. A. Olsen's Sons



Boyhood Years: Whites

James and Ellen White were frequent guests at the Olsen home in Green Bay, Wisconsin



On their first visit they looked over our small collection of books, somewhat the worse for wear, and before leaving they enriched our little library with four volumes of stories bearing the title Sabbath Readings. Mrs. White had herself selected the stories in these very readable books.¹

¹MEO, *Much-Loved Books* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1952), p. 55.

Boyhood Years: Scandinavia



- In 1886, O. A. Olsen was asked to serve as a missionary to Scandinavia
- In the summer of 1887, Mrs. White again visited the Olsen family, who were living at this time in Christiania (Oslo), Norway

Boyhood Years: Moss Campmeeting



- Together the Olsen's and E. G. White held the first Seventh-day Adventist campmeeting to take place in Europe, where Ellen White was the main speaker
- Although quite a number attended the meetings, there were but two family tents—one for Mrs. White and her secretaries, and one for the Olsens

Moss Campmeeting (1887)



Moss Campmeeting (1887)



Moss Campmeeting (1887)



Clarence Olsen



Boyhood Years: Scandinavia

- While there, EGW wrote personal messages in each of the Olsen boys' autograph albums
- MEO later recalled that EGW did not seem to mind their noise and was glad to see the children having a good time, and he noted:

We children had favorite aunts and uncles, but even near relatives did not more completely win our hearts and affections than did James and Ellen White.¹

¹MEO, *Much-Loved Books* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1952), p. 56-57.

Adolescent Years: Return to America

- In 1888, OAO called to be president of the General Conference and the family returned to America
- In the spring of 1890, M. E. Olsen, who was working as a General Conference stenographer, attended a Bible school held for the leading ministers of the denomination
- Ellen White gave a series of talks emphasizing righteousness by faith. MEO took it all down and observed that Mrs. White never referred directly to the teaching of Jones and Waggoner.

Adolescent Years: OAO's Influence

OAO loved books and wanted his sons to share this appreciation:

My father said "yes" oftener than "no".... One thing he never denied us even at times when money was very scarce, and that was books.¹
"If you spend twenty-five hours in playing games, you have nothing of real value to show for it; but if you spend one hour in reading a good book, you will have stored up some useful knowledge."²

¹MEO, "When Father Said 'No,'" YI, January 17, 1928.

²MEO, *Much-Loved Books* (Washington, D. C: Review and Herald, 1952), p. 10.

Adolescent Years: G. H. Bell

MEO wished to study literature and early one morning, he found the professor sitting on the edge of his porch, in blue jeans and wearing a dilapidated straw hat



The whole bearing of the man impressed me at once with a sense of dignity and simplicity.... [Thus began] the most satisfying and fruitful part of my education.¹

¹MEO, "Recollections of Prof. G. H. Bell," YI, May 18, 1920, p. 4-5.

Adolescent Years: G. H. Bell

- Throughout MEO's college studies and until Bell's death, they studied English and American authors together
- Especially admired Wordsworth, Bell's favorite poet
- Although it occupied no more than a dozen years of his life full-time, the teaching of English, and especially literature, was to be MEO's best-loved work



College Days

- MEO attended Battle Creek College from 1890-1894
- W. W. Prescott was president during much of this time
- MEO later recalled that he was particularly moved by the declaration “They shall all be taught of God” that Prescott had commissioned be painted on the college chapel wall just over the rostrum



College Days

- In 1894, MEO graduated from the Classical course with a Bachelor of Arts
- Uriah Smith was president of the board of trustees; board members included J. H. Kellogg, O. A. Olsen, and W. W. Prescott
- George W. Caviness was college president
- Professors included P. T. Magan in history and F. Griggs in the English department



Battle Creek College, *Nineteenth Annual Calendar* [1894].

A. B. Olsen

- During this time, MEO’s brother was studying medicine at the University of Michigan under the sponsorship of the General Conference
- Upon graduation, J. H. Kellogg asked ABO to join the faculty of the American Medical Missionary College where he taught until 1901
- The relationships that ABO gained during this period were to significantly influence his younger brother’s life



A New Denominational Worker

- After his graduation from Battle Creek College, MEO became secretary to his father who was still the president of the General Conference
- He also began to take advanced work in English at the University of Michigan
- In 1897 MEO was issued a ministerial license



A New Writer

- Began to write articles for the R&H
 - First article, "Christian Growth" (3 dimensions)
 - Next article dealt with methods by which children may become involved in missionary work
 - Another stressed that formal missionary meetings should last but half an hour and close on time
 - How to write effective letters: neatness, correct spelling, avoid difficult words or complex sentences
- In all, nearly 300 articles in Adventist journals

A Health Advocate

- In a series of five articles, Olsen reported the 1897 Summer School at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, conducted by Drs. Kellogg and Kress
- By August, 1897 Olsen had become an active supporter of the health movement and wrote his first article on the evils of smoking



Advocate of Correspondence Study

The year 1899 again found Olsen reporting the Battle Creek summer school, with a new element:

There is yet another large class of young people, as well as those of more advanced age, who desire to engage in medical missionary work, but cannot spend the time and money to take a course at one of our sanitariums. It is to meet the wants of such that the Correspondence Department of the Training-School was started.¹

¹ MEO, "Home Training in Medical Missionary Work," RH, July 25, 1899, p. 480.

Advocate of Correspondence Study

- The correspondence department, a division of the Battle Creek Sanitarium Training School, had at this time been in operation for six months
- The correspondence course consisted of 100 lessons, two of which would be received and completed by the student each week
- It was an international school and one of the students resided as far away as Joppa, Palestine

Emerging Themes

Temperance
Efficient Use of Time
Correspondence Schooling
Study of Literature
Missionary Work

Years in Europe

1900-1909

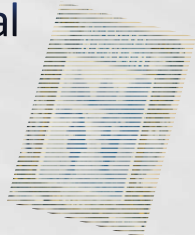
A Call to England

- In 1900, MEO was requested to assist his brother, ABO, who was developing health work in England
- Soon after MEO's arrival, the British Conference elected W. W. Prescott as president, and MEO was chosen conference secretary and secretary of the tract society
- The following year, OAO was requested to lead the Adventist work in Great Britain, which he did for the next several years



The Beginnings of a Journal

- In November, 1901, the two Olsen brothers launched a magazine called *Good Health*, named after Dr. Kellogg's American journal, which was in its 36th year of publication
- The first issue carried an article written by MEO entitled "Juvenile Smoking"
- The brothers printed 20,000 copies of the first issue, and by the following month only a few copies were left on the shelf



The Beginnings of a Journal

- In an editorial, MEO described *Good Health* as a "wide-awake little magazine giving in a nutshell all that is latest and best in the way of health and healthful living"
- When subscriptions reached 50,000 in the 10th month, the size of the magazine was increased
- This first enlarged issue carried a history of Battle Creek Sanitarium by MEO—the beginning of a new focus, Adventist history



The Beginnings of a Journal

- Olsen endeavored to keep his readers abreast of the happenings at the Battle Creek Sanitarium
- The magazine reported both the burning of the sanitarium and the subsequent progress of building the new health center



The Living Temple

An announcement appeared in the July, 1902 issue of the magazine:

Dr. J. H. Kellogg... has prepared the manuscript for a new book, entitled The Living Temple. Good Health has received permission to print some portions of this very interesting work in advance, and the first installment will appear next month.



MEO, "Good Health Next Month," GH, July, 1902, p. 67.

The Living Temple

- The only article by J. H. Kellogg in the next issue, however, dealt with appendicitis
- The promised article did not appear until May, 1903 after the Olsen brothers had brought Kellogg to England for a series of health conferences
- At that time, an article entitled “The Living Temple” began with the words “God dwells in all nature”
- The November and December issues carried notices that Kellogg’s book *The Living Temple* could be obtained from the *Good Health* office

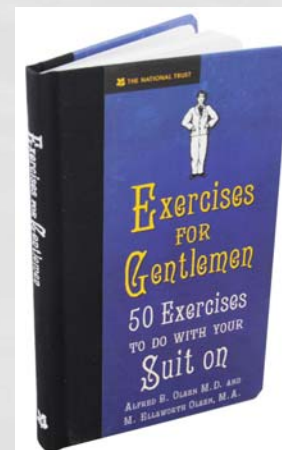
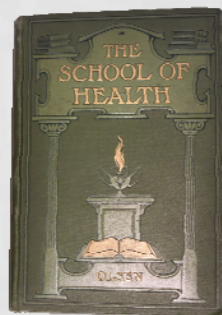
The Living Temple

- This relationship, however, was soon to change
- The June, 1906 edition of the journal carried the last article by John Harvey Kellogg, “Breath Poisoning”
- The preceding two years had seen the number of Kellogg articles steadily decreasing and those by Ellen White increasing



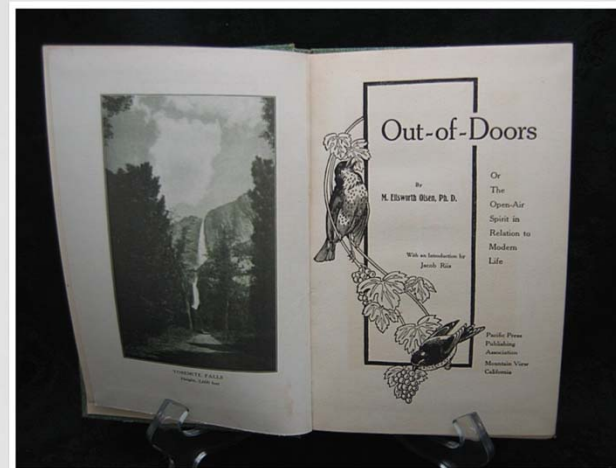
Olsen Brothers’ Publications

- In 1906, the Olsen brothers jointly published *The School of Health*, which was intended to be a “kind of ‘School for Adults’”
- Topics included: Early rising and a morning walk, nature study, proper dress, the feeding of school children, hydrotherapy, medical emergencies, morality, and smoking



MEO's First Book

- In 1906, MEO published his first book, *Out-of-Doors*
- It was dedicated to Theodore Roosevelt, the outdoor president whom he greatly admired
- The book advocated walking and jogging for health
- Also admonished that educators focused almost entirely on mental and moral development to the exclusion of the physical culture: "They seem to forget that little boys and girls have bodies as well as minds."



GH Managing Editor

- By 1903, ABO's responsibilities at the Caterham Sanitarium were absorbing more time, and MEO became managing editor
- That year, an edition of the journal was begun in India, followed by a West Indian edition in 1904, and an edition in South Africa in 1905
- By 1906, there were 75,000 subscriptions to *Good Health*, by now the health journal of largest circulation in Great Britain



Speaking Out on Education

- In the "Editorial Chat" of October, 1903, Olsen observed that school attendance was too long
- He suggested that the cram system be abolished, that schools be placed under systematic medical supervision, and that education provide for the development of the body as well as the mind
- In an article the following year, he wrote,
The nation needs a new education bill, one that shall take up the whole matter from a broad, comprehensive point of view, and provide adequately for the real needs of the children without interfering with the religious convictions of them or of their parents.

MEO, "The 'Times' on Temperance Teaching in the Schools," GH, Sept., 1904, p. 107.

Speaking Out on Education

The educational system of the country seems to us very one-sided.... Children of tender age ought not to have more than three hours mental work at the outside, and the rest of the time they should be developing strong healthy bodies.

Education should mean more than cramming the brain with a whole medley of ill-assorted facts, and tapping it now and then by means of examinations to see how far the process has been carried. If half the time spent in so-called mind-training were devoted to body-training, the result would be more satisfactory from every possible point of view.

MEO, "The Good Health Platform," GH, October, 1907, p. 518.

1906 Educational Convention

- MEO and H. R. Salisbury were British Conference delegates to the 1906 Educational Convention
- A condensed version of Olsen's address at the convention appeared in the *Review and Herald*
- In the address MEO emphasized academic excellence: "Our schools should not only be equal, but surpass, the best schools of the world in the amount of thorough intellectual work required."
- He advised teachers not to neglect intellectual progress and suggested that a part of the summer vacations should be spent in taking advanced work

Final Years in England

- In 1907, MEO became editor-in-chief of the *Good Health*, and his brother, ABO, became associate editor
- In 1909 Olsen wrote on sex education:
The remedy [for immorality] is education. Every child should be taught the basic principles of hygiene and physiology . . . and when the proper time comes such a knowledge of sexual truths should be given, by pure-minded instructors (preferably the parents) as will satisfy legitimate curiosity and guard against impure habits.

MEO, "Editorial Chat," GH, March, 1909, p. 67.

Stanborough Park (c. 1908)



J. L. Shaw



- In 1909, just as MEO was planning to return to America, a close friend of the Olsen family, J. L. Shaw, arrived at the Caterham Sanitarium
- At the time, Shaw was working in India and had contracted a serious illness, and ABO placed him on the road to recovery
- During the next 15 years, Shaw was to be much involved with MEO's life

J. W. Taylor, interview with Horace Shaw, November 10, 1984, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Years in Colleges

1909-1923

Doctoral Studies



- In 1909, Olsen completed a PhD in English Literature from the Univ. of Michigan
- He was the first Adventist to earn a doctorate in English and only the second to receive a PhD
 - The first PhD (history) had been awarded in 1908 by George Washington University to B. J. Wilkenson
- Olsen's dissertation, *Evolution of Biblical Prose*, would later be condensed and published by the denomination as a book

English Professor at the Seminary

- By the early 1900s, the foreign work of the Adventist church was calling for missionaries faster than they could be supplied
- In response to this crisis, the Washington Foreign Mission Seminary was founded in 1907
- The first president was H. R. Salisbury
- He was followed by J. L. Shaw, who asked MEO, just recently graduated from the Univ. of Michigan, to come and teach English





Romance

- During his first year as professor in Washington, Olsen met Lydia Deborah Christensen (age 18), who had just arrived from Denmark to learn English and was living with A. G. Daniels, GC president
- Lydia enrolled in one of MEO's English classes at the seminary and also private English tutoring
- By the spring of 1910, Mahlon and Lydia became engaged
- At the close of that school year Lydia returned to her home in Denmark to prepare for the wedding

A Return to Europe

The summer of 1910 was an important time for Olsen and found him traveling to Europe

1. To do research for a denominational history which he had been asked to write
2. To attend a special workers' meeting in Germany
3. At the end of the summer, MEO traveled to Denmark and married Lydia

Together they returned to Takoma Park where he surprised her with a house that he had built earlier in the summer before leaving for Europe.

A Family

- A child, Louise, was added to the Olsen family one Sabbath morning in December, 1911
- In the space of five years, four children, Louise, Alice, Olan, and Yvonne, made up the Olsen family



A Book from EGW

- Late in 1911, Ellen White sent MEO an autographed copy of her recent book, *Sketches from the Life of Paul*
- On January 12, 1912 he wrote to W. C. White:
It has the marks of her other works: the same ripe wisdom and deep insight, the same chaste style, simple yet profound in its deeper meanings, the same exquisite skill in weaving in the language of Scripture, and treating the characters of Scripture with dignity and yet with a familiarity that brings them home to the hearts of men and women of today.

MEO to W. C. White, January 12, 1912, EGWRC.

A History of the Advent Movement

- During his tenure as English professor at the seminary, Olsen was intensely involved writing *A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*
- The project, first suggested by A. G. Daniels, was begun in the latter part of 1909
- The *Review and Herald*, first-hand experiences, and interviews and correspondence with missionaries and denominational leaders were largely used as the sources

A History of the Advent Movement

- Chapters of the history were submitted to W. C. White and A. G. Daniels for critique
- Olsen wrote W. C. White:
Of this you may be sure, I would not think of putting on the press any chapters dealing with the work of your father and mother and other early pioneers without first getting as much help as possible from you.¹
- W. A. Spicer, S. N. Haskell, J. N. Loughborough, Frederick Griggs, and others helped with ideas and materials

¹MEO to W. C. White, January 12, 1912, EGWRC.

Difficulties with the *History*

- On December 19, 1912, Olsen wrote a lengthy letter to W. C. White and stated,
I confess some things have taken me longer than I myself expected, but I have been anxious that it should not be necessary to do the work over twice.¹
- One month later he added,
I am inclined to think that you will understand more easily perhaps than some of the other brethren how much is involved in preparing a really good history of the denomination.²

¹MEO to W. C. White, January 12, 1912, EGWRC.

²MEO to W. C. White, January 19, 1913, EGWRC.

Difficulties with the *History*

- One of the difficulties was that Olsen was still teaching English 4 to 5 days each week at the seminary
- Another problem was that Edson White would not cooperate in providing materials regarding the Adventist work in the South
- A family feud had developed and not even W. C. White could help out in the situation



MEO to W. C. White, January 12, 1912, EGWRC. See also letters dated May 27, 1912; June 13, 1912; December 19, 1912; and January 9, 1913, EGWRC.

The *History* Comes to Fruition

- In 1923 the *Signs of the Times* would publish a series of thirteen articles summarizing Olsen's history as it was nearing completion
- The book would be published in 1925, 16 years after it was begun
- Olsen would reflect:
Had I at the onset realized to the full the difficulties that would confront me, I am afraid I should have declined the task.¹



¹John A. Waller, "Adventist English Teachers: Some Roots," *Spectrum*, Vol. 10, No. 3.

Educational Concerns

- MEO believed that Adventist schools were evangelizing agencies and existed for the express purpose of educating the youth of the church
Adventist schools were born of a spiritual necessity, to serve the needs of a spiritual movement.¹
- The essential characteristics of these schools were that the Bible was taught in all years of schooling, manual labor and correct physical habits were emphasized, and missionary activities were promoted

¹MEO, *A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists*, p. 639.

Educational Concerns

When I see the broad plans laid for Loma Linda, I cannot help wondering when it will be possible to consider our educational system as a whole, and, after wisely reducing the number of our colleges, do for the remaining ones what needs to be done in order to put them on vantage ground and enable them to do justice to the needs of our young people.



MEO to W. C. White, January 19, 1913, EGWRC.

At the Education Conventions

During a debate at the 1910 education convention, Olsen, possessing one of the few doctoral degrees in the denomination, arose and declared:

I myself have never felt free to encourage our young people to look to the university for an education, nor even for special advanced work, except under circumstances that seemed to make it advisable....

The fact, however, that it is not wise for our young people to go to the universities of the land, is a most powerful argument in favor of raising the standard in our own colleges....

At the Education Conventions

In order to make this possible we need better libraries, better laboratories, and other facilities, and a highly trained force of teachers. Thus we might be able to do a little graduate work in our own leading colleges, which would further reduce the necessity of seeking help from outside institutions.¹

As the convention closed, Olsen recommended that teacher training departments be established at the colleges, and that the GC Department of Education support the publication of an educational journal

¹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Convention of the Department of Education (Washington, D. C: Review and Herald, 1910), p. 57, AUHR.

At the Education Conventions

- The report of the 1923 educational convention at Colorado Springs would list MEO as a delegate from the Central Union
- Unlike the 1910 convention, however, he would make no major presentations
- This, perhaps, would reflect the circumstances embroiling Olsen at that time

¹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Colorado Springs Convention—Proceedings (Washington, D. C: Review and Herald, 1923), AUHR.

Educational Administrator

- South Lancaster Academy called Olsen from WMC to serve as principal in 1917
- Bell had been the first principal of SLA in 1882
- Olsen found, however, that filling his first role as an educational administrator was rather difficult
- This was due in part to the fact that in addition to serving as principal, he was also business manager, English teacher, and superintendent of industries



Educational Administrator

- In 1918, however, under Olsen's leadership, the institution became Lancaster Junior College
- By 1919, LJC was overflowing with the largest enrollment it had ever attained
- Olsen emphasized practical subjects such as hydrotherapy, carpentry, sewing, physical culture, cooking, and farming
- In 1920, there was a special ceremony to commemorate LJC's 138 missionaries, with a dedicatory address given by J. L. Shaw

Union College Chair

- In 1920 Olsen accepted an offer to head the English Dept. at Union College
- There he frequently coordinated his English students in presenting cultural chapel programs
- While at UC, Olsen kept all of his children out of school for one year
 - Olsen, himself, supervised their studies and a teacher from the church school came by weekly



Trauma at Union College

- Morrison, the UC president who had invited MEO to join, transferred to WMC in 1922, and a new leader, O. M. John, took his place
- Under Olsen's guidance, a progressive program had been set up in the UC English department
- At the GC, however, the progressive direction previously felt in the Education Department under Frederick Griggs was giving way to a conservative retrenchment



H. A. Morrison

Trauma at Union College

- In 1923, Olsen was summarily called before the board and fired
- Although there were political issues involved, a deeper cause lay in certain books which Olsen required as reading for his English classes
- Shortly thereafter, Olsen wrote:

The higher English work is not very well understood, and hardly in favor... A good deal of ignorance exists in regard to the nature of English teaching in the higher College classes.

MEO to J. L. Shaw, March 30, 1923, AUHR.



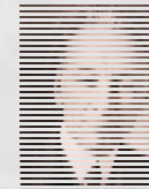
Trauma at Union College



- On March 30, 1923 Olsen wrote to his old family friend, J. L. Shaw, who was treasurer of the GC
- He noted that someone had inquired regarding his willingness to work at Fireside, the fledgling correspondence school of the Adventist church
If there were a desire to enlarge that work, to do some aggressive field work, and put it on a more paying basis as well as to strengthen standards; if there were a real vacancy, I believe I should thoroughly enjoy it.

MEO to J. L. Shaw, March 30, 1923, AUHR.

Trauma at Union College



- Shaw replied on April 18 that Olsen's case had been considered at the Spring Council but as yet no appointment had been made
- The letter noted that Olsen had provided "twenty-nine years of earnest, efficient and faithful service" and hoped that something could soon be worked out
- In fact, Shaw had already been appointed to a committee to locate a job for Olsen and had suggested that Olsen head up Fireside

Years at Fireside

1923-1946

Correspondence School Beginnings

- In the 1880s, G. H. Bell started a correspondence course in English, that lasted for a few years
- In the 1890s, E. A. Sutherland commenced correspondence courses at Walla Walla College
- Keene Academy followed suit and developed its own correspondence school
- By 1900, however, all had ultimately failed
- The idea, nevertheless, continued in the mind of Frederick Griggs, who in 1909 founded the Fireside Correspondence School in Washington, D.C.

Correspondence School Beginnings

- Between 1909 and 1923, Fireside had suffered through fits and starts, under 3 principals, the last of which was in an acting capacity since 1922
- It was to this post as principal of Fireside that Olsen was called in 1923
 - Perhaps church leaders recalled Olsen's previous promotion of the Battle Creek Sanitarium correspondence school
 - Perhaps the decision was based in part on Olsen's rich background and his healthy respect for sound scholarship
 - It could also well be that the position was available at an opportune moment in Olsen's career and that the influence of J. L. Shaw was a significant factor

Olsen at Fireside

- Olsen soon arrived in Washington and took up his work at Fireside with vision and vigor
- By the end of his term of service, Olsen will have built Fireside into an elementary through college institution that served the entire world field, and had become the denomination's largest educational institution



Olsen at Fireside

A special issue of the *Review and Herald* appeared in 1924, with pictures of the senior college presidents

Olsen appears as the principal of Fireside, and his close friends, Prescott, Griggs, and Morrison, as presidents of UC, EMC, and WMC, respectively



Olsen at Fireside

- In 1927, in a front-page article in the *Review and Herald*, Olsen warned that only half of the young people of the Adventist church were attending denominational schools
- The others, he lamented, were attending institutions rampant with atheism
- He then observed that correspondence education was becoming increasingly popular in America and invited the youth to enroll in Fireside
- Before closing, however, he entered a disclaimer:
"The first choice for our young people should be the resident school." If that was impossible, however, the correspondence school would be available.

MEO, "Let Us Gather Them In,"
RH, September 8, 1927, p. 4.

Olsen at Fireside

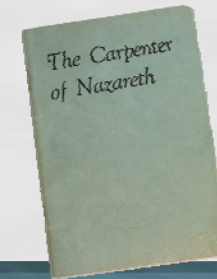
In a 1930 report to the General Conference, Olsen would note that the number of students enrolled had climbed from 559 in 1923 to 2711 students representing over 50 countries



Huizhou, China

Rebranding

- Also in 1930, Fireside began to seek a relation with the National Home Study Council
- On September 24, at Olsen's suggestion, the name, Home Study Institute, was adopted
- In November, Olsen completed the booklet entitled *The Carpenter of Nazareth* with a view of encouraging home study



Themes while at HSI

Adult Education

- "We must cease to think of Christian education wholly in terms of the children and youth.... We must definitely include ourselves.... It is equally the business of parents and other adults." (MEO, *The Carpenter of Nazareth*, Washington, D. C: Review and Herald, 1930, p. 34.)
- "There is no limit to the possibilities of the man who will patiently devote his evenings and his spare time to the acquirement of knowledge." (MEO, "Letting the Evenings Work for You," HSI Misc. Items, AUHR.)
- Developed HSI courses specifically for adults: Geology, church history, public speaking, "How to make and give Bible readings"

Themes while at HSI

Pastoral Training

- Encouraged pastors to acquire a knowledge of great literature such as Augustine's *Confessions*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*
- Advised them to obtain a grasp of world history, not limited to that which is contained in the Scriptures
- Advocated that they should study science, Greek and some Hebrew, journalism, and the fundamentals of psychology
- "The minister of today must recognize the fact that he is a professional man, and as such, needs to grow intellectually." (MEO, "A Shepherd-Minded Ministry," p. 6, AUHR.)

Themes while at HSI

Institutional Accreditation

- “Because this general scheme of standardization of schools and colleges is on the whole a movement in the right direction, we are co-operating with it and expect in course of time that our own institutions will receive full recognition.” (MEO, “Response from Prof. M. E. Olsen,” RH, October 9, 1930, pp. 13-14.)
- Convinced that this would give impetus to the development of better-equipped laboratories and libraries, and would foster the continuing specialization of college personnel
- Noted, however, that Adventist institutions must continue to set their own spiritual standards

Themes while at HSI

Relationships with Other Colleges

- HSI was proclaimed to be the extension division of the Adventist colleges and academies, with up to half of all college work allowed to be taken through HIS
- Maintained that HSI saved the resident colleges money by relieving them of the necessity of offering a given class for but one or two pupils
- Relationships, however, were not without a ripple: In 1942 a refund had to be given to George Vandeman “at the request of EMC that he give his whole attention to the courses he is taking at the college.” (HSI, *Minutes of the H. S. I. Board*. Vol. II [1939-1981], January 8, 1942, AUHR.)

The Closing Years

1946-1952

Retirement

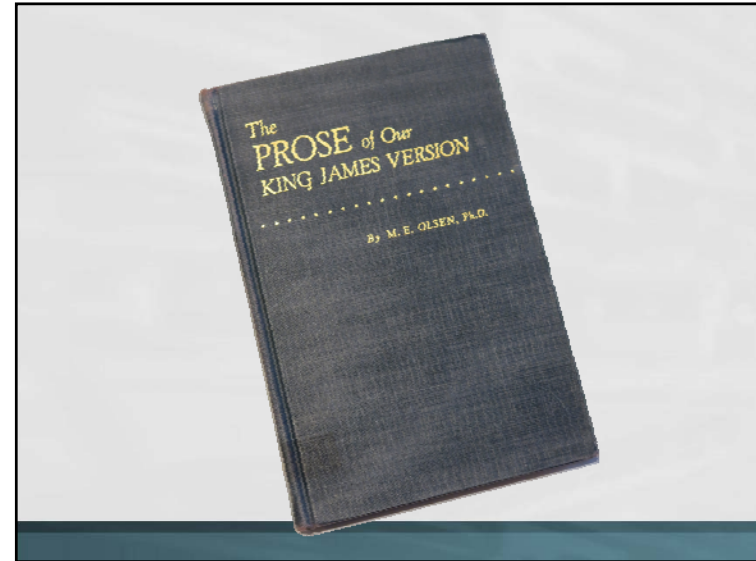
- On June 24, 1946, Olsen placed his resignation as president of HSI in the hands of H. A. Morrison, chairman of the board, having completed nearly 23 years as leader of the correspondence school



Final Publications

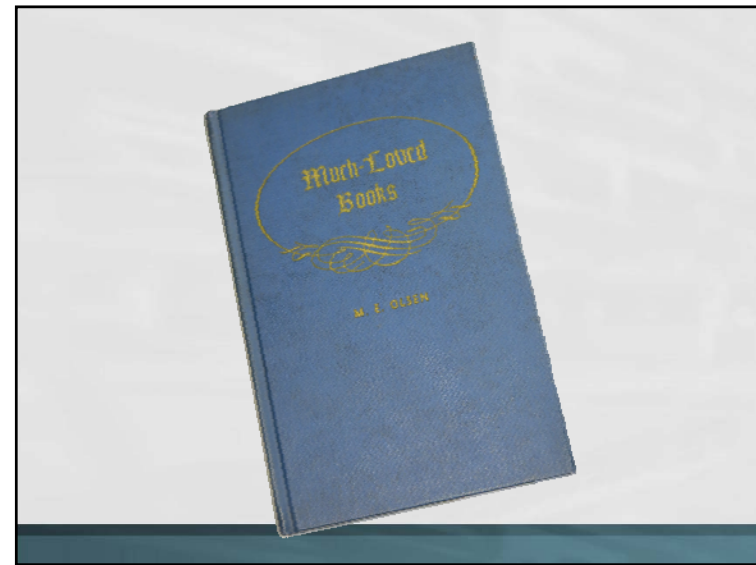
- One of his first projects was to adapt his dissertation on the King James Bible for publication, in order to trace the history of the translation of the English Bible
- A recent version, the Revised Standard Version, had appeared in February, 1946 and was being proclaimed as a serious challenge to the King James Version
- Olsen did not share the popular enthusiasm, and stated, “It is hardly likely to replace that much-loved classic”
- He noted, nevertheless, that the Revised Standard Version did give evidence of fine scholarship
- Tongue-in-cheek, he also praised it “for preserving intact for us so many fine passages from the King James version.”

MEO, *The Prose of Our King James Version* (Washington, D. C: Review and Herald, 1947), p. 9-10.



Final Publications

- Olsen’s last writing project, completed but a few weeks before his death, culminated in the publication of *Much-Loved Books*
- The book was to be a larger volume; but the publishers, wanting a more saleable book, omitted half of the chapters, including one on G. H. Bell
- Published chapters focused on the Bible—the “great world drama”, as well as the works of Luther, James and Ellen White, Thoreau, Charles Lamb, Wordsworth, and Whittier



Mahlon Ellsworth Olsen:
Health Reformer, Educator, and Historian

The pages close...

But the legacy endures.



Mahlon Ellsworth Olsen

- Prolific writer
- Health reformer
- Educational administrator
- Pioneer in alternative education
- Denominational historian