

Centennial Moments

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John Burden

If a single person were to be chosen who might be considered the founder of Loma Linda University and Medical Center, that person would have to be John Allen Burden. Mr. Burden was a man with vision who had a talent for always seeing the potential in developing institutions and who also had the administrative acumen to make the projects he worked on prosper.

John Burden was born in a rough log cabin in Wisconsin on March 24, 1862. At the age of 9 he accompanied his mother to an Adventist meeting where he was first introduced to the writings of Adventist pioneer Ellen G. White. Three years later he made a decision to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Determined to obtain an education, Mr. Burden went to Healdsburg College (known today as Pacific Union College) where he met and a married fellow student, Eleanor. The two were married in 1888 while working for the nearby Rural Health Retreat (which is today known as St. Helena Adventist Medical Center). Mr. Burden's talent for administration grew while in St. Helena and three years later he was placed in charge of the institution.

It became clear to some church leaders including Ellen White that the Burdens were not adequately appreciated where they were. With the expanding for new Adventist medical facilities around the world, the Burdens left to help establish the Avondale Health Retreat in Australia. It was on the eve of their departure that Mrs. White wrote of her high regard for the visionary and talented couple. Writing to medical leaders in Australia she stated that they did not need to be afraid "to place responsibilities upon him. He is capable of superintending your work in almost any line." She added that he was a "good, practical speaker, and knows how to conduct meetings"

(Ellen G. White, *Letter 136*, 1900).

While the Burdens were away, through divine inspiration Ellen White predicted that there were properties and buildings in southern California that would be used for the Adventist medical missionary work. These sanitariums would "be offered to us at much less than their original cost."

"For months the Lord has given me instruction that He is preparing the way for our people to obtain possession, at little cost, of properties on which there are buildings that can be utilized for our work (Idem., *Letter 157*, 1902). Soon after this property was secured in Glendale and in National City California where two Adventist health care facilities which continue to serve the medical needs of communities. Mr.



Burden actively participated in the development of both of these institutions.

Yet Mrs. White continued to push that there was yet another place that the Adventist church should secure. John Burden's talent as an administrator who could develop Adventist sanitariums was becoming well-known. In fact, some Adventist members began to push for him to become the president of the Southern California

Conference. Ellen White counseled against such a move stating that Mr. Burden's talent was really needed to develop health institutions. In 1904 Mrs. White began to counsel church leaders to begin to look for a third property in southern California to develop a sanitarium.

In response to these counsels John Burden began to look between Riverside, San Bernardino, and Redlands for property. In May, 1905, Mr. Burden reported that he had evaluated a suitable 76-acre parcel of property that investors had previously tried to develop as a premier health resort. When Mr. Burden discovered the property he immediately contacted Ellen White who urged Adventist church members to assist in purchasing the property. The heavy debts from starting two other sanitariums recently led them to caution against such a bold move, but thanks to the strong-encouragement of Mrs. White, Mr. Burden took out a personal loan to secure the property.

Through creative financing they were able to secure the funds necessary to develop the Loma Linda Sanitarium (more on this will appear in the next Centennial Moments column).

Mr. Burden was a self-sacrificing individual who once he became involved in Loma Linda never looked back. For the rest of his life he invested not only his financial resources but put his entire life into developing the Loma Linda Sanitarium. After a few years he worked with church leaders and recruited help for the development of a new Adventist medical missionary training school. In addition to his administrative duties he mingled with students in and out of the classroom. Mr. Burden took a personal interest in his students, and even after he retired remained near the campus so that he might still continue to minister to them as a chaplain and counselor.