

New England Adventist Heritage Tours

UNDERSTANDING THE ROOTS OF ADVENTISM

Field trips and historical tours provide an essential tool to enrich the learning process for teachers and students. The quality of learning in almost all disciplines and at all levels can be enhanced by incorporating field visits to appropriate sites in the curriculum. Such visits are particularly profitable in history courses, enabling students to experience a “primary source” in their study. At each site, the students will discover that events of the past “come alive” in a more profound way, and they will be more likely to approach history “as a living and engaging discipline.”¹

As Seventh-day Adventist schools seek to incorporate appropriate field visits to strengthen various aspects of their cur-

riculum, they must go beyond mere secular sites. They should challenge their students to discover their historic and foundational roots—in faith, in education, and in denominational history. An Adventist heritage tour can provide a perfect opportunity to help students discover their past and better understand the present and future. While there are a variety of Adventist heritage sites across the United States and Canada (and other parts of the world), this article focuses on sites in New England where Adventism began, which have become a staple for teaching the Adventist Heritage class at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee.

Southern’s tour program began in 1999 when I approached

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Page 48: Ascension Rock, between the William Miller Home and Chapel in Hampton, New York.

Left: Southern Adventist University students on the New England Adventist Heritage Tour begin the 1,000-mile trip late in the afternoon before midterm break. The bus travels through the night to maximize participants' time at the historic sites.

Center: Southern Adventist University student, Danny Paulliah, contemplates the second coming of Christ at Ascension Rock.



Left: A state historic marker commemorates the "birthplace of the Seventh-day Adventist Church," near the east entrance to Washington, New Hampshire.

Above: This building in Washington, New Hampshire, was an early meeting place for Millerites and later became a Seventh-day Adventist church. The Millerite Adventists who met here are considered to be the earliest group of Sabbath-keeping Adventists in the world.

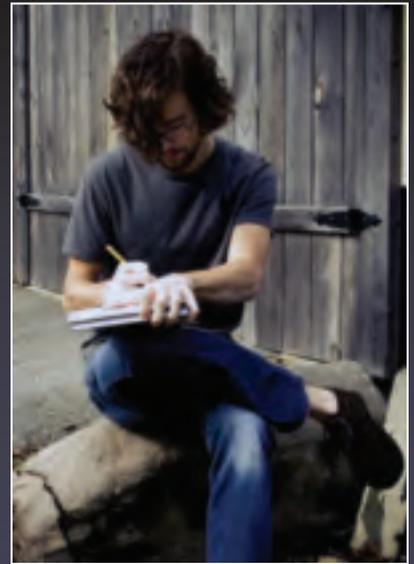
Dr. Jud Lake, at that time a new religion professor at the university, about hosting such a trip. He agreed to be the faculty sponsor for this tour. Over the past decade, on these tours, I have personally found my faith as a Seventh-day Adventist strengthened by learning about the sacrifice and commitment of our church's pioneers. From both a historical as well as a spiritual perspective, I have benefited from these trips, and I have also seen lives changed! One student made a decision to be baptized after going on our very first tour.

In addition, I have learned stories that have revealed insights into the lives of denominational pioneers. They were real people who had a passion for Jesus. They also had personal struggles and disappointments. I've learned about how difficult life was for ordinary people during that time period. As a result, I have found myself culturally enriched. Yet the most important

lesson I've learned is that the tours' "hands on" experience is an exciting way to transmit Adventism's unique worldview to a new generation. "We have nothing to fear for the future," wrote Adventist Church co-founder Ellen G. White, "except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching, in our past history."²

Which Historic Sites to Visit?

If you are planning a historical/academic tour—whether to New England or some other part of the world—the first and most important task is to identify which sites to visit. Each fall, Southern Adventist University offers a four-day tour (not including travel time to and from New England) with one hour of college credit. Most Adventist colleges offer similar tours, especially trips to Europe, the Holy Land, and even Africa that



Clockwise from top left: The William Miller Chapel, built by Miller in 1848 as a safe haven for ostracized believers after the Great Disappointment, is currently owned by the Advent Christian Church. Southern Adventist University student, Caleb DeVost, writes notes in his journal during the Adventist Heritage tour. Students on an Adventist Heritage Tour have the memorable experience of foot-washing at Ascension Rock.

offer anywhere from three to six hours of college credit depending on the length of the trip. (See the sidebar on page 54.)

A newly updated guide complete with GPS coordinates and directions is available for New York and New England historic sites. Prepared by Merlin D. Burt, this colorful volume, *Adventist Pioneer Places: New York and New England*, is an essential guide.³ Paul Gordon and James R. Nix's *In the Footsteps of the Pioneers*⁴ is helpful for sites such as the railroad cut in Freeport, Maine, where James White worked long hours to support himself and his family. Burt adds a few "new" sites, including the Hazen Foss and Harmon homes in Poland, Maine, which are now standard on Southern Adventist University tours.

Through the work of Adventist Heritage Ministry (AHM) (<http://www.AdventistHeritage.org>), a number of sites have been preserved and opened to the public: the William Miller

Farm near Hampton, New York; the Hiram Edson Farm in Port Gibson, New York; and the Joseph Bates home in Fairhaven, Massachusetts. AHM also operates the Historic Adventist Village in Battle Creek, Michigan. However, the majority of historic sites are privately owned, so visitors should respect the residents' privacy by not trespassing or lingering near private residences unless invited. Maps and directions are available through the AHM website.

Perhaps the best way to prepare students for a historical tour is to begin with a visit to a living history museum. Such sites abound throughout the United States and Canada and are accredited through the Association of Living History, Farm, and Agricultural Museums (<http://www.alhfam.org>). My two personal favorites for New England tours are Old Sturbridge Village in central Massachusetts (depicting life in

Planning an Adventist Heritage Tour



Top: Home of Joseph Bates on Mulberry Street in Fairhaven, Massachusetts. This is one of several early Adventist sites in Fairhaven that still exist but are privately owned.

Bottom: Welcome sign in Joseph Bates' childhood home, also in Fairhaven, which is now owned by Adventist Heritage Ministry.

One of the most challenging aspects of a tour is the logistics. The most significant challenge (and cost) is transportation. For larger groups, a van or bus is more efficient than separate cars, and prevents the frustration of having part of the group get separated or lost! Plus, with everyone together, the leader can point out interesting historical and local sites, and the students can focus on the learning process. If you must use private vehicles, make sure that each is adequately insured.

I recommend offering a "package" price for the tour that has a cushion of about 20 percent to cover unanticipated expenses. There is nothing more demoralizing and embarrassing than running out of money partway through the tour, or coming back from a trip with a debt for the sponsoring institution. Make sure to budget for emergencies and increases in the cost of items like food. Once the price has been determined, ask for a sizable deposit from each participant.

At Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, students pay for the tour by signing up for one credit hour of tuition, which covers the price of the tour. Then the university asks for a \$95 deposit to confirm their place and to obtain a firm estimate of the number of people who will be participating. Although contracts can be helpful, the "teeth" in such a commitment is monetary.

Based on the maturity and age of the students, planners will need to determine policies and methods of enforcement based upon the institution's behavioral guidelines (i.e., student handbook). Guidelines for appropriate behavior at the historical sites should be compiled into a handout and distributed to all tour participants.

Insurance is essential for a group tour. Most Adventist schools will be covered through Adventist Risk Management but only if the tour is an officially voted trip. Make sure that all necessary paperwork is submitted well before leaving on the trip. Inquire about participants' health insurance and any pre-existing conditions, allergies, or handicaps that would require special arrangements to be considered in advance.

The total cost of the six-day round trip tour from Tennessee to New England and upstate New York has increased from \$315 per student 13 years ago to \$500 today. Although inflation affects the total costs, I have found that the ratio of expenses remains consistent: About 50 percent will go toward transportation, 25 percent for lodging, and the remaining 25 percent for food, entrance fees, and miscellaneous expenses. Be sure to contact sites ahead of time to ask about discounts for tour groups and students.

New England between 1790 and 1840) and Upper Canada Village in southern Ontario (depicting life in the 1860s). Another great location to consider is Mystic Seaport: The Museum of America and the Sea in Mystic, Connecticut, which depicts life in a 19th-century coastal village and can provide tour groups with insights into the career of Adventist co-founder Captain Joseph Bates before he retired from the sea. Immersing tour participants in a lifelike representation of the past helps them envision what everyday life was like for the church's pioneers. Obviously, logistics may determine which living history museum is feasible for your trip.

Planners may want to broaden the tour to include other historic sites in New England. National Parks in the area can be researched online through <http://www.nps.gov>. Some history tour groups will want to explore sites dating to the American

Revolution by visiting battlefields such as Lexington and Concord, and learning about the Boston Tea Party and the historic ride of Paul Revere. Literary sites abound in New England, including Longfellow's home in Portland, Maine; as well as Fruitlands Museum and Walden Pond, both in central Massachusetts. And for those interested in studying colonial America, a stop at Plimoth Plantation (Massachusetts) or Colonial Williamsburg (Virginia) are excellent choices.

A Sample Itinerary

A suggested itinerary for a four-day New England Adventist Heritage Tour could look something like this:⁵

Day One. In the morning, visit the Joseph Bates home in Fairhaven, Massachusetts. There are nearby sites associated with Bates, most notably the approach to the original bridge



Clockwise from top left: Tour guide and article author Michael W. Campell shares stories and early Adventist hymns in the William Miller Chapel.

Interior of the childhood home of Annie and Uriah Smith in Wilton, New Hampshire.

A copy of *The Midnight Cry*, a weekly Millerite paper dedicated to sharing the news about Christ's expected second advent in 1844. The childhood home of Annie and Uriah Smith is now privately owned.

upon which Captain Bates shared with his friend James Madison Monroe Hall that “the news is the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord our God.”⁶ Sometimes I take tours across the river to New Bedford to visit the National Park Service’s New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park. We typically spend the afternoon visiting Old Sturbridge Village, about 90 minutes away by bus to the northwest (although some tour guides prefer to reverse the order). Typically, I plan for the group to spend the night in a hotel or youth camp near Leominster, Massachusetts, and stay at that one site throughout the tour because of its central location. Some tours, especially those with more mature participants and more time to travel, may want to explore changing locations for a more in-depth experience.

Day Two. Visit sites in southern New Hampshire such as Leonard Hastings’ potato patch in New Ipswich and Annie and

Uriah Smith’s childhood home in Wilton. In the afternoon, take the group to the Washington, New Hampshire, Seventh-day Adventist Church, and have them participate in an early Advent hymn sing.⁷ I make sure to schedule plenty of time for this last site so guests can walk the Sabbath Trail and engage in spiritual reflection.

Day Three. Visit sites in and around Portland, Maine. On the way, set the context for the day by visiting Haverhill, Massachusetts, to see the grave of Hazen Foss, who refused to share the visions he received shortly before Ellen Harmon began to receive her visions. If the tour occurs in the fall, this area can be counted upon to have some of the most colorful fall foliage. I then continue up to Maine (making sure to stop at the Maine Welcome Center for a restroom break) to sites near Gorham, Portland, and Topsham. Typically, this day focuses on Ellen



Clockwise from top left: Guided tour arrives at the childhood home of Joseph Bates in Fairhaven, Massachusetts.

During a stop at the cemetery in Haverhill, Massachusetts, where Hazen Foss is buried, James R. Nix, director of the Ellen G. White Estate in Silver Spring, Maryland, lectures to tour participants.

A sign outside of the 1834 Meeting House in West Poland, Maine, where Ellen Harmon is believed to have related her first vision.

Tour leaders Jud Lake (left) and Michael W. Campbell with the plaque in Gorham, Maine, marking the birthplace of Ellen G. (Harmon) White.

White's early life and ministry. Recently, I have had the tour group drive north to Poland and then work its way back to Portland since there is more to see (unfortunately, while Adventist Heritage Ministry has worked hard to preserve the sites that they have acquired, many locations are no longer extant). A highlight for every tour I have led is a side trip to Cape Elizabeth to visit the Portland Head Light (<http://www.portlandheadlight.com>), one of the most photographed lighthouses in the United States.

Day Four. After our day in Maine, I like to spend the next morning on a leisurely drive through New Hampshire and Vermont to the William Miller Farm and Chapel near Hampton, New York. A highlight of the journey is a stop at the Vermont Country Store (<http://www.vermontcountrystore.com> for locations and hours) to shop for New England souvenirs. I make

sure to leave a minimum of four hours at the Miller Farm, the "crown jewel" of Adventist heritage sites, now owned and operated by Adventist Heritage Ministry. Here the group has a picnic lunch (if it is raining, we eat in one of the barns) and then divide up in small teams to explore the property.

Afterward, I intentionally leave time to tell stories about William Miller, which culminates in an appeal for students to have the same passion for Jesus that the Adventist pioneers had in their walk with God. As a result of this spiritual meeting, many lives—including my own—have been transformed through a recommitment to Jesus in that sacred space. The tour includes a special communion service in the William Miller Chapel, and if the weather permits, tour participants wash one another's feet on Ascension Rock. At the close of the day, we have an old-fashioned "testimony" time so that participants can

witness to the evidence of God's leading in their lives.

Logistics will constrain the order in which you visit these sites. Some tour guides prefer to reverse the order of days two and three, for example, to help build a spiritual climax, but I have chosen the order described above, specifically to accommodate the schedule of college students on their midterm break. Some tour planners prefer to find lodging on the third night closer to Rutland, Vermont, in order to maximize time at the William Miller Farm on the last day. Each tour is a little bit different and reflects the stories of the tour guide(s) along with the personal constraints of the tour group.

Putting It All Together

Above everything else, the reason for organizing an Adventist Heritage Tour is to combine educational enrichment and faith building for each participant. Southern Adventist University students have shared with me on numerous occasions that involvement in this trip was a "turning point" in their lives. In such a "laboratory" experience, not only do students discover the heritage of the church, but they are also personally confronted with the reality of God's continued leading.

One important fact I like to share with tour groups—especially the ones with students in them—is that most of the pioneers were young people. Ellen Harmon was 17 years old when she received her first vision; other church founders such as Uriah Smith, James White, and J. N. Andrews were in their teens or early 20s during the height of the Millerite revival. I remind them that God is calling young people to finish the work that the Adventist pioneers began.

The stories I share at various Adventist heritage sites continue to inspire me as I have watched the Holy Spirit at work

during these tours. These trips are not only opportunities for education, but also challenges to be ready to meet Jesus when He comes again. ☞

This article has been peer reviewed.



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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. http://www.nps.gov/history/Nr/twhp/Prof_Dev_Project/fieldstudies.htm.
2. Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1915, 1943), p. 196.
3. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2011.
4. Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990.
5. You will need to add several days for travel to and from New England, which means that the total length of the tour will be somewhere between six and eight days.
6. George R. Knight, *Lest We Forget: Daily Devotional* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 2008), p. 71.
7. The church has a set of *Advent Singing* booklets in the sanctuary on loan courtesy of the Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.

Academic Credit for Tours *

Depending on the length and complexity of the tour, participants may earn from one to six college credits at the sponsoring institution.

Course assignments vary, depending on the nature of the tour and the locations visited. Listed below are the arrangements for several Adventist university-sponsored tours.

For shorter tours, participants are often required to keep a daily journal, which is to be submitted at the end of the tour. In it, they are to react to what they see and hear on the tour, and take notes on lectures presented on the bus and at historic sites. They may also be asked to respond to questions in a handout. The student's final grade depends on the quality of his or her journal, as well as on participation in the activities of the tour.

For longer tours, particularly international ones, the students can earn up to six credit hours for one course. They can take up to two courses for a two-week tour and one course for a seven-day tour. Some schools that offer overseas

trips sometimes will offer two- or three-week trips. Students are required to meet at least two to three times in class or at another location for briefing before the tour. Some professors use online meeting assignments to bring participants together during winter or summer break.

Course requirements for longer tours are as follows: Students must take extensive notes in a journal every day of their travel and also take pictures to illustrate what they have learned. During the trip, on selected days, the director schedules required lectures or meetings for an hour in the evening. There may be a final test at the end of the tour.

Upon their return, students must complete a 10- to 20-page research paper on a topic related to the class (10 pages for lower-division courses; 20 pages for 300- to 499-level classes).

*Thanks to Jud Lake and Zack Plantak for their contributions to this sidebar.