

## A Prophet on Wheels

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No record exists of Ellen White being motion-picture filmed or having her voice audio-recorded<sup>1</sup>—modern technological innovations already established during her lifetime. She is known to have used the telephone, however.<sup>2</sup> Had she lived long enough, she surely would have embraced every innovative, legitimate means of communication. After all, during her long lifetime she personally witnessed the transition from hand-copying all her written correspondence, articles, and book manuscripts, to reproducing these materials on the calligraph, or typewriter, as early as the summer of 1885.<sup>3</sup> Mrs. White neither enjoyed the creature comforts of steam central heating at her Elmshaven office/home until 1913,<sup>4</sup> nor of electricity until January of 1914, when all of the surrounding Pratt Valley got “wired.”<sup>5</sup> But the technological advancements she mostly experienced and embraced involved transportation.

Mrs. White had long before made the transition from arduous transportation by horse and carriage or open sleigh over body-torturing rough logways and mud sloughs<sup>6</sup> (or by canal boat when railway fares were too expensive), to that of “riding on the cars” (passenger train travel).<sup>7</sup> The transition must have seemed heavenly. Her first recorded train trip was in May 1854, bound from Michigan to Wisconsin, but the train was about only three miles out of Jackson when a terrible crash ensued. The lives of Ellen and her husband, James, were spared through the providence of God, but four other passengers on that ill-fated train unfortunately perished. The Whites, saddened but undaunted, boarded another train in Jackson the very next morning and completed their trip west.

Ellen White is known to have taken at least 13 automobile rides in her twentieth-century years. Her first car ride ever (on January 13, 1902, in Chicago), oddly enough, was endured in a recumbent position. It seems that the W. O. Worth model was shaped somewhat like a covered streetcar, with seats running along each side. Wheelchair-bound Mrs. White explains that “it was a great relief . . . to be able to lie down.”<sup>8</sup> While she was in the Los Angeles and San Diego area in 1905 she experienced three car rides with a Brother Johnson operating his own conveyance. Her reaction: “I enjoy very much riding in the automobile.”<sup>9</sup>

We next hear of her arriving at the 1908 Los Angeles camp meeting with Sara McEnterfer and Minnie Hawkins—courtesy of a driver by the name of Brother Crocker.<sup>10</sup> The next year she popped up with Sara and son Willie at the new Wabash Valley Sanitarium in Lafayette, Indiana—in a car driven by Dr. W. W. Worster, the institution’s medical superintendent, and Brother H. C. Saunders, its business manager.<sup>11</sup>

Again in Los Angeles in 1910, we find our intrepid messenger of the Lord this time in a car with Elder E. E. Andross, California Conference president, and John Wessels, business manager of the Glendale Sanitarium.<sup>12</sup> Around the same time we read of her being driven from Los Angeles to Glendale by an especially accommodating church brother. Not only was this unnamed brother kind but, writes Mrs. White: “We had the utmost confidence in his skill in managing his machine.”<sup>13</sup> About the same time, she describes a similar experience with an unnamed man who took special pains to chauffeur her from Glendale to Los Angeles.<sup>14</sup>

In 1911, traveling from San Fernando to Los Angeles, Mrs. White briefly describes her experience: “Elder Andross took us in an automobile to visit the several churches and the Bible

Workers' Home in Los Angeles. We did not get out of the conveyance, but stopped and spoke to some of those engaged in the work. It was a very pleasant trip. . . . The automobile was an easy-riding machine that did not jolt me. . . ."<sup>15</sup>

Sometimes cars were used to convey Sister White to other connecting, long-distance transportation. This was the case later in 1911, when "a brother who is always ready to place his automobile at our disposal" dropped her off in Nashville for her return trip to St. Helena.<sup>16</sup> This last statement gives rise to the justifiable supposition that Mrs. White may have taken many more automobile rides than have been documented in writing. Perhaps by now you have also detected a common thread running through these accounts. Far from being a joy-riding "little old lady from St. Helena," she enthusiastically utilized the modern conveniences at hand to further the Lord's work.

By 1912, the five-mile section of road between San Bernardino and the Loma Linda Sanitarium in Redlands afforded an unusually smooth trip.<sup>17</sup> But the final car ride we hear about must have caused Mrs. White to ponder what the future had in store for the rising generation. On home turf in the St. Helena area, she shared a rare purely-for-pleasure ride with son Willie's twin boys, Henry and Herbert, in their jointly owned snazzy Model T Ford<sup>18</sup>—and this in 1913 at the age of 85, slightly less than two years before her death.

In thus reviewing the manner and speed with which she adapted to change, we have before us compelling evidence that Ellen G. White was truly a woman of her times. Were she still alive today, it seems certain that she would embrace every legitimate technological innovation that might expedite the delivery of the three angels' messages to all the world. After all, she was a Bible-believing Christian, and in my Bible I find that in "the time of the end . . . many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. 12:4).

Just as did Mrs. White all her long life, may God help us today to take all the tools He has given us and use them for His glory.

**Epilog.** Ellen "rode the cars" for the last two times when her body was transported July 19, 1915, on the early train from St. Helena to nearby Richmond for the second of two California funeral services. Her remains then were transported by rail the same afternoon, at last reaching Battle Creek on July 22 and her final resting place in that lovely little family burial plot at Oak Hill Cemetery (*Ellen G. White Biography*, vol. 6, pp. 433–435). I have stood at that very spot more than once and have contemplated just how special the great resurrection day is going to be when the entire White family is raised to immortal life and, with no less a Personage than Jesus Himself, is transported in a cloudy angelic chariot to Heaven. Now that's a ride we should all be looking forward to with keenest anticipation!

**Note:** *Other modes of travel used by the Lord's messenger.*

- As the yet unmarried Ellen Harmon, the Lord's messenger traveled by **rowboat** and **steamboat** from Belfast, Maine, to Portland, Maine, in 1845 (Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years*, vol. 1, p. 82).
- By **wagon** (from which Miss Harmon fell) returning from New Hampshire to Springfield, Maine, about 1845 (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 48).
- By **horse-drawn wagon** (as Mrs. James White) in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, April 20, 1848 (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 93).
- By **horse and carriage** drawn by Charlie, a dapple chestnut horse donated to the Whites by the believers in Sutton, Vermont, between Sutton and Melbourne, Québec, Canada, from about 1850 onward for many years (William C. White, "Sketches and Memories of

James and Ellen G. White,” *Review and Herald*, April 25, 1935, in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years*, vol. 1, p. 178).

- By **stagecoach** to Sutton, Vermont, spring 1850 (*Life Sketches*, p. 131).
- By **hack** (two-seated wagon) in Boston, Massachusetts, about 1851 (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 149).
- By **ferry** from Mill Grove, New York, to Detroit, Michigan, May 1853 (Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years*, vol. 1, p. 274).
- By **covered wagon** from Battle Creek, Michigan, to Wright, Michigan, in 1865 (statement given April 13, 1902, in *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 306).
- By **sidesaddle on horseback** in Monterey, Michigan, May 6, 1868 (*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 155).
- By **double wagon** in Hamilton, Missouri, in 1870 (Lt 11, September 5, 1870, in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years*, vol. 2, p. 294).
- By **express wagon** from Denver, Colorado, to Walling’s Mills, Colorado, June 25, 1873 (MS 8, June 25, 1873, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 3, pp. 159, 160; vol. 11, p. 123).
- By **spring wagon** in Walling’s Mills, Colorado, September 11, 1873 (MS 11, September 15, 1873, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 20, p. 208).
- By **sailboat** and **steam launch** (tugboat), San Francisco Bay and Pacific Ocean, April 10, 1876 (Lt 5, April 11, 1876, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 7, pp. 280, 281; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years*, vol. 6, p. 26).
- By **farm wagon** into Melvern, Kansas, May 25, 1876 (Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years*, vol. 3, p. 36).
- By **streetcar** in Chicago, Illinois (?), October 23, 1878 (MS 5, October 23, 1878, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 11, p. 57).
- By **horse-drawn omnibus** in Emporia, Kansas, May 19, 1879 (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 11, p. 61).
- By **small boat** with raft towing carriage (while horses swam) at Trout Run, Ohio, June 5, 1889 (*Review and Herald*, July 30, 1889); five days after the Johnstown (Pennsylvania) Flood.
- By **phaeton** (light, four-wheeled, horse-drawn carriage, with or without a top) round-trip between South Lancaster, Massachusetts, and Clinton, Massachusetts, October 28, 1890 (MS 42, October 28, 1890, in Manuscript Release 1033, p. 15).
- By **skiff** in Whangaroa Harbour, New Zealand, February 20, 1893 (*The Bible Echo*, May 15, 1893).
- By **two-wheeled horse-drawn rig** (cart, or carriage), Napier, New Zealand, March 1893 (MS 78, March 1893, in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Australian Years*, vol. 4, pp. 77, 79).
- By **horse and gig** (light two-wheeled, one-horse carriage) in Long Point, New Zealand, July 27, 1893 (Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Australian Years*, pp. 100, 101).  
[Note: This seems likely the same conveyance as the one termed a two-wheeled trap, listed next.]
- By **two-wheeled trap** (two-seated wagon) in Long Point, New Zealand, August 3, 1893 (Diary, August 3, 1893, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 3, p. 210).
- By **horse and cart** (or rig) in Cooranbong, Australia, August 1894 (Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Australian Years*, p. 154).
- By either **platform wagon** or **phaeton** in Hamilton, Newcastle, New South Wales, December 26, 1898 (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, p. 233).

- By **two-seated surrey** (carriage with canopy top) pulled by A. G. Daniells's horse named Charlie, Washington, D.C., to Takoma Park, Maryland, May 1, 1904 (Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Elmshaven Years*, p. 322).
- By **horse-drawn cab**, San Francisco, California, May 7, 1906 (Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years*, p. 82), surveying the April 18 San Francisco Earthquake devastation.
- By **single buggy** in Lake County, California, about April 1908 (Lt 118, April 23, 1908, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12, p. 263).

<sup>1</sup>E-mail correspondence with Tim Poirier, vice director, Ellen G. White Estate, September 5, 8, 1998.

<sup>2</sup>She mentioned phoning the Echo Publishing House office in Melbourne locally about February 6, 1894 (Lt 88, February 6, 1894, in "The Fannie Bolton Story," p. 123), writing simply: "Our mail has not come, [it] is at the Echo office—will come tonight, have telephoned for it." The other occasion came about near the very end of her life. On March 10, 1915, Mrs. White's secretary, C. C. Crisler, interviewed her via phone regarding the literature work, writing of it in "Telephone Message," *Pacific Union Recorder*, vol. 14, no. 34, April 1, 1915, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>The first mention is in her diary while en route on the S.S. *Cephalonia* from Boston to Liverpool, August 7-18, 1885. See MS 16a, August 1885, in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years*, vol. 3, p. 291.

<sup>4</sup>Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years*, vol. 6, pp. 378, 410.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 402.

<sup>6</sup>*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 94.

<sup>7</sup>Husband James records a train trip the Whites took together as early as March 1849 (James White letter to Brother [Leonard] and Sister [Elvira] Hastings, March 22, 1849, in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years*, vol. 1, p. 159). Her son Willie recounts trips she made with James by canal boat between 1846 and 1848 (William C. White to Marion Crawford, May 7, 1912, in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years*, vol. 6, p. 367).

<sup>8</sup>Lt 11, January 28, 1902, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, p. 255; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Elmshaven Years*, vol. 5, p. 144.

<sup>9</sup>Lt 263, September 15, 1905, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, pp. 394, 395; and Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years*, vol. 6, p. 28. The last of these three rides was taken on September 14, 1905.

<sup>10</sup>Lt 240, August 16, 1908, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 8, p. 19; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years*, vol. 6, 170.

<sup>11</sup>*Review and Herald*, December 23, 1909. The date of the ride was August 2, 1909.

<sup>12</sup>William C. White to May White, March 27, 1910, in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years*, vol. 6, p. 294. The date of the ride was March 24, 1910.

<sup>13</sup>Lt 36, April 3, 1910, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 8, p. 20 and Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years*, vol. 6, 294.

<sup>14</sup>Lt 151, April 1910, in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years*, vol. 6, pp. 296, 297. The date of the ride was April 23, 1910.

<sup>15</sup>Lt 20, April 30, 1911, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 3, p. 181; *Loma Linda Messages*, p. 568, and *The Paulson Collection of Ellen G. White Letters*, p. 310.

<sup>16</sup>Lt 60, August 4, 1911, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 3, pp. 181, 182.

<sup>17</sup>William C. White to Marion Crawford, May 7, 1912, in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years*, vol. 6, p. 367. The date of the ride was March 10, 1912.

<sup>18</sup>Lt 11, August 28, 1913, in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 3, p. 182, and Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years*, vol. 6, p. 396. The date of the ride was August 27, 1913.