

Review®

APRIL 1, 1976

ADVENT REVIEW AND SABBATH HERALD • GENERAL CHURCH PAPER OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS



This painting by Annie Smith (1828-1855) is believed to be a self-portrait. See story on page 4.

Annie Smith, Her Life and Love

Snatched away in beauty's bloom at
27, Annie Smith left behind her
many poems that reflect her sad
but eventful life.

By **RON GRAYBILL**

Let none this humble work assail,
Its failings to expose to view,
Which sprung within Misfortune's vale
And 'neath the dews of Sorrow grew.

THUS ANNIE REBEKAH SMITH, the early Adventist hymnist, begs indulgent tolerance of the little book of poems she completed on her deathbed in 1855. I will honor her wishes as I tell the simple story of her short, sad life.

Most of what is known about her comes from a short sketch of her life included in another book of poems published by her mother in 1871. From this we learn that Annie was born in West Wilton, New Hampshire, on March 16, 1828, the only daughter of Samuel and Rebekah Smith. She was four years older than her better-known brother, Uriah, and four months younger than the best-known of Adventist women, Ellen G. White.

At 10, Annie was converted and joined the Baptist Church. With her mother, she left that communion in 1844 to throw her youthful energies into preparation for the second advent of Christ.

When the clouds of October 22, 1844, turned out to

Ron Graybill is assistant secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate.

be only those that draped another drab New England day instead of a host of angels, Annie turned her attention to study and teaching. For the next six years she alternated between teaching in seven different district schools and pursuing her own intellectual enrichment.

She spent six terms at the Charlestown Female Seminary in Charlestown, Massachusetts, next door to Boston. The seminary, chartered in 1833, offered courses in English, philosophy, Romance languages, Latin, Hebrew, music, and art. There were also free lectures in anatomy, physiology, and chemistry.

The seminary was ostensibly nondenominational. There were regular weekly Bible lessons, and each young student was expected to come equipped with her own Bible, a commentary, plus other books "containing moral and religious instruction, suitable for Sabbath reading." The students were required to attend church twice each Sunday at some stated place.

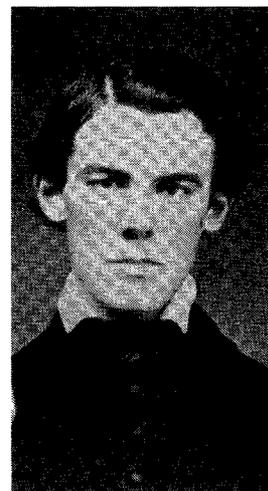
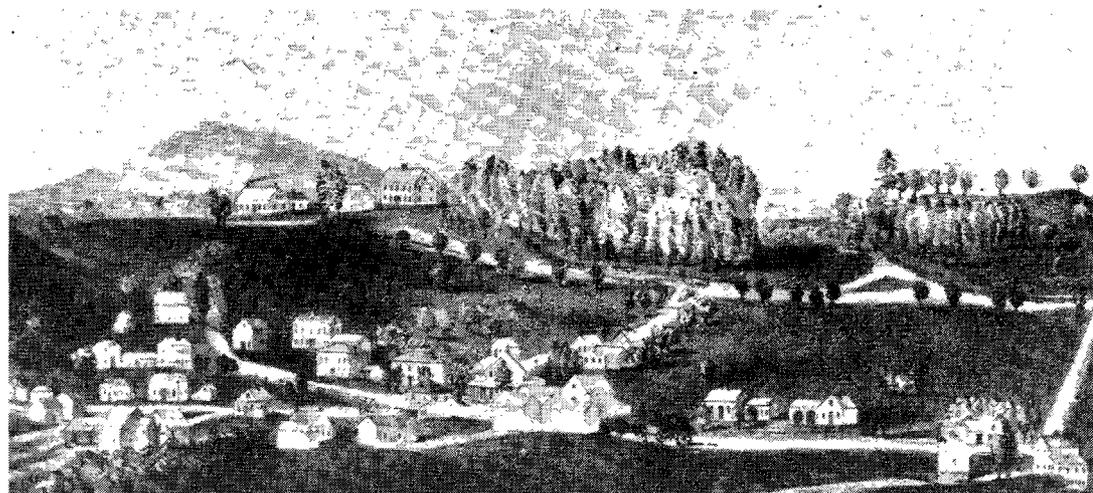
During Annie's last term at the seminary, in 1850, she was enrolled in an art course. One day, while sketching a picture of Boston from Prospect Hill in Somerville, she is reported to have strained her eyes. For eight months she could hardly use them.

Meanwhile, her mother was becoming more and more concerned about Annie's avid pursuit of secular success in literature and art. When Joseph Bates, the sea captain who became an Adventist preacher, visited the Smith home in West Wilton, Mrs. Smith shared her burden with him. Since he was to be in Boston in a few days, he urged the mother to write Annie inviting her to his meetings that were to be held at Elizabeth Temple's home in Boston.

The night before the first meeting Bates had a dream. In it every seat in the room was filled except one next to the door. The first hymn was sung, and then, just as he opened his Bible to preach, the door opened and a young lady entered, taking the last vacant chair.

The same night Annie had virtually the same dream. The next evening she set out for the meeting in ample time, but lost her way. She entered just at the moment the dream had specified. Bates had been planning to talk on another subject, but remembering his dream, he switched to a sermon on the Adventist view of the Hebrew sanctuary.

At the close of the meeting he stepped up to Annie and said: "I believe this is Sister Smith's daughter, of West Wilton. I never saw you before, but your countenance looks familiar. I dreamed of seeing you last night." Annie related her own dream and was deeply im-



Uriah Smith, Annie's brother, sketched his hometown, West Wilton, when he was 15. J. N. Andrews, whom Annie met in Rochester, was about her age.

pressed with the turn of events, and she soon made a new commitment to the Advent faith.

A month after she attended Bates's meetings, Annie sent a poem, "Fear Not, Little Flock," to the REVIEW.

Impressed with Annie's poem and doubtless acquainted with her talents through her mother, James White, the editor, immediately wrote asking her to come to Saratoga Springs, New York, to assist him as a copy editor. She hesitated, pleading her eye trouble as a reason she could not accept. He told her to come anyway, and, upon her arrival, she was quickly healed after anointing and prayer.

Annie's Contributions

Although most of Annie's time was spent in the drudgery of copy editing, occasionally she was given full responsibility for the REVIEW while the Whites were away on preaching tours. She continued to write hymns and poetry, contributing a total of 45 pieces to the REVIEW and the *Youth's Instructor* before her death three and a half years later. Ten of her hymns survive in the current Seventh-day Adventist *Church Hymnal*.

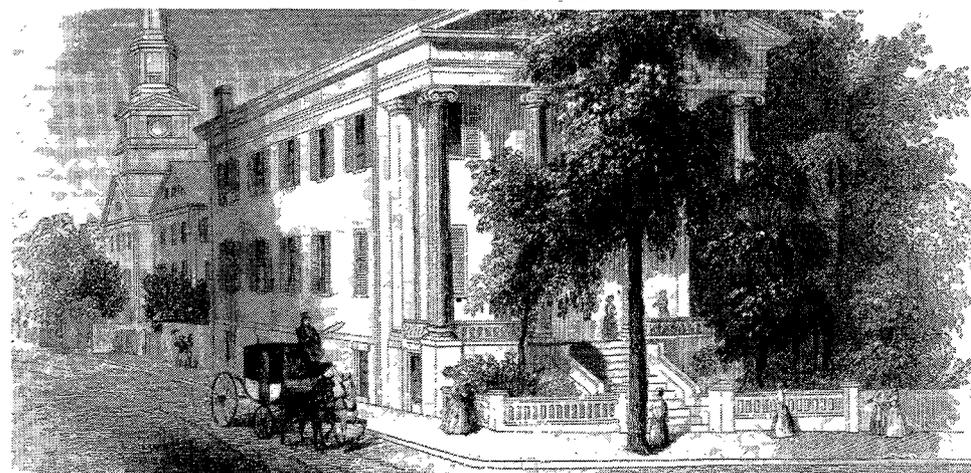
Annie had lived with the Whites in Saratoga Springs for only a few months when they moved to Rochester. Shortly before the move she turned 24. Times were hard for the little group of workers in Rochester. Ellen White tells how they had to use turnips for potatoes. Annie's work was not always easy, either. James White, driving hard in those difficult early days, could be a demanding taskmaster. Most of Annie's poetry was deeply and seriously religious, but she did venture at least one light-hearted rhyme that may reflect something of James White's eagerness that the REVIEW be a perfect paper. The poem was titled "The Proof-Reader's Lament":

What news is this falls on my ear?
What next will to my sight appear?
My brain doth whirl, my heart doth quake—
Oh, that egregious mistake!

"Too bad! too bad!!" I hear them cry,
"You might have seen with half an eye!
Strange! passing strange!! how could you make
So plain, so blunderous a mistake!"

Guilty, condemned, I trembling stand,
With pressing cares on every hand,
Without one single plea to make,
For leaving such a *bad mistake*.

Although not a regular student, Annie spent six terms at the Charlestown Female Seminary, studying such things as French and oil painting. This engraving of a cat reveals her artistic talents.



If right, no meed of praise is won,
No more than *duty* then is done;
If wrong, then censure I partake,
Deserving such a gross mistake.

How long shall I o'er this bewail?
"The best," 'tis said, "will sometimes fail;"
Must it then *peace* forever break—
Summed up, 'tis only a *mistake*.

In spite of whatever difficulties may have arisen, the Whites must have appreciated Annie and her work. James sent her a gift of \$75 during her last illness, and Annie's mother, writing of the bond of affection between her daughter and the Whites, said, "Annie loved them."

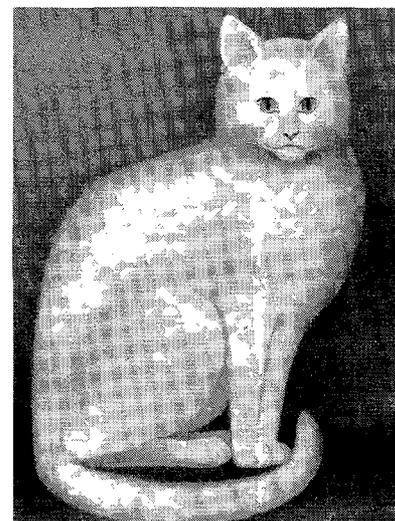
There was someone else whom Annie loved: the handsome young preacher John Nevins Andrews. John lived in Rochester during the time Annie was there. They were about the same age, and both were bright and intellectually ambitious. There are indications that Annie had high hopes of a future with John. But he disappointed her, turning his affections to Angeline Stevens, a girl from his hometown, Paris, Maine.

The evidence for Annie's love and subsequent heart-break lies half buried in a letter Ellen White wrote to John just one month after Annie's death: "I saw that you could do no better now than to marry Angeline; that after you had gone thus far it would be wronging Angeline to have it stop here. The best course you can now take is to move on, get married, and do what you can in the cause of God. Annie's disappointment cost her her life."

Ellen White appears to be saying: Don't do the same thing to Angeline that you did to Annie. Now that you've raised her expectations, go ahead and marry her. While judgments based on a single piece of evidence are usually hazardous, when Ellen White's comments are linked with certain passages in Annie's own poetry, it seems quite clear that Annie was jilted by John.

In the spring of 1854 she wrote two religious poems that may reflect this experience:

If other's joys [Angeline's?] seem more than thine,
Pause, ere thou at this repine;
Life hath full enough of woe,
For the sunniest path below.



And in a poem titled "Resignation" she wrote:

Thou art the refuge of my soul,
My hope when earthly comforts flee,
My strength while life's rough billows roll,
My joy through all eternity.

But Annie's most personal feelings on this subject would hardly be found in her religious poetry, printed as it was in the REVIEW for J. N. Andrews and everyone else to read. Her mother's book, published in 1871, includes a good selection of Annie's secular verse. One of these was a poem Annie addressed to her mother:

My lot has been to learn
Of friendship false, that bright will burn
When fortune spreads her wing of light,
But fades away when cometh night.

"Dear Annie," her mother wrote in her "Response":

What though thy lot has been to bear
Much adverse fate, 'mid toil and care
Raised expectations crushed and dead
And hope's triumphant visions fled?

Does not thy heart begin to feel
The claims of Him who wounds to heal?

The possibility that Annie may have been in love with J. N. Andrews adds a new dimension to the controversy over her hymn "I Saw One Weary, Sad, and Torn" (*Hymns and Tunes*, No. 667). Each verse of the hymn has been thought to be an ode to one of her Adventist pioneer contemporaries. The first two stanzas have been assigned respectively to Joseph Bates and James White. Bates has been identified by the "many a line of grief and care," which on his brow was "furrowed there." He was much older than any of the other pioneers. James White is believed to have been the one who "boldly braved the world's cold frown" and was "worn by toil, oppressed by foes." But who would be the Adventist who

. . . left behind

The cherished friends of early years,
And honor, pleasure, wealth resigned,
To tread the path bedewed with tears.
Through trials deep and conflicts sore,
Yet still a smile of joy he wore:
I asked what buoyed his spirits up,
"O this!" said he—"the blessed hope."

Three possible candidates have been suggested for this stanza: Uriah Smith, Andrews, and Annie Smith herself disguised in masculine pronouns. Uriah is eliminated on chronological grounds. He had not yet accepted the "third angel's message" at the time Annie wrote the hymn. The hymn was published August 19, 1852, about a year after Annie's conversion, five months after her arrival in Rochester, and just enough time for a friendship with John to blossom.

But Annie herself cannot be ruled out as a candidate. She certainly felt that she had renounced "honor, pleasure, and wealth" to become an Adventist.

The question of whether the stanza refers to John or Annie, if either, may never be resolved, and perhaps it is fitting that they are linked in this mystery.

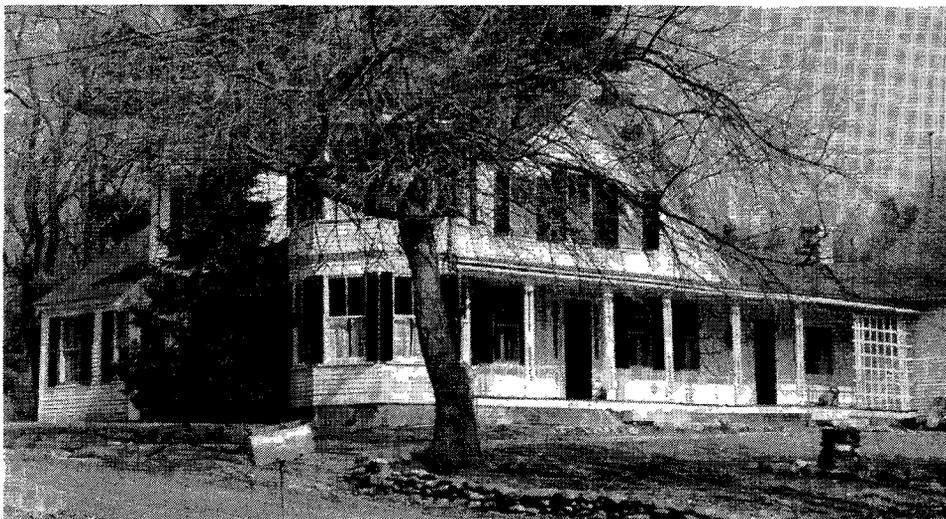
It is no wonder that many of Annie's hymns were so somber. Not only was she an Adventist in a day when Adventists were scorned and despised, not only did she give up her hope of worldly fame, not only was she thwarted in love, but death itself was stalking her. She had been with the REVIEW for barely a year when she was called home for the death of her father, Samuel Smith. When she returned to the office in Rochester late in December, 1852, she found that James White's brother Nathaniel and his sister Anna had arrived, both suffering from tuberculosis.

Anna White soon took over the editorship of the newly launched *Youth's Instructor* to which Annie contributed an occasional poem. But Nathaniel lived only till May of 1853. Annie commemorated his death with a poem. About a year later Luman V. Masten, another of the young workers in the office, died of tuberculosis. Again Annie wrote a poem, a portion of which read:

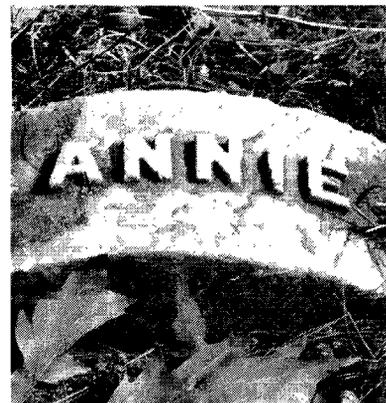
Then mourn not the loss of our dear, absent brother
Bright angels shall watch o'er the dust where he's laid
To rest by the side of his fondly-loved mother,
Who for his salvation so fervently prayed.

Annie Contracts Disease

In November of that same year, 1854, Annie returned to her home in West Wilton, suffering from the first stages of tuberculosis. She had just arrived when word came that Anna White had died of the disease. The poem she wrote for Anna became a hymn which would be sung at her own funeral:



In November of 1854, Annie returned to her mother's home in West Wilton, suffering from the first stages of tuberculosis. She died the following July, after having completed a small book of poetry.



She hath passed Death's chilling billow,
And gone to rest:
Jesus smoothed her dying pillow—
Her slumbers blest.

Annie arrived home November 7. A month later she was coughing blood. Her mother says that since she had "confidence in water treatment, she went where she could receive such." Perhaps she traveled to nearby New Ipswich, where, according to the *Water-Cure Journal* of June, 1853, a Mr. Amos Hatch operated a hydro-pathic institution.

But the treatment did not help, and Annie returned home in February, just in time for a visit from Joseph Bates. "At the commencement of the Sabbath, the 16th," her mother wrote, "the spirit and power of God descended upon her, and she praised God with a loud voice. . . . Bro. B. then said to Annie, 'You needed this blessing, and now if the Lord sees that it is best for you to be laid away in the grave, He will go with you.'"

But Annie prayed for just one more privilege before she died. She wanted to be able to finish her long poem, "Home Here and Home in Heaven," and publish the little book of poetry she had been planning. Her brother Uriah came home in May, and helped her to copy and arrange her poetry for publication. As soon as the flowers blossomed that spring he sketched and engraved a peony, her favorite, to go on the title page of her book.

Annie told her mother that she believed there would be a change in her condition once the book was completed. Either she would be healed or she would die. She lived less than ten days after she finished her work.

Her mother chronicled the last days of her 27-year-old daughter in great detail. On the eighteenth of July Annie wrote a poem titled "Our Duty":

Never from the future borrow
Burdens that no good repay,
Strength required for to-morrow,
May be lost on us today.

At three o'clock the next afternoon she said: "Mother, some change has taken place. I don't think I shall live through the day." "I saw that there was a change," her mother wrote, "and stayed by her. Night drew on. No one happened in. She said, 'It seems to me I could not breathe to have many in the room.'" Her mother told her she was not afraid to be alone with her if she died. Through the night the mother and her semi-invalid brother John watched. It seemed that each moment must be her last.

About two in the morning she rallied some, and looked very happy. "Annie is being blessed," Mrs. Smith said to John. Soon Annie exclaimed, "Glory to God" a number of times, louder than she had spoken for a long while. "Heaven is opened," she said. "I shall come forth at the first resurrection."

Uriah had returned to Rochester by now, hoping he could get the type for Annie's book and let her see the proof sheets before she died. Mrs. Smith wanted to write him and urge him to come home at once, but Annie said: "It will make no difference, I think I am dying; don't leave me, Mother, while I live."

Annie and her mother talked freely about her death long before it occurred. Her mother did not look back on those last days as some hideous shame to be expunged

from memory, but as something worth preserving in every detail.

On Tuesday morning, July 24, Annie composed her last poem:

Oh! shed not a tear o'er the spot where I sleep;
For the living and not for the dead ye may weep;
Why mourn for the weary who sweetly repose,
Free in the grave from life's burden and woes?

No recasting can improve the poignant forcefulness of her mother's account of her last hours:

Tuesday night was a solemn and interesting night. I stayed with her alone through the night. Neither of us slept. She was very happy, and talked much with me. She said in her former familiar way, "My mother, I've been afraid I should wear you all out. I've called after you by night and by day." She felt bad to have me kept up as I was on her account. But she said, "I am here now, your dying girl. I think this is the last night, and you must be sure to rest when I am gone. O, my blessed mother, I shall bless you in Heaven for taking such care of me. No sorrow or suffering there. We shall all be free there. Yes, we shall all be free when we arrive at home, and we shall live forever. Yes, and I can smile upon you now through all my sufferings." It was her last suffering night. Wednesday, the 25th, a death coldness was upon her. In the afternoon she became more free from pain and distress. While speaking in the evening of taking care of her, she said, "I shall not want any one to sit up; you can lie on the lounge." At 1 o'clock I called Samuel [another brother]. She talked with him, called for what she wanted as usual, and told him he might lie down. About three o'clock she called him to wet her head with water, and said she felt sleepy. She was indeed going into her last sleep. Samuel wet her head, and soon after spoke to me and said, "I don't know but Annie is dying." I spoke to her. She took no notice, breathed a few times, and died apparently as easy as anyone going into a natural sleep. Her sufferings were over. She was gone. It was 4 o'clock in the morning, July 26, 1855.

Of Annie it can be said that in her affliction "still a smile of joy" she wore. What sustained her? What buoyed her spirits up? "O this," she replies, "the blessed hope." □

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