

Washington NH Seventh-day Adventist® Church

Birthplace of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Home of the Sabbath Trail

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Rachel Oaks Preston



Jim Nix Collection

Rachel Oaks Preston

1809 - 1868

PRESTON, RACHEL (HARRIS) OAKES (1809-1868).

A Seventh Day Baptist who persuaded a group of Adventists to accept the Sabbath and thus to become in that sense, the first Seventh-day Adventists. Born in Vernon, Vermont, she joined the Methodist Church, then joined the Seventh Day Baptist church of Verona, Oneida County, New York. Later she moved to Washington, New Hampshire, to be near her daughter, **Delight Oakes**, who taught there. When Mrs. Oakes sought to introduce the Sabbath to the company of Adventists in the Christian church there, she found them so engrossed in preparation for the coming of the Lord that they paid little attention to her Seventh Day Baptist literature.

She did eventually gain as a convert Frederick Wheeler, a Methodist preacher. One Sunday while conducting the communion service for the Christian congregation, he remarked that all who confess communion with Christ in such a service as this "should be ready to obey God and keep His commandments in all things." Later Mrs. Oakes told him that she had almost risen in the service to tell him that he had better push back the communion table and put the communion cloth back over it until he was willing to keep all the commandments of God, including the fourth. The episode set Wheeler to serious thinking and earnest study, and not long after about March, 1844, as he later related he began to observe the seventh-day Sabbath. After "the passing of the time" in 1844, during a Sunday service in the Washington church, William Farnsworth stated publicly that he was convinced that the seventh day of the week was the Sabbath and that he had decided to keep it. He was immediately followed by his brother Cyrus and several others. And Mrs. Oakes, in turn, soon embraced the Adventist teachings. Thus it was that the first little Sabbatarian Adventist group came into being.

Authorities disagree as to the timing of these events; for example, as to whether the "passing of the time" referred to the spring or the autumn disappointment. For a discussion of the problem see Washington, New Hampshire, church.

Mrs. Oakes later married Nathan T. Preston and moved away. Not until the last year of her life did she find herself in harmony with what had meanwhile become the SDA Church.

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