

## WILLIAM MILLER

Birth: Feb. 15, 1782 Pittsfield, Massachusetts  
Death: December 21, 1849 Low Hampton, New York  
Family: The first of 16 children  
Spouse - Lucy P. Smith  
Accomplishments: Farmer, Baptist lay-preacher,  
author, builder, preacher of the  
personal second coming of Christ

# WILLIAM MILLER

## Herald of the Second Advent

February 13, 1782 - December 20, 1849

As a little boy William Miller lived on a farm in Eastern New York. On the death of his parents this farm became his. As a lad he was a diligent student, borrowing books and reading whenever he had a chance. At night, after his parents had retired, he would quietly rise, take a book and lie down in front of the fireplace and study. One night he father caught him and threatened to whip him if he did not get his rest and stop his foolish study habits.

Miller had a strong religious background but he became attached to the wrong "crowd." His friends were deists. These people set aside the Bible and had vague ideas about God and His personality. But Miller was always a man of high moral character. What he failed to find in religion he sought to find in high and patriotic attainments. He served his country as an officer in the War of 1812. He served with distinction. Later in his home community he served as the justice of the peace.

When Miller was thirty-four years of age he became dissatisfied with his views. The Holy Spirit impressed his heart, and he turned to the study of the Word of God. In this book Jesus was revealed to him as his Saviour. He found in Christ the answer to all his needs. He determined to study the Bible carefully and to determine, if he could, the answer to the many problems that had perplexed him. His study led him to the great prophecies that pointed to the first and to the second advent of our Lord. The time prophecies interested him, particularly the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation.

In the year 1818, as a result of his study of the prophecies of Daniel 8 and 9, he came to the conclusion that Christ would come some time in the year 1843 or 1844. He hesitated until 1831 before he began to announce his findings. Then the die was cast. From his first public service we may mark the beginnings of the Advent movement in North America. In the months and years that followed, roughly 100,000 persons came to believe in the imminence of Christ's second coming.

Following the disappointment of 1844 Miller lived for several years. He fell asleep in Christ in 1849. A small church stands near his home in Low Hampton, built by Miller before he died. In spite of his misunderstanding of the event that was to transpire in 1844, God used him to awaken the world to the nearness of the end and to prepare sinners for the time of judgment.

He lies buried in the small cemetery at Low Hampton, New York, awaiting the call of the Life-Giver.

See: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 317-330; also *Midnight Cry*, pp. 17-60; *Footprints of the Pioneers*, pp. 18-27; and *Captains of the Host*, pp. 15-26.



## William Miller Second Advent Preacher

by Paul Gordon and Beverly MacLaughlin

William Miller sat down at his desk to study the Bible. An idea came into his mind again and again. "Go and tell it to the world." William wrote about his idea, something like this:

. . . I can't go, Lord. Then all my excuses came up but my distress became so great, I made an agreement with God that if I should be invited to speak publicly in any place, I would go and perform my duty to the world. I would tell them about the Lord's coming. Instantly, all my burden was gone.

In about thirty minutes from then, a boy rode up to ask William if he would talk to the people the next day on the subject of the Lord's coming.

I . . . retired in great distress to a grove (of trees) nearby . . . I finally submitted, and promised the Lord that, if He would sustain me, I would go, trusting in Him, to give me grace and ability to perform all He would require of me.

There is something special about this request that made it remarkable. It actually took about an hour to travel by horseback from Dresden, where the boy lived, to get to William's farm. That means that the boy started on his trip to ask Mr. Miller to preach *before* he made the agreement with God.

The Lord blessed William Miller especially during his first public lecture. In fact, at the close of the services he was asked to stay and lecture during the week. People

rode in from neighboring towns; and believed what William taught them from the Bible.

This was the start of many requests for William to share his Bible studies with many people. From 1832 to 1844 William Miller kept a log of his preaching. During this period he preached over 3200 times, or an average of more than 266 times every year.

William wrote the following story in his log. It lets us know that not everyone believed he was correct in his ministry. He was near the city of Boston; and a friend took him to a phrenologist in Boston; a phrenologist was a person who examined the bumps on a person's head, and by examining these bumps, he would get a clear idea of the character of the person.

The phrenologist started to feel the bumps on William's head, not knowing that it was William Miller. The "doctor" said that this head (Miller's) was large, well-developed and well-balanced. Then, he went on to say to Mr. Miller's friend, "Mr. Miller could not easily make a convert out of *this* man to his harebrained theory. He has too much good sense." He proceeded making comparisons between the head he was examining and the head of Mr. Miller, as he imagined it would be. "Oh, how I would like to examine Mr. Miller's head," he said, "I would give it a good squeeze."

The phrenologist, knowing that the gentleman was a particular friend of William Miller's, spared no pains in going out of his way to make remarks about him. The others present laughed; and he heartily joined with them, because he thought they were laughing at his funny comparisons. The examination he gave the real Mr. Miller, was exactly opposite what he thought the



imagined Mr. Miller's head would be like if he could touch it.

When the examination was finished, the phrenologist asked Mr. Miller his name. Mr. Miller said it was of no consequence, but the "doctor" insisted. William said, "Miller—you may write down Miller." What is your first name?"

"They call me William."

"What? The gentleman who is lecturing on the prophecies?"

"Yes, sir, the same." At this the phrenologist settled back in his chair, ashamed, and spoke not a single word. We can just imagine how he felt, can't we?

William Miller just laughed when people tried to make fun of him. He knew God had called him to tell people about Jesus's second coming. And, even though William didn't have all his facts correct, God had a plan for his life, and William allowed God to be Lord of his life.

Ellen Harmon was only 12 years old when she heard William preach in Portland, Maine. She believed his preaching, and along with her whole family, became one of the first Adventists. In the book *Early Writings*, Ellen Harmon White wrote about William Miller. She said that, "Angels of God accompanied William Miller in his mission."

**Vocabulary**

lecture

harebrained

theory

"no consequence"

**William Miller**  
**Farmer, Justice of the Peace**  
by Paul Gordon & Beverly MacLaughlin

William Miller was largely self-educated. Public school was not as organized when he was a boy. He was the oldest of 16 children; five boys and eleven daughters. Because of their very large family, William's parents could not afford to provide the education he really wanted. But, young William, when possible, collected books of his own. He read eagerly to learn all he could. Many nights, after the family had fallen asleep, William read books by the light of the fireplace in his log cabin. By the time he was a teenager, William could read and write better than his friends. His above average education earned him the title of "scribbler general."

When William was 21 years old he married Lucy. They made their home in Pultney, Vermont. They had many friends and enjoyed having them visit in their home.

William began to study the Bible seriously. He was a bit confused for awhile. His confusion about religion even caused him to hurt the feelings of his grandfather, Phelps, who was a Baptist minister in Orwell, Vermont; and his uncle Elihu Miller, a Baptist pastor of Low Hampton, New York. This all took place before there were any Seventh-day Adventist Churches.

William Miller joined the revolutionary war in 1812. He was 30 years old when he became a captain in the army. He was a good leader and kind to the soldiers he commanded. He was respected by his men.



After the war was over, two of the men he had commanded got into a terrible argument. They remembered Captain Miller and asked him to help settle their argument. William Miller agreed and the two men were satisfied with his decision. This led to William serving as a justice of the peace for several years.

William built a home for his family in Low Hampton, New York. This home still stands, but it needs repair to keep it nice. William farmed about 200 acres around the house in addition to serving as justice of the peace until about 1830.

Recently, some papers were discovered that William stored in an antique barrel up in the attic of his home. These papers were written by him as part of his work as a justice of the peace. A justice is like a judge who helps people make decisions that do not involve huge amounts of money.

William and his family began attending the Baptist church near their farm. While he was reading a printed sermon, William began to see the beauty and love of Jesus. He wrote . . . "and in Jesus I found a friend." William made a decision to live for Jesus. At age 34 he started walking the path that would eventually lead him to become a great preacher of the ADVENT message.

**Vocabulary**  
self-educated  
justice-of-peace

ADVENTIST PIONEER STORIES-  
ELEMENTARY Adventist Heritage  
Project Pages 1-2

## William Miller

### Preparing to Preach

by Paul Gordon & Beverly MacLaughlin

A monomaniac? What in the world is a monomaniac? William Miller had heard that a doctor-friend-neighbor of his in Low Hampton, New York was saying, "Esquire Miller . . . is a fine and a good neighbor, but was a monomaniac on the subject of the Advent." William decided to let the doctor prescribe for him.

One of the Miller children became ill so William sent for the doctor. After caring for the child, the doctor noticed that William was very quiet in one corner of the room. The doctor asked what ailed him. "Well, I hardly know, doctor. I want you to see what does ail me, and prescribe for me." The doctor felt William's pulse and asked if he hurt anywhere.

"Well," said William, "I don't know, but I may be a monomaniac; I want you to check me and see if I am, and if so, cure me. Can you tell when a man is a monomaniac?" The doctor blushed and said he thought he could, ". . . a monomaniac is an ordinary person when you talk about all subjects but one, and when you talk about that particular subject, he will rave on and on, and cannot be stopped." William said, "Sit with me for two hours while I explain the subject of the Advent to you; and by then you will discover if I am a monomaniac. You may even charge for your time as in your regular work of a doctor."

William Miller opened the Bible to Daniel 8. He read and explained and asked questions of the doctor.



They talked about the 2300 days mentioned in Daniel and about the angel Gabriel. They read something about 70 weeks. William wrote down these numbers and added here and subtracted there until he came up with the year of 1843. William Miller's conclusions were that Jesus was coming back to earth in 1843.

The doctor blushed, picked up his hat and left the house all upset. The next day he visited William. The doctor believed what William had explained from the Bible and said that they both must be monomaniacs. They both must have laughed.

We know now that Jesus didn't come back to earth in 1843. But . . . we'll learn more about that when we read the story about William Miller – Second Advent Preacher.

<p>Vocabulary monomaniac prescribe ailed</p>
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## *A Story About William Miller.*

In 1818 William Miller came to the conclusion that Christ was going to return in 1843 or 1844. But he hesitated to tell people about it because, as he thought, "I am only a farmer and they will laugh at me." So he studied the question fifteen years more. Then one Saturday in early August, 1831, he promised the Lord that if the way would open, he would go. Arthur Spalding tells the story of how the Lord led his nephew, Irving, to his home with the very invitation he had bargained for:

"What do you mean by the way opening?"

"Why if someone should come without my initiative, and ask me to go out and sound the message, I should say the way was open."

"And then Irving [was] at the front door, rapping, and giving his father's message [to come and take a church service in the absence of the local preacher]. 'Come and teach our people that the Lord is coming . . .'"

"William Miller was thunderstruck by this sudden call. He answered the boy not a word, but turning on his heel, he strode out the back door and down the little slope on the west side and up again into the maple grove, where often he went to pray. But all the way along the path a Voice was thundering in his ears: 'Go and tell it! Go and tell it! Go and tell it to the world!' In his maple grove (still standing, with several patriarchs of the time and some younger trees) he fell upon his knees and cried, 'Lord, I can't go! I can't! I'm only a farmer, not a preacher; how can I carry a message like Noah?' But all he could hear was, 'Will you break a promise so soon after you have made it? Go and tell it to the world!'"

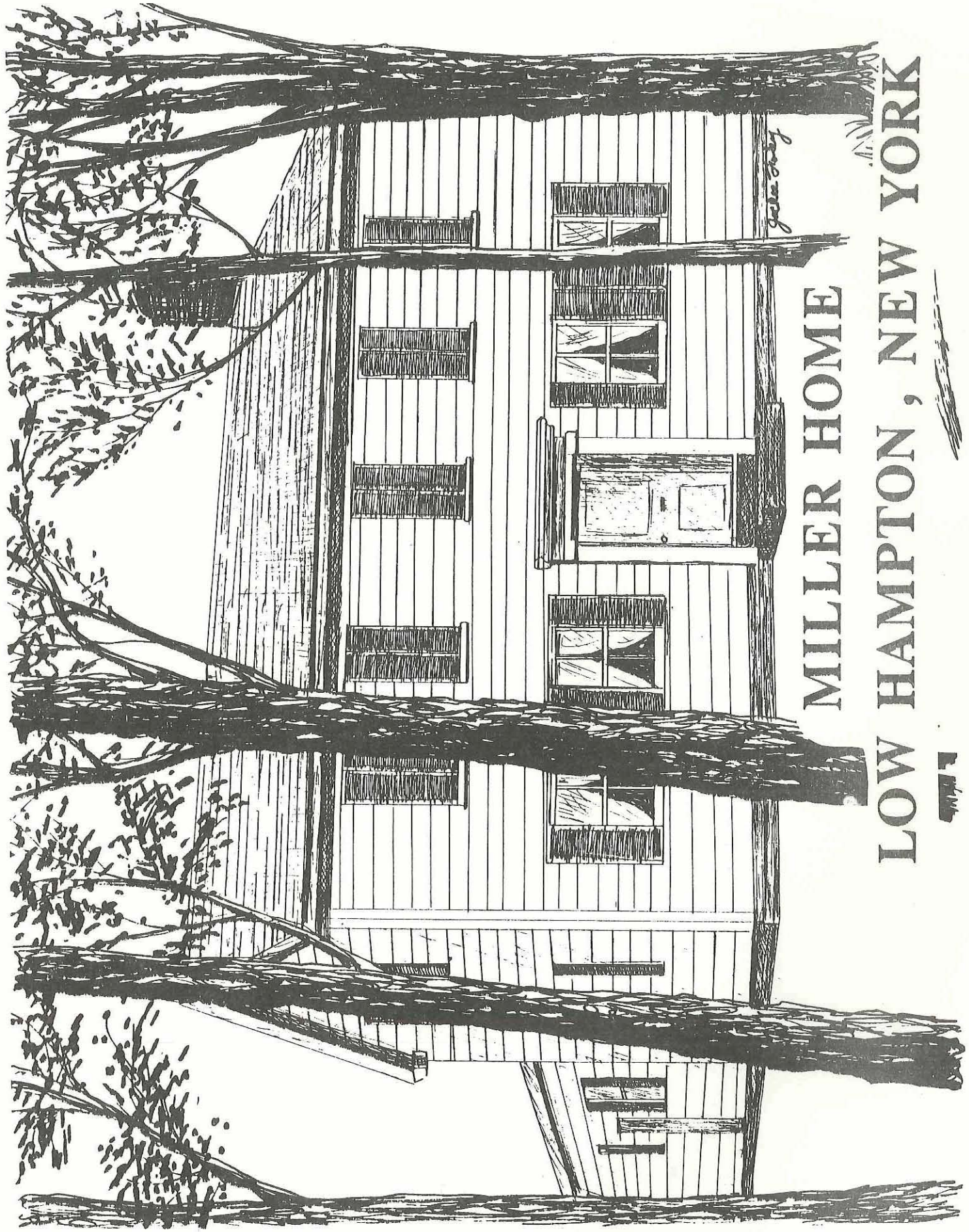
"At last he gave up, crying, 'Lord, I don't know how I can do it; but if you will go with me, I will go.'"

"At once the burden lifted. His spirits soared. he sprang to his feet--this staid old farmer of middle age--and leaped up and down, clapping his hands and shouting, 'Glory! Hallelujah!'"

"Lucy, his littlest daughter, his almost constant companion, had followed him as he hastened down the path; and now, standing aside, she watched his prayer and his triumph. Amazed at such an outburst as she had never before seen in her father, she ran back to the house crying, 'Mother, Mother, come quick! Father's down in the grove, and he's gone crazy!' It was what the world said of him later, but Lucy came to revise her judgment and to follow his teachings to the end of her days."--*Footprints of the Pioneers*, pp. 20-22.

Well, that is the story of Miller's call to preach the second coming of our Lord. What a strong preacher he was, too! Deliberate, forceful! Thousands were converted under his ministry. If we expect the Lord to help us to get ready for His coming and to help others get ready, we must be as earnest Bible students and as faithful in our work as Miller was back in the 1830's and the early 1840's.

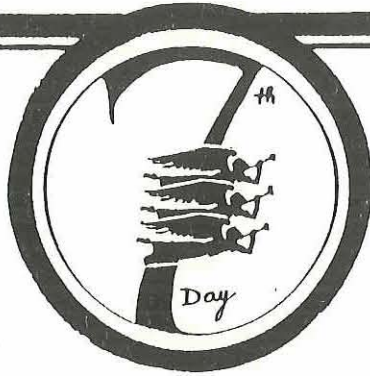




**MILLER HOME**  
**LOW HAMPTON, NEW YORK**

**PLAN**





## Miller Chapel Low Hampton, New York

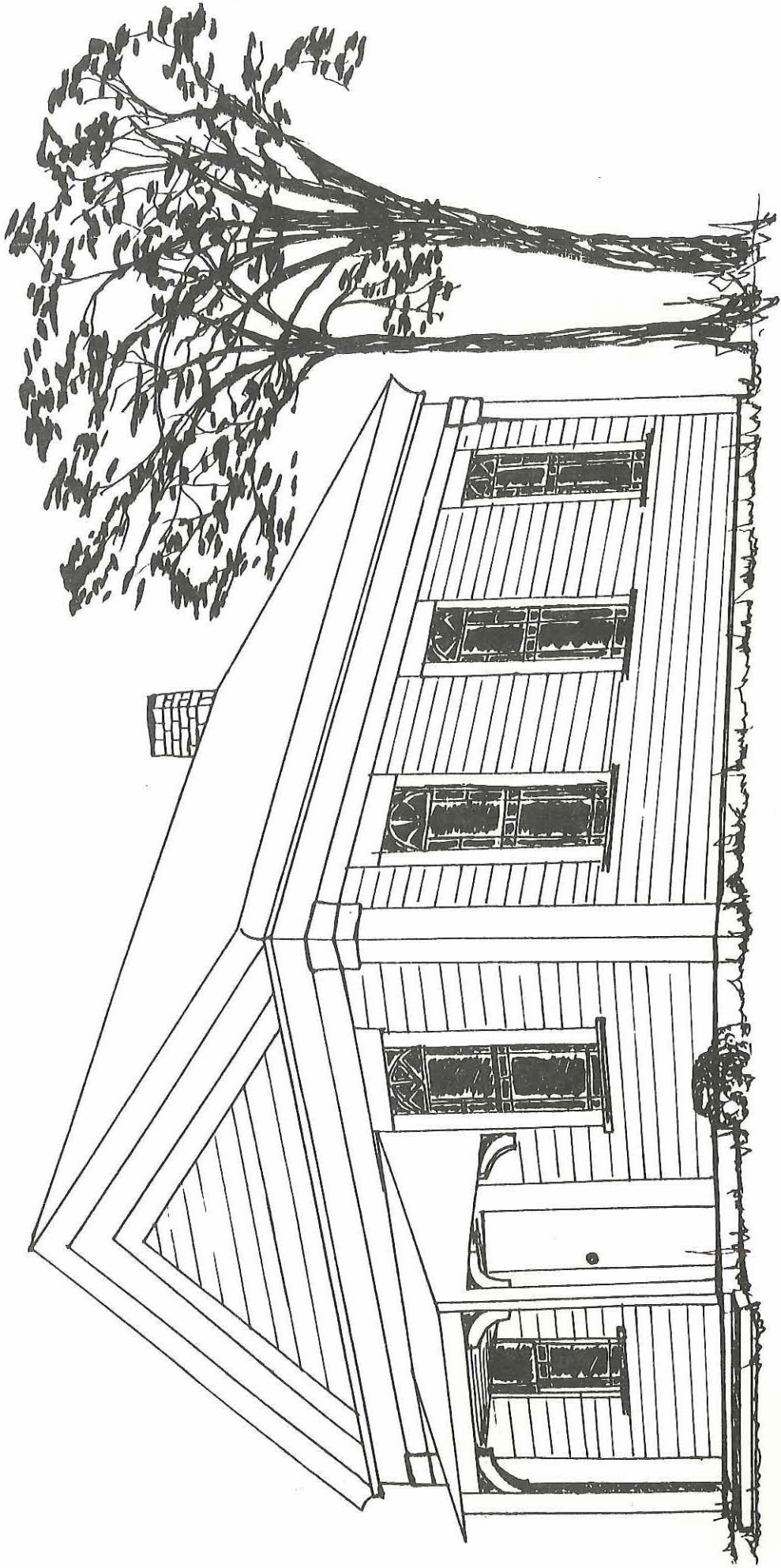


William Miller built this modest chapel in 1848, on his farm, just westward from his home for the local company of second advent believers. The church was completed about one year before his death.

Behind the church is an outcropping of limestone which it is alleged that some waited for what they understood was to be Christ's Second Coming.

Today the church is owned by the Advent Christian Church but is primarily maintained by the Seventh-day Adventist Organization.





**MILLER CHAPEL**  
**LOW HAMPTON, NEW YORK**