

Our Story

The Seventh-day Adventist faith was brought to Tennessee and Kentucky by Squire Osborn and Elbert B. Lane in 1871.

Lane was the first Adventist minister sent to the Nashville area. He reported to the *Review and Herald* magazine on May 2nd, 1871 that his first public meetings were held in the railroad station, and were so well attended, listeners overflowed into the freight rooms.

That same year in Kentucky, Squire Osborn also held evangelistic meetings, and in 1876 he founded the first Adventist conference for Tennessee and Kentucky.

In 1879, the conference was divided, with Osborn as president for the Kentucky conference and G. K. Owen for Tennessee. Owen soon moved to Michigan, but occasionally visited and acted as president pro tem until Samuel Fulton succeeded him. On one of Owen's trips to Tennessee, he reported visiting the Springville congregation, which was organized by his own evangelistic meetings. In the early 1880s, this church received widespread attention from the press when members of the congregation were prosecuted for keeping the Sabbath, under the State Sunday law. Nearly every man in the Springville church was convicted and sentenced to fines or imprisonment. Some were required to perform road labor on a chain gang.

In 1882, the Kentucky Conference had 2 ordained ministers, 5 churches and 84 members. The Tennessee Conference had 1 ordained minister, 5 churches and 54 members. The next year, Samuel Fulton was president of the Tennessee Conference and held evangelistic meetings in the Leach community, near Jackson. Opponents to Adventist teachings burned his tent to the ground and threatened him with bodily harm. Undaunted, he continued his message and twelve men stepped up to guard him. The community gave offerings for a new tent, and eventually built a log church.

The Tennessee River Conference was organized in 1889, and was composed of western Kentucky and west Tennessee. E. E. Marvin was its first president. The eastern half of both states were included in the Cumberland Conference. In 1908, the Kentucky Conference was reformed. Western Kentucky was taken from the Tennessee River Conference and eastern Kentucky from the Cumberland Conference, which soon reduced to east Tennessee alone and separated from the Southern Union to become part of the Southeastern Union Conference.

In 1932, the Kentucky and Tennessee River Conference combined to form the present-day Kentucky-Tennessee Conference, and C. L. Butterfield was elected as its first president. This conference included all of Kentucky and west Tennessee, and was comprised of 2,562 members in 42 churches, with 10 ordained ministers. The Southern and Southeastern Unions also merged, forming today's Southern Union.

The Conference office moved from 24th Avenue North and Seifried Street to 3208 West End Avenue in 1945. The office moved again in 1959 to Madison, Tennessee, and bought 34.5 acres on Center Hill Lake near Smithville for a youth camp. Indian Creek Camp has been in operation for over fifty years, and hosts over 600 campers every summer.

The conference office moved a final time into its current location in 1979. The conference had purchased the property across from present-day Rivergate Mall in 1960.