



The History of New Hope

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

By Dr. Dahlia Pottinger

The New Hope SDA Church was started by an enthusiastic group of forty-four Seventh-day Adventists who attended Boulevard, Decatur, West End and Mount Olive Seventh-day Adventist churches. This burning desire and effort to start a church was mainly to share the love of Christ with others in the Conley area. Patmah Davis came up with the idea. The ambitious members sent a letter to the South Atlantic Conference in which they expressed their desire to start a church.

In their quest for a church, Patmah Davis and Una Assam discovered the Methodist United Church on Bouldercrest Road. Pastor Martha Forrest “willingly and graciously” welcomed this excited group of believers to use the facility for Sabbath services. Miriam Petty made the arrangements. Charter member, Roger Davis wrote, Pastor Martha Forrest opted to rent them the church at an affordable cost.

Ethney Johnson, a dedicated foundation member, recalls that some of the early members affectionately referred to the Cedar Grove United Methodist Church as, *Martha’s Church*. Named New Hope by Jean Guthrie and “sanctioned by the Holy Spirit,”

the group soon became known as “The New Hope Community Services Group.” Without a permanent place for mid-week worship services, generous families such as Harold and Norma Priestley, Roger and Patmah Davis and Desiree Goodman, hosted youth programs and prayer meetings in their homes. In this way, they saved money on rent and this fellowship “contributed to a shared feeling of intimacy and oneness.”

The New Hope Community Services Group had not yet received “official sanction” from the South Atlantic Conference, “but armed with Matthew 28:19 and 20, and led by a resourceful laity,” the group pressed on. Since they did not have a pastor, they were ably led by resourceful laity such as J. Michael Beale and Byron Guthrie, a local elder. The group got pastoral support from theological stalwarts such as Pastor C.D. Henri, G. H. Taylor, Sam Gooden, and Pastor R.E. Tottress. The group regarded Pastor Tottress as their unofficial pastor. He performed the first baptism, the first communion, the first baby blessing and he was also there for the first funeral.

The New Hope Community Services group requested recognition from the South Atlantic Conference, but they were denied. They were very disappointed, but never gave up hope.

After a year and a half of uncertainty about their status in the organization, the South Atlantic Conference of Seventh Day Adventist finally organized New Hope as a Company, which became a part of the Boulevard District of churches. Dr. James Parham was their pastor.

On March 15, 1986, New Hope celebrated its first anniversary with an all-day sabbath program. Divine Hour was an inspiration! The congregation repeated the Doxology and the Fourth Commandment. Elder Albert Foster and Elder J. Michael Beale participated. Dr. James Parham gave the Pastoral Remarks.

Although the members were happy for their new "Martha Church" for Sabbath worship, this ardent group of believers wanted to find a permanent place to call their own. It may have seemed unrealistic to some skeptics, but it was always their goal to build their own church.

The treasurer, Desiree Goodman, was among those who spearheaded this effort. From the inception, most members started setting aside a portion of their earnings toward the Church Building Fund.

Pat Davis led the search for a church property. Joined by Una Assam, Elizabeth Rice, Miriam Petty and Desiree Goodman, these ladies drove many miles, as they searched and searched for a place to purchase. Una Assam recalls driving through the darkness of Evans Mill, with Pat Davis. Unfortunately, they were unable to find a place.

A glimmer of hope shone through one day, when Desiree Goodman spied a For Sale sign on a property, as she drove down Panthersville Road, in DeKalb County.

James Gardner from Tri-City. Elder James Thomas served as Pastor David Jones.

The theme of the Grand Opening of New Hope Seventh Day Adventist Church was *ReNEWing Our Hope and Moving on By His Grace, In His Power, To His Glory*. On Friday, December 3, 1993, at 6:00 p.m. the Communion and Consecration Service were held. The morning service on December 4, 1993, was dubbed "Services of Victory and Gratitude." Divine worship was impressive with music from the Sanctuary Choir. Missilene Edwards made the announcements and Dawn Grant ministered to the little ones with the Children's Story.

The President of South Atlantic Conference Pastor Ralph Peay did the Dedication Prayer and Jynean Palmer-Reid sang, *Holy Ground*. Elder Ward Sumpter gave the sermon.

St. Aubyn Edwards conducted the closing hymn, "To God Be the Glory," while Roger Davis (Organist) and Eula Washington

(Pianist) blessed the sanctuary with lively notes of praise. The Sabbath Afternoon featured a "Praise in Song" four part Celebration in

Music with participants from Berean, New Hope, West End, Decatur, Maranatha and Belvedere sister churches.

After the refurbished building was dedicated, the congregation enjoyed worship, fellowship, and praise. People from various cities in Metro Atlanta came to join the joyful, ardent worshippers. Lively song services, passionate preaching and love were hallmarks of New Hope. Seats filled up quickly and many times visitors were escorted to share the choir seats. The Cottage also buzzed with Sabbath School classes. Marlene Stephens taught the children's Sabbath School there. Many happy years, memories Sabbath lunches have been chronicled in that comfortable cottage. Years of planning, outreach programs and ministries have taken place in that space.

Various pastors gave served the New Hope congregation. Dr. R.E. Tottress served from 1985-1987. Pastor James Parham from 1987-1989; Pastor David M. Jones, from 1989-1994; and Pastor Al Freeman 1994-1997; In the process of building, the South Atlantic Conference graciously "lent" the members Pastor John Simon.

The ministry of Elder C. Dunbar Henri and his dear wife Lorraine Henri succeeded Pastor Al Freeman and came at a much needed time. He brought calm and excellent leadership which helped to settle the congregation. He has left cherished memories among New Hope members. He served from 1997-1999.

In 1999, Dr. Clinton A. Valley and Mrs. Martha Valley answered the call to become the next pastor of New Hope. He was described as a "hands-on-pastor who was very personable, who enjoyed home visitations and involvement in every aspect of church work."

Nestled amongst the trees and green foliage of Panthersville Road, 5.4 acres of property displayed a *For Sale* sign. Two sisters owned the property on which sat "The cottage," their home, and another building which some pioneer members called, "a welding shop" or "The Butler Building." This new group of believers had high hopes but little money; they realized the price of the property was out of their reach.

The pioneers kept looking. Sadly, no place of worship emerged on the horizon. A year went by, and one day, Desiree Goodman passed by the Panthersville property again. Interestingly, the *For Sale* sign was gone, and happily, no one had had bought the property. The price had also dropped! So, the New Hope members approached the elderly sisters and negotiated its purchase.

The members excitedly sought the help of the South Atlantic Conference but were unsuccessful in getting any financial assistance.

Armed with the unstoppable ambition, the fire to evangelize, and the old saying, "Where there's a will, there's a way," the fledgling New Hope Company approached a bank to see whether it could help them purchase the property.

A bank manager presented a possible solution.

If three qualifying members could put up their homes as collateral, then the members may be able to get the loan to purchase the property. With much faith, prayer, and commitment, through the gracious generosity of three families, the New Hope Community Services Group secured the loan. The brave pioneers Pat Davis and Roger Davis, Una Assam, John Lassiter and Origa Lassiter, put up their homes as a collateral for the buying of the property.

The ink was dry on the paper. In 1991, The New Hope members had purchased the property at 3979 Panthersville Road for \$100,000 dollars. Una Assam recalled, "Signing the loan papers was like the Bible. If the church defaulted on the loan, then the bank would take our home. We could not do it without the faithful members. The members were very faithful. It is very touching!" The faithful forty-four and more, were excited. They had acquired their own.

Renovation of Dilapidated Building

Once again, Pat Davis led the renovation of the existing buildings which would be used as their temporary quarters. They had little money, so they had to do most of the construction work themselves. Two buildings were on the church property. The first was the cottage and the second was what seemed to be a welding building. The second building, had to be brought up to code and turned into a sanctuary.

Roger Davis remembers that "Some members were reluctant or unwilling to support the venture because the existing church Butler building was a dilapidated eyesore, and it really needed a complete metamorphosis before it could be realized into a place of worship."

Almost everyone pitched in, working tirelessly, cleaning up and throwing out "stuff." LaTonya Beale was a devoted worker who gave significant help. Missilene Edwards recalled that as they worked on turning the metal building into a place of worship, the crew discovered snakes in the wall of the Fellowship Hall! After overcoming some initial trepidation, the snakes were removed. She and Minnie Rugless then painstakingly covered the holes in the wall, with tar.

Una Assam spoke about the hard work of the members. She said, "Brother Donald Grant worked his life to build and restore the Fellowship Hall. Elder St. Aubyn Edwards and Aldon Stephens also are among those who worked hard on the building. They also did the roof. When you look back, is like, thank you God."

Missilene Edwards also recalls that the scaffoldings had to be removed before they could do anything on the dilapidated building. She concurs with Una Assam that Donald Grant Sr. worked very hard, as he put in the sheetrock, and that faithful Myke Antoine, did all the brick work. Thanks to Elder John Simmons who became the Associate Pastor in 1992. As an experienced builder, he willingly devoted much time and expertise to overseeing the renovation of the fellowship Hall.

People worked untiringly, weekdays and Sundays. Some members who rendered unforgettable "yeomen" service included: Myke Antoine, Patrick Archer, Eddie Davis, Roger Davis, Aldon Stephens. Aubyn Edwards (our industrious First Elder), Donald Grant, Eliad Johnson, John Lassiter, Monte Moore, Dennis Nooks, Leopold Rugless, Rajit Singh, Aldon Stephens, Anthony Tobias, Owen Ennis, and Howard Woodburn. The contributions of Byron and Jean Guthrie, Miriam Petty, Charlie and Barbara Henderson, Edna Jones, Yvonne Millington, Elizabeth Coby, Dalton and Wendy Eason and Edna Jones helped immensely.

Christine Demetrius, Wilhelmina Leach, and Ida Butcher, three senior citizens, toiled long hours, doing whatever they could to help. Una Archer, Carolyn Blake, Irma Checkley, Valda Cohall, Missilene Edwards, Wilhelmina Foster, Dawn Grant, Origa Lassiter, Vivienne McCatty, Carris Nooks, Beryl Palmes, Norma Priestley, Minnie Rugless and Eastlyn West, also assisted in the refurbishing work. Members prepared and cooked meals, ensuring that everyone who labored on Sundays and in the week had food to eat.

With God's help, the daunting task of renovating the building and turning it into the present Fellowship Hall building was completed without any physical injuries. The New Hope members were greatly assisted by members from other Atlanta Seventh Day Adventist congregations.



These included Fred Buddy, Byron Guthrie, Andy Morgan, and Isaac Young from Belvedere; Mervyn Chapman, Cleopus Gilbert and Eaton Nelson from First Lithonia; Clarret English, Dave Ennis, Carta Francis, and Valens Plummer from Decatur; Regina Parham from Atlanta Boulevard; Henry Floyd from Metropolitan and James Gardner from Tri-City. Elder James Thomas served as Associate Pastor during the tenure of both Dr. Parham and Pastor David Jones.

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As the New Hope SDA Church grew, its vibrant worship and its tightly knit family atmosphere attracted many. The membership, which started with 44 strong, had increased significantly to 227 by March of 2000. Factors such as deaths, relocations, membership transfers, and the addition of new faces, plus a welcome infusion of young people, provided a new dynamism of intrigue and growth.

At this 15-year milestone, it was time to break ground for a new edifice because the church had run out of room. The overcrowding on sabbaths had to be alleviated. The New Hope theme, "Small Enough to Share - Big Enough to Care" printed on its bulletins, needed far more physical space. The refurbished sanctuary, The Fellowship Hall, had been outgrown. A new edifice was needed to meet the overcrowding and expanding needs of the church.

The New Hope members launched out in faith to build a new church. With the theme, "A Local Church with a Global Mission," the New Hope Seventh Day Adventist Church hosted their Groundbreaking Weekend, March 4-5, 2000. Dr. Valley, Senior Pastor, wrote: "From our humble beginnings as a service community services group, we have now come proudly to break ground for our million dollars church facility. Let me pause to salute the pioneers who under God had the vision to launch this bold initiative. Tribute must be paid to the visionary leadership and support given by the ministers who have preceded me in this pastorate."

Construction began after all the planning approvals had been secured. The Building Committee Chairperson, Pat Davis, invited everyone to ponder the mighty long way that God had brought the New Hope brethren and expressed gratitude for the presence of everyone. She mentioned that years ago, at the inception of the New Hope Community Services group, each member was asked to lay aside \$1.00 dollar, towards building a sanctuary. She expressed gratitude for the insight of their forebearers, and for the faithful ones who systematically gave of their funds. Many members dug deep in their pockets supported the fundraising campaign. Some sacrificed money from their paychecks. Others put aside investment monies and put-up pledges. Some added more to their offering.

The theme for the groundbreaking Sabbath School was, *Building to God's Glory* under Superintendent Joyce Lewis. Redva Cox, Roger Davis and Glenda Francis participated.

The Sabbath school Lesson Study was led by Elder Darryl Howard, Youth Ministries/Communications Leader of the South Atlantic Conference. Welcome was given by Arline Harvey and Special Music by Anthony Tobias.

President of the South Atlantic Conference, Elder V. J. Mendinghall, was the Groundbreaking Divine Hour Worship speaker. Stephene Demetrius welcomed the visitors; Elder St. Aubyn Edwards conducted the lively Hymns of Praise and did the Offertory; Sarah Osborne read the Scripture and did the Benediction; Elder Kenroy Malcolm led the Prayer of Intercession; Jackie Wilson told the Children's Story, and the New Hope Senior Choir provided the musical selections.

A Praise Concert was a refreshing blessing on that March 4, 2000, groundbreaking sabbath afternoon. Artists included Pauline Harvey, Dennis Arthurs, Cassandra Edwards, David Marcelle, the Youth Choir, the Children's Choir, the New Hope Ensemble, New Hope Male Quartet, Dave Ennis, and Hope Trio. Eliad Johnson gave the Benediction.

Of course, the night ended with a rousing Social at the Cedar Grove United Methodist Church Gymnasium featuring steel band music, flag drill, a variety concert, comedians, a Louise Bennett Impersonator, marches, food, and lots of fun! Admission was only \$1 dollar; children under 12 paid a mere \$.50 cents.

The New Hope SDA Groundbreaking activities continued the afternoon of Sunday, March 5th at 2 pm. The Program warmed up with a lively song service conducted by St. Aubyn Edwards, the Presentation of Colors by the Pathfinders and a sermonette from Elder Ward Sumpter, the Executive Secretary of the Southern Union Conference of SDA. Pastors who participated in the program included: SAC President Elder V. J. Mendinghall, Elder D. M. Jones, Elder L. Stone, Elder C.D. Henri, Elder M. Preston, Elder R. Franklin, Elder M. Preston, and Elder C. A. Valley. Expressions of gratitude were given by the Church Pastor, Elder C.A. Valley; Bank of America's Ms. Vicki Molinari; Architect Mr. J. Hone; Construction Manager, Mr. D. Foster and DeKalb County's Commissioner, Bill Brown.

The DeKalb County Proclamation was done by Commissioner P. Sanford. Michelle Beale, David Marcelle, and Pauline Harvey

rendered special music. The members provided light refreshment and Tropical Steel Vibes played celebratory music.

Senior Pastor, Dr. Clinton A. Valley and our New Hope Church members undertook the Herculean leadership in the building of the new sanctuary. This was challenging in many ways. Unfortunately, during construction, a workman accidentally fell

from a rafter and never survived. As the construction team dug, mud seemed to be everywhere, but that inconvenience did not stop the excited members from coming to worship. Finding parking was a challenge, but thanks to our sister church next door, the Lovelife Christian Fellowship, members were able to use their church parking lot. Faithful members, passionate about the erecting of this new edifice, poured in many hours of labor; families made financial sacrifices to honor their pledges. No donation was too small.

Under the leadership of Dr. Valley, the building of sanctuary was completed in 2001. It was dedicated on June 24, 2001. There was a buzz of excitement in the air as members prepared for the opening ceremony and celebration. With a sense of pride, members admired the plush, new pink carpet, the long benches with their soft cushions, the newly ensconced lights fixture emanating a quiet glow. The Fellowship Hall's trusty old kitchen experienced a total upgrade in flooring, appliances, utensils, and even new aprons. Grace McCalla and her son Marcel Sands donated a new kitchen stove. Heather Cox donated the tiles. Members made all kinds of donations and sacrifices to outfit the kitchen and donate items for the edifice. The Lassiters outfitted the new sanctuary with brand Seventh Day Adventist Hymnals. The Senior Choir, under the direction of Pat Davis and organist Roger Davis, sang lustily in their newly acquired robes.

Smiles were on everyone's faces. It was weekend of ecstatic celebration. Dr. Valley stated that having a proper building gives New Hope the opportunity to "extend our religious and humanitarian work and thus contribute to the improvement of the quality of life for all." Tears of joy welled up in the eyes of many as the New Hope SDA was dedicated to the glory of God. Elder St. Aubyn Edwards was the First Elder. He had succeeded the position from the unforgettable, hardworking First Elder, Delroy Myrie. Missilene Edwards was the Church Administrative Assistant.

Since that time, New Hope has been blessed by the ministries of various pastors. Pastor Kenneth J. Boswell, his dear wife Patricia Boswell, their two daughters, Tiffany and Lauren became a part of the New Hope Church family. He succeeded Dr. Clinton A. Valley.

*“Small Enough
to Care... Big Enough
to Share!”*

New Hope was also blessed to have the ministry of Pastor Linwood Stone and Dr. Jennifer Stone. Pastor Stone, in the January 2013 Church Directory, expressed a joy and privilege to be a part of the family of God. He exhorted all members to share our faith and help others find their way to Jesus. Repeatedly, with a twinkle in his eye and a smile, he reminded us to "Keep smiling, no one knows what you're up to...except God." Dr. Jennifer Stone's ministry of compassion, helpfulness and support are treasured.

Dr. Nathaniel Hollis and Mrs. Jo Hollis were next to serve the New Hope SDA Church. They were installed and on April 29, 2017. Dr. Hollis loved the Word and enjoyed evangelism. His passion to see others saved was evident in his sermons, Revelation Seminars, distribution of literature and many fervent prayers. Dr. Hollis encouraged the New Hope congregation to pray for others and for family members. He held the flock together when COVID-19 Pandemic broke. The Church transitioned to online worship services. We said goodbye to the monthly Sunday board meeting with breaks for a delicious cornmeal porridge from Beverly Constant, Norma Priestley, and the Hospitality Team. The church faced, like many churches across the world, various obstacles as it transitioned from in person church services to online platforms. These included inadequate equipment, the need for personnel tech training, producing relevant, and engaging content, among others. But the church pressed on.

Thankfully, Darwin Dowdie, Joel Legall, David Marcelle, and all members of the New Hope Media Team stood bravely during the pandemic, took precautions, and showed up at the New Hope SDA church to stream the live the broadcast. Much appreciation goes to Dr. Eliad Johnson, Elder Winston James, Violet Thompson, Verol Thompson, Elder Curland Francis, Garfield Morrison, and everyone else who came online, teaching the Sabbath School lessons, assisting in Divine Hour and keeping church alive, as most people sheltered in place.

After over forty years of dedicated service, Dr. Hollis retired from the ministry. His New Hope family celebrated this historic achievement on December 11, 2021. The Church presented an exceptional Pastor Appreciation and Retirement celebration together.

With the retirement of Dr. Hollis, New Hope needed a new pastor. After a few weeks, news broke that New Hope was getting Dr. Everton A. Ennis and Mrs. Ingrid Ennis. The Church welcomed them with open arms. On Sabbath, January 22, 2022, our new pastor, and his wife were installed in New Hope SDA.

Dr. Ennis is a Pastor, Conflict Resolution Consultant for

Corporations, A Conference Speaker, and the author of *From Holy Hell to Hallelujah Again*, an insightful approach to conflict management. He had recently pastored the New Jerusalem SDA Praise and Worship Center in Douglasville, Georgia and the Newnan First SDA Church in Newnan, Georgia. Dr. Ennis transformed the worship services to online platforms, updated existing technologies, brought New Hope into an interactive worship style with the use of online platforms.

New Hope has experienced redesigns of its Home, Instagram, and Facebook pages. Mrs. Ingrid Ennis, with her professional training, business degree and technical knowledge, has significantly contributed to content development, production, livestreaming, and training of Media personnel at New Hope. The Café style approach which engages online audiences, and in person members to New Hope SDA is an essential part of evangelism outreach. Dr. Ennis' sermon series on *Experiencing Hope* has yielded five precious souls for baptism.

For many years, the New Hope Community Services Department has served the community and its members. Thanks to the vision and hard work of Nellie Cameron, who started this outreach from The Cottage. The Church appreciates the collaboration with the Atlanta Community Food Bank and other donors who have supported this community outreach program for many years Novlette Forrester has also given years of consistent leadership and dedicated service. The Pathfinders, The Master Guides, Pauline Cameron, Ornell Christie, Eastlyn West, Earle Allen, Percell Demetrius, Byron Townsend, Neil Harvey, Bernard D'Aguilar, David Patterson and many others have volunteered their time and resources to serving the community.

To serve the wider community, New Hope Church, under the leadership of Dr. Ennis and the collaboration of the Community Services Team, launched the New Hope Community Resource Center (NHCRC). This arm of ministry will allow New Hope to expand its community outreach services in DeKalb County. Webinars, Job Training, Food Distribution, Family Support, Conflict Resolution, Recreation are among the services that are being offered. Currently, the building plans for the center are being worked on.

Paying off the New Hope Church mortgage, was on the hearts of the Church Board and members. Over the years, Melvin Constant, Treasurer, has presented many budget reports to New Hope Church Board, with an update on the mortgage. But last year was different. The balance was steadily decreasing. Insightful board members asked some important questions, made some beneficial recommendations and the treasurer carried out the recommendation.

At first, members suggested paying extra on the mortgage.

The church also saw wisdom in refinancing the mortgage loan and thanks to the South Atlantic Conference, that became a reality. Members were passionate about getting rid of this debt, so they significantly increased the monthly payments, and this brought the down faster. When the mortgage balance became lower, the members tapped into available resources and wiped out the balance on the mortgage loan.

The Church appreciates the leadership of Dr. Nathaniel Hollis, dedicated treasurer Melvin Constant, the New Hope Finance Team, the New Hope Church Board, and all New Hope members who made paying off the mortgage debt an amazing reality. To every member who gave additional funds, to every member who sacrificed to pay the mortgage over the years, the church is very grateful.

The history of New Hope also acknowledges our first female elder, Elder Antega Townsend who has held the position of First Elder for over twenty years. She is a dedicated leader who has worked with various administrators and pastors. Elder Townsend stated that, "It was a pleasure to serve as an elder."

Elder Percell Demetrius is presently the First Elder of New Hope SDA. His wife, Stephene Demetrius, is a veteran educator, who has led the New Hope SDA Education Department for years.

During the mortgage journey we lost a few members. We were indeed blessed to have Donald Birch Sr. With heaviness of hearts, we mourn his loss. New Hope is indeed grateful for the many years of music ministry, the lively song services, the sweet potato puddings and warm totes. The Men of Hope will miss the lively Saturday night "Board Meetings", or domino games and energetic Sunday morning soccer scrimmages.

The Board voted to name the Summer Concert Series, the "Donald Birch, Sr. Summer Gospel Concert Series." The church also lost an icon, Lucille Francis, a devoted Christian, an exemplary deaconess and beloved family member. The church also mourned the passing of Brudy Francis. New Hope will never forget her compassionate spirit, beautiful smile, and legacy. Troy Russell's contribution to Sabbath School, Bible Class and New Hope will always be remembered. The memories and legacy of prayer warrior Wilhemina Leach, Owen Ennis and Kaleal Ennis will remain in our hearts.

The history of New Hope is something to shout about. Our history captures snapshots of our passionate, devoted members who love the Lord. It contains snippets of the following: Revelation Seminars; evangelistic outreach; praying for seven families each week; prayer and fasting; The Atlanta Food Bank Hunger Walk; Black History programs;

heartwarming baptisms; beautiful Communion Services; Men and Women prayer lines, historic Bible Bowl wins; a strong Pathfinder and Master Guide Program.

Thanks for the Quartet Festivals; Christmas Music Programs, Christmas Banquets, memorable children's stories and the Lamb's Offering, annual Education Day; Children's Church; ministering to the wee ones; Sabbath School; Bible Class; Young Adult Ministries; Adventist Youth; dedicated Deaconesses and Deacons; faithful Ushers; caring Family Life Ministry personnel; amazing Women's Ministry activities like daily meditations and encouragement from Maureen Thomas; Father's Day full course dinners and treats from the Women's Ministry; lively Saturday night Socials with Music and crunchy Fried Dumplings; delicious Sabbath Meals and Engaging Conversations.

New Hope has come this far by faith and looks forward to continued success as we share the message of salvation with Ellenwood and the world.

