

Image not found or type unknown



Kelley, Frank Cortis (1860–1918)

ENOC IGLESIAS ORTEGA

Enoc Iglesias Ortega, Ph.D. (University of Morelos, Mexico), is an associate professor at the Adventist University of Colombia and editor of the university journal of studies and research. He has written seven books and has co-authored two others besides having written numerous magazine articles. He has worked for the Adventist Church as university president, academic vice president, and general secretary, as well as university director of admissions and records. He is married to Aura Graciela González Arjona and has two adult children.

Frank Cortis Kelley was the first Adventist to arrive in continental Colombia from a foreign country and spread the

teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Not commissioned by the Adventist Church, he was a self-supporting missionary in the capital, then Bogotá, Special District, (now Bogotá, Federal District).

Early Years

Frank Kelley was born in Tama County, Iowa, on March 18, 1860. In October 1879, he moved to Denver, Colorado, where he presumably joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1880.¹ He moved further west to Beaverton, Oregon in 1883 before settling in Oakland, California, in June 1889, taking employment at the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Precisely what motivated Kelley to become a self-supporting missionary in Colombia is unknown; however, he first applied for a passport in 1894.² In 1922, Kelly informed Max Trummer that when he was a student at Pacific Union College he had desired to travel to Colombia as a self-supporting worker.³

The results of Kelley's missionary endeavors followed on the baptism of the first converts in Colombia's San Andrés and Providencia islands in the West Caribbean Conference in 1901 and 1902. By 1895, it was already reported that there was a photographer (referring to Kelley) distributing publications in Colombia.⁴ Kelley planned to teach English and sell photographic equipment since there seemed to be great interest in photography in that country at the time.⁵ In 1895, he traveled from New York to Bogotá where he took photos and taught English while distributing *El Centinela* magazine.

One of Kelley's strengths was his ability to reach university students with his English classes. These early contacts were fruitful in that many of his students became professionals and later took up high-ranking positions in government or in companies. When he would run into them, he would take advantage of the moment to share the Gospel. These people later affirmed that the Adventist faith was true, but that they could not accept it. It was evident that those in positions of influence could not belong to a Protestant denomination.⁶

It was said of Kelley's ministry that "in human vocabulary we have such words as destiny, chance, coincidence, and luck. But there was no place for such words in God's vocabulary. It was the Spirit of God that moved on F. C. Kelley to come to Colombia."⁷

Matrimony and Mexico

Kelley returned to the United States in 1899 where he married Carrie E. Mills (1856-1938) in Howell, Michigan on February 7, 1899. Mills was a graduate of Battle Creek College and a church school teacher. The newlyweds briefly settled in Fenton, Michigan, where Frank Kelley continued to work as a photographer.⁸

From 1901 to 1906, the Trummers worked Mexico City.⁹ While there, The Kelleys established a school and Carrie Mills Kelley became the first Adventist school teacher in the city.¹⁰ It is not entirely clear what Kelley did upon their return to the United States. In 1910, they were once again living in Howell, Michigan.¹¹

Return to Colombia

By 1920, Kelley was working as a carpenter in Santa Barbara, California.¹² In November of that year, the Kelley's returned to Colombia where their missionary spirit of the Kelleys impressed Max Trummer and soon they united forces together with L. V. Cleaves who had worked as a Bible worker in Barranquilla in 1921. The united efforts of the Kelleys, Trummer, and Cleaves resulted in the organization of a church in Bogotá that later was firmly established by the work of two missionary colporteurs, Fred Steeves and Fred Broker.

Because there was no conference organization in Colombia at the time, Kelley never occupied a church position. The Kelleys worked as self-supporting missionaries along with Pastor Chávez and Max Trummer to organize a church in Bogotá. The synergy of these three families helped to move the work forward, albeit modestly.

Kelley set the example of an effective missionary work with publications and "[L]ater on, faithful colporteurs followed in his footsteps, selling our books."¹³ In spite of the high cost of photography and the publications, Kelley was able to disseminate the Word of God through his activities. When Trummer arrived in Bogotá, the Kelleys were older, but they had a rich experience and their testimony for future generations was inspiring.¹⁴ Kelley was able to easily reach university students and other educated people because he was an educated man himself.¹⁵

A question that has been formulated about Kelley's ministry is why he did not remain in Barranquilla to disseminate Adventism there. The answer may have to do with the fact that Bogotá was a national educational center with various universities, such as the Universidad Santo Tomás (Saint Thomas University)¹⁶ and the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (Pontifical Xaverian University).¹⁷ His talents would not have been as useful in Barranquilla, since this city in 1895 did not yet have the Universidad del Atlántico (University of the Atlantic).¹⁸

Later Years

Due to the threat of yellow fever, in 1923 the Kelleys, now in their 60s, returned to the United States where they lived first in Pasadena, California, and then retired to Santa Barbara, California. Carrie Kelly died on June 4, 1938, in Loma Linda, California.¹⁹

Legacy

Kelley was the first foreign Adventist to work in Colombia as a self-supporting missionary. In order to properly value the scope of Kelley's work in Bogotá, one must take into account all the adverse circumstances he had to face. Any judgment, opinion, or perception of the success of his missionary labors over the short term should take into consideration these challenging conditions that characterized the national life of Colombia at that time. Today Adventists are organized as the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Colombia under the Personería Jurídica Especial (Special Legal Status) contained in Resolution 763 of June 21, 1996, conferred by the Colombian Ministry of the Interior.²⁰ To pioneer the work of a religious faith in any part of the world represents a great responsibility. Kelley proved the strength of his faith by coming to Colombia from a far-away land to work as a free-lance Adventist pioneer.

SOURCES

California. Santa Barbara County. 1920 United States Census. Digital images. Ancestry.com, September 20, 2020, <https://ancestry.com>.

Escandón Hernández, Rafael. *Monedas de oro. Reminiscencias de la familia Escandón* [Gold Coins: Reminiscences of the Escandón Family] (Clearlake, CA: Perfect Printers, 2005).

Hicks, H. H. "Carrie Mills Kelley obituary." *Pacific Union Recorder*, May 25, 1938.

Hicks, H. H. "Frank Kelley obituary." *Pacific Union Recorder*, August 31, 1938.

"Historia" [History]., Universidad del Atlántico, April 25, 2017. Accessed July 8, 2019. <https://www.uniatlantico.edu.co/uatlantico/info-general/historia>.

Howell, E. E. *El gran movimiento adventista* [The Great Adventist Movement] Florida, Buenos Aires: Asociación Casa Editora Sudamericana, n.d.

Iglesias Ortega, Enoc. *Presencia adventista en Colombia* [The Adventist Presence in Colombia] Medellín, Colombia: El Faro Editores, 1996.

Michigan. Genesee County. 1900 United States Census. Digital images. Ancestry.com, September 20, 2020, <https://ancestry.com>.

Michigan. Livingston County. 1910 United States Census. Digital images. Ancestry.com, September 20, 2020, <https://ancestry.com>.

"Presentación", [Presentation]. Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. Bogotá, n.d. Accessed July 8, 2019, <https://www.javeriana.edu.co/institucional>.

"Reseña histórica" [Historical Review]. Universidad Santo Tomás. Primer Claustro Universitario de Colombia [Saint Thomas University. First University Cloister of Colombia]. 2017. Accessed July 8, 2019, <https://www.usta.edu.co/index.php/nuestra-institucion-usta/la-universidad/presentacion-usta#rese%C3%B1a-hist%C3%B3rica>.

Resolution 763. Republic of Colombia. Ministry of the Interior. June 21, 1996.

Viana Moreno, Yerko Samuel. *Historia del adventismo en Bogotá, D. C., 1921-2011* [History of Adventism in Bogotá, D.C., 1921-2011]. Bogotá: Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Día, Secciones Asociación del Alto Magdalena y del Sur de Bogotá, n. d.

NOTES

1. H. H. Hicks, "Frank Kelley obituary," *Pacific Union Recorder*, August 31, 1938, 14.?
2. U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925, "Frank Cortis Kelley," August 27, 1894, Ancestry.com, accessed September 20, 2020, <https://ancestry.com>.?
3. Rafael Escandón Hernández, *Monedas de oro. Reminiscencias de la familia Escandón* (Clearlake, California: Perfect Printers, 2005), 45.?
4. E. E. Howell, *El gran movimiento adventista* [The Great Adventist Movement] (Florida, Buenos Aires: Asociación Casa Editora Sudamericana, n.d.), 292.?

5. Yerko Samuel Viana Moreno, *Historia del adventismo en Bogotá, D. C., 1921-2011* (Bogotá, Colombia: Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Día, Secciones Asociación del Alto Magdalena y del Sur de Bogotá, n. d.), 21.?
6. *Ibid.*, 46.?
7. Enoc Iglesias Ortega, *Presencia adventista en Colombia* (Medellín: El Faro Editores, 1996), 19.?
8. 1900 United States census, Genesee County, Michigan, enumeration district 0008, roll T623, 1854, FHL microfilm 1240710, page 18, digital image, "Kelley, Frank," Ancestry.com, accessed September 20, 2020, <https://ancestry.com>.?
9. U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925, Certificate no. 96959, "Frank Cortis Kelley," October 4, 1920, Ancestry.com, accessed September 20, 2020, <https://ancestry.com>.?
10. H. H. Hicks, "Carrie Mills Kelley obituary," *Pacific Union Recorder*, May 25, 1938, 14.?
11. 1910 United States census, Livingston, Michigan, enumeration district 0108, roll T624_660, FHL microfilm: 1374673, page 1b, digital image, "Kelley, Frank C.," Ancestry.com, accessed September 20, 2020, <https://ancestry.com>.?
12. 1920 United States census, Santa Barbara County, California, enumeration district 95, roll T625_146, page 15b, digital image, "Kelley, Frank C.," Ancestry.com, accessed September 20, 2020, <https://ancestry.com>.?
13. Howell, 282.?
14. Escandón, 45.?
15. Escandón, 22.?
16. "Reseña histórica" [Historical Review], Universidad Santo Tomás. Primer Claustro Universitario de Colombia (Saint Thomas University. First University Cloister of Colombia), n.m., 2017, consulted on July 8, 2019, <https://www.usta.edu.co/index.php/nuestra-institucion-usta/la-universidad/presentacion-usta#rese%C3%B1a-hist%C3%B3rica>?
17. "Presentación" [Presentation], Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. Bogotá, n.d., accessed July 8, 2019, <https://www.javeriana.edu.co/institucional>.?
18. "Historia" [History], Universidad del Atlántico, April 25, 2017, accessed July 8, 2019, <https://www.uniatlantico.edu.co/uatlantico/info-general/historia>.?
19. H. H. Hicks, "Frank Kelley obituary," *Pacific Union Recorder*, August 31, 1938, 14.?
20. Resolution 763, Republic of Colombia. Ministry of the Interior, June 21, 1996).?

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000