

# Wilson, Gilbert Temple (c. 1857–1899) and Mary Jane (Haysmer) (later Williams) (1859–1938)

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## MILTON HOOK

Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian*, *Gospel Revivalist* the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

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Gilbert Temple Wilson was a church administrator, including New Zealand Conference president.

## Early Life

Gilbert Temple Wilson, born in Michigan about 1857, was the second child of six in the family of Thomas and Mary Adelia (Shepard) Wilson.<sup>1</sup> Later the family moved to southern Nebraska and the four sons helped their father on a farm at Red Cloud.<sup>2</sup> On April 6, 1882, Gilbert married Mary Jane “Jennie” Haysmer at Bushnell Township, Michigan.<sup>3</sup>

## Denominational Service

Soon after their marriage Gilbert and Jennie took up work as colporteurs in the Fenwick/Bushnell Township district north-east of Grand Rapids.<sup>4</sup> They remained in the area until 1888 and then received a transfer to work in Flemington, West Virginia.<sup>5</sup> A further transfer was made to Atlanta, Georgia, in 1891 when Gilbert was first listed as an ordained minister.<sup>6</sup> In 1892 the General Conference Foreign Mission Board appointed Gilbert and Jennie to join the ministerial team in New Zealand.<sup>7</sup>

Gilbert and Jennie sailed from San Francisco on the “Alameda,” arriving at Auckland on November 5, 1892.<sup>8</sup> Gilbert began his work by assisting in a training class for colporter recruits at Timaru in the south island. He followed by joining another evangelist in a tent crusade at Hastings in the north island.<sup>9</sup>

When the 1893 New Zealand Conference session was held Gilbert was elected president.<sup>10</sup> He was re-elected for 1894<sup>11</sup> and 1895.<sup>12</sup> He also carried the vice-presidency of the New Zealand Tract Society<sup>13</sup> and the presidency of

the New Zealand Sabbath School Association.<sup>14</sup> Late in 1895 he attended the Armadale camp meeting in Melbourne and during the business sessions he was elected vice-president of the Australian Conference, second in charge to President Arthur Daniells.<sup>15</sup> His work took him to various camp meetings held for the constituency<sup>16</sup> and follow-up tent crusades for the public, all occasions when he preached to large audiences.<sup>17</sup>

Early in 1897 there appeared ominous signs that Gilbert was suffering from tuberculosis. He reduced his heavy administrative load and first sought respite among the Adventist community at Cooranbong followed by treatment at the Summer Hill Sanitarium.<sup>18</sup> He used his time to write and publish devotional poems<sup>19</sup> and articles for the denominational periodicals.<sup>20</sup> Some pieces were descriptive of events at the Avondale School for Christian Workers.<sup>21</sup> These served to advertise the new institution among the church youth. Towards the end of 1898 Gilbert and Jennie moved north to the warmer climate of Brisbane, Queensland. Gilbert continued to report about church events in the conference. At the Queensland camp meeting he was pleased to associate with Elders Arthur Daniells, Stephen Haskell and Ellen White.<sup>22</sup>

A few weeks after the camp meeting, on Friday, January 13, 1899, Gilbert peacefully passed away. Haskell conducted the funeral service on the following Sabbath afternoon, January 14,<sup>23</sup> and Gilbert was laid to rest in the Toowong Cemetery before the close of the day.<sup>24</sup>

Jennie returned to the New South Wales Conference and spent the year as a Bible worker in the Maitland district. At the end of the year she transferred to the South Australian Conference for another twelve months to train several young ladies for similar work.<sup>25</sup> She sailed back to America in 1902 and resumed her Bible work in Michigan and Tennessee. On March 12, 1907, she married Elder William Wallace Williams, a widower, and they retired to Miami, Florida. Jennie passed away on August 16, 1938,<sup>26</sup> and was laid to rest in the Miami Memorial Park Cemetery.<sup>27</sup> When William passed away the following year he was placed alongside her.<sup>28</sup>

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