



Frank and Mary Jane Loasby with children Lucille and Frank, Jr., and two unknown Indian gentlemen, Chickoki Mallian (Pakistan today), December 25, 1918.
Photo courtesy of General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

Loasby, Frank Herbert (1887–1966)

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Frank Herbert Loasby was a pioneering Seventh-day Adventist missionary to present-day Pakistan and northern India.

Early Life

Frank Herbert Loasby was born in England on April 8, 1887.¹ As a young man, Loasby went to the United States to further his Adventist education at what was then called the Foreign Missionary Seminary in Takoma Park, Maryland. After beginning his studies, he spent the summer of 1908 canvassing in New Jersey.² Support in another form came in 1910 when the General Conference agreed to pay half of his school fees at the seminary.³

In 1911, Loasby married Mary Jane Barritt (1887-1975), who had also come to the United States from England as a young adult. The wedding took place in Takoma Park, Maryland.⁴ Frank and Mary Jane Loasby had two children: Lucille, born in 1915⁵ and Frank, Jr., born in 1917.⁶ During these early years, Loasby showed an interest in foreign

lands and world mission. He wrote a poem, published in the *Youth's Instructor* in 1910, titled "Ilala," the place where the renowned medical missionary David Livingstone died in Africa.⁷ The *Youth's Instructor* also published three articles by Loasby in 1911 and 1912 on religion, culture, and mission history in East Asia.⁸

Pioneering Work in the Punjab

In 1913, Frank and Mary Jane Loasby were called to serve in India as pioneer missionaries.⁹ They arrived in Bombay in July and after a brief stay moved to the Punjab, a region that would be divided between the newly-independent nations of India and Pakistan in 1947. This was new territory for Adventists—the Loasbys, along with Dr. Victor L. Mann (1880-1951) and his wife Adeline, were the first Adventist missionaries to serve in this location.¹⁰ The Loasby family spent the next 13 years initiating the Adventist work in various mission stations in the Punjab. In 1917, Frank Loasby passed his third-year examinations in Urdu, the language spoken most widely in the region at the time.¹¹ This gave him the capacity to both better understand the local people and communicate the gospel to them in verbal and print form.

The Loasbys often traveled together as a family from village to village in a bullock cart. In a two-week trip in 1921, for example, they visited four villages where Indian workers were stationed, staying three days at each. They slept in a tent on the edge of the villages. Each morning they conducted a short meeting for the local Adventist workers. During the day, Mary Jane Loasby distributed basic medicines from a dispensary. In the evening, Frank Loasby set up a white sheet on a wall somewhere in the village and show lantern slides illustrating his biblical message.¹² Meetings of this nature often drew a crowd of 200-300 people, Loasby wrote in 1918. Most of the attendees were Muslims and Sikhs.¹³ While very few of these would commit to following Jesus and becoming Adventist, some eventually did. Loasby claimed to have baptized the first Sikh to become an Adventist, Bhagwan Singh, in 1925.¹⁴

In the town of Chuharkana, northwest of Lahore, the Loasbys helped establish a small mission station and school. This would eventually grow into a full-fledged elementary school that continued operating long after they left.¹⁵

In 1927, Loasby was called to oversee moving the Adventist school in Lucknow, India, to a more rural location called Roorkee. The move was intended to create an environment in which students could both study and work in various industries,¹⁶ in accordance with the views Loasby expressed in denominational periodicals concerning training for evangelism and industrial work as the primary purpose of Adventist education.¹⁷

After firmly establishing the school in Roorkee, the Loasby family went on furlough. When they returned to the mission field, they were assigned back to Lahore in the Punjab.

Northeast India Union Mission Leadership

After a few years in Lahore, Frank Loasby was called to be the superintendent of the Northeast India Union Mission in 1937.¹⁸ Mary Jane Loasby served as Dorcas Society leader for the union mission during part of their time at this assignment.¹⁹ Frank Loasby was responsible for overseeing the work in a vast territory comprised of the northeastern states of India as well as what became the nation of Nepal. He spent many months of the year visiting remote villages and mission stations.

It was a very challenging location. Much of the assigned territory still did not have any Adventist presence. This was a matter of prayer for Loasby, he wrote in 1939, with specific reference to Nepal.²⁰ In some locations, there had been an Adventist presence for nearly forty years without a single new member.²¹ Other locations, such as the tribal territories of the Santal, saw sizable groups of people accept in the Adventist message and join the church.²²

In his 1939 report, Loasby lamented that a diminishment of foreign missionaries made it necessary to close some mission stations.²³ World War II and the growing threat of a possible Japanese invasion in 1942 also hampered the work.²⁴ The Loasbys had been in India since 1914 and much had changed in the dynamics of leadership and the relationship between local Indian leaders and foreign missionaries. Some of Loasby's articles suggest that he was in favor of the "Indianization" of leadership. He oversaw this transition in a number of mission stations in his territory.²⁵ But, at other times his writing appears to lament this change.²⁶

By the end of 1943, the Loasbys had moved to Salisbury Park in Pune, India, where Loasby became an editor at the Oriental Watchmen Press.²⁷ In 1946, the Loasbys took permanent leave from India, having served there for thirty-three years.²⁸

Contribution

After retirement from overseas mission service, the Loasbys lived in various parts of the United States before settling in British Columbia, Canada, where Frank Loasby passed away in 1966 at age 79. Mary Jane Loasby died in 1975 at aged 87. They were the first Adventists to reach many of the villages they entered as missionaries, and at times the first Christians of any denomination.²⁹ Along with the countless lives transformed by their thirty-three years of service on the Indian subcontinent, the school they established in Roorkee continued into the twenty-first century as a thriving institutional emblem of the Loasbys' legacy, providing Adventist education at the elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels.³⁰

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