

# Colcord, Willard Allan (1860–1935)

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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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Willard Allan Colcord was an editor and religious liberty advocate.

## Early Life

Willard Allan Colcord was born on December 8, 1860, at Coleta, Illinois, to Ivory and Charlotte (Fraser) Colcord. His siblings were Irena Loretta (b.1859), Ivory Celia (b.1869), Bertha Viola (b.1871), Milton (b.1873, d.1873), Angeline (b.1874), and Edith Marion (b.1877).<sup>1</sup> His paternal grandmother traced her lineage to the Pilgrim Fathers. His father was a farmer who became treasurer of the Illinois Conference, 1859-1877. Willard said of his father that he was “generous beyond his ability,” one who came to regard the ownership of a house or land of little importance in view of the imminence of Christ’s return.<sup>2</sup> Willard’s early years were, therefore, austere. He attended Rockford Academy and advanced to Battle Creek College to complete his formal education.<sup>3</sup>

In Jefferson, Iowa, Willard married Anna Letitia Guise on September 28, 1882.<sup>4</sup> At the time Willard was not a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church, despite his upbringing, but soon after their marriage they became members of the Grand Junction Iowa church.<sup>5</sup>



Picture taken during General Conference held in Takoma Park, MD.  
Front row: A. G. Daniells, O. A. Olsen, G. A. Irwin; Second row: W. A. Spicer, L. T. Nicola, W. A. Colcord, L. A. Hoopes; Third row: H. E. Rogers.

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

## Denominational Service

Willard began his ministry in 1886 at Des Moines, Iowa,<sup>6</sup> and later transferred within the Iowa Conference to the town of Atlantic.<sup>7</sup> He was recognized as a man having literary abilities, prompting his appointment to editorial work at the Review and Herald Publishing Company, Battle Creek, Michigan, 1889 through 1893.<sup>8</sup> Part of his work involved the chairmanship of the Year Book Committee.<sup>9</sup> In his role as a contributing editor he demonstrated a special interest in religious liberty issues, publishing a number of articles on the topic,<sup>10</sup> some in a combative style.<sup>11</sup> The subject was topical due to realities such as the Paris Sunday Congress,<sup>12</sup> persecution of Sunday workers in Tennessee,<sup>13</sup> and the Blair bills under discussion in the United States Congress.<sup>14</sup> In 1889, when Willard first published his articles, the Adventist church had inaugurated the National Religious Liberty Association. At its second annual meeting, 1890, Willard was elected to be their Recording Secretary.<sup>15</sup>

In 1893 Willard was appointed to work in Australia. Prior to his departure from Battle Creek he was ordained to the gospel ministry.<sup>16</sup> He and his family arrived in Melbourne, Australia, in late 1893.<sup>17</sup> His first speaking appointment was a series of lectures about the principles of religious liberty, addressed to a Canvassers' Institute held at the Australasian Bible School, St Kilda, suburban Melbourne.<sup>18</sup> Willard was elected as one of three on the Editorial Committee of the *Bible Echo*.<sup>19</sup> He was one of five on the Book Committee for the Australasian Union Conference and was General Field Secretary for the Religious Liberty Department. Anna was placed on the short-lived Committee for Primary Education<sup>20</sup> and served as a deaconess at the North Fitzroy church, which they attended regularly.

Willard changed roles in mid-1899, being elected vice-president of the New South Wales Conference at that time.<sup>21</sup> Two years later, in mid-1901, he was elected to a similar position in the Queensland Conference.<sup>22</sup> He remained there for twelve months before returning to America. It was a stormy passage across the Pacific Ocean, the ship's engines failing twice before repairs were made while drifting on the high seas.

Back in America Willard initially assisted in the work of home missions conducted by literature evangelism.<sup>23</sup> It was not long, however, before he was back in his more familiar role as an exponent of religious liberty. He was elected to be among eight members of the Religious Liberty Department,<sup>24</sup> later becoming secretary of the General Conference Religious Liberty Bureau.<sup>25</sup> His final role was to serve as book editor at the Review and Herald Publishing Association.<sup>26</sup>

## A Step Away and Return

The last mention of Willard in the ministerial directory of the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* was in 1914. Elder William Prescott explained later that Willard lost faith in the denomination and discontinued association with the church community, only to regret the move and seek re-baptism and full fellowship again. During his final few years Willard did not enjoy good health and was dependent on nursing care. He passed away in Washington,

D.C., on November 4, 1935. Anna passed away on May 28, 1950. A service for her was conducted in the funeral home and she was laid to rest in the George Washington Cemetery, Adelphi, Maryland. Two adult children had predeceased her: Charles Herbert (b.1893) and Clarence Guise (b.1898). Two children survived their parents: Clara Louise (b.1888) and Glenn Albert (b.1901).<sup>27</sup>

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## NOTES

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