

Miller, Maude Amelia (Thompson) (1880–1905)

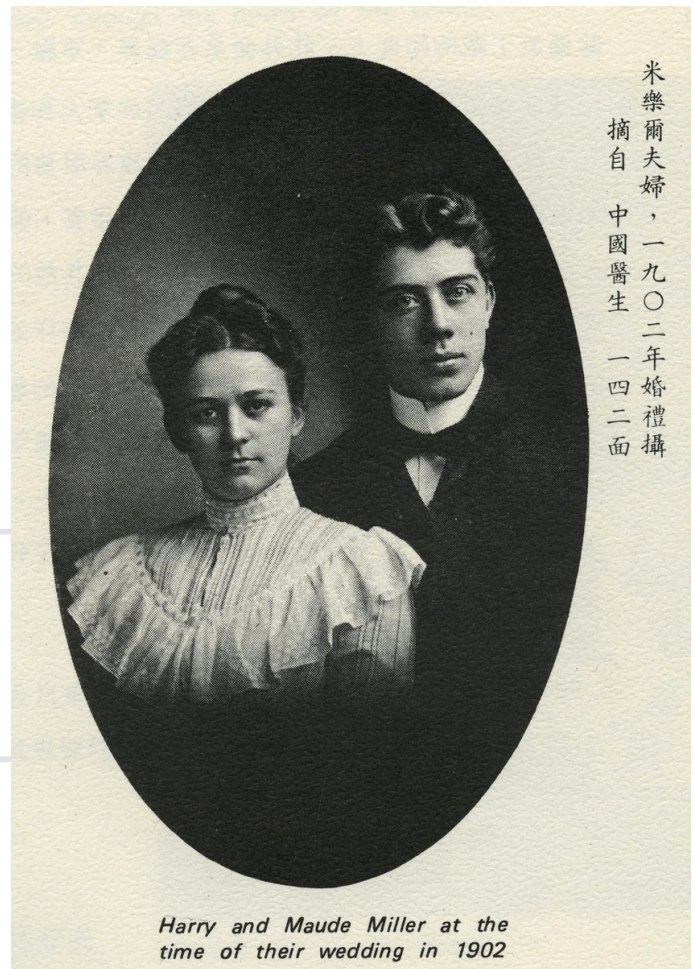
RUTH CROCOMBE

Ruth Crocombe lives in Brisbane, Australia. Her research examines the connections between Seventh-day Adventist missionaries and the political and financial elite during the Chinese Republican Period.

Maude Miller, the first Adventist missionary who died in China, the foreign country to which she dedicated her selfless service, was born Maude Amelia Thompson in Branch County, Michigan, on May 4, 1880. She was the eldest child of Cassius and Rachel Thompson. When Maude was a child, the family moved to Allen Township in Hillsdale County in Michigan. She graduated from Quincy High School in 1897. In the fall of 1898, Maude entered American Medical Missionary College and graduated July 19, 1902. Maude was the youngest member of the graduating class.¹

While she was a student at American Medical Missionary College, Maude met Harry Willis Miller, a classmate. They were married on July 1, 1902, shortly after their graduation.² Maude was an excellent student and obtained a higher score than her husband in the state medical examinations in Chicago, Illinois. Immediately after their graduation, both Maude and Harry Miller began working as physicians at the Chicago Branch Sanitarium, where Maude specialized in obstetrics and gynecology.

In late 1903, Maude and Harry travelled to China as medical missionaries for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They left the United States on October 3, 1903, aboard the Canadian Pacific Ship *Empress of India* and arrived in China on November 7. They were among a group of six medical missionaries sent by the Seventh-day Adventist



Harry and Maude Miller at the time of their wedding in 1902.

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

Church to China. Other members of the group included Doctors Arthur and Bertha Selmon and Nurses Charlotte Simpson and Carrie Erikson (also spelled Errichson). Guided by the more experienced Eric and Ida Pilquist, who were formerly with the British Foreign Bible Society, the Millers established a dispensary in the inland town of Hsin Tsai, or Sin-tsai Hsien (now Xincai), in the province of Henan. From the very beginning, they decided to adopt the local culture, all wearing Chinese clothing and the men bearing a shaved forehead and “queue.” While in Hsin Tsai, Maude gave birth to twin boys, who only lived for a few hours after birth³

In 1904, they opened another dispensary in nearby Shan Tsai in Henan. They also established the first printing press in Shan Tsai, where some of the early Adventist Chinese publications were produced. Despite suffering health issues in China, Maude successfully mastered Mandarin and taught the gospel in addition to her medical work caring for large numbers of sick local women and children, for whom she had a burden.⁴

At a time when women were largely confined to domestic roles, Maude was a pioneer. She was an equal partner in her husband’s mission and was one of the earliest Seventh-day Adventist missionaries to work on Central China’s mainland.

On March 14, 1905, Maude died of tropical sprue – a rare nutritional disorder – at age 24. Maude was survived by her husband, father, mother, and brother and sister. At her request, Maude was buried wearing Chinese clothing. Following local custom, she was buried outside Shan Tsai’s city wall.⁵

SOURCES

Errichson, Carrie and Simpson, Charlotte. 1905. Maude Amelia Thompson Miller obituary, *West Michigan Herald*. May 10, 1905.

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Spicer, W. A. “The Message of Another Missionary Grave.” *ARH*. May 4, 1905.

Selmon, A. C. “Laid to Rest in China-Maude Miller.” *ARH*. May 4, 1905.

Young, Samuel, ed. “Harry Willis Miller, MD.” In *Chinese SDA History*. Hong Kong: Chinese Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists. (From Chinese.)

NOTES

1. A. C. Selmon, “Laid to Rest in China: Maude Miller,” *ARH*, May 4, 1905, 23.

2. R. S. Moore, *China Doctor: The Life Story of Harry Willis Miller* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1969).

3. Selmon, 23.

4. Moore.; Samuel Young, ed., "Harry Willis Miller, MD," in *Chinese SDA History* (Hong Kong: Chinese Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists).
(From Chinese.)

5. W. A. Spicer, "The Message of Another Missionary Grave," *ARH*, May 4, 1905, 3-4.

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