

Lee, Frederick (1888–1988) and Minnie (Iverson) (d. 1968)



Frederick Lee

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RUTH S. L. LO

Originally trained as a nurse at Sydney Adventist Hospital, Ruth Siew Lan Lo received a BA in psychology and a MSc in community health from Wollongong University, and a PhD from University of New England. She was a nursing professor and a musician, having taught at Southern Cross University for 12 years and taught piano and theory in United States for nearly 10 years. In addition, she has an interest in Adventist history.

Frederick Lee (Chinese: *pinyin*: Li Baogui) was a pioneer missionary to China for some thirty years, where he served in a variety of capacities including evangelist, administrator, and editor of the *Chinese Signs of the Times*. After returning to the United States in 1935, he became an associate editor of the *Review and Herald* for nineteen years until his retirement in 1958.

Early Life and Family

Frederick Lee was born on January 28, 1888, in Kalamazoo, Michigan.¹ His father, William Lee, later became the secretary-treasurer of the Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and his mother, Lillian Lee, was the director of nursing at the Melrose Sanitarium. Frederick Lee had a sister, Myrna, and a brother, Howard?²

After Frederick Lee's birth, his parents, who were devout members of another Protestant church at the time, hired a nurse to take care of mother and child. The nurse was trained at the Battle Creek Sanitarium and was a Seventh-day Adventist. She decided to share her faith with the Lees. The Lee family accepted the new-found truths and became Seventh-day Adventists. In due course, William and Lillian Lee both worked for the church.³

Growing up in an Adventist home, Frederick Lee developed an early desire for mission service. As his graduation from college drew near, he informed the General Conference that he was interested in going overseas to spread

the gospel, thinking mainly of the African continent. But, when his appointment to mission service came soon after he graduated from college in 1908, it was to China. In 1909, he married Minnie Iverson. At aged 21, fresh out of college and inexperienced, he and his bride sailed on the *S. S. Monteagle* for China in October 1909, arriving at Shanghai on November 14, 1909.⁴

Ministry and Service

After three months of Chinese language study in Shanghai, the Lees left for Ying Shang in Anhwei (Anhui) to open up new work. There they were met by several Chinese Adventists and continued language study under Mr. Han. Their hearts were greatly saddened when they witnessed a severe famine that struck Anhui province. Thousands died of starvation. Unfortunately, there was little that they could do. After a year and a half, Frederick Lee, who had been giving Chinese Bible studies to small groups, began to preach Sabbath sermons in Chinese as well.⁵

The Lees then moved to Nanking (Nanjing), just in time to witness the establishment of the Republic of China after the Manchu Dynasty was overthrown in 1911. Those were turbulent times. Often, they were unable to go to the railway station as the city gates were ordered to be shut day and night. In September 1912, the Lees moved to Hankow (Hankou) where Frederick Lee was appointed president of the Hupeh (Hubei) Mission. He was officially ordained a year later. In April 1913, the Lees moved again, this time to Yencheng, Honan (Henan). Even though his official position was in administration, Lee never neglected any opportunities for public evangelism.⁶

In 1919, Lee was appointed president of the North China Union Mission in Peking (Beijing), where the family lived for the next five years.⁷ He held evangelistic meetings on the subject of "The World United" in one of the best-known halls in Peking, called Hu-Gwang Guild Hall, which attracted an audience of nearly a thousand people. This subject generated great interest among the educated class of Chinese for many years, and it brought forth a lot of discussion. At the close of the meeting, over three hundred people expressed a desire to study the subject further. Among those attending the meetings were government officials, students, principals of schools and colleges, and even princes of the former dynasty.⁸

After Peking, Lee was appointed president of the Central China Union Mission in 1925. The Lees returned to Hankow. But the situation there was very chaotic at that time, with strong anti-foreigner sentiments in many provinces. Many foreigners were evacuated to Shanghai. In 1927, the Lees returned to Shanghai, where Frederick Lee was appointed editor of the *Chinese Signs of the Times*, a post he held for eight years. In addition to his editorship, he was also the China Division's ministerial and evangelism director, conducting ministerial training throughout the country. Tragically, it was in Shanghai that their 13-year old daughter, Dorothy, died of scarlet fever and was buried. Their three surviving children were Anna, Milton and Mary Lou.⁹

In 1935, due to Minnie Lee's poor health, the Lees returned to the United States permanently. Frederick Lee pastored a local church in California for a short time before being called to be the associate editor of *Review and*

Herald, a position he held for nineteen years until 1958.¹⁰ In 1947, he took a short leave from the associate editorship to conduct a series of joint evangelistic meetings in Peking with his son, Milton Lee, who was then a very popular Mandarin-speaking public evangelist in China. Frederick Lee retired at age 70 after forty-nine years of service in the Church.¹¹

After Minnie Lee passed away in 1968, Frederick Lee married Emma Iverson Paul in 1970. Emma Paul was one of Minnie Lee's cousins. Frederick Lee passed away on October 11, 1988, in Loma Linda, California, at age 100;¹² remembered for his unparalleled passion and enthusiasm for public evangelism and his lasting contribution to the print ministry of the church.

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. "Frederick Lee obituary" *ARH*, March 16, 1989, 25.
2. Milton Lee, "Frederick Lee," in *Chinese SDA History*, ed. by Samuel Young (Hong Kong, China: Chinese Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, 2002).
3. Helen Lee, "China Missionaries," 2002, unpublished manuscript, 2, Milton & Helen Lee Collection, Center for Chinese Adventist Heritage, Hong Kong Adventist College, Hong Kong, China, accessed October 8, 2019, <https://ccah-collection.weebly.com/leef.html>.
4. Ibid, Lee, Helen 2002; see also Lee, Milton 2002, *Chinese SDA History*.

5. Ibid.
 6. Ibid.
 7. Ibid.
 8. Frederick Lee, "Evangelistic Effort in Peking," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, June 1920, 2.
 9. Milton Lee, "Frederick Lee."
 10. Ibid.
 11. Frederick Lee, "A New Evangelism for China 1 & 2", *Ministry*, January 1949, accessed September 5, 2019, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1949/01/a-new-evangelism-in-china-1>; Frederick Lee, "A New Evangelism for China – 2," *Ministry*, February 1949, accessed September 5, 2019, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1949/02/a-new-evangelism-for-china2>.
 12. "Former Review Editor Dies", *ARH*, November 3, 1988, Vol 65, No. 44, 6; "Lee, Frederick Obituary.
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