

White, Seabert Griffin (1885–1973) and Genevieve (Paisley) (died 1940)

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.



Family photo of Seabert and Genevieve White with children (eldest to youngest) Seabert Jr., Esther, and Elwin in Chinese costume, c. 1918.

From *Adventism in China Digital Image Repository*.

Seabert White served as a missionary in China for seven years and then returned to his home country, Canada, to minister in the provinces of British Columbia, Ontario, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Early Years

Seabert White was born on February 12, 1885, in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, to Francis Augustus and Eliza (Ford) White. His father was of German heritage and worked as a stove moulder. Seabert was the middle child in a family of thirteen children.¹ He was raised in a Methodist home, and his first ten grades of education were spent in the public system. At the age of twelve, in 1897, he was baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist by Elder P.M. Howe. He attended the church school at Selton, Ontario, and then advanced to complete a book-keeping course at Guelph Business College not far from his birthplace.²

Beginning of Church Career

Book-keeping was the door to Seabert's career with the Adventist church. In 1907 he travelled west to the California Conference where he began work in the Book and Bible House.³ Gradually he was given greater responsibilities. He became the Tract Society secretary,⁴ followed by the addition of the Missionary Society secretary.⁵ Finally, he was appointed secretary/treasurer of the newly formed Central California Conference, the secretary/treasurer of the Tract Society and the Field Missionary secretary.⁶ On June 15, 1909, he married Genevieve Paisley at Oakland, California.⁷

Mission Service

In 1912 Seabert and Genevieve received an appointment to serve in China. They and their infant son, Chester Seabert, arrived in Shanghai on September 24, 1912, and proceeded to the language school for mandatory training.⁸ Genevieve was pregnant with their second child. Less than two months after arrival, November 13, she gave birth to Esther Ella Elzada.⁹

Seabert briefly served as treasurer of the Honan Mission¹⁰ and then transferred south in 1915 to Changsha in the Hunan province to fulfil a similar role. However, it was not all office work. At one stage he reported visiting twenty companies of believers scattered in the Hunan Province, a trip that took him away from home and headquarters for two months.¹¹ In 1917 Seabert was ordained in Shanghai by Elders Arthur Daniells and John Fulton.¹² In that same year a new mission was formed to cover the Shaanxi Province, and Seabert was appointed to be the pioneering director. He established a group of approximately forty converts in the provincial capital, Xi'an.¹³

In 1919 Genevieve became seriously ill. The White family went to Shanghai and when it was thought advisable for her to travel a booking was made to sail back to America. A cholera epidemic in Shanghai forced them to board the incoming ship and sail away via Hong Kong. Seabert and Genevieve, with their three children Seabert, Esther and Elwin, left Shanghai on August 12, 1919, aboard the "Empress of Japan."¹⁴

Homeland Ministry

After a brief rest and recuperation period Seabert accepted an appointment to pastoral ministry in the British Columbia Conference, western Canada, beginning in 1920. He transferred east to Quebec to take up similar duties in 1929 in the St. Lawrence Conference.¹⁵ In 1932 he was elected to be superintendent and secretary/treasurer for the Newfoundland Mission, a small entity with three churches and 221 members. Genevieve served as Sabbath School secretary.¹⁶ In 1936 he transferred to similar roles in the Maritime Conference with headquarters in Halifax, Nova Scotia.¹⁷

Tragically, Genevieve became ill again and passed away on April 18, 1940, in the New England Sanitarium. She was sixty years of age.¹⁸ She was laid to rest in the Lindenwood Cemetery at Stoneham, Massachusetts.¹⁹

Seabert remarried in 1941.²⁰ He wed his secretary, Dorothy Ostoich, who was also treasurer, Sabbath School secretary and Book and Bible House manager for the Maritime Conference.²¹ Soon after their marriage they moved west in order for Seabert to serve as president of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conference. With 47 churches and 2,397 members in the territory, it was the largest entity he had administered. He held the position until his retirement in 1949.²²

Retirement years were spent in Victoria, British Columbia. He took an active part in the Victoria church until just weeks prior to his passing. At the age of eighty-eight he died in the Royal Jubilee Hospital, Victoria, on July 22, 1973. Dorothy and his three children survived him.²³ Dorothy passed away in San Diego, California, on January 20, 1974.²⁴

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NOTES

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