

Winegar-Simpson, Martha Abigail “Abbie” (1865–1949)

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.

Abbie Winegar-Simpson, Battle Creek Sanitarium physician and American Medical Missionary College professor, did much to bring the “Battle Creek idea” of health reform to California through her work at St. Helena, Glendale, and Long Beach sanitariums.

Early Years

Abbie Winegar was born in the mountains of Oregon at Canyon City on May 2, 1865. Her parents, Frederick and Margaret Jane (Chambers) Winegar, raised eight children on their family farm: Charles Henry (b. 1863), Martha Abigail (b. 1865), twins Arabelle and Isabelle (b. 1867), Lucy Ann (b. 1871), Mary Ellen (b. 1873), Frederick Bruce (b. 1875) and Hester Jane (b. 1879).¹

Abbie was raised as a Methodist and then gravitated to the “first-day” Adventists or Advent Christian church. Through her own reading and attendance at tent meetings she converted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1889. Her early education took place in public schools and during 1883 and 1884 she attended Blue



Dr. Abbie Winegar, American Medical Missionary College faculty member, 1902.

Photo courtesy of Department of Archives and Special Collections, University Libraries, Loma Linda University.

Mountains University in Oregon.²

Battle Creek Years

During her first year as a Seventh-day Adventist, Abbie taught at the elementary school in Milton, Oregon. She then took nurses' training at Battle Creek Sanitarium in 1890-1891 followed by medical school at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. After finishing her studies there in June 1894, she spent a year in Chicago, completing her training as a physician at Northwestern University.³

Dr. Winegar returned to Battle Creek Sanitarium as hospital physician and also taught obstetrics at the American Medical Missionary College located there.⁴ She became a leading speaker at camp meetings, health seminars and nursing graduation ceremonies.⁵ She also became recognized for the quality of her articles on "health principles and physiotherapy,"⁶ published in denominational periodicals such as *Good Health*, the *Medical Missionary*, *Life and Health*, and the *Pacific Health Journal and Temperance Advocate*.

California Years

At the close of 1901, Dr. Winegar left Battle Creek to serve at St. Helena Sanitarium in northern California. While there she married William Ray Simpson on March 8, 1903, in a ceremony in San Francisco conducted by Alonzo T. Jones.⁷ Along with a husband, Abbie gained three stepdaughters from Simpson's first marriage to Mary Ann Hayes, who died in 1900 of tubercular peritonitis. The girls were: Anna Ray (b. 1890), Joella Lula (b. 1895) and Mary Agnes (b. 1899).⁸

After the marriage the Simpsons moved to southern California. In August 1903, Dr. Winegar-Simpson connected with Los Angeles Sanitarium, a small facility that offered hydrotherapy treatment rooms.⁹ Soon afterwards, both she and her husband would be instrumental in the founding and early years of Glendale Sanitarium, opened in suburban Los Angeles in October 1904. Abbie Winegar-Simpson was the first medical superintendent and Ray Simpson the first business manager.¹⁰

In 1907 the husband-wife team led out in the establishment of the privately-operated Long Beach Sanitarium. A venture in operating a city hospital in Long Beach had failed financially, and Ray Simpson acquired the lease to the recently-constructed facility to house the sanitarium. According to a report in *Life and Health*, the building was "commodious, and well arranged," and because of its "proximity to the ocean" offered "advantages not found at any other institution."¹¹ Dr. Winegar-Simpson took the lead as medical superintendent for the first three years, while her husband served as business manager.¹²

Long Beach Sanitarium as one of several listed in the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* in the 1900s and 1910s as "privately owned or managed, and not under conference supervision."¹³ It became known for modeling Dr Kellogg's Battle Creek enterprise, advocating fresh air, sunshine, exercise, a vegetarian diet and drug-free

treatments with hydrotherapy.¹⁴

Final Years

In later years, Dr. Winegar-Simpson renewed a connection with Glendale Sanitarium, then finally retired in 1937.

¹⁵ W. Ray Simpson passed away in Los Angeles on October 30, 1940, after a heart attack. He was interred at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale.¹⁶ Abbie Winegar-Simpson died at Glendale on January 9, 1949, age 83. She also rests at Forest Lawn Memorial Park where her epitaph reads, "Thy Works Do Praise Thee."¹⁷

SOURCES

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"Glendale Sanitarium and Hospital Constituency Meeting." *Pacific Union Recorder*, February 13, 1935.

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"Changes in the Work Forces of the California Sanitariums." *Life and Health*, April 1908.

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NOTES

1. "Martha Abigail Winegar," *FamilySearch*, accessed January 26, 2023, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/pedigree/landscape/K8XM-SJ7>.
2. Abbie Winegar-Simpson Biographical Information Blank, October 11, 1905, Secretariat Missionary Files, RG 21, Record 114944, GCA.
3. Ibid.
4. "Faculty of the American Medical Missionary College," *Gospel of Health*, June/July 1897, 68.
5. For examples of reports on her presentations see William Byington White, "The Indiana Camp Meeting," *ARH*, September 21, 1897, 603; "The Work and Workers," *Welcome Visitor*, November 4, 1897, 2; "In the evening of Wednesday . . .," *ARH*, November 16, 1897, 736.
6. "Abbie Winegar Simpson obituary," *ARH*, February 24, 1949, 20.
7. Winegar-Simpson Biographical Information Blank, October 11, 1905, GCA.
8. "Mary Ann (Hays) Simpson," *Find A Grave*, Memorial ID 16014445, October 6, 2006, accessed January 26, 2023, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16014445/mary-ann-simpson>.
9. Winegar-Simpson Biographical Information Blank, October 11, 1905, GCA; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 1904, 98.
10. Dr. Winegar-Simpson is identified as the sanitarium's first medical superintendent in *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev. edition (1996), s.v. "Glendale Adventist Medical Center," though identified as one of two "physicians in charge" in the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 1905, and as simply as one of the physicians for the following two years. Both sources list John A. Burden as the first business manager, but the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 1906 and 1907 lists Simpson as business manager, and he is described as the institution's first business manager in "W. Ray Simpson obituary," *Pacific Union Recorder*, December 18, 1940, 6.
11. "Changes in the Work Forces of the California Sanitariums," *Life and Health*, April 1908, 191.
12. Winegar-Simpson identified as supervisor in "Sanitarium Notes," *St. Helena Star*, November 5, 1909, 1, and in "Long Beach Hospital" in *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 1908 and "Long Beach Sanitarium" in *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 1909. No one is identified as

superintendent in the 1910 yearbook; the 1911 edition lists R. S. Cummings as superintendent.

13. See *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks*, 1908-1913.
 14. Claudine Burnett, "Come to Long Beach for Your Health," *Historic Long Beach*, May 9, 2013, accessed February 23, 2023, <https://historiclongbeach.blogspot.com/2013/05/come-to-long-beach-for-your-health.html>.
 15. "Glendale Sanitarium and Hospital Constituency Meeting," *Pacific Union Recorder*, February 13, 1935, 7-8; "Abbie Winegar Simpson obituary."
 16. "William Ray Simpson," *Find A Grave Memorial* ID 8312710, January 25, 2004, accessed January 26, 2023, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/8312710/william-ray-simpson>.
 17. "Martha Abigail "Abbie" (Winegar) Simpson," *Find A Grave Memorial* ID 64939201, January 31, 2011, accessed January 26, 2023, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/64939201/martha-abigail-simpson>.
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