

# Westworth, William Anthony (1871–1938)

---

## 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.



Marion and William Westworth

Photo courtesy of Center for Adventist Research.

---

William A. Westworth was a pastor, conference president, mission leader, and director of one of Adventism's earliest radio broadcasting ministries.

## Early Years

William Anthony Westworth was born in Chicago, Illinois, on March 29, 1871, to John and Catherine Martzloff Westworth. His father was born in England and his mother was of French-German heritage. When he was an infant, William's parents moved to England, and that is where he spent much of his childhood. Ten years later, he and his mother returned to the United States, settling in upstate New York. William attended secular schools in England and America.<sup>1</sup>

The Westworths were members of the Church of England, or Episcopalian church as it is known in the United States. In the summer of 1886, though, at the age of 14, William left the Episcopalian church and was baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist at Batavia, New York. He and his mother became charter members of a congregation organized in Buffalo. William married Marion Virginia Bachus at Fort Erie, Ontario, Canada, on July 4, 1891. Following his marriage he attended Battle Creek College for the academic year of 1891-1892.<sup>2</sup>

## A Career in Church Leadership

In 1892 William began his ministry in his home territory, New York State. He was ordained at Auburn, New York, in 1895 by Albert E. Place and R.C. Porter. He transferred to the West Virginia Conference in 1899. He served briefly at the Washington, D.C. church in 1901 and in the Vermont Conference prior to an appointment in the British Isles.<sup>3</sup>

Westworth's first overseas appointment developed into leadership of the Scottish Mission. During his term, 1902 through 1905, four churches were organized including those at Glasgow, Edinburgh and Kirkcaldy.<sup>4</sup> The baptized membership of the mission totalled 115.<sup>5</sup> He returned to America in 1905 to take up the role of president of the Southern New England Conference with headquarters at Hartford, Connecticut.<sup>6</sup>

A call to serve as the first president of the newly organized Southeastern Union Conference brought Westworth to Atlanta, Georgia, early in 1908. The union comprised five conferences previously part of the Southern Union: Cumberland, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina.<sup>7</sup> A year and half later, though, in 1909, Westworth accepted a second overseas appointment, this time as superintendent of the China Union Mission, headquartered in Shanghai. Unfortunately, illness in the family caused a premature return to America in 1911.<sup>8</sup>

For the next eight years Westworth experienced short-term roles and moved from place to place, first as president of the Upper Columbia Conference, then as pastor of the Pittsburgh church, followed by acting president of the West Pennsylvania Conference, pastor of the Battle Creek church in Michigan, president of the North Illinois Conference, and president of the Indiana Conference.<sup>9</sup> A somewhat greater measure of stability came in his next two positions: president of the East Michigan Conference, 1919-1922, and president of the Illinois Conference for the following four years.<sup>10</sup>

## WEMC, "The Radio Lighthouse"

Westworth accepted a marked change from conference administration to a radio ministry in 1926. For several years religious programming was beamed from the campus of Emmanuel Missionary College at Berrien Springs, Michigan, on radio station WEMC, popularly known as "The Radio Lighthouse." Westworth was appointed to be its director. The WEMC broadcasting schedule under the call sign WEMC included preaching services, vocal music and the International Sunday School lessons.<sup>11</sup> In 1928 the Federal Radio Commission made changes to the operating frequencies of many stations and adjustments had to be made at WEMC. The temporary break in transmission allowed enough time for Westworth to increase the variety of programming and the amount of time on the air. He incorporated organ recitals, children's stories, French language lessons, medical talks, round table discussions and a question box.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, the Great Depression brought a financial squeeze for WEMC, forcing its sale in 1930.<sup>13</sup> Westworth transferred to minister in the Indiana Conference, concluding in 1934 as pastor of the South Bend church.

William and Marion Westworth retired to Lafayette, Indiana. He passed away peacefully on November 1, 1938!<sup>4</sup> Marion passed away on December 23, 1939. They rest together in Grand View Cemetery, La Fayette. Their son, Paul, and adopted daughter, Ruth, survived them.<sup>15</sup>

---

## SOURCES

"About Us." WAUS. Accessed January 6, 2022. <https://www.waus.org/about>.

"Marion Virginia Backus Westworth." *Find A Grave*. Memorial ID 111107266, May 24, 2013. Accessed July 23, 2021. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/111107266/marion-virginia-westworth>

*Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Online Archives. <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

Westworth, W. A. "Radio Station WEMC." *Lake Union Herald*, November 14, 1928.

Westworth, W. A. "With WEMC." *Lake Union Herald*, November 3, 1926.

Wight, S. E. "William A. Westworth obituary." *ARH*, December 15, 1938.

"William Anthony Westworth." *Find A Grave*. Memorial ID 92935915, July 2, 2012. Accessed July 23, 2021, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/92935915/william-anthony-westworth>

Westworth, William Anthony. Secretariat Missionary Files, RG 21, Record 11492, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives, Silver Spring, MD (GCA).

---

## NOTES

1. William Anthony Westworth Biographical Information Form, October 12, 1905, Secretariat Missionary Files, RG 21, Record 11492, GCA.
2. Ibid.; S. E. Wight, "William A. Westworth obituary," *ARH*, December 15, 1938, 22.
3. Westworth Biographical Information Form, October 12, 1905, Record 11492, GCA.
4. Wight, "William A. Westworth obituary."
5. "Scottish Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 1905, GCA.
6. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. edition (1996), s.v. "Southern New England Conference."
7. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. edition (1996), s.v. "Southeastern Union Conference." in 1932 the unions united again as the Southern Union Conference.

8. Wight, "William A. Westworth obituary."
  9. Ibid.
  10. Ibid.
  11. W. A. Westworth, "With WEMC," *Lake Union Herald*, November 3, 1926, 1.
  12. W. A. Westworth, "Radio Station WEMC," *Lake Union Herald*, November 14, 1928, 1-2.
  13. "About Us." WAUS 90.7, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.waus.org/about>.
  14. "William Anthony Westworth," *Find A Grave*, Memorial ID 92935915, July 2, 2012, accessed July 23, 2021, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/92935915/william-anthony-westworth>.
  15. "Marion Virginia Backus Westworth," *Find A Grave* Memorial ID 111107266, May 24, 2013, accessed July 23, 2021, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/111107266/marion-virginia-westworth>.
- 

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000