

# Wellman, Sterrie Austin (1879–1966)

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## 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.

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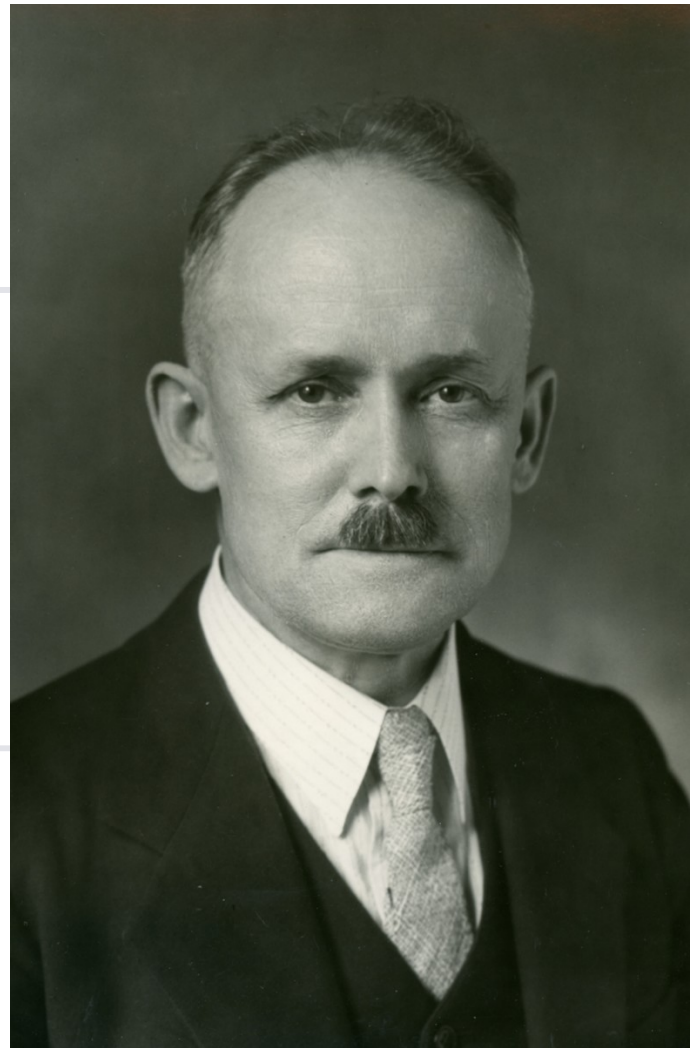
Sterrie Wellman's church career is distinguished by pioneer mission work in the Caribbean and India followed by lengthy service as an associate secretary of the Sabbath School Department at General Conference headquarters.

## Heritage and Education

Sterrie Wellman was born in Richmond, eastern Michigan, on January 5, 1879, to Delmer Elwood Wellman and his wife Amanda Elizabeth Sloan

Wellman. Delmer worked at a broom shop in Hillsdale, Michigan, and sold Adventist literature part-time. He became a colporteur full-time in 1888, then entered ministry in the Michigan Conference in 1893. He and Amanda had four children: Lee Emery (b. 1877), Sterrie Austin (b. 1879), Edna DeEtta (b. 1880) and Edwin (b. 1882).<sup>1</sup>

After graduating from public high school in Hillsdale in 1897, Sterrie worked for several months at the Review and Herald Publishing Association in Battle Creek, gaining experience beneficial in his later mission service. In 1898 he enrolled at Battle Creek College, taking the business course along with some units in pedagogy. These studies also provided some foundation for his years overseas in the mission field but they were cut short when, in early 1899, he accompanied his missionary parents to Kingston, Jamaica.<sup>2</sup>



Sterrie A. Wellman, 1934.

Photo courtesy of the Review and Herald Photographic Collection,  
General Conference Archives

## Mission Service: West Indies

On May 1, 1899, Sterrie began work for the Jamaica Mission. His main role was to conduct the mission elementary school. In addition he was secretary of their Tract Society and the mission's bookkeeper. Later, on November 12, 1899, he married Cora Jeanette Snyder in Jamaica. They had two children: Thelma (born in 1903) and Sterrie Eugene (born in 1910).<sup>3</sup>

For a decade Sterrie Wellman moved about the Caribbean Islands on various assignments. In June 1901 he left Jamaica and went to St. Thomas, Danish West Indies (later named Virgin Islands), to assist in evangelism. In October 1901 he went to St. Kitts in the Lesser Antilles for the same purpose. He moved on to Port of Spain, Trinidad, in June 1903 where he was associate editor, later general editor, of the *Caribbean Watchman* and manager of the Watchman Publishing Company. He was ordained in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1907 by Irwin H. Evans, Eugene W. Farnsworth and Luther Warren. In addition to his publishing and editorial responsibilities, Wellman pastored the Kingston church and did evangelistic work in Jamaica for six months in 1908. For the first eight months of 1909, he continued his editorial work in Panama where the *Caribbean Watchman* editorial office had relocated.<sup>4</sup> Only occasionally did he himself publish an article.<sup>5</sup>

After a decade in the Caribbean region, Wellman was appointed to mission service in India. Before he and Cora sailed for their new mission territory they took a furlough back home in Michigan during 1909 and 1910.<sup>6</sup>

## Mission Service: India

When he arrived in India in late 1910 Wellman located at Lucknow in the northern province of Uttar Pradesh.<sup>7</sup> Seventh-day Adventist mission work in that area was in its infancy. A few tracts in the local languages were available for distribution. Stations were already established at Lucknow and Garhwal.<sup>8</sup> A clinic and school for girls were being conducted at Najibabad.<sup>9</sup> Once again Wellman devoted much of his time to editorial work, now with the monthly periodical, *Oriental Watchman*.<sup>10</sup>

In 1916, Wellman became superintendent of the North India Mission. He was the only ordained minister in the territory. Several licensed missionaries assisted him.<sup>11</sup> In January 1917 he reported that 14 individuals had been baptized in the previous two years, a church at Lucknow and another at Mussorie were functioning with approximately 30 members in each congregation, five out-stations were being conducted and the clinic and girl's school were still operating.<sup>12</sup>

In April 1917 Sterrie and Cora attended the Asiatic Division committee meetings in Shanghai en route to furlough in America. Wellman filled in as pastor of a church in Columbus, Ohio, during part of their time in the homeland.<sup>13</sup> They returned to India in December 1918.<sup>14</sup> Reorganization of the territory took place at the time and Wellman was appointed to the Sabbath School, Young People's and Home Missionary portfolios in the

Southern Asia Division of the General Conference. His head office remained in Lucknow. He held this role until 1925 when he accepted permanent return to the United States.

## General Conference Years

Upon his return Wellman took two short-term assignments in California: four months in 1925 as Home Missionary secretary in the Pacific Union Conference, then as Sabbath School secretary in the California Conference for the first half of 1926.<sup>15</sup> At the 1926 General Conference session in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Wellman was appointed as one of two associate secretaries in the Sabbath School Department at General Conference headquarters. He remained in the role for two decades until he retired.<sup>16</sup> His work entailed overseas travel in the interests of worldwide Sabbath Schools.<sup>17</sup> Though not a prolific writer, he occasionally published articles about the Sabbath School as a feature of church life.<sup>18</sup>

Wellman retired in 1946 and in 1949 he and Cora moved to Winter Park, Florida. She passed away on May 14, 1955.<sup>19</sup> Wellman was recognized and interviewed as a veteran pioneer missionary during the "Pageant of Nations" at the 1962 General Conference session in San Francisco.<sup>20</sup> He passed away at Burtonsville, Maryland, on July 13, 1966.<sup>21</sup>

Sterrie Austin and Cora Jeanette Wellman rest alongside each other in the Fort Lincoln Cemetery, Brentwood, Maryland. Cora's headstone carries Christ's promise, "I go to prepare a place for you." Sterrie's headstone reads, "Behold I come quickly."<sup>22</sup>

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## NOTES

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2. Sterrie Austin Wellman Biographical Information Blank, March 28, 1934, Secretariat Missionary Files, RG 21, Record 114952, GCA.
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4. Wellman Biographical Information Blanks, March 28, 1934 and July 3, 1912, Secretariat Missionary Files, Record 11492, GCA.
5. See for example, S.A. Wellman, "Is the End Near?-Historical Evidences," *Caribbean Watchman*, November 1909, 135-137.
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  17. See for example, S. A. Wellman, "This Patient Disappeared," *ARH*, December 26, 1935, 10.
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  20. Harry M. Tippet, "Echoes of the Pageant of Missions," *ARH*, August 16, 1962, 2.
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