

# Wiest, Charles Snyder (1879–1968)

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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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As a church pastor and evangelist, Charles Wiest served in the East Pennsylvania, West Michigan and Colorado conferences. As a conference president, he led the Mississippi, South Wisconsin, Indiana and Kansas conferences.

## Early Experience

Charles Wiest was born on August 29, 1879, in Crystal River, Florida.<sup>1</sup> His parents were Daniel Cletus Wiest and his wife Kathryn Ann (Snyder). Daniel and Kathryn had a large family of 12 children: Alberta (b. 1873), William Isaac (b. 1874), John Harvey (b. 1876), Carrie Rebecca (b. 1877), Charles Snyder (b. 1879), James Norman (b. 1884), Frank Milton (b. 1886), Horace Snyder (b. 1888), Kathryn Sophia (b. 1890), Ralph George (b. 1891), Paul Arthur (b. 1892), and Sarah Florence (b. 1897).<sup>2</sup>

While Charles was still a boy the family moved north to Perry Township, Pennsylvania, and his father Daniel worked as a lock tender. At the age of nine Charles worked in a local brickyard to help support his family. He later found employment as a machine-knitter in a shirt factory. By the age of 19 he had risen to be superintendent of the factory. When Charles was 22 years of age he joined the Seventh-day Adventist church



Charles S. Wiest

Credit: Ancestry.com

and returned to schooling as a mature student at South Lancaster Academy (SLA) in Massachusetts.<sup>3</sup>

## Early Ministry

After his graduation from SLA in 1907, Wiest was employed on the ministerial team in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.<sup>4</sup> He began his ministry in the north-central part of the state, first in the Williamsport area, then Wellsboro, where he teamed with Bertram M. Heald in raising up a new congregation in 1908.<sup>5</sup> The following year he married schoolteacher Minnie Merle Edwards on May 6, 1909, in a ceremony at her parents' home in Cherry Flats, near Wellsboro, with the conference president, William H. Heckman, officiating.<sup>6</sup>

Two months prior to the wedding, the conference, at its fifth annual session, approved Wiest for ordination to gospel ministry.<sup>7</sup> After their marriage, he and Minnie, along with evangelist Charles S. Baum, conducted a tent effort in Pottsville.<sup>8</sup> This was followed by another at West Clifford while Wiest pastored the Scranton church.<sup>9</sup> During his final year in Pennsylvania, Wiest was one of three evangelists who conducted evangelistic campaigns in separate tents in Philadelphia that, altogether, led to approximately 40 accessions to the church.<sup>10</sup>

## Four Conference Presidencies

Wiest moved from evangelism and pastoral duties to more than two decades of conference administration, beginning in 1912. He was president of the Mississippi Conference, 1912 through 1916. His leadership role did not curtail his tent evangelism. One example was a series in Quitman that he conducted in 1913.<sup>11</sup>

In September 1916 he transferred to Michigan to be the pastor of the Dime Tabernacle in Battle Creek. It turned out to be only a six-month assignment because Wiest was elected president of the South Wisconsin Conference in 1917. This was followed by two lengthier terms as president, first in the Indiana Conference, December 1918 through July 1926 and secondly in the Kansas Conference, July 1926 through August 1933.<sup>12</sup> Kansas, with a constituency of 2,313 baptized members among 69 churches in 1926, was the largest conference he administered. By the end of his seven years as president the membership had increased to 2,746.<sup>13</sup>

## Later Ministry and Legacy

In 1933, Wiest accepted a call to pastoral ministry in the Minnesota Conference. He served in St. Paul for five years, then in Mankato. He also held several evangelistic campaigns during these years, raising up a new church in Albert Lea. Wiest transferred to the Colorado Conference in 1946 and, despite officially being placed on sustentation (retirement) in 1952, continued in active pastoral-evangelistic ministry for another decade.<sup>14</sup>

At age 82, and after 55 years of denominational service, Wiest finally stepped back from full-time ministry in 1962 in order to care for his wife, Minnie, who had experienced a series of strokes.<sup>15</sup> She passed away in Denver, Colorado, on March 25, 1966, and was taken for interment to the Welsh Settlement Cemetery, Charleston,

Pennsylvania.<sup>16</sup> After his wife's death, Elder Wiest lived with his only child, Ruth, a librarian at Southwestern Adventist College, in Keene, Texas. He passed away on August 5, 1968, at 88, and was laid to rest alongside Minnie.<sup>17</sup>

School buildings were a significant part of Wiest's legacy. When he was president of the Indiana Conference he led the search in 1919 for a suitable site for what became known as Indiana Academy at Cicero, an institution that replaced Beechwood Academy at Boggstown. Wiest raised the funds and administered its construction.<sup>18</sup> In Kansas, he arranged for additions to be made to Enterprise Academy at Enterprise, a rural setting north of Wichita. Later, he was instrumental in the establishment of schools at Mankato, Minnesota, and Grand Junction, Colorado.<sup>19</sup>

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## NOTES

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