

# Adams, Elbridge Martin (1881–1974)

---

DANIEL LUNKHOHAO TOUTHANG

Daniel Lunkhohao Touthang

---

Elbridge Martin Adams, a pioneer American missionary, served in various capacities including as a minister, Bible instructor, evangelist, administrator, and editor. Elbridge and his wife, Sophia, spent more than 40 years in faithful service.

## Early Life, Education, and Marriage

Born December 18, 1881, in Washington, Iowa, United States of America.<sup>1</sup> Elbridge Martin Adams was the fifth child of John William and Mary Narcissa Hare. He had six siblings: Willis Milton, Ebner, Charles Thomas, Pearlie, and Olive Emma.<sup>2</sup> Raised in an active Adventist home, Elbridge spent his early years in Iowa. George Watson baptized him.<sup>3</sup>

Adams spent five years in a local public school before attending the Battle Creek church school in 1894. Then he studied at Union College in Nebraska from 1890 to 1901. Finally, he obtained his diploma for the ministerial course at Fernando Academy in California in 1908.<sup>4</sup>

On June 21, 1910, Adams married Sophia Weldon Conway, a nurse by profession, in Glendale, California. Sophia also came from an Adventist background and had been born in Helena, Texas. Their union resulted in two daughters, Elinore and Aldine.<sup>5</sup>

## Ministry

Adams started his denominational service at the Southern Western Union Conference, California,<sup>6</sup> first for a short period as a literature evangelist in California and Iowa during 1900. He then taught church school for two years<sup>7</sup> and later, embarked on evangelism from 1906 to 1911. Shortly, after he obtained his ministerial degree, Adams answered the call to be a missionary in the Philippines. The General Conference committee on September 18, 1911, voted that “ministerial credentials be issued to E. M. Adams, for the Philippines”<sup>8</sup> On January 1, 1912, he and his family arrived at Manila Port, Philippines.<sup>9</sup>

Despite only five months of preparation, he found himself in charge of the Philippine Islands Mission during 1912-1913.<sup>10</sup> But his ministerial work prepared the field for a bountiful harvest. He and his team conducted Bible studies, visitations, and camp meetings, resulting in many converts, and the church grew.<sup>11</sup> From 1914 to 1919,

he concentrated on ministerial leadership and started to organize such missions as the West Visayan Mission (WVM) <sup>12</sup> in Negros and the Panayan Mission<sup>13</sup> on Panay Island. Also, he was instrumental in establishing the Jaro Church School in Iloilo in 1914.<sup>14</sup> Besides his responsibilities in the WVM, Adams was also appointed as the vice president of the Philippine Union Conference when it reorganized from a mission into a conference in 1917.<sup>15</sup> His leadership advanced the church's outreach in those mission fields.<sup>16</sup>

From 1920 to 1924, E. M. Adams served as the Bible teacher in Pasay Academy (formerly Philippine Academy) and editor of periodicals at the Philippine Publishing House (PPH),<sup>17</sup> including the *Mizpa*.<sup>18</sup> As a Bible teacher, he organized a workers' training class for more mature students and instructed them in conference and church duties. To apply what they had been taught, he required them to look for potential interests and conduct Bible studies. They labored with their friends to make contacts and conduct studies, paving the way for evangelistic meetings led by Adams two weeks before the school term closed. Many of the older students became permanent workers in the field.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, aside from being the PPH general editor, he also assisted the work in the Central-Southern Luzon Conference.<sup>20</sup>

In 1924, E. M. Adams became president of the Central-Southern Luzon Conference.<sup>21</sup> He immediately organized a workers' institute in Nagcarlang, Laguna, in May 1924. Held under trees, it lasted for a month and made a deep spiritual impression on the attendees because of its periods of prayer and Bible study.<sup>22</sup> In this territory, Adams collected many stories of Sabbath converts as a result of the books sold by the colporteurs<sup>23</sup> as well as the witnessing of members that led to baptisms.<sup>24, 25</sup> During the ninth session of the Central Luzon Conference in 1926, Adams spoke about the growth of church membership, the erection of new churches, and the increased tithes and offering.<sup>26</sup>

Adams and his family went on furlough to the United States from April 21, 1926-August 18, 1927.<sup>27</sup> During this period, he attended the General Conference meetings. As part of the session on religious liberty, "Elder E. M. Adams reported for the Philippines, stated that these islands knew nothing of either civil or religious liberty until after the American occupation; but now we have liberty in both these realms."<sup>28</sup> He also discussed the Sabbath challenges as Sabbath-keeping was still restricted in some places and the public schools also held classes on Saturdays.

Upon his return to the Philippines in 1927, he assumed his editorial<sup>29</sup> job at PPH while still engaged in ministerial work.<sup>30</sup> Among the magazines and church papers he oversaw included *Ang Tanglaw* (the Tagalog monthly magazine), *Tagalog-Mizpa* (a church paper), *Ang Taladaan Sang Panag-on* (a monthly), *Cebuan-Mizpa* (a church paper), *Panayan-Mizpa* (a church paper), *Ilocano-Mizpa*, and the Ilocano "Signs"--*Ti Damag Ti Pagaran*.<sup>31</sup> He constantly communicated with the membership through his encouraging articles.<sup>32</sup>

During his third furlough from April 27, 1932-May 4, 1933, he attended the Autumn Council convened in the Battle Creek Tabernacle in Michigan October 18-26, 1932.<sup>33</sup> Back in the Philippine Islands in 1933, he served as the director of WVM for the second time<sup>34</sup> as well as the religious liberty secretary of the Philippine Union

Mission.<sup>35</sup> To his surprise, membership had grown to about 4500 Adventists from the initial 200 in 1919. Church schools had increased to a dozen, a junior academy had been established, and a hundred churches and companies of believers now existed.<sup>36</sup> Adams and his teams, despite the responsibilities of caring for the large mission, had pushed forward vigorously in evangelism.<sup>37</sup> From June 7, 1938, to August 7, 1939, Adams spent his fourth furlough<sup>38</sup> in the United States. The evening before he and his wife departed from the states, their daughter, Elinore, married John Graham.<sup>39</sup>

When he returned to the Philippines in 1939, he assumed the leadership of the Northern Luzon Mission until 1941.<sup>40</sup> Although more and more people requested Bible studies,<sup>41</sup> church workers were few. In response, lay workers, medical practitioners, and colporteurs<sup>42</sup> aided in the growing work of the vast territory, leading to the establishing of more new churches.

The years 1941-1945 marked the World War II in the Philippines. About a million Filipinos perished and Manila was severely destroyed<sup>43</sup> including the Adventist offices and headquarters.<sup>44</sup> E. M. Adams and his wife, Sophia, were among the many missionaries interned in the Los Banos camp.<sup>45</sup> With the liberation in 1945, Adams, together with a few other missionaries, voluntarily decided to remain and assist the work of the mission<sup>46</sup> and the Philippine Union College (PUC).<sup>47</sup> Leaving on furlough to the U.S. from February 26, 1946 to August 17, 1947,<sup>48</sup> he attended the General conference sessions. V. T. Armstrong asked to speak during it. "I am happy to represent," he said. "with the delegates from the Philippines here at this meeting, over 25,000 believers. . . the Lord carried forward the work through the national workers and believers"<sup>49</sup> as well as the foreign missionaries sent to the Philippines. He also had arranged for two of the national workers, P. R. Dias and T. A. Pilar, to testify about God's grace in the midst of war and difficulties. During 1947-1952 he was appointed as acting president and field secretary.

In 1947, E. M. Adams was elected to serve as the secretary of the ministerial department of the Philippines Union Mission.<sup>50</sup> In 1949, he had the posts of both the secretary and the acting president of the Philippines Union Mission after the departure of M. E. Loewen.<sup>51</sup> In 1950, during the General Conference's forty-sixth session, July 10-22, Adams reported that "during the three years, '47, '48, and '49, we have baptized 10,667 souls, bringing our membership up to 32,722 at the close of 1949."<sup>52</sup> Then, he was voted to be the field secretary of the Far Eastern Division upon the recommendation of the division committee during the General Conference meeting in 1951.<sup>53</sup> On February 14, 1952, the General Conference Committee voted to authorize the permanent return of E. M. Adams on recommendation from the Far Eastern Division committee,<sup>54</sup> and he departed the Philippines on June 2, 1952.<sup>55</sup>

## Later Life

E. M. Adams and his family returned to the United States after 40 years in service overseas.<sup>56</sup> They settled in California, enjoyed their retirement, and continued dedicating their lives to the Lord's service. He was still a GC delegate May 24-June 5, 1954<sup>57</sup> and July 26-August 4, 1962.<sup>58</sup> Stating that he and his wife "desired not to live in a city nor in a center of Adventists well supplied with talent,"<sup>59</sup> they chose to settle where they could do something for Jesus. At reunions of fellow missionaries, he participated in plans to advance more soul-winning activities.<sup>60</sup> On June 8, 1974, E. M. Adams died at the age of 92 in Lake, California.<sup>61</sup>

## Legacy and Contribution

R. F. Cottrell addressed Adams as "the faithful warrior for Christ in the Philippines" who with his wife, Sophia, spent 40 years in the country.<sup>62</sup> During his service in the West Visayan Mission, the leadership of E. M. Adams led to "a blessed spirit of unity, harmony, cooperation and brotherly love [that] prevails throughout the entire field."<sup>63</sup> He witnessed, in his four decades in the nation the growth from one humble Seventh-day Adventist family in Manila in 1912<sup>64</sup> to 80 members, and then to more than 40,000 by the time he retired.<sup>65</sup> The Philippine Union had divided into two unions, 10 organized missions, and 1 unorganized field. The publishing house printed in 14 languages. The church had two colleges and nine academies besides numerous church schools, and a large sanitarium and hospital with a school of nursing.<sup>66</sup> The Philippine Island Religious Liberty Association under the leadership of E. M. Adams was affiliated with the Religious Liberty Association.<sup>67</sup>

E. M. Adams, "during this long and fruitful period of service, has served as a missionary, editor, departmental secretary, mission president, union mission secretary, and for at least two or more periods Adams had carried the heavy responsibility of directing the work of the entire Philippines Union Mission."<sup>68</sup> He had also learned to speak Visayan, Ilongo, and a little Tagalog.<sup>69</sup> The South Philippines Union Mission constructed an Adams Center in Davao City, the headquarters for Adventist work in Mindanao,<sup>70</sup> in honor of Pastor and Mrs. E. M. Adams.<sup>71</sup>

---

### SOURCES

Adams, E. M. "Evangelism in Northern Luzon Mission." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, June 1941.

Adams, E. M. "Former Missionaries Hold Reunion." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, November 1956.

Adams, E. M. "From the Homelands." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, July 1927.

Adams, E. M. "Fruits of Home Missionary Work." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, August 1924.

Adams, E. M. "Greetings from E. M. Adams." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, March 1954.

Adams, E. M. "Service Record." Southern-Asia Pacific Division, Silang, Cavite, the Philippines.

Adams, E. M. "Special Efforts Among the Churches in the West Visayan Mission." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, October 1933.

Adams, E. M. "The Central Luzon Conference." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, March 1926.

Adams, E. M. "The Philippines." *Asiatic Division News*, December 1, 1912.

Adams, E. M. "With Our Colporteur Missionaries in the Philippine Union Mission." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, September 1940.

"An evening with the Far Eastern Division- Rapidly Growing Mission Field." *General Conference Session Bulletin*, July 20, 1950.

"Announcements." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, July 1, 1923.

Annual Committee Meetings, "Manila." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, April 1928.

Armstrong, V. T. "Philippine Union Council." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, March 1946.

Armstrong, V. T. "An Evening with the Far Eastern Division--Deliverance in the Philippines." *ARH*, June 11, 1946.

Armstrong, V. T. "The Call to the Church." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, July 1945.

"Autumn Council, Battle Creek, Michigan, Oct. 18-26, 1932," *General Conference Committee Minutes*, October. 18-26, 1932.

Ballenger, E. S. and E. M. Adams. "Southern California--The Burbank Meeting." *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 29, 1909.

Barrows, J. S. and L. V. Finster. "Organization of the Philippine Union Conference." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, July 1, 1917.

Bradley, W. P. "Division News Items." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, September 1939.

Bradley, W. P. "Philippines Missionaries Safe," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, April 1945.

R. F. Cottrell. "The Story of the Day." *ARH*, July 23, 1950.

"Credentials." *General Conference Committee Minutes*, September 19, 1911-A.

"Delegates to the General Conference- General, Mission, and Institutional Delegates." *GC Session Bulletin*, May 25, 1954.

Dick, E. D. "Day of Special Intercession for Interned Missionaries, October 30." *Canadian Union Messenger*, October 20, 1943.

Dick, E. D. "Special prayer for Interned Missionaries." *Lake Union Herald*, October 19, 1943.

"Editorial Appointments." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, May 1, 1924.

Elbridge Martin Adams Family Tree. Accessed, October 7, 2019.

"E. M. Adams—Extension of Furlough." *General Conference Committee Minutes*, May 29, 1947.

"E. M. Adams—Field secretary Far Eastern Division." General Conference Committee Minutes, March 22, 1951.

"Far Eastern Division Workers—Permanent Return." General Conference Committee Minutes, February 14, 1952.

Figuhr, R. R. "The Onward March in the Philippines." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, October 1934.

Finster, L. V. "Philippine Islands: The Pearl of the Orient," *Mission Quarterly*, First Quarter, 1916.

Finster, L. V. "The Philippine Mission for the Year 1914." *Asiatic Division Mission News*, July 1, 1915.

Griggs, Frederick, "Good Days in Central Luzon." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, February 1926.

Longacre, Charles S. "Liberty," *A Magazine of Religious Freedom*, Fourth Quarter, 1932.

McEachern, J. H. "A Good Month in the West Visayan Mission." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, May 1935

Mills, R. C. "Forty Years of Service in the Philippines." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, February 1952.

Montalban, V. M., "Progress Highlights." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, April 1966.

"Nominating Committee Report." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, October 1947.

Pedicord, C. A. "The Field--Report of the First Annual Conference of the Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, September 12-22, 1902." *Pacific Union Recorder*, November 6, 1902.

Pratt, F. A. "How it Happened in the Philippines." *British Advent Messenger*, December 1, 1950.

"Proceedings of the General Conference- Thirteenth meeting," *GC Session Bulletin*, August 3, 1962.

Ranario, C. P. "South Philippines Hosts Interdepartmental Meeting." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, 1973.

"Seventh-Day Adventists, September 12-22, 1902." *Pacific Union Recorder*, November 6, 1902.

*Seventh-Day Adventist Yearbook*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1912, 1934, 1939.

Sevrens, Oliver Fisk. "The Philippine Academy." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, April 1-15, 1923.

Snow, C. M. "Religious Liberty at the General Conference." *ARH*, June 9, 1926.

Sorenson, C. P. "A Life Dedicated to service in the Philippines." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, June 1951.

Sorensen, C. P. "Division items." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, February 1949.

Steinel, I. A. "Report of the Educational and Missionary Volunteer Department of the Philippine Union Mission." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, December 1-15, 1920.

"Summary of Proceedings—Far Eastern Division Committee—1927 Annual Meeting." *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, June 1927.

1. Eldridge M. Adams, "Service Record," Southern-Asia Pacific Division. Accessed, October 11, 2021.
2. Elbridge Martin Adams Family Tree. Accessed, October 7, 2019, <https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/LWW1-1C9/elbridge-martin-adams-1881-1974>.
3. Eldridge E. Adams, "Service Record."
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. E. S. Ballenger, and E. M. Adams, "Southern California- The Burbank Meeting," *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 29, 1909, 4.
7. C. A. Pedicord, "The Field- Report of the First Annual Conference of the Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, September 12-22, 1902," *Pacific Union Recorder*, November 6, 1902, 2.
8. "Credentials," General Conference Committee Minutes, September 19, 1911-A, 85.
9. Eldridge E. Adams, "Service Record."
10. *Seventh-Day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1912), 151.
11. E.M. Adams, "The Philippines," *Asiatic Division News*, December 1, 1912, 11, 12.
12. L. V. Finster, "The Philippine Mission for the Year 1914," *Asiatic Division Mission News*, July 1, 1915, 31-33.
13. L. V. Finster, "Philippine Islands: The Pearl of the Orient," *Mission Quarterly*, First Quarter, 1916, 3-8.
14. I.A. Steinel, "Report of the Educational and Missionary Volunteer Department of the Philippine Union Mission," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, December 1-15, 1920, 6.
15. Eldridge E. Adams, "Service Record."
16. J.S. Barrows, and L.V. Finster, "Organization of the Philippine Union Conference," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, July 1, 1917, 4, 5.
17. Eldridge E. Adams, "Service Record" . . .
18. "Editorial Appointments," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, May 1, 1924, 5.
19. Oliver Fisk Sevens, "The Philippine Academy," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, April 1-15, 1923, 6.

20. "Announcements," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, July 1, 1923, 8.
21. Eldridge E. Adams, "Service Record."
22. E.M. Adams, "Workers' Institute in Nagcarlang, P.I.," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, July 1, 1924, 2.
23. "Announcements," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, July 1, 1924, 12.
24. E.M. Adams, "Fruits of Home Missionary Work," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, August 1924, 11.
25. Frederick Griggs, "Good Days in Central Luzon," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, February 1926, 5.
26. E.M. Adams, "The Central Luzon Conference," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, March 1926, 5.
27. Eldridge E. Adams, "Service Record."
28. C. M. Snow, "Religious Liberty at the General Conference," *ARH*, June 9, 1926, 30, 31.
29. "Summary of Proceedings—Far Eastern Division Committee—1927 Annual Meeting," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, June 1927, 11.
30. Eldridge E. Adams, "Service Record."
31. Annual Committee Meetings, "Manila," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, April 1928, 3.
32. E. M. Adams, "From the Homelands," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, July 1927, 13.
33. "Autumn Council, Battle Creek, Michigan, October 18-26, 1932," General Conference Committee Minutes, Oct. 18-26, 1932, 738.
34. *Seventh-Day Adventist Yearbook*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1934), 129.
35. *Ibid.*, 126.
36. E.M. Adams, "Special Efforts Among the Churches in the West Visayan Mission," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, October 1933, 3-4.
37. R. R. Figuhr, "The Onward March in the Philippines," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, Oct. 1934, 3.
38. *Seventh-Day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1939), 140.
39. W. P. Bradley, "Division News Items," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, September 1939, 8.
40. Eldridge E. Adams, "Service Record."



41. E.M. Adams, "With Our Colporteur Missionaries in the Philippine Union Mission," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, September 1940, 6-7.
42. E.M. Adams, "Evangelism in Northern Luzon Mission," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, June 1941, 10.
43. World War II. Retrieved from  
<http://countrystudies.us/philippines/21.htm#:~:text=Japan%20launched%20a%20surprise%20attack,north%20and%20south%20of%20Manila.>
44. V. T. Armstrong, "Philippine Union Council," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, March 1946, 2.
45. W. P. Bradley, "Philippines Missionaries Safe," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, April 1945, 2
46. V. T. Armstrong, "The Call to the Church," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, July 1945, 1.
47. Eldridge E. Adams, "Service Record."
48. "E. M. Adams- Extension of Furlough," General Conference Committee Minutes, May 29, 1947, 573.
49. V. T. Armstrong, "An Evening with the Far Eastern Division- Deliverance in the Philippines," *ARH*, June 11, 1946, 229
50. "Nominating Committee Report," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, October 1947, 8.
51. C. P. Sorensen, "Division items," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, February 1949, 8.
52. "An evening with the Far Eastern Division- Rapidly Growing Mission Field," *General Conference Session Bulletin*, July 20, 1950, 273.
53. "E. M. Adams- Field secretary Far Eastern Division," General Conference Committee Minutes, March 22, 1951, 339.
54. "Far Eastern Division Workers—Permanent Return," General Conference Committee Minutes, February 14, 1952, 688.
55. Eldridge E. Adams, "Service Record."
56. R. C. Mills, "Forty Years of Service in the Philippines," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, February 1952, 8, 9.
57. "Delegates to the General Conference- General, Mission, and Institutional Delegates," *GC Session Bulletin*, May 25, 1954, 12.
58. "Proceedings of the General Conference- Thirteenth meeting," *GC Session Bulletin*, August 3, 1962, 12.
59. E. M. Adams, "Greetings from E. M. Adams," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, March 1954, 10.
60. E.M. Adams, "Former Missionaries Hold Reunion", *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, November 1956, 3.

61. Elbridge Martin Adams Family Tree.
62. R. F. Cottrell, "The Story of the Day," *ARH*, July 23, 1950, 1.
63. J. H. McEachern, "A Good Month in the West Visayan Mission," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, May 1935, 4.
64. R. C. Mills, "Forty Years of Service in the Philippines," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, February. 1952, 8, 9.
65. "An Evening with the Far Eastern Division," *GC Session Bulletin*, May 29, 1954, 210.
66. R. C. Mills, "Forty Years of Service in the Philippines," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, February 1952, 8, 9.
67. Charles S. Longacre, "Liberty," *A Magazine of Religious Freedom*, Fourth Quarter, 1932.
68. C. P. Sorenson, "A Life Dedicated to service in the Philippines," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, June 1951, 19.
69. Eldridge E. Adams, "Service Record."
70. C. P. Ranario, "South Philippines Hosts Interdepartmental Meeting," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, 1973, 6.
71. V. M. Montalban, "Progress Highlights," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, April 1966, 11.

---

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