



Anhui (Anhui) Mission houses at Nanjing, 1927.

Photo courtesy of Susan D. Patt.

Anhui Mission (1917–1951)

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.

The Anhwei Mission () territory encompassed the province of Anhwei (later Anhui) and northern Jiangsu Province. It was first a sub-division of the North China Union Conference and later the East China Union Mission. The Seventh-day Adventist mission had established stations in the central provinces of Henan, Hubei and

Hunan. Further advances were made from the east, using Shanghai as a base to establish stations at Nanjing and further west into Anhui Province.

Introduction

In 1913 Arthur Selmon entered Anhui from Shanghai and did some medical work in addition to meeting with a handful of believers. At the time evangelism was being conducted by C. D. Han, a recent convert.¹ The following year national canvassers sold many subscriptions for *Shi Djao Yeuh Bao* (Signs of the Times) in Anhui.² Three young men attending the mission school at Nanjing ventured across the border into Anhui and spent their 1914 summer vacation canvassing in Wuhu. During this period, 1913-1914, there were reports of an elementary school for girls and another for boys operating on a partly self-supporting basis in Anhui.³ The brighter students progressed to the training school in Shanghai. Annual general meetings were held in Anhui, regular attendees congregating for fellowship and the baptism of further converts especially in the Yingshang county near Fuyang, north-west Anhui.⁴

Anhui Mission Established

A major reorganization of the Chinese territory took place in 1917. A Mandarin-speaking portion of the North China Union Conference, approximating Anhui Province and the northern half of Jiangsu Province, was designated the Anhui Mission. Two years later a further reorganization transferred the same territory to the East China Union Mission,⁵ its administrative office shifting from Nanjing⁶ to Shanghai⁷ and later back to Nanjing.⁸

One of the leading people of the Anhui Mission in its early stage was Harry Doolittle (), who devoted more than a decade to its advancement. He became familiar with the culture and the needs of both the membership and the team of national workers. His missionary method was a wise one, i.e., to train a team of local men and women who could speak to the minds of their own people. When he gathered the scattered membership together for annual general meetings he furthered his philosophy by allowing the national leaders of the out-stations to preach to the assembly.⁹

Mission Progress

Harry Doolittle's report of mission activities during 1922 was enlightening. Local floods and famine had led to banditry, almost entire towns being looted and burned. At Ying Djou Fu two national workers and their families miraculously escaped with their lives during the turmoil. Despite the hardships the membership increased their tithes and offerings. Thirty-three converts were baptized. The elementary schools remained staffed with graduates trained in the Shanghai College and the Nanjing Industrial School flourished with fifty-six students, the majority earning their fees by weaving towels that were sold to local business companies.¹⁰ Later, this enterprise closed and another, named Anhwei Junior Middle School, was opened in Yingshang county. Four

teachers taught Grades 1 through 9, all instruction being given in Mandarin.¹¹ In 1922 the mission had a total of almost 250 baptized members spread over four organized churches and several Sabbath School companies. Two colporteurs worked in the territory.¹² The national ministerial team numbered two ordained men and thirteen others with preaching licenses.¹³

The years of national revolution, 1926 through 1928, caused great disruption to mission efforts in the Anhui territory. Some national workers were arrested and led through the streets as common criminals. Some were imprisoned for months.¹⁴ Mission schools, chapels and offices in Nanjing were looted and occupied by soldiers, forcing administration to shift to Shanghai. Not until August 1928 could reconstruction and restoration take place. Statistics at the close of 1928 recorded a baptized membership of 285 among six churches and twelve companies. Six elementary schools and one advanced school were conducted with a total enrolment of 155. National workers included three ordained ministers, twenty-one others licensed to preach and six ladies engaged in the evangelism of Chinese women.¹⁵ In 1929 Mrs. Bothilde Miller visited from the Jiangsu Province to stimulate efforts for the women,¹⁶ supporting the work of Mrs. Lwan Si-mu who had toiled in ministry for women throughout the 1920s.¹⁷

Despite continued civil unrest advancements were made in the early 1930s. Reports showed that in the two years to 1930 the baptized membership rose to 453 in ten churches and twelve companies. Sabbath School membership numbered 727.¹⁸ A new junior middle school was opened at Bengbu in the central north of Anhui Province.¹⁹ Tragically, in 1933 calamity struck one school teacher, Wang Shou Chen, and his family. Wang's wife and youngest child died while suffering deprivations. Wang was slain by bandits, who carried off his sixteen-year-old daughter.²⁰

By the end of 1934 the baptized membership had risen to 622. Sabbath School attendance averaged one thousand each week. Advancements into new areas continued to be largely dependent on a team of five colporteurs. Graduates from the mission schools furthered their education at the China Training Institute in Jiangsu Province. Those wishing to train as nurses enrolled at Yancheng Sanitarium or the Shanghai Training School for Nurses.²¹

The Sino-Japanese War impacted the Anhui Mission in terms of bomb damage to church properties. In the spirit of neutrality church periodicals only made passing references to unrest and hardships, even in the aftermath of the 1937 Nanjing atrocities, but they did report of national evangelists promptly returning to their stations after fleeing the danger.²² One visitor to the mission territory described Anhwei as "desolated," church members having only food fit for animals but still eagerly attending Sabbath School.²³ On several occasions the East China Union officials sent aid to the church members in Anhui Province.²⁴

Political and social conditions did not improve significantly. The Second World War and the advancing Communist troops after the War prolonged the hardships suffered in China. The baptized membership total for the Anhui Province was 853 at the close of 1941.²⁵ As war crept over the region many church members fled to

safer parts of the country and provincial record-keeping became practically impossible.²⁶ National missionaries struggled to advance the mission cause against adversities, principally the difficulty of moving funds to the mission staff and low cash exchange rates. Administrative control was handed to nationals for the duration of the War and mission headquarters were located in Fuyang.²⁷ After the War a return to active public evangelistic campaigns for several years was cut short by the successes of the Communist armies.²⁸ The last reliable membership total was reported in 1951 as 1,048 dispersed among seven churches.²⁹

Mass evacuation of expatriate missionaries in China began in December 1948³⁰ and administration was handed back to national men.³¹ Direct communication with the Anhui Mission practically ceased in 1949. The entire China Division headquarters moved to Shanghai in 1949³² and soon after to Hong Kong.³³ By 1951 all church entities in the provinces of China, including the Anhui Mission, ceased to have any official status.³⁴

Directors of Anhui Mission

Harry J. Doolittle (杜尔), 1917-1928; Otto B. Kuhn (库恩), 1928-1932; Bernard Peterson (彼得森), 1932-1937; Walter Strickland (斯特里克兰), 1938-1940; D. R. White (怀特), 1941-1942; Wu Tsung Shan (吴宗善 Wú Cóngshàn), 1942-1946; Harold J. Shultz (舒尔茨), 1946-1949; Fu Yi Ying (傅 Ying Fù Y yīng), 1949-1951.

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6. "Anhwei Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1918), 157.

7. "Anhui Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1920), 160.
8. E.g., "Anhui Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1922), 109-110.
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13. "Anhui Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1923), 126-127.
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31. "Anhui Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1950), 98.
32. "Recent Changes," *China Division Reporter*, November 1949, 8.
33. William H. Branson, "Change in Division Headquarters," *China Division Reporter*, January 1950, 1.
34. "China Division," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1952), 104.
35. D. R. White was director of Anhwei Mission in 1941 according to *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1941), p. 107 (<https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1941.pdf>). According to the family sources (see the photo of the document attached to this article) and knowledge of D. R. White's granddaughter, D. R. White and his family returned to the United States in late 1940 and were not in China in 1941 (Susan Patt, email message to the editor, December 14, 2023).

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