

Williams, Durward Swingle (1891–1930) and Ora B. (Whitmore) (1883–1964)

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.

Durward and Ora Williams were educators who served in America, China, and the Philippines.

Heritage and Training

Durward Swingle Williams was born on October 10, 1891, in Stewardson, Illinois, to Frank and Ada (Swingle) Williams. His father was a tinsmith and hardware merchant living at Prairie Township to the north of Stewardson. He had two younger siblings: Ralph (b.1894) and Vida Margaret (b.1899).¹ His elementary education took place in the Stewardson Public School. When he was ten years old, his mother became a Seventh-day Adventist. Durward's college education began at Emmanuel Missionary College (EMC) but was interrupted when he returned home to assist his father in the family business. He accumulated some credits through the Fireside Correspondence School before returning to EMC and graduating from the Ministerial Course on May 21, 1917. The following day he wed Ora Whitmore,² a high school teacher who had studied at the American Conservatory of Music, Chicago.³

Combined Service

Durward and Ora were appointed to the Fox River Academy at Sheridan, Illinois. He served as preceptor and teacher of science, mathematics, and mechanics. She taught Latin.⁴ They were there for only twelve months when they accepted an invitation to engage in overseas mission work in China.

Arriving in China on October 6, 1918, Durward and Ora spent almost a year studying the Chinese language at Hankow (now part of Wuhan, Hubei Province).⁵ They then went a little further north to Yancheng in the Henan Province where Durward accepted the role of principal of the Henan Intermediate School and Ora was at times the assistant principal, advisor to the preceptress, and class teacher.⁶ About 1923 Durward was elected to the additional portfolio of Central China Union Mission as education secretary.⁷ An education convention took place

in Shanghai April 1925, with Durward and Ora leading out in some of the discussions and addressing the delegates on several occasions.⁸ Durward was ordained to the gospel ministry in Hankow on May 1925.⁹

For twelve months, 1925 to 1926, Durward and Ora took a furlough of sorts, time out for Durward to take some further studies in education back in America at EMC. They returned to China for Durward to resume his role as education secretary of the Central China Union Mission and adopt the new responsibility as principal of the Hankow Intermediate School. Political conditions soon deteriorated in China, forcing the evacuation of missionaries. Durward and Ora accepted teaching positions at Philippine Junior College, Manilla, for the 1927-1928 academic year.¹⁰ Durward taught science and history. Ora taught English and mathematics.¹¹

In 1928 Durward and Ora returned to China, happy to take their place in the classrooms again, but this time they were located at the China Theological Seminary at Chiao Tou Djen (now Qiaotouzhen) northwest of Shanghai. Durward was given charge of the Science and Industrial Departments. Ora taught music and pedagogy.¹² They agreed to remain on campus during the 1930 summer vacation in order to keep the industries operating to enable students to earn their fees for the following year. During that summer Durward was struck with typhoid fever. The deadly disease took his life on Saturday evening, July 26, 1930. He was only thirty-eight years old. At dawn on Monday, July 28, he was laid to rest on the crest of a hill overlooking the Yangtze River valley.¹³ Ora bravely remained in China for a further two years, teaching English and serving as librarian at the Far Eastern Academy in Shanghai, the institution where the children of missionaries were educated.¹⁴

After China

Ora returned to America in 1932 and settled near the Washington Sanitarium, Tacoma Park. She did several hours of canvassing each week within walking distance of her home, in suburbs such as Hyattsville and Mt. Rainier.¹⁵ In 1934 officials at Washington Missionary College initiated an experimental employment bureau and asked Ora to conduct the enterprise. She organized the placement of young women in homes for domestic work so that they could earn their tuition fees. The scheme was short-lived.¹⁶ Later, Ora moved a little further south and became a member of the South Richmond Seventh-day Adventist Church in Virginia. She passed away in the Washington Sanitarium on September 16, 1964, and was interred in Fort Lincoln Cemetery, Washington, D.C!¹⁷

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NOTES

1. "Durward Swingle Williams," FamilySearch, Intellectual Reserve, 2021, accessed August 6, 2021.
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2. "Durward Swingle Williams," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, August 1930, 16.
3. Bessie Mount, "Ora R. (Whitmore) Williams," *Columbia Union Visitor*, December 24, 1964, 11.
4. "Fox River Academy," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1918), 193.
5. "Durward Swingle Williams," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, August 1930, 16.
6. E.g., "Honan Intermediate School," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1922), 165.
7. "Central China Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1924), 123-124.
8. "Educational Department-Convention Program, April 3-14, 1925," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, April 1924, Extra, 14.
9. "Durward Swingle Williams," *Far Eastern Division Outlook*, August 1930, 16.
10. Ibid.
11. "Philippine Junior College," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1928), 277-278.
12. E.g., "China Theological Seminary," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1929), 269.
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14. E.g., "Far Eastern Academy," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1932), 289.
15. E.g., "The Literature Ministry," *Columbia Union Visitor*, November 23, 1933, 7.

16. "Important Notice," *Columbia Union Visitor*, August 23, 1934, 3; "News Notes," *Columbia Union Visitor*, January 3, 1935, 3.

17. Bessie Mount, "Ora R. (Whitmore) Williams," *Columbia Union Visitor*, December 24, 1964, 11.

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