

Wilcox, Milton Charles (1853–1935)

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.

Milton C. Wilcox devoted more than fifty years to the Adventist cause, most of them as an author and editor of books and periodicals, most notably, *Signs of the Times* (1891-1913).

Early Life and Ministry

Milton Charles Wilcox was born to Allen (1818-1887) and Julia Ann Lawton Wilcox (1825-1900) on April 9, 1853, near Oxbow in upstate New York. Charles (apparently the name he used as a youth) had at least five siblings, including a younger brother, Francis McLellan Wilcox (1865-1951), who also became a prominent editor in the Seventh-day Adventist church.¹

In addition to working on the family farm in the Adirondack foothills, Charles showed a studious nature by earning a school teacher's certificate when he was only 16. He aspired to be a lawyer but curiosity led him to evangelistic meetings conducted by H. H. Wilcox (no relation) and he became increasingly interested in the Scriptures. M. C. Wilcox was baptized by Dudley M. Canright and joined a new church of 10 members formed at New Connecticut, New York, in May 1877. Not long afterwards he was appointed the congregation's leader.²



Milton Charles Wilcox

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After receiving basic instruction at a Bible Institute conducted by Uriah Smith, James White and Stephen Haskell, Wilcox began preaching with another lay evangelist, Theodore M. Lane, in public halls of rural communities such as Sabinsville and Knoxville, Pennsylvania, followed by Kinneyville, New York. He took an intensive course at Ives Seminary, a Methodist institution in Antwerp, New York. However, soon after beginning a one-year course at Battle Creek College in Michigan, illness forced him to withdraw. He was ordained to Adventist ministry in 1880. On October 31, 1882, Milton married Kate Althea Osterhout.³

Editorial Work and England

During 1882 and 1883 Wilcox served an apprenticeship in typesetting and editing under Uriah Smith at the Review and Herald Publishing House, Battle Creek. It was his introduction to the protocols of magazine and book production.⁴ Among his assignments was to serve on a committee of three for the compilation of the 1884 *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*.⁵

In 1884 Wilcox sailed to England under appointment to head the nascent British Mission Committee. At Great Grimsby he preached to the public in open-air gatherings and initiated the periodical *Present Truth*, a 16-page monthly, in May 1884. Twice monthly publication began in November 1885, and Wilcox remained on the masthead as editor until June 1887.⁶

He had sailed alone in 1884, Kate remaining with her mother in America, suffering from an emotional disorder that may have been post-natal depression after the birth of their first child, Kathrina Blossom (born January 6, 1883). When he returned home in late 1886, Wilcox fully expected to take his family back to England but Ellen White advised against it due to Kate's fragile health. Instead of returning to England he returned to evangelistic work, conducting public meetings at Brownsville and Newburg, New York. His next assignment was to take charge of issuing the *General Conference Bulletin* during the 1888 Minneapolis session.⁷

Pacific Press and *Signs of the Times*

Following the 1888 session Wilcox began editorial work at Pacific Press in Oakland, California. It proved to be an enduring appointment of 45 years. He began as one of three assistant editors, then after two years became editor-in-chief in 1891.⁸ In the same year he co-edited *Pacific Health Journal and Temperance Advocate* and continued to carry the dual role until the end of 1892.⁹ Kate later contributed to this second periodical by assuming responsibility for the column titled "Women's Realm."¹⁰ Milton maintained his role as editor of *Signs of the Times* until 1913 and then began two decades as book editor, interrupted only by twelve months as Dean of Theology in 1918 at the College of Medical Evangelists, Loma Linda, California (later Loma Linda University).¹¹

During his time as book editor Wilcox processed a wide range of publications covering biblical topics, science, children's stories and natural history. For example, *Astronomy and the Bible* by Lucas A. Reed was a popular

book, first issued in 1919, which appeared in several editions.¹² Another well-known volume was *The World's Best Book* by William P. Pearce, telling of the discovery of ancient biblical manuscripts and the experiences of early translators of the Scriptures. Neil Wayne Northey wrote a nature series for children, one title being *The Bluebirds and Their Neighbors*.¹³ Storybooks about animals also featured, one being titled *Redstreak and Dickey* by George Clarence Hoskin.¹⁴ A number of Seventh-day Adventist authors, Matilda Erickson Andross for example, became household names among Adventists with the publication of books such as *Life's Greatest Things*.¹⁵

It was said of Wilcox that he was "indefatigable," serving on the boards of Pacific Press, Pacific Union College and St. Helena Sanitarium, foregoing vacations, writing several quarterlies for the Sabbath School lessons and pastoring at the Oakland and Mountain View churches for extended periods, all in addition to his editorial work. He retired after half a century of productive service.¹⁶

Milton C. Wilcox passed away on September 16, 1935, at age 82, only two years after retirement.¹⁷ Kate passed away on May 28, 1938. They both rest in the Alta Mesa Memorial Park in Palo Alto, California.¹⁸ Their three children survived them: Kathrina Blossom (b. 1883), at one time editor of *Our Little Friend*, Uthai Vincent (b. 1888), contributor to *Signs of the Times* and later a newspaper correspondent, and Llewellyn Altheus (b. 1898), also a contributor to *Signs of the Times* and later chaplain of Glendale Sanitarium.¹⁹

Selected Books by Milton Charles Wilcox

The Manner of Christ's Coming (1894)

The Fullness of Jew and Gentile (1901)

The Seven Churches and the Seven Seals (1904)

The Surety of the Bible: God's Multiplied Witness (1925)

Studies in Ephesians: Thoughts on the Wonderful Epistle (1927)

The Lord's Day: The Test of the Ages (1931)

Questions Answered: Gathered from the Question Corner of the Signs of the Times (1938)

SOURCES

Cottrell, R. F. "Francis McLellan Wilcox." *ARH*, September 27, 1951.

General Conference Session Minutes, 1863-1868. General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, Silver Spring, Maryland.

"Kate Althea Wilcox." *Pacific Union Recorder*, July 27, 1938.

"Kate O. Wilcox." *Find A Grave*. Memorial ID No. 190944297. Accessed March 12, 2021, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/190944297/kate-o.-wilcox>

Milton Charles Wilcox Sustentation File. RG 33, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

Slade, E. K. "Milton Charles Wilcox." *ARH*, November 14, 1935.

NOTES

1. E. K. Slade, "Milton Charles Wilcox," *ARH*, November 14, 1935, 21; R. F. Cottrell, "Francis McLellan Wilcox," *ARH*, September 27, 1951, 13; see United States Census records for 1860 and 1870 and the New York State Census, 1875, at "Allen David Wilcox," *FamilySearch*, accessed July 8, 2021, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/sources/LVK7-5B3>.
2. Slade, "Milton Charles Wilcox"; Milton C. Wilcox to Sustentation Committee, February 9, 1931, GCA, Sustentation Files, RG 33, Box 9812, Milton C. and Kate A. Wilcox; M.C. Wilcox, "New Connecticut," *ARH*, July 19, 1877, 30.
3. Wilcox to Sustentation Committee, February 9, 1931, and Sustentation Fund Application, February 4, 1924, in Milton C. and Kate A. Wilcox Sustentation File, GCA; Slade, "Milton Charles Wilcox."
4. Slade, "Milton Charles Wilcox."
5. General Conference Session Minutes, November 9, 1883. General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics and Research, Silver Spring, Maryland.
6. See the full-text holdings for *Present Truth* in "Periodicals," General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Online Archives, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/Forms/AllFolders.aspx>.
7. Wilcox to Sustentation Committee, February 9, 1931, Milton C. and Kate A. Wilcox Sustentation File, GCA.
8. *Ibid.*
9. See the full-text holdings for *Pacific Health Journal and Temperance Advocate* in "Periodicals," General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Online Archives, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/Forms/AllFolders.aspx>.
10. "Kate Althea Wilcox," *Pacific Union Recorder*, July 27, 1938, 13.
11. Slade, "Milton Charles Wilcox."
12. Advertisement, *Signs of the Times*, February 3, 1925, 15.

13. Advertisement, *Signs of the Times Online*, December 23, 1930, 15.

14. Advertisement, *Signs of the Times Online*, December 16, 1930, 15.

15. Advertisement, *Signs of the Times Online*, March 24, 1931, 15.

16. Slade, "Milton Charles Wilcox."

17. Ibid.

18. "Kate O. Wilcox," *Find A Grave*, Memorial ID No. 190944297, accessed March 12, 2021,

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/190944297/kate-o.-wilcox>.

19. Slade, "Milton Charles Wilcox."

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