

Hartwell, Raymond Herbert (1903–1984) and Iva Esta (Hamel) (1902–1997)



Raymond Herbert and Iva Esta Hartwell.

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

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Raymond Herbert and Iva Esta Hamel Hartwell were Adventist missionaries to China and Lebanon for almost three decades. Raymond was a minister; Iva was a music and English teacher. The Hartwells were gifted linguists, conversant in Chinese, Tibetan, French, German, Spanish, Japanese, and Arabic. Raymond's Chinese name was (pinyin: Hán Déwēi).

Early Life

Hartwell was born March 11, 1902, in Conway, Massachusetts, to Herbert Clifford and Sarah Hartwell. He grew up in Massachusetts until 1914. At the age of six, when Hartwell learned that his parents had dedicated him to the Lord's work, he decided to become a minister. He attended South Lancaster Academy. He lived afterward in New York until 1920, working as a Bible House assistant (1919-1920). His father baptized him in 1916 at the Buffalo, New York, camp meeting. He then studied at Clinton Theological Seminary in Clinton, Missouri (1920-1923), after which he became a licensed minister in Nebraska (1923-1926). While there, he married Iva Esta

Hamel (born August 6, 1902, in Marshfield, Wisconsin)¹ on May 28, 1924, in College View, Nebraska.

Service

The General Conference requested the release of the Hartwells from the Nebraska Conference for service in China.² Their subsequent medical examinations were accepted as satisfactory for mission service.³ They arrived in Shanghai on September 4, 1926, and spent the first year in language study in Nanjing where they barely escaped with their lives during the 1927 Nanjing Incident. "Once in Nanking," he wrote, "we lost all our possessions, and I narrowly escaped with my life by climbing down over the city wall by sheets tied together."⁴

Hartwell was also ordained to the gospel ministry on February 24, 1928, by William A. Slicer, J. L. Shaw, I. H. Evans, C. C. Crisler, and Frederick Griggs. They afterward went with Dr. John N. (1891-1980) & Dorothy (1903-1979) Andrews to Tibet, where Raymond served in the West China Union (1928-1929). On their way, they had a memorable trip up the Yangtze River, where their steamer hit a rock and the boat sank. They were stranded for three weeks before they could make their way past the Three Gorges while dodging bullets from bandits who shot at them from shore.

They subsequently served in the West China Union (1928-1929), East China Union (1930-1931), and then at Shanghai Sanitarium as chaplains and radio evangelists (1934-1937). Due to war conditions, in 1937, the Hartwells were forced to flee to the Philippines, where he began a radio program that received wide coverage. In less than a year, they were back in China, where he conducted radio programs in Chinese and English. He also became president of the Kiangsu Mission (1937-1940).

Once, when questioned by a sailor if missionary work in China was mere foolishness, Raymond replied:

In giving him an answer we had called attention to the fact that Christians belonged to the army of Christ, and therefore were to obey all of His commands, including the one, "Go . . . into all the world, and preach the gospel." Of course he [the sailor] saw nothing foolish about obeying the command of his superiors when ordered to China to protect American interests in Chinese waters. Neither is there anything foolish about Christian soldiers obeying orders given by their Superior even when it means coming to a land like China to advance the Cross and Kingdom for Christ among a people who know Him not.⁵

In 1941 they left on furlough when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, effectively ending any chance of returning to China as missionaries. During this time, he served as a pastor in the United States, first in the Carolina Conference (1941-1943) and then in Minneapolis, Minnesota (1945-1945).

After the war, he returned without his wife as one of three missionary administrators to help rebuild the church's work in China. In addition, he served as president of the Central China Union (1945-1947).

He then returned to the United States again, where he pastored in Memphis, Tennessee (1947-1949). From 1950, he served as secretary and president of the Middle East Union. From 1955-1956 he studied at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary to earn an M.A. degree. He contributed to the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (developed between 1954-1957).⁶ He also served as a member of the General Conference Executive Committee for fourteen years, and for a time, as interim president of Middle East College. While her husband was at the Middle East Union, Iva Hartwell served as the chair of the Music Department at Middle East College. In most of the other countries where the Hartwells had served, Iva labored alongside her husband primarily as secretary to church leaders.⁷

Final Years

In their golden years, they started a retirement home at Cumberland Heights, Tennessee, from which they remained active in giving Bible studies and speaking at area churches.⁸ Raymond died June 8, 1984, in Park Ridge Hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee, after he suffered a stroke while attending a camp meeting.⁹ Iva Hartwell died January 5, 1997, in Loma Linda, California.¹⁰

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. "Hartwell, Iva Hamel," Obituary, *ARH*, August 28, 1997, 28.
 2. General Conference Committee Minutes, February 1, 1926, 1113.
 3. General Conference Committee Minutes, February 18, 1926, 1128.
 4. Raymond H. Hartwell, "Does it Pay?" *ARH*, September 8, 1932, 15.
 5. Raymond H. Hartwell, "How Would You Answer the Question?" *Central Union Outlook*, January 26, 1932, 2.
 6. "Hartwell, Raymond H.," Obituary, *Southern Tidings*, August 1984, 24.
 7. "Hartwell, Iva Hamel," Obituary.
 8. "Life Sketch of Elder Raymond H. Hartwell," *The Mid-America Adventist Outlook*, September 6, 1984, 5.
 9. "Hartwell, Raymond H.," Obituary, *Southern Tidings*, August 1984, 24.
 10. "Hartwell, Iva Hamel," Obituary.
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