

Mitchell, Harvey Melville (1848–1904)

DEWITT S. WILLIAMS

DeWitt S. Williams, Ed.D. (Indiana University) lives in Maryland after 46 years of denominational service. He pastored in Oklahoma, served as a missionary in the Congo (Departmental and Field President), and Burundi/Rwanda (President, Central African Union). He served 12 years in the General Conference as Associate Director in both the Communications and Health and Temperance Departments. His last service was Director of NAD Health Ministries (1990-2010). He authored nine books and numerous articles.

Harvey M. Mitchell became the 16th treasurer of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists after several years in the Ohio Conference where he served as a minister and in a variety of roles involving business and financial management.

Early Years

Harvey Mitchell was born March 26, 1848, in Morrow County, Ohio, to Andrew and Martha Kilgore Mitchell. He had three sisters and five brothers, although three brothers and one sister died during childhood or teenage years.¹ His oldest brother, David K. Mitchell (1835-1909), was also a leading minister in the Ohio Conference²

On August 13, 1875, Harvey married Hattie Lillian Flack (1858-1879), a cousin to Warren G. Harding (1865-1923), 29th president of the United States, and to the prominent Adventist physician George T. Harding (1878-1934)³ The young couple had two children: Lorin Clyde (1876-1956) and Daisy Lillian (Taylor) (1878-1944). However, Hattie, only 17 years old at the time of her marriage, died just four years later at the age of 21.⁴

Varied Service in Ohio

Mitchell joined the Methodist Episcopal Church as a youth, but became a Seventh-day Adventist in 1878⁵ He was “a graduate of the best business college in America,” according to Adventist minister Dudley M. Canright,



H. M. Mitchell

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

who did not name the school.⁶ As a lay member, Mitchell quickly took a prominent role in church affairs, offering training in business procedures for the Ohio Tract and Missionary Society as early as 1880.⁷ In 1882, he audited the records of the secretary and treasurer of the Ohio Conference for the year, a service he would later perform several times during the 1890s.⁸

In 1888, Mitchell entered church work more fully. Early in the year he took up the duty of vice president of the Ohio T. and M. Society and taught a class in book-keeping for especially for local church clerks and treasurers at three district meetings.⁹ At the conference's annual constituency session and camp meeting in August, he was appointed state canvassing agent, issued a ministerial license, elected to the Ohio Conference executive committee and as a delegate to the General Conference held at Minneapolis in November.¹⁰ He continued on the conference executive committee through 1897 and was either vice president or president of the Ohio T. and M. Society through at least 1894.¹¹ The conference also drew upon Mitchell's business expertise in managing its institutions. He was on the Mount Vernon Sanitarium board of directors from at least 1888 to 1892, serving at times as secretary of the board and as business manager of the institution.¹² When Mount Vernon Academy opened in 1893, Mitchell was on the executive committee and served as secretary and auditor for the board of trustees.¹³

Mitchell was ordained and issued credentials as a gospel minister by the Ohio Conference during meetings held in Cleveland in August 1892.¹⁴ After living for 18 years as a widower, Elder Mitchell married Rachel Brown (1859-1903) on June 16, 1897.¹⁵

General Conference Treasurer (1900-1903)

The General Conference Executive Committee appointed H. M. Mitchell the 16th treasurer of the General Conference in November 1900 following the resignation of Anderson G. Adams.¹⁶ George A. Irwin, the GC president, had previously served as Ohio Conference president and had thus observed Mitchell's capabilities first hand. At the 1901 GC session, Mitchell was elected to a two-year term as treasurer.¹⁷

Harvey and Rachel Mitchell moved to Battle Creek, Michigan, after his call to the General Conference. Unfortunately, Rachel did not enjoy good health during their short time there, and died on March 18, 1903.¹⁸ Harvey thus was unable to attend the 1903 GC session soon underway in Oakland, California, and thus A. G. Daniells, the GC president, read the treasurer's report for the two years ending December 31, 1902.¹⁹ Elder Mitchell's own health was not good, and his service as GC treasurer came to an end when W. H. Edwards was elected to succeed him at the 1903 session.

H. M. Mitchell moved back to Academia, near Mount Vernon, Ohio, after leaving Battle Creek in 1903. He remained a trustee of the General Conference Association, but held no other denominational responsibilities.²⁰ He suffered from dropsy, or edema, and died at his home on December 6, 1904, at the age of 56.²¹ He was buried in Mound View Cemetery in Mount Vernon, Ohio.²²

In a brief article published in the *Review* a year before his death, Elder Mitchell made this appeal:

If my brethren all over the field could witness the offerings coming in for nearly three years, as I have done while acting as treasurer of the General Conference and Mission Board, and read the letters from God's poor (but rich in faith), in response to the many appeals for help, some giving their last cent, others dividing a pittance in order to help, sending the same with praises and thanksgiving, and all wishing they could do more, I am sure hearts would be melted to do more than has ever been done in the past.²³

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NOTES

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