

Upper Ganges Section

GORDON E. CHRISTO

Gordon E. Christo, Ph.D. in Old Testament and Adventist Studies (Andrews University). Christo is retired and working on contract as assistant editor of the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* and assistant editor of the *Seventh-day Adventist International Biblical-Theological Dictionary*. He is currently setting up a heritage center for Southern Asia Division. Some of his research on Adventist history can be seen at <https://sudheritage.blogspot.com/> and <https://www.facebook.com/SUDHeritage/>.

The Upper Ganges Section is a part of Northern India Union Section in the Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists. It was organized 1938 and reorganized in 1952, 2002, and 2018. Its headquarters is in Hapur, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Its territory includes the following districts in the state of Uttar Pradesh: Agra, Aligarh, Amroha, Baghpat, Bareilly, Bijnor, Budaun, Bulandshahr, Etah, Firozabad, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Ghaziabad, Hapur, Hathras, Kasganj, Mainpuri, Mathura, Meerut, Moradabad, Muzaffarnagar, Pilibhit, Rampur, Saharanpur, Sambhal, Shahjahanpur, and Shamli. The territory of the former Western Uttar Pradesh Region has been incorporated into this section.

Statistics, as of June 30, 2020: churches 43, membership 37,915, population 68,599,167.

The area around the region where the River Ganges flows from the Himalayas into the plains is where the Adventist message was first proclaimed to the Hindi-speaking people.

Beginning of Adventist Work

When Georgia and Luther Burgess returned from the United States in 1906, they came with funds from personal sales of subscriptions to the *Bible Training School* magazine and used those funds to finance their pioneering work in North India. An invitation by a local gentleman led them to the hills of Almora where they engaged in the study of Hindustani (Hindi/Urdu), and in about six months they prepared for sale a 26-page pamphlet in Urdu script.¹ The booklet was likely the *Sanatan Susamachar (Everlasting Gospel)* in Hindi and Urdu which colporteurs sold by the thousands.² At the biennial conference at the end of the year 1906, Luther and Georgia Burgess were requested to work in Dehra Dun.³ They briefly conducted a training school there and then moved around Hardwar, Agra, Delhi, Meerut, and Aligarh, staying in a tent that held all their earthly possessions. During this time, they baptized Maqbool Massey,⁴ who later started the work in Moradabad.⁵ After Annfield House, a rest home for workers, was purchased in Mussoorie,⁶ a company of Adventists grew up around the estate where the Adventist missionaries vacationed. Amarnath and his wife, who had learned the Adventist doctrines from the Burgesses in Tulsipur, were baptized on June 22, 1907, and joined the company.⁷ John Last was baptized in Mussoorie⁸ and started preaching in Patiala, while Amarnath canvassed in Dehradun and Hardwar, and Lall

Mohammad witnessed in Delhi and Agra.⁹

In 1909 the local workers were placed as follows: Caleb in Ghaziabad; Maqbool Massey in Najibabad; and Amarnath, Samuel, and Gardner in Lucknow. Around this time a girls' school opened in Dehradun and property was acquired in Dwarikhel/Chelusain for an industrial school.¹⁰ Luther and Georgia Burgess started the industrial school in Garwhal and the first convert from Hinduism there was Banka Admatha (Howard), who was sent to the India Christian Training School in Lucknow,¹¹ and who taught at Hapur before returning to Chelusain in 1934.¹²

First Permanent Station—Najibabad

A girls' school which was intended to train Indian women to work for other women and to attract local students started in Dehradun; but as there were many good schools in the town, the girls' school moved the following year to Najibabad, where there was already a dispensary under the care of Sisters Shryock and Singh.¹³ Sister Kurtz had learned the local language adequately by the time work opened in Najibabad and Sister Shryock took another year before she was able to give Bible studies. Alice O'Connor had a school in rented quarters in the heart of the town, but she came down with the plague. She survived, but it was decided to purchase property in a less congested area.¹⁴ A four-acre property, with 12 large mango trees, was found on the bank of stream which had a spring of fresh water, just 40 miles from Garwhal.¹⁵ This was the second permanent mission station in north India (after Lucknow) and the first in the Upper Ganges area.¹⁶ A mission bungalow was built in Najibabad in 1913,¹⁷ and Rembrandt and Belva Morris moved in. The Morris couple stayed until 1929, by which time the church had grown to more than 40 members. There was also a branch church in Kashipur. The Morris couple started a day school which became the first boarding school in north India.¹⁸ A company of believers was organized there on January 23, 1915, with Morris as the leader and his wife as the secretary-treasurer.¹⁹ In May, Buddha Singh and his wife were baptized. These were the parents of Jahan and Lakhan Singh.²⁰ Buddha Singh, who had been born in 1853 in Khansal, Moradabad district, became very active in witnessing in Najibabad and the surrounding villages.²¹ Fulton described him as an Indian evangelist.²²

Mrs. Lakhan Singh, who had taught in a government school in Utraula, assisted Alice O'Connor in the zenana school work.²³ Until 1916, the school is referred to as a girl's school for zenana work, but in 1916 the enrollment seems to have been mostly boys.²⁴ In 1917 the school in the bungalow is described as "for our workers' boys."²⁵ Several buildings for the boys' school were completed in 1917.²⁶ After the Morris couple left in 1929, the Champions carried on the work. However, though their work was diligent, the results were discouraging.²⁷ In the beginning of 1936, the union took an action to sell the property.²⁸ The Champions moved to Roorkee.²⁹ Thereafter, the work at Najibabad suffered and closed. Scattered members continued to request that the work be reopened, and finally the Najibabad Church was reorganized on October 14, 1967.³⁰

Growing Importance of Hapur

Since the school in Najibabad was a boys' school, the Mattisons who arrived in India in 1912 and had been assigned to start a girls' school in north India, arrived in Hapur in December 1916.³¹ Soon they purchased about five acres of land for the girls' school.³² Adventist education at Hapur began with Milton M. Mattison who had arrived in India with his wife in 1912. By January 1917 they had settled in Hapur. While living in an ashram near the railway station, Mattison sought to acquire land for a mission station. Finally, in September, they managed to purchase and register five acres of land, less than a mile away from the station on a bend of the Meerut Road. By November 1918 they had a constructed a bungalow for one missionary family and guests.³³

Since there was already a boys' school at Najibabad, Mattison started a school for girls.³⁴ Mattison had been appointed in charge of the North India Field of the North India Mission, but since he was busy with the work in Hapur Station, he could not do much in the surrounding area. This was resolved when the Southern Asia Division was organized in 1919-1920, and the North India Mission was organized with Mattison in charge and McWhinny placed in charge of the Hapur Station.³⁵

Within a few months the girls' school in Hapur moved to Lucknow into premises vacated by the India Union Christian Training School, and the North India Boys School moved from Najibabad to the Hapur campus for the 1920 school year.³⁶ Within a few years a number of village schools were opened around Hapur in Saidpur, Galouthi, Tanda, Bhikanpur, Dharampur, and Palhipur.

Moradabad

As early as 1904, a colporteur reported that there was a couple in Moradabad who had been keeping the seventh-day Sabbath for several years.³⁷ Patras Singh and his son, who lived in Narauli near Moradabad, were baptized in 1909.³⁸ Prominent members from Moradabad in the 1920s include C. Ritchie and Winifred Winston, who were officers in the union Young People's Missionary Volunteer Society and who attended Vincent Hill School.³⁹

In 1929 the UP Mission was reorganized as the North Agra Mission. Pastor Jahan Singh of Muradnagar was assigned to assist L. E. Allen in opening new work in Unnao. Pastor Robin Singh of Amorha was transferred to take the place of Jahan Singh with headquarters in Meerut. Sarawa and Philkhuwa were added to the Hapur Station territory. The district where Robin Singh was, Kashipur district, was combined with the Amroha Station and Padri Gardner was put in charge of both with headquarters in Moradabad.⁴⁰

Organizational History

When the Southern Asia Division was organized from December 25, 1919, to January 4, 1920, biennial conference, the North West India Union Mission was comprised of the Bombay Mission, the United Provinces

Mission, and the Punjab Mission.⁴¹ The United Provinces Mission was so named because its territory was the state of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. The first mission stations were at Hapur, Najibabad and Roorkee, besides Lucknow and Cawnpore (Kanpur). In 1929 the mission was divided into the Central Agra Mission and the North Agra Mission.⁴² At the end of 1936, due to economic constraints, the Central Agra Mission was discontinued and joined with the North Agra Missions, which were again joined to the United Provinces Mission Field with headquarters in Lucknow. In 1937 headquarters moved from Lucknow to Delhi.

As the Japanese intensified attacks on Burma in 1942, and missionaries began to evacuate, the leaders took an action to install indigenous leaders. Accordingly, A. Gardner and B. A. Howard were the first local officers of the mission.

In 1947 the mission was divided again into the North United Provinces Mission (NUPM) and the Central United Provinces Mission. The NUPM would have territory lying north of the Agra railway line, running from the border of Nepal to Bareilly and down to Mathura.⁴³ Headquarters for this mission were established at Moradabad. Within about five years the names changed to North Ganges Mission and Central Ganges Mission.⁴⁴

In 1954 the division took an action to avoid the term "mission." Accordingly, the name changed from North Ganges Mission to North Ganges Section.⁴⁵

The North and Central Ganges Sections were combined in 1955 into the Upper Ganges Section with headquarters in Lucknow at first,⁴⁶ then temporarily in Hapur.⁴⁷ When the property at 27 Barakhamba Road was purchased in 1955, the Upper Ganges Section moved there. In 1961 the headquarters moved from Delhi to Hapur.⁴⁸

Superintendents/Presidents

United Provinces Mission: Milton M Mattison (1919-1928).

North Agra Mission: Frank K. Loasby (1929-1930); Ray L. Kimble (1931-1934); Olie O. Mattison (1935-1936).

United Provinces Mission Field: J. B. Conley (1937-1938); Rembrandt P. Morris (1939-1940); Olie O. Mattison (1941); A. Gardner (1942-1943); Banka A. Howard (1944-1945).

North United Provinces Mission: Banka A. Howard (1946); R. J. Ritchie (1947); Ray L. Kimble (1948-1949); Chander Sen (1950).

North Ganges Mission: Donald W. Hunter (1951).

Upper Ganges Mission/Section: Theodore R. Torkelson (1952-1955); Charles R. Holford (1956); Inayat M. Chand (1957-1960); Alf J. Johanson (1961); Saudagar Chand (1962-1968); Lal Singh (1969-1976); L. D. Paul (1977); Prabhudas Kujur (1978-1981); Lal Singh (1982-1985); Shishpal Chand (1986-1990); Manoj Gayen (1991-1996); Kenneth Paul Singh (1997-1999); Earnest Gordon (2000); S. P. Singh (2001-2010); R. R. Bharti (2011-2015); Satish

Sharma (2016-present).

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NOTES

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5. Maqbul Massey, "Moradabad," *Eastern Tidings*, Feb 1908, 4.
6. "The Mountain Home," *Eastern Tidings*, April 1907, 2. "The Outlook," *Eastern Tidings*, May 1907, 1.
7. Lydia Hansen, "Baptism in Mussoorie," *Eastern Tidings*, July 1907, 3.
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