



The Davenports in front of their home in Henan, China. Left to right: Richard, Mrs. Pearl Davenport, Donald Jr., and Dr. Donald E. Davenport, c. 1919.

From *Adventism in China Digital Image Repository*, shared by the Davenport family.

Davenport, Donald Edward (1886–1933) and Pearl Ivy (Hoyt) (1889–1981)

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Donald Edward and Pearl Ivy Hoyt Davenport¹ were Seventh-day Adventist medical missionaries to China.

Donald was born May 23, 1886, in Stuart [Stewart], Iowa, to John (1864-1917)² and Rose Josephine Eldridge (1864-1903).³ Raised in an unbelieving home, his mother accepted the Adventist message and was baptized just before her death in 1902. In his early years he lived in Iowa, Montana, and Nebraska.⁴ Donald was “stirred by the message” before his mother died, when he became initially interested in Adventism. At the September 1909 Hastings, Nebraska, camp meeting, he was converted and baptized.⁵

Pearl was born on July 30, 1889, in Arcola, Illinois, to John Adam (1859-1933) and Effie Rosalie (née Ellis) Hoyt (1860-1955). She attended public and church schools until she attended Loma Linda, California, where she completed the nurses’ course in 1912. She traced her conversion to 1905 when she was baptized.⁶

In 1910 Donald entered the College of Medical Evangelists where he pursued the medical-evangelistic course. Donald and Pearl met at Loma Linda and were afterward wedded on September 6, 1912, in Bakersfield, California.⁷ Donald graduated June 8, 1915, from the College of Medical Evangelists,⁸ and subsequently they left as missionaries for China on September 11, 1915.⁹ They arrived in Shanghai on September 30, 1915, on the S. S. Persia.¹⁰ Upon arrival they traveled to Nanking where they attended a language school for the first nine months. By June 1, 1916, they had moved to Mokanshan where they spent the following summer.¹¹

Donald and Pearl had six children: Donald (1913-1996), Virginia Ruth¹² (1916 to 1917), Richard (1918-1982), Russell (1920--2003), Marian Lucille (1923-2019), and Marjorie (1924-2002). Their two oldest children became sick from contaminated water, and their oldest daughter, Virginia, died.¹³ That fall Dr. Davenport traveled with Frederick Lee visiting numerous out-stations in the Honan region.¹⁴ Gradually Lee and Davenport continued the work established by Dr. Harry W. Miller continuing a small medical clinic in Honan. In March 1917 he reported that during that month he treated 551 patients performing operations on a crude wooden table. He optimistically noted because of their medical missionary work of a man who requested to join the church. “But we feel,” he wrote, “that there are better things ahead.”¹⁵

Davenport worked as a fundraiser and developed plans for a new dispensary-hospital in Yen Cheng (Yencheng) that opened in 1919. The new medical facility could accommodate between 30 to 40 inpatients plus “two good treatment-rooms and a commodious dispensary.” They were soon joined by two additional physicians, Drs. Herbert and Ethel James.¹⁶

The Davenports returned to the United States on July 22, 1921, on furlough.¹⁷ While here they worked at the St. Helena Sanitarium, and Donald completed his B.A. degree. At the 1922 General Conference they requested that he obtain an additional year furlough. He rented an office in Mountain View, California, where he established a private practice. Urgent telegrams caused him to forego and returned to China. Yet, after two more years of mission service, and due to Pearl’s declining health, she returned to America for medical treatment while Donald continued to run the clinic in China for an additional year. When the General Conference permitted him to return after nine years of mission service, he returned to Mountain View where he continued in private practice.

In August 1928 he became the medical superintendent of the Washington Sanitarium in Takoma Park, Maryland. In his final illness, Dr. Davenport had a brain tumor, succumbing to the disease on Feb. 15, 1933.¹⁸ Pearl continued to work as a registered nurse until her retirement in 1963. She died on May 5, 1981, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and is buried in Collegedale Memorial Park.¹⁹

SOURCES

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"Dr. Davenport Dies at Takoma Park." *Evening Star* [Washington, D.C.], February 15, 1933.

"Donald E. Davenport Biographical Information Blanks." April 24, 1916, *Secretariat Appointee Files* RG21, Record ID 114899, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

Lee, Frederick. "Thoughts of Honan." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, December 15, 1919.

"Virginia R. Davenport obituary." *Asiatic Division Outlook*, November 15, 1917.

"Donald E. Davenport obituary." *ARH*, April 27, 1933.

"Pearl H. Davenport obituary." *ARH*, August 13, 1981.

NOTES

1. For the full family tree of "Donald E. and Pearl H. Davenport", see this link: <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/pt/RSVP.aspx?dat=MTc2MzI4ODI0OzswMjJhNzUyNS0wMDA2LTAwMDAtMDAwMCM0wMDAwMDAwMDAwMDAwMDA7MjAyMTEwMjUyMDUyMTg7MQ==&mac=A>.
2. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/37065051/john-h-davenport> [accessed 10/25/21].
3. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/37065056/rose-josephine-davenport> [accessed 10/25/21].
4. GCA, File No. 114899, *Secretariat Appointee Files*, RG 21, Box No. 7299, Donald E. Davenport Biographical Information Blanks, April 24, 1916.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. "Don Davenport Claims Bride at Mother's Home," *Bakersfield Morning Echo*, September 7, 1912, 5 [accessed from Newspapers.com 9/26/21].

8. See "Notes," *ARH*, June 10, 1915, 24.
9. See "Notes," *Asiatic Division Mission News*, September 15, 1915, 2.
10. See "Notes," *Asiatic Division Mission News*, October 15, 1915, 4.
11. See "Notes," *Asiatic Division Mission News*, July 1, 1916, 6.
12. See note about the arrival of Virginia Ruth Davenport on July 5, 1916. *Asiatic Division Mission News*, July 15, 1916, 4.
13. Pearl Hoyt-Davenport, "A Personal Word from China," *The Youth's Instructor*, February 5, 1918, 6-7; Obituary, *Asiatic Division Outlook*, November 15, 1917, 8.
14. See "Notes," *Asiatic Division Mission News*, November 15, 1916, 6.
15. D. E. Davenport, "Medical Missionary Work in Honan," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, April 15, 1918, 7.
16. Frederick Lee, "Thoughts of Honan," *Asiatic Division Outlook*, December 15, 1919, 4-5.
17. California, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists, 1882-1959; The National Archives at Washington, D.C.; Washington, D.C.; Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at San Francisco, California; NAI Number: 4498993; Record Group Title: Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004; Record Group Number: 8 [accessed from Ancestry.com 9/26/21].
18. "Dr. Davenport Dies at Takoma Park," *Evening Star* [Washington, D.C.], February 15, 1933, 2. Accessed from Newspapers.com [9/26/21]; see "Notes," *ARH*, March 9, 1933, 24.
19. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/92359444/pearl-h.-davenport> [accessed 9/26/21].

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