

Tornblad, Ollie Oberholtzer (1868–1953)

THANG SUAN SUM

Thang Suan Sum (B.Th., Spicer Memorial College; M.A. in Religion, Andrew University, Spicer Memorial College-off Campus) currently, works at Myanmar Union Adventist Seminary as a Bible instructor in religion.

Ollie Oberholtzer Tornblad was a physician, Bible instructor, writer, motivator for young people, and a missionary to Burma.

Early Life, Education and Marriage

Ollie Oberholtzer was born in 1868¹ to the family of an Adventist minister.² As a young woman she started working for the Adventist church as a Bible teacher in Indianapolis, Indiana.³ At Battle Creek Sanitarium she studied nursing under Dr. John Harvey Kellogg. She continued the medical education and graduated from the Arkansas University School of Medicine in 1905. In 1906 she traveled to Burma (present-day Myanmar) for missionary work,⁴ landing in Mumbai (Bombay), India⁵ along the way. Her first missionary establishment was in Moulmein, as she pioneered the medical work in that city.⁶ She married Carl Tornblad, an Adventist businessman,⁷ on September 26, 1910.⁸

Ministry

In 1910 the Tornblads found a suitable mission station⁹ in the Shan State of Myanmar. They set up a combination of business and medical missionary enterprises.¹⁰

Carl Tornblad died in Kemmendine, Myanmar, on November 3, 1919.¹¹

In 1923 Dr. Tornblad wrote an article titled "Walking for Health." She noted that missionaries did activities such as "pray, study, and work for spiritual blessings," yet they should also maintain their physical health, as it is also pivotal for their work. Most missionaries of the time carried on mission work with "ill health," the main cause being an inactive physical life. She maintained that "walking" activities are the best antidote, as they "greatly improve" blood circulation.¹²

In 1926 Dr. Tornblad was asked to open a medical and evangelistic work in Pyin Oo Lwin (formerly and colloquially referred to as May Myo or Maymyo), a hill station which was a summer residence of the lieutenant-governor of British Burma. The hill town was also a permanent residential headquarters of the lieutenant-general of the British government of Burma Division, and a home of educated Europeans and Burmese people.

Dr. Tornblad started her work there by visiting house-to-house, distributing *Signs of the Times* gospel literature and conducting Bible studies.¹³

In 1931 Dr. Tornblad started the Young People's Society in Pyin Oo Lwin to develop youth spiritually.¹⁴ In 1932 Dr. Tornblad returned to the United States and continued her ministry work as a part-time Bible teacher in the Central California Conference.¹⁵

Dr. Ollie Tornblad died in 1953.¹⁶

Legacy

Dr. Ollie Oberholtzer Tornblad left an important legacy in Myanmar. Passionate for young people, she established the Young People's Society. She was a missionary who could approach high-ranking and educated city people. She and her husband, Carl, combined their expertise for the Lord's service. Furthermore, her handy piece of article about the well-being of God's workers in the field is still in use.

SOURCES

Hamilton, G. A. Obituary of Carl Tornblad. *India Union Tidings*, December 1, 1919.

"In Northern Burma." *Western Canadian Tidings*, July 6, 1926.

Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia. Second revised edition. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996. S.v. "Ollie (Oberholtzer) Tornblad."

Spicer, W. A. "Marching Swiftly On: A Year-End Look over the Fields." *Australasian Record*, February 3, 1912.

"This is a day of surprises. . . ." *The Eastern Tidings*, October 1910.

Tornblad, Ollie. "I am having a really good interest" *Eastern Tidings*, September 1, 1931.

Tornblad, Ollie O. "Walking for Health." *The Eastern Tidings*, September 1, 1923.

NOTES

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), s.v. "Ollie (Oberholtzer) Tornblad."

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ollie O. Tornblad, "Walking for Health," *The Eastern Tidings*, September 1, 1923, 3.
6. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), s.v. "Ollie (Oberholtzer) Tornblad."
7. Ibid.
8. "This is a day of surprises. . .", *Eastern Tidings*, October 1910, 4.
9. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), s.v. "Ollie (Oberholtzer) Tornblad."
10. W. A. Spicer, "Marching Swiftly On: A Year-End Look over the Fields," *Australasian Record*, February 3, 1912, 3.
11. G. A. Hamilton, obituary of Carl Tornblad, *India Union Tidings*, December 1, 1919, 8.
12. Ollie Oberholtzer Tornblad, "Walking for Health," *The Eastern Tidings*, September 1, 1923, 3.
13. "In Northern Burma," *Western Canadian Tidings*, July 6, 1926, 6.
14. Ollie Tornblad, "I am having a really good interest . . .," *Eastern Tidings*, September 1, 1931, 3.
15. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), s.v. "Ollie (Oberholtzer) Tornblad."
16. Ibid.

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring, MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000