

Shepard, Reid Sears (1888–1977)

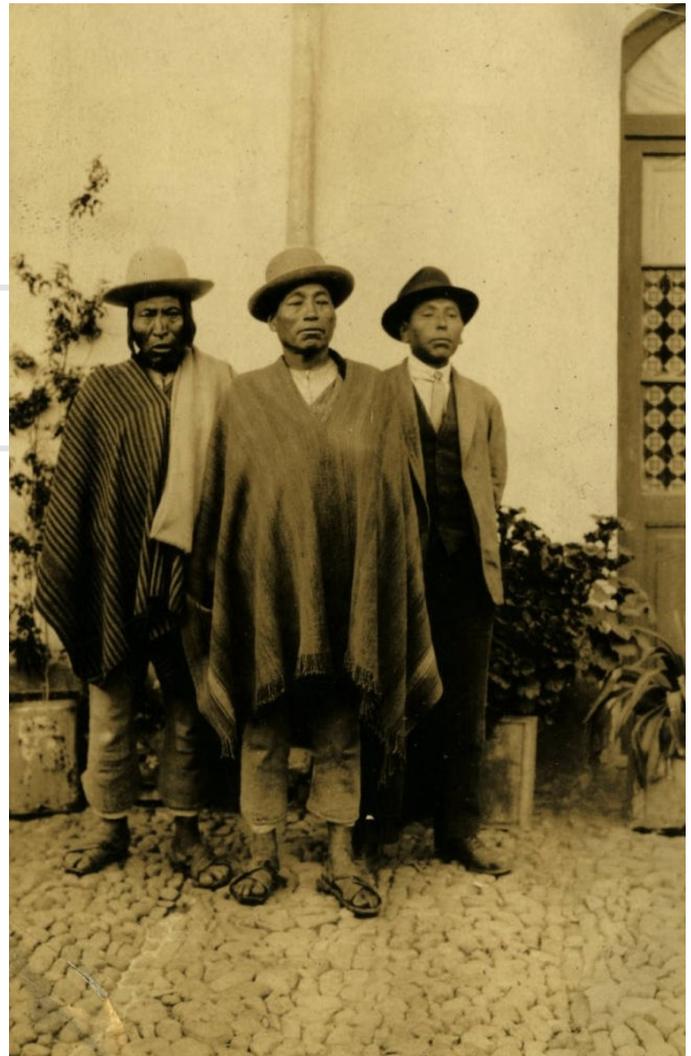
SAMUEL ANTONIO CHÁVEZ

Samuel Antonio Chávez

Reid Sears Shepard served as an educator, administrator, and missionary in Peru and Bolivia, mission territories of the South American Division.

Early Years, Education, and Marriage

Shepard was born on May 1, 1888, in Otsego, Michigan, United States.¹ He studied and graduated from Emmanuel Missionary College (now Andrews University). He married Ethel Cooper, a teacher at the church school, and they had a daughter, Dorothy Cagle.² In 1908, he graduated from college³ and later received his ministerial license at the seventh meeting of the West Michigan Seventh-day Adventist Conference, which was held in Otsego, Michigan.⁴



Two Aymara chiefs and Mateo, Reid Shepard's interpreter.

From Department of Archives and Special Collections, University Libraries, Loma Linda University,

<https://cdm.llu.edu/digital/collection/WEHTASAII/id/686/rec/4>.

Ministry

Shepard served as secretary and treasurer of the Lake Titicaca Indian Mission in 1917, which is based in Platería (Peru),⁵ and was later transferred to Bolivia. At that time, he began to think of a strategic place to start preaching Adventism among the Aymaras of Bolivia. He and his wife⁶ arrived in La Paz in March 1920, and without knowing where to start their work, they placed their trust in God's direction. So, accompanied by a Methodist missionary he had met before, he visited the Bolivian minister of education to whom he revealed his interest in opening a school among the indigenous people, and sought information about the best place for the enterprise. The minister not only approved his recommendation, but also offered him the opportunity to run the school at

Pucarani. However, he turned down that last offer.⁷

In the search for the best place to establish the school, Shepard met with, in the following days, the son of Esteban Machaca, who was an indigenous chief of great influence in the Bolivian highland region. This meeting enabled Machaca and 11 other chiefs to study the Bible with Shepard. In that way the Iquiaca mission was established.⁸ Later, at Francisco Tancara's insistence, Pastor Shepard left for Rosario, about 130 km from La Paz, accompanied by Mateo Urbina, his interpreter. Later, they gathered around 50 people in Villorio for Bible, which lasted two days. In addition, they also took care of the sick.⁹ Therefore, a group of natives asked him to open a school in that location.

Since Rosario's climate was not pleasant, Shepard feared for his wife's health. However, he noticed that despite the difficulties that the native population would face when converting, the more he preached, the more determined the population became. The next day, he promised them that he would open the school as soon as he obtained the necessary authorization and documents. However, on July 12, a revolution broke out, and the liberal party was stripped of its power by the Radical and Republican parties.¹⁰ With the help of Pastor Orley Ford, who was then director of the school at Pomata Mission Station (Peru) and a person whom Shepard had met on a boat trip to Bolivia, he gained access to a member of congress who was called to occupy a post in the new government. The man, by divine providence, spoke English and showed great interest in advancing the educational work among the indigenous people.¹¹

Through the help of this parliamentarian, Shepard was approved for an audience with the president of the country, who then granted him a new authorization for the establishment of the school. On August 15, 1920, the Shepard couple returned to the region. Many Indians were waiting for their arrival with 40 donkeys and 70 llamas that were used to transport all their belongings. They were also with Mateo Urbina and Marcos Zenteno, Peruvian interpreters. The house that was given to them was that of Julian Chuquimia.¹² Peverini described the place as follows: "The Shepard couple were hosted in a house that consisted of a four by five meter room, with a dirt floor, thatched roof and no windows, with a small unsealed door."¹³

On the morning of August 20, when the metal stove was turned on, the thatched roof caught fire and fell on them. The couple managed to escape unscathed, but unfortunately few pieces were untouched by the fire. This was why, welcomed into the house of the church brethren, they spent their first Sabbath in Rosario. Later, the Shepard family went through yet another series of difficulties. First, civil and religious authorities demanded that they leave the city within three days.¹⁴ In addition, the priest threatened everyone who would accept Adventism. They would not be allowed in local church ceremonies and religious rites.¹⁵ That same night, pastors Stevens, Peterson, and Pohle arrived in Rosario.

To resolve the difficult situation, Shepard and the new pastors traveled to La Paz, and with the assistance of the American ambassador, they worked out a solution to the problem with the country's president. On a second

trip, this time in the company of Brother L. G. Beans and Merubia, the latter a Methodist minister, he held a series of meetings and interviews with high government officials. As a result of these efforts, the authorities sent telegrams and notes that led the deputy mayor to support and defend the Adventist mission. When the first Adventist school opened in 1920 at the Rosario Mission Station, about 34 students attended, an amount that gradually increased. This was achieved with the help of Ethel, Reid Shepard's wife, who contributed valiantly to the advancement of missionary work by working as a teacher and nurse.¹⁶

Late Years and Contribution

Pastor Shepard was responsible for bringing many artifacts, both from Peru and Bolivia, to Andrews University in the U.S.A. After several years of dedicated missionary service to the church on Lake Titicaca (Bolivia) and in the USA, he retired and moved to California, where he died in the city of Colton, on January 15, 1977, at the age of 89.¹⁷ His wife and daughter, as well as eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, remained.¹⁸ The work of the Shepard couple was supported by Francisco Tancara and contributed to the improvement in all aspects of the lives of the indigenous people. Through their efforts, the first indigenous school was established, which even functioned as a preparatory school for teachers. Miguel Salomón argues that “his missionary and educational work allowed the SDA church of Bolivia to establish itself definitively among the Aymara in the Bolivian plateau. Adventists should keep in their memory a special thanks to this education apostle and mentor of Aymaras teachers and missionaries.”¹⁹

When Adventism first entered the region, it struggled against the small percentage of church growth, with only 25 people baptized in 23 years of effort, from 1897 to 1920. From 1921, Rosario became the main territory of Adventist presence in the region. There, 86 people were baptized on May 7, 1921. The number of members continued to increase, and at the end of 1923, there were 217 baptized members. Adventism began to experience a phase of solid growth. In this context, Shepard's legacy was instrumental in advancing the Adventist message among the natives.²⁰

SOURCES

“College Graduates and Courses Completed.” *Lake Union Herald* (online) November 3, 1908.

Chavez, Rene Samuel Antonio. “Un estudio histórico sobre el aporte de la educación adventista en la vida del indígena aymara de Rosario 1920-1930” [A historical study on the contribution of Adventist education in the life of the Aymara indigenous people of Rosario 1920-1930]. Master's Thesis, Peruana Unión University, 2010.

Greenleaf, Floyd. *Tierra de esperanza: El crecimiento de la Iglesia Adventista Sudamericana* [A Land of Hope: The Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South America]. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana Publishing House, 2011.

"Mileposts Obituaries." *Lake Union Herald*, March 8, 1977.

Peveerini, Héctor J. *En las huellas de la Providencia* [On the footsteps of Providence]. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana Publishing House, 1988.

"Reid Sears Shepard, San Bernadino." *The Sun-Telegram* B.5 (Online), January 18, 1977.

Salomón, Miguel. "Estudio histórico de los factores que incidieron en el desarrollo de la Iglesia Adventista de Séptimo Día en Bolivia (1907-1977) - Educación-Obra Médica-Publicaciones-Evangelización-Finanzas" [Historical study of the factors that influenced the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Bolivia (1907-1977) - Education-Medical Work-Publications-Evangelization-Finance]. Doctoral thesis, Peruana Unión University, 2005.

"Seventh Meeting of the Conference." *The West Michigan Herald* (online), March 25, 1928.

Stahl, Fernando A. *En El Pais de los Incas* [In the Country of the Incas]. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Sudamericana Publishing House, 1923.

Wood, Kenneth H. "Deaths." *ARH*, March 10, 1977.

NOTES

1. Kenneth H. Wood, "Deaths," *ARH*, March 10, 1977. 23.
2. Ibid.
3. "College Graduates and Courses Completed," *Lake Union Herald*, November 3, 1908, accessed on January 30, 2020, <https://bit.ly/38Vh0z9>.
4. "Seventh Meeting of the Conference," *The West Michigan Herald*, March 25, 1928, accessed January 30, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2RCTfGw>.
5. Floyd Greenleaf, *Tierra de esperanza: El crecimiento de la Iglesia Adventista Sudamericana* (A Land of Hope: The Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South America) (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana Publishing House, 2011), 218.
6. Rene Samuel Antonio Chavez, "Un estudio histórico sobre el aporte de la educación adventista en la vida del indígena aymara de Rosario 1920-1930" [A historical study on the contribution of Adventist education in the life of the Aymara indigenous people of Rosario 1920-1930], Master's thesis, Peruana Unión University, 2010, 87.
7. Héctor J. Peveerini, *En las Huellas de la Providencia* [On the Footsteps of Providence] (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana Publishing House, 1988), 183.
8. Fernando A. Stahl, *En El Pais de los Incas* [In the Country of the Incas] (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Sudamericana Publishing House, 1923), 123.

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Peverini, 186-187.
12. Chavez, 87.
13. Peverini, 187.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Chavez, 87; Peverini, 192.
17. Wood, 23.
18. "Reid Sears Shepard, San Bernadino," *The Sun-Telegram* B.5, January 18, 1977, accessed January 30, 2020, <https://bit.ly/37RXBiR>; "Mileposts Obituaries," *Lake Union Herald*, March 8, 1977, 15.
19. Michael Salomón, "Estudio histórico de los factores que incidieron en el desarrollo de la Iglesia Adventista de Séptimo Día en Bolivia (1907-1977) - Educación-Obra Médica-Publicaciones-Evangelización-Finanzas" [Historical study of the factors that influenced the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Bolivia (1907-1977) -Education-Medical Work-Publications-Evangelization-Finance] (Doctoral thesis, Peruana Union University, 2005), 219.
20. Peverini, 192.

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