



Kenneth and Florence Woods with children Janet and Kenneth, Jr.

Photo courtesy of Center for Adventist Research (Kenneth H. Wood Collection).

# Wood, Kenneth H. (1891–1964) and Florence Ethel (Nightingale) (1884–1967)

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## MILTON HOOK

Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian*, *Gospel Revivalist* the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

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Kenneth and Florence Wood were missionaries in China from 1912 to 1941. On return to the homeland Kenneth served as a minister in California.

## Heritage and Training

Kenneth Wood was born in Stevensville, Michigan, on March 19, 1891, to William "Harry" Archibald Wood and his wife, Martha "Mattie" Jane (Whipple) Wood. He was baptized when eleven years old in Lake Michigan at St. Joseph by Elder Sanford Horton. After elementary school Kenneth attended the Sheridan Industrial School, Illinois, and Cedar Lake Industrial Academy in central Michigan. The family moved to California where Kenneth completed his education at Fernando College San Fernando.<sup>1</sup>

## Early Church Career

In September 1910 Kenneth found employment as an accountant at the Glendale Sanitarium, California.<sup>2</sup> His only known sibling, Belle, was superintendent of nurses' training at the institution and married to Dr. Daniel Comstock, medical superintendent.<sup>3</sup> During 1912 Kenneth served briefly as secretary of the Southern California Tract Society and then began to assist with tent crusades in the suburbs of Los Angeles.<sup>4</sup> On August 28, 1912, he married Florence Ethel Nightingale at Riverside, California.<sup>5</sup> Florence had followed a similar career path, working as an accountant at Glendale Sanitarium and transferring to be the stenographer for the president of the Southern California Conference.<sup>6</sup>

## Mission Service in China

On November 23, 1912, Kenneth and Florence sailed from San Francisco under appointment as missionaries to China.<sup>7</sup> The assignment proved to be long-term and became the defining characteristic of their ministry. Several months were spent on arrival in mandatory language study in Shanghai.<sup>8</sup> Kenneth's official role was secretary/treasurer of the Kiangsu (or Jiangsu) Mission<sup>9</sup> but in addition to those duties he became actively involved in field work, selling and distributing denominational literature and establishing Sabbath Schools near his base at Shanghai.<sup>10</sup> By 1916 all Adventist mission efforts in Kiangsu were essentially under his direction while at the same time he carried his treasury work. Florence evangelized the Chinese women.<sup>11</sup> Kenneth soon became superintendent of the South Kiangsu Mission and Florence served as the Sabbath School secretary.<sup>12</sup> Kenneth was a member of an exploratory party that travelled south into the Chekiang (or Zhejiang) Province and discovered many people were open to the Adventist message at Wenzhou in 1917.<sup>13</sup> In the same year he was ordained by Elders Arthur Daniells, John Fulton and Walter Knox.<sup>14</sup> He and Florence maintained their roles in what became known as the Kiangsu Mission until 1928.<sup>15</sup>

In 1929 Kenneth was elected to broader responsibilities as superintendent of the East China Union Mission which was composed of the three provinces, Anhwei, Kiangsu and Chekiang.<sup>16</sup> There were elementary schools and an academy in each of the provinces.<sup>17</sup> During the period 1929 through 1937 statistics revealed healthy progress. In 1929 there were 43 organized churches with a total of approximately 2,000 baptized members.<sup>18</sup> By 1937 numbers had increased to 110 churches and 4,270 members. Once again, Florence had adopted the work of Sabbath School secretary for the Union.<sup>19</sup>

Kenneth was reassigned in July 1937 to be superintendent of the Manchurian Union Mission. The Mission headquarters were located in Mukden. By 1940 there were 27 churches organized in the territory with a membership of almost 2,000. The Mission distributed *Shi Djao Yueh Bao* (Signs of the Times), established out-stations in the mountains of Jehol (infamous as the opium district), and maintained the Shenyang Sanitarium together with its subsidiary clinic.<sup>20</sup>

## Back in the Homeland

Kenneth and Florence took a furlough back in California, September-December 1941. They were fortunate to miss the hurried war-time evacuation of expatriates from China during that period. From 1942 through June 1946 Kenneth worked as secretary of the War Service Commission for the Central California Conference. He remained in the Conference, serving as departmental secretary of the Sabbath School, Temperance, Industrial Relations and Religious Liberty, 1946-1957.<sup>21</sup>

## Final Years

In his retirement Kenneth continued working for the temperance cause. He passed away on August 24, 1964, at San Jose, California,<sup>22</sup> and was laid to rest in Sunset Chapel Mausoleum at Mountain View Cemetery, Altadena, Los Angeles.<sup>23</sup> Florence passed away on May 12, 1967, and rests alongside Kenneth. They had two children: Janet Evangeline (Miller) (La Gourgue) Chalmers (b. 1915) and Kenneth H. Wood, Jr. (1917-2008).<sup>24</sup>

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