



The Australasian Union Conference Committee, Warburton, 1910. G. Wantzlick, first person on the left, second row.

Photo from *Australasian Record*, September 30, 1968. Photo and identification, courtesy of Pastor R. E. G. Blair.

## Wantzlick, Gustav Adolph (1867–1913) and Margaret Ann Teasdale (1873–1943)

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Gustav Adolph Wantzlick was a pastor and church administrator. Wantzlick and his wife, Margaret, were missionaries to the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia).

## Early Life

Gustav Adolph Wantzlick, usually known as Adolph, was born in Germany in August 1867<sup>1</sup> to Daniel and Augusta Wantzlick. He had an older and a younger sister. Apparently, when he was three years old, family conditions were such that his uncle and aunt, Friedrich and Louise, offered to raise him as their own son.<sup>2</sup> The trio sailed from Hamburg on October 11, 1876, as assisted immigrants to the colony of Queensland, Australia. Their ship, the *Lammershagen*, took them to Maryborough, Queensland, where they disembarked on January 18, 1877.<sup>3</sup> Friedrich established a blacksmithing business further north, in Rockhampton. They were naturalized as British subjects in 1890.<sup>4</sup>

Seventh-day Adventist evangelists, Arthur Hickox and George Starr, conducted a tent crusade in Rockhampton, beginning July 26, 1894. There were many German immigrants attending and Michael Bernoth, a former German Baptist minister and recent convert, conducted special meetings for them. The Wantzlicks were baptized and were among the first members of the Rockhampton church when it was organized on October 20, 1894.<sup>5</sup> Adolph Wantzlick showed promise as a leader and was the first to be elected as their church elder.<sup>6</sup>

On September 6, 1896, Wantzlick married Margaret Ann Teasdale, a British immigrant<sup>7</sup> who was born in Ulverston, Lancashire, about October 1873.<sup>8</sup>

## Denominational Service

From March to September 1898, Wantzlick attended the Avondale School for Christian Workers at Cooranbong, New South Wales, in order to prepare for denominational service.<sup>9</sup> In late 1898, he was appointed to work in New Zealand including the church at Wanganui.<sup>10</sup>

At the New Zealand Conference annual session and camp meeting in Christchurch, held January 3-21, 1901, he was ordained and elected vice president of the New Zealand Conference.<sup>11</sup> He was re-elected in 1902<sup>12</sup> and 1903.<sup>13</sup> In 1904, he began to pastor the New Plymouth church<sup>14</sup> but in August, at the Australasian Union Conference council, he was nominated North Australian Mission director centered at Townsville in Queensland.<sup>15</sup>

Wantzlick's established home church of Rockhampton was within his field, but there were many other areas to pioneer. In Townsville, he and an assistant began by selling the *Signs* and *Good Health* magazines from door to door.<sup>16</sup> Rather than pay the stagecoach fare, he rode his bicycle from Mackay to St Lawrence—a round trip of nine hundred kilometers over rough roads—in order to baptize four isolated converts.<sup>17</sup>

At the Australasian Union Conference session in September 1906 at Cooranbong, New South Wales, Wantzlick served as a delegate-at-large.<sup>18</sup> During the course of the meetings, he was appointed to be director of the Sumatra Mission at Padang, Dutch East Indies.<sup>19</sup> Some evangelism had occurred in the area, but it had lapsed and converts were few and half-hearted. Wantzlick was expected to revitalize and strengthen the mission. Wantzlick, along with his wife, Margaret, and other missionaries including her brother, George Teasdale, and his family sailed from Brisbane to Java. The Wantzlicks disembarked at Padang on December 1, 1906. Wantzlick learned the Dutch language quickly, although the local language proved more difficult.<sup>20</sup>

At Padang, Wantzlick modified a thatch-roofed barn and held Bible readings on the premises for a few individuals. Much of the time was spent distributing literature.<sup>21</sup> The most promising avenue was the teaching English language classes to a small group of young men. But after more than two years of work there was little to show for it.

In mid-1909, the Wantzlicks took a six-month leave and sailed to Europe. They began their tour at Genoa, travelling through Switzerland, Germany, and finally Rome. At one stage, Wantzlick made a detour into Holland where he was invited to speak on his mission work at Padang. The highlight of their trip was his reunion with his mother, sisters, and other relatives in Berlin.<sup>22</sup>

Adolph Wantzlick had every reason to believe that he would return to Sumatra, but during his return trip, church leaders appointed him to evangelize the many German settlers in South Australia.<sup>23</sup> Word was relayed to him and the family continued their journey on to Sydney, arriving January 15, 1910.<sup>24</sup> Throughout the year, Wantzlick used Angaston as his base, but visited enclaves of Germans in Tanunda, Penola, and Mount Gambier.<sup>25</sup>

In September 1910, Wantzlick was one of eight South Australian delegates at the Australasian Union Conference session held in Warburton, Victoria.<sup>26</sup> He returned to Adelaide for the South Australian Conference camp meeting in November when he was elected vice president of the conference.<sup>27</sup> He had barely drawn breath when he received word that the AUC leaders wanted him to revive and nurture his home church of Rockhampton and the scattered members in North Queensland. His brother-in-law, George Teasdale, had returned from Java and was president of the Queensland Conference at the time. During 1911, Wantzlick revitalized the Rockhampton church and companies at Calliope and Raglan.<sup>28</sup> He also visited isolated members to the north in Mackay, Townsville, and Charters Towers, people he had baptized some years earlier.<sup>29</sup>

Wantzlick continued this work into 1912, until he developed ominous signs of a serious ailment. He was diagnosed with inoperable, cancerous tumor surrounding his spinal cord. He suffered for months, eventually choosing to be hospitalized in the Sydney Sanitarium where only palliative care was available. He died on August 1, 1913, and was buried in the Avondale Cemetery, Cooranbong, New South Wales.<sup>30</sup>

Wantzlick's death was a crushing blow for Margaret Wantzlick and their three children. At the time Gustav Theodore was aged sixteen, Hilda Margaret was seven, and Elvin Adolph was only two years old.<sup>31</sup> In 1916,

probably because of the prejudice against all things Germanic during the First World War, Margaret Wantzlick advertised in the church magazine that she and the children had legally changed their surname to her maiden name, Teasdale.<sup>32</sup> Her brother, George Teasdale, was in the midst of a quarrel with the church.<sup>33</sup> Margaret Teasdale, no doubt, sympathized with his situation and her loyalty to the church waned. In 1919, the church treasury ceased her support payments<sup>34</sup> and she threatened to publicize the matter among church members.<sup>35</sup> She warned of court proceedings, but the case was not pursued.<sup>36</sup> Margaret Teasdale died with post-operative pneumonia on September 28, 1943, in Melbourne's St. Benedict's Hospital, operated by the Sisters of Mercy,<sup>37</sup> and was interred in Burwood Cemetery, in suburban Melbourne.<sup>38</sup>

## Retrospect

In Gustav Adolph Wantzlick's premature death, the Adventist Church lost a diligent evangelist and missionary.

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