

# Simons, Donald Barnett (1918–1998)

## SAMUEL LONDON, AND CAROL ANN SIMONS-WILLIAMS

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Carol Ann Simons-Williams is the daughter of Douglas Barnett Simons.

A graduate of Oakwood Junior College (now a university), Donald Barnett Simons served the denomination for more than forty years as a pastor, missionary, public relations officer, and administrator.

Donald was born in Zanesville, Ohio, on May 21, 1918, to English Glenn Simons (1891–1977) and Emily Naomi Warnick (1891–1979). He was the second son of seven children. His mother was the daughter of Franklin George Warnick (1868–1941), a former Baptist minister who accepted the seventh-day Sabbath and later embraced Adventism. Warnick is best known for his work with James Edson White on the *Morning Star* riverboat. During this missionary venture White and Warnick took the Adventist message to American blacks in the Deep South.

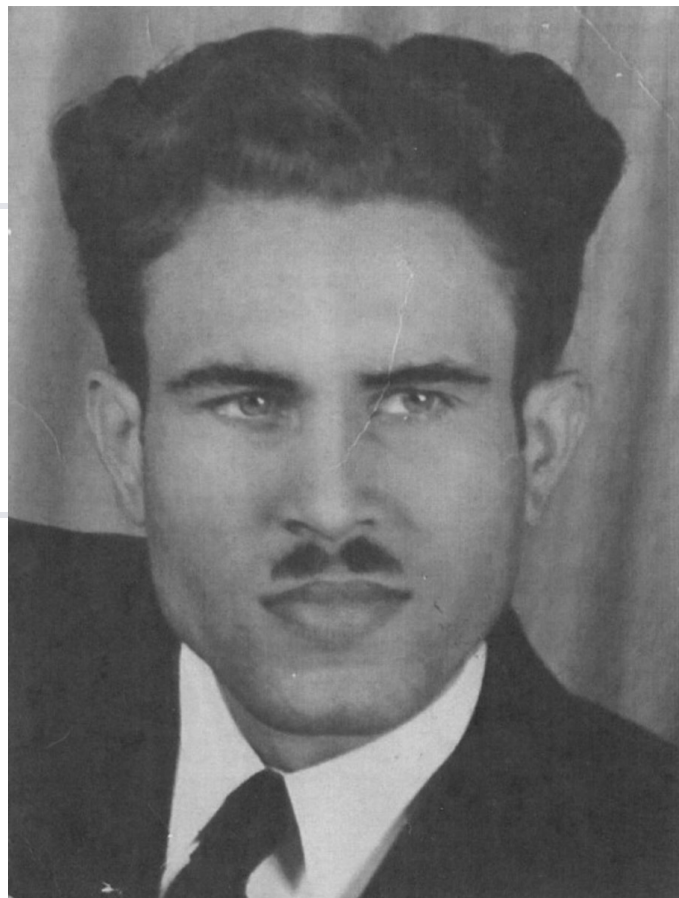
Simons graduated from Lower Paxton High School in Richmond, Ohio. For the purpose of raising funds to attend Oakwood Junior College, he moved to New Jersey and worked as a colporteur with Roy Edwin Stone (1913–1984) and Coleridge Dunbar Henri (1912–2002). At Oakwood he studied theology and graduated in 1940. From 1940 to 1942, he worked as a school teacher in Paducah, Kentucky.

On July 8, 1942, Simons married Dorothy June Rice (1918–2015) in Chicago, Illinois. The couple had five daughters: Carmelita Naomi (1943–1984), Vera Jean (1945–1945), Geneva Estelle, Flora Annette (1950–1950), and Carol Ann.

In 1942 Herman Robert Murphy (1912–1993), leader of the black work in the Alabama-Mississippi Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, recruited Simons to help him conduct an evangelistic effort in Birmingham, Alabama.<sup>1</sup> From 1944 to 1946 Simons worked for the Alabama-Mississippi Conference's Colored Department and the South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists as a licensed minister.<sup>2</sup> During this time he oversaw church districts in Meridian and Greenwood, Mississippi, and later pastored a church in Memphis, Tennessee.

In 1947 Simons accepted an invitation to serve as a missionary to Sierra Leone in West Africa. While there he conducted a major evangelist effort at the Wilberforce Memorial Hall in Freetown, Sierra Leone, which resulted in numerous baptisms and the planting of new churches in the country.<sup>3</sup>

In 1950 Simons returned to the United States and around this time accepted an offer to join the Lake Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists as the Home Missionary and Sabbath School secretary. He served in this office until 1956.<sup>4</sup> That year Simons moved to the Allegheny Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and became the Home Missionary and Sabbath School secretary there until 1967.<sup>5</sup> In 1967 Simons became the president of the newly organized Allegheny West Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He remained in this position until 1972.<sup>6</sup> From 1972 to 1976 Simons served as pastor of the Ebenezer Seventh-day Adventist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In 1976 he accepted an invitation to become the director of public relations with the Christian Record Braille Foundation in Lincoln, Nebraska. He continued in this role until his official retirement in 1983.<sup>7</sup>



Donald Barnett Simons  
Photo courtesy of Carol Simons Williams.

Although retired, Simons served as the pastor of the Bethesda Seventh-day Adventist Church in Omaha, Nebraska, and the Allon Chapel Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lincoln, Nebraska. During the last year of his life he was confined to bed rest, and on January 18, 1998, Simons died in Lincoln, Nebraska, from complications resulting from diabetes. He was 79 years old.<sup>8</sup>

Simons' legacy is found in his forty years of faithful ministry as an evangelist and missionary who brought countless souls to Christ. He accomplished this through direct and indirect means, serving as a colporteur, foreign missionary, pastor, Home Missionary and Sabbath School secretary, conference president, and public relations officer.

## SOURCES

"Donald Barnett Simons obituary." Allon Chapel Seventh-day Adventist Church, January 25, 1998.

Pinkney, A. V. "Allegheny: Elder Donald B. Simons New Home Missionary Secretary." Oakwood University Archives. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1943–1946, 1952–1972, 1976–1983.

Simons, D. B. "Good News From Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa." *North American Informant* 2, no. 10 (February 1948).

## NOTES

1. "Donald Barnett Simons obituary," Allon Chapel Seventh-day Adventist Church, January 25, 1998; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1943), 57.?
2. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1944), 58; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1945), 58; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1946), 67.?
3. A. V. Pinkney, "Allegheny: Elder Donald B. Simons New Home Missionary Secretary," Oakwood University Archives. See also D. B. Simons, "Good News From Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa," *North American Informant* 2, no. 10 (February 1948): 1–3.?
4. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1952), 52; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1953), 51; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1954), 48; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1955), 39; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1956), 39. See also "Donald Barnett Simons obituary."?
5. Pinkney; "Donald Barnett Simons obituary."  
See also *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1957), 32; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1958), 33, 34 (note, in the 1958 *Yearbook*, Simons is mentioned as an ordained minister); *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1959), 35; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1960), 35; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1961), 36; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1962), 35; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1963), 35. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1964), 37; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1965–1966), 38; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1967), 40.?
6. "Donald Barnett Simons obituary." See also *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1968), 40; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1969), 44; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1970), 45; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1971), 45; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1972), 44.?
7. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1976), 445; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1977), 445; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1978), 464; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1979), 475; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1980), 473; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1981), 485; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1982), 505; *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1983), 525.?
8. "Donald Barnett Simons obituary."?

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