

Wire Hill Mission Station

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The Wire Hill Mission Station in Kenya was opened in 1909.

Background

In July 1907, J. D. Baker and his wife Anne, together with Hellen Thompson, arrived in Mombasa from England. Arthur A. Carscallen joined them in Mombasa, and he married Hellen Thomson in a ceremony officiated by Baker.¹ They then returned to Gendia and, shortly after that, Peter Nyambo left for his native Nyasaland (now Malawi).

Earlier, in November 1906, Carscallen, together with Peter Nyambo, had settled at Ogango Hills, well-known as Gendia officially commencing the Adventist missionary work in British East Africa. After the new missionaries arrived at Gendia, Carscallen (popularly known as *Bwana Kaskal*), together with Baker, went to Mutui area with a view to start a new mission. But the people there resisted, and the duo were forced to return to Gendia.

In 1908, the German missionary-at-large Ludwig R. Conradi visited East Africa and, after passing through the Pare Mission in Tanganyika, came to Gendia to check on the work. Together with Carscallen and Baker, they surveyed the country, and Conradi urged the immediate establishment of new mission stations in the population areas he had noted.²

They made a visit to the Kasipul region led by Luke Simba, who had been with them in the Gendia Mission. He assured them of the cool weather of Kasipul region would make a good mission station. While there, they were met Chief Oyugi of Mumbo. The chief made available to them his assistant Chief Omiti, who showed them a hill called Pakla. Baker and the rest of his entourage pitched their tent at Pakla, and the people around the area were quite welcoming. They never hesitated to share the word of God with them.³

On Friday, Baker lit a fire near the tent at around 3.00 p.m., and this strange scene attracted some people who were curious to know what was going on. Baker then used the opportunity to invite those people to attend a Sabbath meeting the following day during the morning, and this continued week after week until it became a routine.⁴ The Bakers developed a good rapport with the villagers and, come January 1909, they secured the plot

for a new Mission named Wire Hill. The new station was about 15 miles away from Gendia. They constructed new buildings and, in March 1909, Baker and his wife Anne moved in to continue the work.

Soon, new missionaries arrived at Wire Hill to boost the work. These included H. H. Brooks, his wife, and B. L. Morse. Brooks was then posted to open up Gem Mission in 1910, which was the third mission station.

Meanwhile, Morse took charge of the education program at Gendia. Brooks became ill and had to return to England, and there being no new missionary at Gem, the station had to be closed.

Some of the early converts and the first to be baptized at Wire Hill included Joseph Migeo, Timotheo Amollo, Jeremiah Oigo, Jeseo Njoga, Paulo Magunga, and Filipino Owili. They too became evangelists, and Jeremiah Oigo, for instance, became a notable evangelist who would open up Kamba country in Eastern Kenya from 1933⁵. They helped quite a lot in evangelism since they could speak the local language and communicate with the European missionaries.

When World War I broke out in 1914, Baker and his wife had to leave Wire Hill for an internship in Kaimosi. The mission buildings at Wire Hill were partially damaged, but did not suffer much looting like the other stations did, such as Gendia, Kamagambo, and even Kanyadoto and Karungu. It became necessary to leave a local African in charge of the work at Wire Hill. The task fell upon John Tolo.⁶

Baker remained at Wire Hill until 1920 when T. G. Belton took over. Belton served until 1925 when he left. He served under difficult conditions, including the loss of his children who were buried within the mission compound's grounds.⁷

The Synod committee spreading development of the Gospel included local members of the Wire area. Among them were Joshua Ouma and Paulo Magunga. Other active members included Reuben Obewa, who was in charge of music. Led by the spirit of God, new members joined the church day by day, and converts were encouraged to start small centers within their local areas for worship and formal education of their children. These centers were called "Dei". These are the schools as well as those in their charge: Wang'apala: William Ayodo, Wang'нено; Yason Ogado; Buoye-Kanyango, Benjamin Bwana, Kwoyo-Kotieno; Joel Mola & Paulo Ogwande, Kakelo; Elisha Nyang'iya, Kajwach; Johana Abuor.⁸

The First Campmeeting

The first campmeeting was organized at Wire Hill in 1933 and was held within the Mission compound. Some 2,500 people attended the meeting on Sabbath, and an offering of Sh. 1,560 was collected.⁹ The Campmeeting was held during the rainy season, so each afternoon, rain washed out the meetings. However, over 200 people were baptized on Sunday.¹⁰ Tremendous growth has been realized so far with numerous camp meetings in the present station.

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. Virgil E. Robinson, *Third Angel over Africa*, unpublished manuscript, Helderberg College Library, 81.

2. Ibid.

3. Timothy Oguta, interviewed by Mark Ng'ong'a, Wire, Oyugis, August 24, 2018.

4. Ibid.

5. S. G. Maxwell, "First-Fruits in a New Field," *The Advent Survey*, June 1, 1935, 1.

6. Isaac Okeyo, *Adventism in Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: Africa Herald Publishing House, 1990), 14.

7. Timothy Oguta, interviewed by Mark Ng'ong'a, Wire, Oyugis, August 24, 2018.

8. Ibid.

9. S. G. Maxwell, "Camp Meetings in South Kenya," *The Advent Survey*, February 1, 1934, 8.

10. Ibid.

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