



Honan Intermediate School, Yencheng.

From *Asiatic Division Outlook*, September 1, 1918, page 5.

Conger, Milton George (1891–1957) and Lottie Lea (Lucas) (1883–1968)

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.

Milton Conger served as a missionary teacher in China and a pastor, conference president, and college lecturer within the Columbia Union Conference.

Early Years

Milton Conger was born in Rochester in western New York State on September 12, 1892, to George and Catherine (Burke) Conger. His siblings were Arthur Morseman (b. 1888), Florence Minnie (b. 1890), Lawrence Burke (b. 1895), Eugene Dunham (b. 1899), and Ralph Remington (b. 1911).¹ He attended the remote Fernwood Intermediate School in Tunesassa on the Alleghany River near Quaker Run. His studies advanced to Washington Foreign Missionary Seminary, Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.² While still a student, on September 3, 1912, he married Lottie Lea Lucas in Harmony near Watts Flats where Lottie was a public schoolteacher.³ Previously, she had taught at the church school in Milton's hometown of Rochester.⁴ At the time of their marriage, he was 21, and Lottie was 28. They returned to the Seminary, and Milton graduated in the class of 1916.⁵

Church Career

While Milton was still engaged in his studies, he did some canvassing with small books among the Seneca Indians. He also took time out to assist Elder George Stevens with a tent crusade in Belmont Park in northeast Virginia.⁶

Following his graduation, Milton and Lottie were appointed to the mission field in China. They sailed from San Francisco aboard the S.S. China on July 26, 1916, with a group of nearly 50 missionaries bound for the Far East.⁷ After disembarking, their first months were spent in the Adventist language school at Nanjing before progressing further inland to Yancheng in the Henan (formerly Honan) Province.⁸

One of Milton's first assignments was to participate in the first Harvest Ingathering Campaign held in China. In 1917, the missionaries dispersed to several cities to solicit funds from Chinese businessmen.⁹ He traveled north to Beijing and successfully canvassed the central business district, a commission that tested his newly-acquired language.¹⁰

Milton's official appointment was designated as the education and young people's secretary of the North China Union Conference. Lottie was assigned as his assistant in the Education Department.¹¹ The territory was vast, extending over 10 provinces: Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Anhui, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan, and Tibet. His responsibility included conducting teacher-training institutes, the supervision of 33 elementary schools, and the China Missions Training School in Shanghai in addition to the training school at Yancheng. On the campus at Yancheng, there were two double-storied mission homes and a substantial two-story classroom block that catered to 100 students.¹² He and Lottie were located on the Yancheng campus, the approximate center of their territory, and they conducted the daily program of the school with the help of seven well-trained Chinese teachers. Lottie taught elementary Bible and English classes in addition to all the units of vocal music and art. Milton taught classes in pastoral training, Bible doctrines, and advanced English.¹³

After three years at Yancheng, Milton was appointed to lecture in Bible subjects and pedagogy at the Shanghai Missionary College (formerly the China Missions Training School). He and Lottie transferred to Shanghai where they settled into their new home in September 1919.¹⁴ Lottie did not teach because her time was taken up with

the care of their daughter Florence, born in 1920.¹⁵ Not until 1923 was she listed as an English teacher. At the same time, Milton was specializing in Bible classes.¹⁶ He was ordained in Shanghai, 1922, by elders Irwin Evans and Francis Allum. In addition to his teaching, he served as pastor of the campus church, then the largest SDA church in China. All his preaching and lectures were in the Chinese language, and he often acted as an interpreter for English-speaking visitors. He became so proficient in the language that he wrote the Bible Doctrines textbook for use by Chinese teachers and translated five other key instruction books such as Elder Milton Kern's *New Testament History* and Elder William Prescott's *Doctrine of Christ*.¹⁷

In 1921, Milton was chosen as the Adventist mission representative to assist the American Red Cross with famine relief in the north of China. Three years earlier, the Yangtze River had flooded and destroyed the harvest on the plains. The farmers had barely time to recover before the famine left people with nothing more to eat than bean pods, thistles, chaff, and ground corn cobs. Their charitable work involved organizing wheelbarrow brigades of paid workers to build roads, establishing sanitation teams to monitor work camps, and supervising emergency food distribution hubs. His assistance lasted for the summer months, and then he returned to the college campus.¹⁸

On June 9, 1923, Milton and his family sailed from Shanghai on the S.S. Empress of Asia to take a furlough in America.¹⁹ Their vacation proved to be a working holiday with Milton spending 12 months lecturing about the China mission field during a tour of Adventist colleges and academies in the eastern States of their homeland. He also assisted evangelistic campaigns in Providence, Rhode Island, and Boston, Massachusetts.²⁰

The Conger family did not return to China. Instead, Milton accepted appointments as a church pastor or president in several homeland conferences. He served in the West Virginia Conference in 1924 through 1929 and was instrumental in forming the Ravenswood and Wheeling congregations. For three years, he served in the New Jersey Conference, some of that time at Camden, and the remainder as home missions and Sabbath School secretary.²¹ In 1932, he was elected as the president of the West Pennsylvania Conference, holding that role until 1938.²² A brief 12-month term followed as president of the West Virginia Conference²³ before serving as president of the New Jersey Conference from 1939 to 1945.²⁴

The start of the academic year of 1945 found Gonger back in the classroom as associate professor of homiletics at Washington Missionary College.²⁵ In 1950, he returned to fieldwork in the Potomac Conference, nurturing congregations at Lynchburg and Vienna in Virginia.²⁶

Final Months

Towards the end of 1956, Milton Conger was diagnosed with cancer. He passed away in the Washington Sanitarium on October 11, 1957, and was laid to rest in the Flint Hill Cemetery in Oakton, Virginia.²⁷ Lottie passed away in Rusk, Texas, on January 8, 1968. She rests in Cedar Hill Cemetery at Rusk.²⁸

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