

Belleau, George Samuel (1895–1964)

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.

George Belleau served in Canada, Brazil, and the United States as a pastor, evangelist, union and local departmental director, and conference president.

Family and Education

George Belleau was born in Quebec City, Canada, on May 7, 1895. His parents, George Samuel Belleau, Snr., and Marie Josephine (Giroux), were of French Canadian heritage and belonged to the Presbyterian church. George was the eldest of three children. His younger siblings were Wilfrid Emmanuel (b. 1897) and Lily Lucy Eloja (b. 1900).¹ His mother, Marie, was the first in the family to join the Seventh-day Adventist church. His father, who was a baggage handler for the Canadian Pacific Railway, did not join until he retired about 1937.²

George's elementary education took place at private schools in Quebec. Through his mother's influence and his own reading, he became convinced of the Adventist message as a teenager. He entered Alberta Industrial Academy (now Burman University) in Lacombe, Alberta, with plans to become a minister. There he was baptized in 1913 by Elder Henry Humann. George took two years of ministerial training at Walla Walla College, 1915 through 1917, returning a decade later to complete the four-year degree. He had canvassed books during the summers to help pay his tuition fees. On November 1, 1917, he married fellow student and Canadian citizen Ruth Annie Wallace in Spokane, Washington.³

Early Ministry

Belleau began his ministerial career nurturing a small group of believers in Pocatello, Idaho, 1918-1919. In May 1919 he was appointed to do evangelism among the French in Quebec.⁴ He initially worked with Louis Passebois, conducting public meetings in Montreal, a bastion of Roman Catholicism known as the City of a Hundred Steeples. Some priests attended their meetings.⁵ While in Montreal, Belleau was also called on to minister to the English-speaking Adventists when they were unsettled by the apostasy of the conference secretary/treasurer. It was a delicate role for a man so young and with little experience. The following year, at

the 1920 Quebec camp meeting, Belleau was ordained to the gospel ministry by Elders Stephen Haskell and Frederick Stray and Dr. Daniel Kress.⁶

In 1921 Belleau accepted an overseas mission appointment to Brazil,⁷ where he engaged in pioneering evangelism for the East Minas Mission, a fledgling entity formed two years earlier that covered the eastern half of the State of Minas Gerais. He was the superintendent and only minister for the mission, headquartered in Mariano Procópio.⁸ For two years he labored in this field and then transferred to evangelism for the East Brazil Union Mission, stationed in Rio de Janeiro.⁹

Belleau returned to Canada in 1924, ministering for a short time in the Ontario Conference,¹⁰ then made his way to the Pacific Northwest, completing the ministerial Course in addition to the education course at Walla Walla College in 1927.¹¹ The double qualifications characterized his subsequent ministry.

Departmental Director and Conference President

After his graduation Belleau was appointed to minister in the Western Oregon Conference.¹² In 1931 he became secretary (director) of the Education and Young People's and Missionary Volunteer departments for the Oregon Conference.¹³ The following year he transferred to the same roles for the North Pacific Union Conference.¹⁴ His published articles championed the Seventh-day Adventist school system.¹⁵ His role took him throughout the Northwest and to Alaska to promote denominational education¹⁶ and to gatherings of youth such as one at Gabriola, British Columbia, in 1938.¹⁷

In 1938 Belleau was elected president of the Idaho Conference, which then had 27 churches with a total membership of 1,565.¹⁸ He held this role throughout the Second World War years and then transferred east in August 1945 to the Northern New England Conference presidency, located in Portland, Maine.¹⁹ Less than a year later, though, he accepted a call back to the Oregon Conference, where he was appointed pastor of the Medford district.²⁰ It wasn't long before he was given secretarial portfolios. First it was the Education Department, in 1948.²¹ He began to publish once again, extolling the high-calling of the Seventh-day Adventist school system and its personnel.²² The department of Rural Living, later named Self-supporting Institutions, was added to his responsibilities in 1949.²³ In 1953 he transitioned to the Sabbath School Department, carrying in addition the Religious Liberty Department and the Industrial Relations Department.²⁴

Final Years

Belleau retired in 1959. He and Ruth initially located at La Sierra in southern California but then returned to Portland, Oregon. He maintained an interest in religious liberty issues, assisting the Protestants and Other Americans United organization whenever his health permitted.²⁵ The group advocated the separation of church and state and the principles of religious freedom.

On June 14, 1964, George Belleau passed away in Portland, Oregon, after suffering a stroke. He was laid to rest in Finley-Sunset Hills Memorial Park, Portland.²⁶ Ruth Belleau passed away in Van Nuys, California, on June 1, 1985.²⁷ She was taken to Oregon for interment alongside George.²⁸

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7. "Mission Board Notes," *ARH*, October 13, 1921, 24.
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9. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 1924, 148.
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12. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 1928, 65.
13. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 1932, 63-64.
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16. "E.K. Slade, "Annual Meeting in Alaska," *ARH*, May 14, 1936, 18.
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 24. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for 1955, 45.
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 27. "Ruth A. Belleau obituary," *ARH*, August 1, 1985, 23.
 28. "George S. Belleau," *Find A Grave Memorial*.
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