

Wight, Sherman E.

(1869–1958)

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.

Sherman E. Wight's term of service to the Seventh-day Adventist church spanned more than 50 years, most of them as president of local and union conferences in the United States.

Early Years

Born at Ravenna, Michigan, on April 24, 1869,

Sherman was the only son of John and Caroline Munson Wight who survived into adulthood. His twin brothers, Lester M. and Lester Earl (b. 1885), both perished in early childhood.¹ Sherman took his elementary and secondary levels of education in public schools, then attended Battle Creek College, 1888-1893. In the summer of 1889 he was baptized in the Kalamazoo River by John O. Corliss.² During his college years he paid his fees by canvassing denominational books in the summers and working in a tent-making factory in the winter months. On July 3, 1895, he married Clara Hayes in Potterville, Michigan.³

Michigan Conference officials gave Wight a ministerial licence in 1895.⁴ In 1900 he was elected to be a member of the conference executive committee and a trustee of the legal entity of the conference.⁵ The following year he was ordained at Lansing, Michigan, by John D. Gowell and W. W. Prescott.⁶ In the same year, 1901, Wight was elected to lead the conference canvassing team.⁷

Conference Leadership



S. E. Wight

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

In August 1902 the Michigan Conference was divided into three sections, Wight being elected the initial president of the North Michigan Conference. At the time there were 650 baptized members in the territory giving a tithing of approximately \$4,000 per year.⁸ One winter Sherman and Clara made all the tents for their conference.⁹ During his term of office he was part of the decision-making process to move the senior training institution of his alma mater, Battle Creek College, to a new campus at Berrien Springs that became known as Emmanuel Missionary College.¹⁰

Wight remained president of the North Michigan Conference until elected to the presidency of the Illinois Conference in 1908. In 1910 he transitioned to the presidency of the West Michigan Conference. He was president of the Southern Union Conference for eight years, 1912-1920, with headquarters in Tennessee.¹¹ In this period he led the re-location of the Southern Training School, Graysville, to a new campus at Collegedale, Tennessee, where Southern Junior College (later Southern Adventist University) was established.¹²

Wight spent a further eight years (1920-1928) in Nebraska as president of the Central Union Conference. In 1928 he returned to the presidency of the West Michigan Conference and in 1932 was elected president of the re-united Michigan Conference, headquartered in Lansing.¹³ He took a special interest in accommodation improvements at Cedar Lake Academy. One facility was named Wight Dormitory as a memorial of his work.¹⁴

In 1934 Wight accepted the presidency of the Indiana Conference. The load of high administrative responsibility was lifted in 1940 when he moved to the role of district pastor.¹⁵ In 1943, however, Wight, at age 74, was called again to take up the responsibility of Indiana Conference president, serving in that capacity until he retired in 1947.¹⁶

Final Years in Berrien Springs

Sherman and Clara Wight spent their retirement years among the Emmanuel Missionary College community at Berrien Springs. He helped to inaugurate fund-raising campaigns for a campus church building and a church school building in the village of Berrien Springs. He passed away peacefully on October 18, 1958.¹⁷ Clara passed away on November 17, 1960. They rest together in Rose Hill Cemetery, Berrien Springs.¹⁸

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. "Sherman E. Wight," *FamilySearch*, accessed July 21, 2021, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/pedigree/landscape/LHVD-BKM>.
2. S.E. Wight Biographical Information Blank, April 27, 1934, Secretariat Missionary Files, RG 21, Record 114593, GCA.
3. "Sherman E. Wight obituary," *ARH*, November 27, 1958, 27.
4. Ibid.
5. J.D. Gowell, "Michigan Conference Proceedings," *ARH*, October 16, 1900, 669.
6. Wight Biographical Information Blank, April 27, 1934, GCA.
7. J.D. Gowell, "Michigan Conference Proceedings," *ARH*, September 24, 1901, 625-626.
8. "The Michigan Camp Meeting," *ARH*, September 2, 1902, 24.
9. "Sherman E. Wight obituary."
10. "Adventist Pastor Dies," *Grand Rapids Press*, October 22, 1958, 57.
11. Wight Biographical Information Blank, April 27, 1934, GCA.
12. "Sherman E. Wight obituary."
13. Wight Biographical Information Blank, April 27, 1934, GCA.
14. "Sherman E. Wight obituary."

15. Jay J. Nethery, "New Leaders in Indiana and Michigan," *Lake Union Herald*, September 3, 1940, 1.
 16. Jay J. Nethery, "Changes," *Lake Union Herald*, July 20, 1943, 1; "Sherman E. Wight obituary."
 17. "Adventist Pastor Dies."
 18. "Clara Hayes Wight," *Find A Grave*, Memorial ID 67276551, March 22, 2011, accessed July 21, 2021, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/67276551/clara-e.-wight>.
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