South East Adventist Seminary

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South East Adventist Seminary is located in Hpa-an, Myanmar. It was established in 1970.
Establishment of the School

The first pioneers to enter the beautiful land along the Salween (now Thanlwin) River were George A. Hamilton and A. H. Williams. They were commissioned by the church led by Herbert Votaw in Rangoon (now Yangon), Myanmar. Votaw knew and was convinced that, through the work of Adventist education, the Three Angels' Message could be proclaimed. Led by the Holy Spirit, Hamilton and Williams surveyed the Ohndaw area and realized that it was an ideal place to establish future mission work. They requested to use the land for future mission work, and Hpapun Township gave permission under their jurisdiction. The land, which had been reserved for religious purposes, was purchased by G. G. Hamilton and Mary Gibbs in January 1915. The property covered 7.05 acres of land with the Salween River to the east.

Founding of the School

The founder and architect of South East Adventist Seminary in Myanmar was Eric B. Hare, a tireless missionary from Australia who devoted his time and energy to the development of the Karen people in the region now known as Hpapun District. He officially established a school in June 1916 at Ohndaw Village at the bank of Salween River. The school was named Ohndaw Junior Bible Seminary and renamed Eric B. Hare Memorial Academy, or South East Adventist Seminary.

Eric B. Hare was born on October 12, 1894, in Australia and spent 20 years as a missionary in Burma among the Karen people at Ohndaw, Papun District. His parents had been missionaries, and his childhood ambition was to also be a missionary. He received early education in Australia before beginning his missionary journey to Burma. He married Agnes in 1920 while serving as the Ohndaw school’s principal and the Southeast Mission’s superintendent. He left for the United States in 1934 for his children to continue their education. He was later called to Burma to continue missionary work in Ohndaw, but World War II prevented his return to his beloved school, and he was not able to visit its campus again.

Early History of the School

Eric Hare worked very hard to establish a school at Ohndaw. He forcefully took two siblings, Tun Be and Naw Htoo, to be educated at Ohndaw. At the end of June 1916, Eric B. Hare opened the Ohndaw school with the siblings as the first two students. The Ohndaw school underwent considerable growth from 1916 until World War II broke out in 1939.

World War II

The Ohndaw school went through challenging times during World War II. Principal Herold Baird had to leave Burma, crossing India’s borders by land, due to the war. The staff house, the school buildings, and all the school properties were targeted by Japanese bombers. A few houses were destroyed by bomber aircraft attacks. Japanese ground forces marched past the school’s property. The school continued operations under the leadership of Po Tha Khin until it was forced to close.

Principal Po Tha Khin had been Eric Hare’s friend and coworker before Hare left in 1934. Po Tha Khin had completed his studies at Meiktila and had helped expand the mission work as a teacher. However, at the absence of Principal Baird, Po Tha Khin was trained for leadership and elected principal of the Ohndaw school in 1939, leading the growing school through World War II.

Condition of the School after World War II

The war ended in 1945, and the Ohndaw school reopened for the academic year of 1945-1946. Lively students were again seen on the school campus. Lenny Hare, Eric B. Hare’s son, returned to Burma and served as the principal of Meiktila Technical Training School. In 1948, he was elected principal of the Ohndaw school his father had established three decades prior. Lenny Hare had to leave the country, and the responsibilities of the principal fell on Chit Maung, one of Eric B. Hare’s students. He was elected acting principal in 1951 and principal in 1952.

Relocation of the School

The region became socially unstable once again, and Principal Chit Maung had to relocate the Ohndaw school to various places. In 1954, the school was closed down for one semester to relocate to Panlain with all students living in the lower parts of Karen State. Chit Maung had taught the majority of the students in the school and continued teaching them at Panlain.

From 1960-1976, the school was relocated several times due to the unstable situation at Ohndaw and the territories in Hpapun District. Some of the places which the school relocated to were Hpa-an, Naung Kraing, Lay Po Hta, and Balugyun. In 1977, Aung Sein was elected principal of the Ohndaw school, and about 30 students beginning from
Grades 5-8 attended the school at Tagubadi Village, Chaungson Township, Balugyun. The school operated from June 1977 to March 1979. In April 1978, the school moved back to Ohndaw under Aung Sein’s leadership. In March 1979, materials belonging to the school were returned to Ohndaw. Four houses were left intact on the Ohndaw campus; the houses were used for staff and as student dormitories. Approximately 35 students attended the Ohndaw school for the 1978-1979 academic year.

In 1982, Jimmy David was elected principal of the Ohndaw school, Myanmar Union Mission upgraded the school to offer Grade 9, and the number of students considerably increased. At the same time, students from Grades 8 and 9 were required to take a Union Examination prepared by the union education department. In 1988, Aung Sein was reelected principal of the Ohndaw school. Student enrollment increased due to the closure of some Myanmar government schools. The closure of Myanmar colleges and schools did not affect the Ohndaw school’s development. By this time, the school was renamed Ohndaw Junior Bible Seminary. The school was upgraded to Grade 10 with the 1991-1992 academic year, and the students were required to take a Division Examination prepared by the Education Department of India.

Aung Shein was elected principal of Ohndaw Junior Bible Seminary in 1995 and served the school toward the end of 1998-1999 academic year. The school was officially renamed South East Adventist Seminary at the executive meeting of the Myanmar Union Mission on May 21, 1996. In November 1996, the situation of the region worsened, which once again led to the relocation of the school. Once the school relocated, the property and land was confiscated by the rebels’ army and was never again used as the school’s site.

The total number of students for the 1997-1998 academic year was 148, and it was difficult to accommodate these students in a very small compound of Hpa-an Mission. As a result, the mission leaders immediately formulated a plan to construct the school buildings on a new plot of land near Ye-bu Village. In April 1997, 28 acres of land were purchased by the Southeast Mission to be the school’s new location. The land was located at Ye-bu Village, Hlaingbwe Township, 18 miles from the capital of Kayin State, Hpa-an.

A Turning Point for the School
Nay Win was elected principal in 1999 and, at the same time, assigned to supervise the construction of the school. In June 1999, the school’s operations transferred to its new campus at Ye-bu Village with 146 students for the 1999-2000 academic year. However, at the beginning of the academic year on the new campus, staff and students faced difficulties, including a water shortage.

A New Era of Changes
In February 2002, a group from the United States visited the campus and saw the needs of the school firsthand. A month later, blueprints for new buildings were made, and Tin Tin Hla, a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was contracted as the building engineer for the new school, dormitories, classrooms, and staff houses. The work began in March 2002, and all the buildings were completed by February 2003. All campus buildings were donated by Mac Nealus, an American. The school had adequate classrooms, staff houses, and student dormitories and stored a sufficient amount of water for the staff and students. At the beginning of the 2003-2004 academic year, 360 students were enrolled in the school.

The teaching methods and standards of the school were elevated after the visit of the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA) in 2004. The accrediting team provided recommendations in ten areas for the school to follow. The AAA team visited the school every three years to observe, examine, and promote the standard of the school in accordance with the policy of Seventh-day Adventist education. The final evaluation visit from the AAA team to the school was in July 2018.

In December 23-24, 2016, the South East Adventist Seminary celebrated its centennial jubilee inviting all living former principals and students to worship the Lord together at the school campus in Ye-bu. Many former students and principals attended the celebration services on Sabbath, and the school administration recognized the principals’ distinguished service to the school.

Role of the School in the Development of the Church
The South East Adventist Seminary contributed to the development of the church in Myanmar in spreading the Three Angels’ Message of God. The students of the school participated in the mission work while studying at the school and continued to serve in the mission after completing their studies. They founded many churches in Myanmar and later became leaders of local churches, many serving as the leaders of Myanmar Union Mission.

Fulfillment of the School Mission in the Future
The mission of the school is to elevate Jesus Christ as a personal Savior. Historically, the school accomplished its mission of introducing young people to Jesus through its Christian education. Many young people, through the influence of Christian education, accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and were faithful to Him. The school
will continue to uphold its mission statement of fostering the missionary spirit among students through the school’s Christian staff and curricula.

**Student Enrollment for the Academic Years 2012 Through 2018**

The 2012-2013 academic year’s enrollment was 345 students with a staff of 19. By the 2018-2019 academic year, student enrollment was 496 with 24 staff members. Total baptisms for these seven academic years was 143.

**List of Principals**


**SOURCES**


**NOTES**


7. Southeast Mission minutes, 80 – 90, archives of Myanmar Union Mission office, Dagon, Myanmar.


