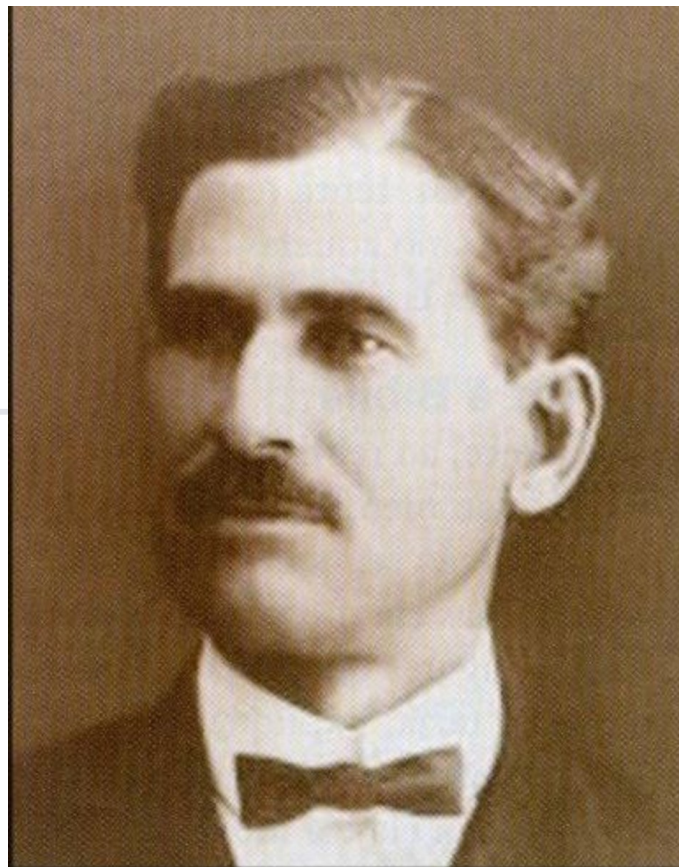


Rentfro, Clarence

Emerson

(1877–1951)



Clarence Emerson Rentfro

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THE BRAZILIAN WHITE CENTER – UNASP

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Clarence Emerson Rentfro, pastor, teacher, canvasser, and missionary, was born on July 23, 1877, in the city of Sigourney, Iowa, United States. Rentfro became an Adventist at a young age and went to Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. At the age of 21, he began working in Sioux City, Iowa holding evangelistic meetings¹ and selling publications through canvassing while studying at Union College.²

On June 11, 1903, Rentfro married Mary Loizette Haskell.³ From this union three children were born: Charles, Curtis, and Mirian Rentfro.⁴ On September 26, 1904, they landed in Lisbon, Portugal, where they had been called to work as missionaries spreading the Adventist message and doing pioneering work in that country. After working for two years, the first conversion to Adventism took place in 1906. The following year, 1907, he was

ordained to pastoral ministry by Pastors Daniells and Irwin in Switzerland. He was later appointed director of the Portuguese Mission, where he served for some time. During his service in that country, he contributed to building churches in Lisbon and Porto.⁵

Later, the family was sent to Brazil, landing on April 8, 1917, in Rio de Janeiro. Through the invitation of Pastor Frederick W. Spies, he soon visited the state of Minas Gerais. Because of the shortage of ordained ministers in Rio de Janeiro, only three at the time, Rentfro was given the task of assisting in evangelistic programs in the state. After almost two years in there, he was transferred to Minas Gerais, where he baptized 35 people. Rentfro worked in the states of Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro⁶ from 1917 to 1920.⁷

During the period that he was superintendent of the Minas Gerais Mission, the field grew greatly. The mission that once had 71 members, grew to 271 members.⁸ In this way, in 1920, the Minas Mission was considered one of the most promising fields of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil. New churches were being opened and evangelistic work was being done with perseverance.⁹

For four years,¹⁰ Rentfro worked in the states of Minas Gerais¹¹ and Rio de Janeiro¹² doing visitations, baptisms, and preaching.¹³ However, his work advanced especially in cities of Minas Gerais like Barbacena, Porto Novo do Cunha,¹⁴ Carangola, Caparaó, and Juiz de Fora. Along with his wife, he was a great supporter of medical missionary work as well as offering canvassing courses.¹⁵

In 1921, Rentfro was transferred to Pernambucana Mission to work as president of the field.¹⁶ He remained in the administration of that Mission until 1922.¹⁷ He was then assigned to teach Bible and History classes at Brazil College (now Central Adventist University of Sao Paulo).¹⁸ He taught throughout 1923 and the first semester of 1924. After that, his wife, Mary Loizette Haskell Rentfro, who served as a hydrotherapy teacher, got sick and required serious medical care. As a result, they were instructed to return to the United States because of the medical care needed.¹⁹

They returned to the United States and from 1925 to 1927 he worked as a pastor in the North Dakota Conference.²⁰ In 1927 he was transferred to the Wisconsin Conference, where he conducted evangelistic meetings²¹ until his last appointment in the year 1930.²² From then until 1937, Rentfro worked in the Michigan Conference²³ and retired in 1938 and relocated to Covina, California. He passed away on September 3, 1951.²⁴

Clarence Emerson Rentfro made a significant contribution to the Adventist Church in Brazil. He served for about 35 years as pastor, administrator, evangelist, canvasser, and teacher. In the area of evangelism, he held several series of meetings in the region of Minas Gerais, being responsible for one of the largest growths in church membership in Brazil at that time. As a canvasser, he gave great encouragement to young people to work in the publishing ministry and exerted strong support for the health message everywhere he went. In administration, he was president of the Minas Gerais and Pernambucana Missions. As a teacher, he taught Bible and history classes at Brazil College.

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