

Simpson, Charlotte

(1875–1948)

MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL

Michael W. Campbell, Ph.D., is professor of church history and systematic theology at Southwestern Adventist University. An ordained minister, he pastored in Colorado and Kansas. He is assistant editor of *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* (Review and Herald, 2013) and currently is co-editor of the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Seventh-day Adventism*. He also taught at the Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies (2013-18) and recently wrote the *Pocket Dictionary for Understanding Adventism* (Pacific Press, 2020).



DR. SELMON. F. A. ALLUM. DR. MILLER.
MRS. ALLUM. MISS ERICKSON. MISS SIMPSON. MRS. SELMON.

Charlotte Simpson was a missionary nurse to China in the early 1900's. Her Chinese name was *Pinyin* hé xīn p sheng).

Charlotte was born on July 5, 1875, in Hooton Roberts, Yorkshire, England, to Joseph Simpson (1839-1909) and Harriet Kitson (1840-1912).¹

Originally from Great Britain, she first emigrated to the United States around 1896, returning to England the next year, and then returning to the United States on Dec. 17, 1901.² Afterward she worked at Dr. J. H. Kellogg's Chicago Branch Sanitarium called Life Boat Rest.³

Charlotte left with Drs. Arthur C. and Bertha L. Selmon and Harry W. and Maude T. Miller, along with fellow nurse Carrie Ericksen (1876--1962), for China on October 5, 1903. They arrived in Shanghai on October 24, 1903. Most of that first year was spent in language study with one of Pilquist's early converts. After spending several months among the Chinese in Honan, "learning ... their customs," they decided to scatter. In a letter, Simpson wrote:

We are all well and happy. We have many people who come to us for help. In fact, so many that we are unable to help all of them. We are getting along very nicely with the Chinese language. Our only means of heating was an oil cooking stove, and the oil is so expensive that we could not afford to burn it much. However, now we have our floors put down and are burning charcoal. We put it in a pan and set it in the middle of the room, and in this way it makes the room feel quite warm and comfortable. We have not yet become fully accustomed to living on Chinese foods. We can buy rice and sweet potatoes here but are unable to get Irish potatoes or milk, except

Back row: Arthur Selmon, Francis A. Allum, Harry W. Miller; front row: Evaline Allum, Carrie Ericksen, Charlotte Simpson, Bertha Selmon, c. 1905/06. From *Australasian Union Conference Record*, August 20, 1906.

from the water buffalo or goats. They do not have cows here. Drs. Selmon and Miller wear the full Chinese costume. We are all anxiously waiting until the time when we can get out and meet the people and help them. The Chinese are very friendly toward us, and we all love them already.⁴

Simpson went with Carrie Ericksen to open a new dispensary in Sin-tsai. "We find that the medical work opens the hearts of the people to the gospel," she wrote, "and this is what we are working for, not that we may get the praise, but that they may know that God is working through us, and that all praise is due Him."⁵ They faced a number of significant challenges, not least of which was the fact that they were women treating the sick. "It seems rather strange that, as the Chinese have such contempt for women, they are so willing to come to us for treatment."⁶ Charlotte and Carrie decided that their primary focus would be:

...among the women and girls. Surely this is one of the most important features of mission work, to reach the mothers of growing families; but here in China it is the mothers-in-law we aim to reach; for they have entire control, not only over their daughters-in-law but also their children, as well. Each week we hold two or three meetings with the women at their homes; they know when to expect us, and we usually find a large number of their friends and neighbors waiting for us.⁷

These two nurses thereby modeled a pattern of Bible women who through their efforts at educating women, teaching them to read, visiting them in their homes, and even teaching them hymns would set an example for subsequent women's work in China.

Carrie and Charlotte were especially shaken when their good friend, Dr. Maude Miller, died on March 14, 1905. They anointed her per the instruction of James, but God did not see fit to heal her. "We could not believe that she would be taken from us.... Although we do not understand the reason, we know God's ways are just and above our ways." They both noted, as they wrote her obituary, that the funeral was held in the room where they learned Chinese, and she was buried in a Chinese dress and buried as was the custom in a small mound just outside the city wall.⁸

In late 1906 she returned with Carrie back to the United States due to "broken health."⁹ They cited their isolation that contributed to their discouragement, as well. They arrived on January 14, 1907, in Seattle, Washington!¹⁰ Immediately afterward she stayed with Carrie's family in Iowa. Eventually Charlotte and Carrie bought a home together in Glendale, California, where they lived together.¹¹ She died on November 5, 1948.¹²

SOURCES

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"A Chicago Worker in the Heart of China." *The Life Boat*, March 1904.

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NOTES

1. See Ancestry.com [accessed 11/5/21].
2. Pennsylvania, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists, 1800-1962 [accessed from Ancestry.com 11/5/21].
3. "Personal Items," *The Life Boat*, March 1902, 71.
4. "A Chicago Worker in the Heart of China," *The Life Boat*, March 1904, 94.
5. Charlotte Simpson, "Mission Work Among the Women of China," *ARH*, December 28, 1905, 14.
6. Simpson, Charlotte, "China," *ARH*, March 29, 1906, 16.
7. Simpson, "Mission Work Among the Women of China," 14.
8. See Obituary, *The West Michigan Herald*, May 10, 1905, 3.
9. General Conference Executive Committee Minutes, March 28, 1907, 267; see also note in *The Educational Messenger*, February 15, 1907, 14.
10. National Archives and Records Administration (Nara); Washington, D.C.; Naturalization Records of the U.S. District Court For the Southern District of California, Central Division (Los Angeles), 1887-1940; Microfilm Roll: 11; Microfilm Serial: M1524 [accessed from Ancestry.com 11/5/21].
11. "Nurses Buy Home," *The Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 1910, 26.
12. *California, U.S., Death Index, 1940-1997* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, U.S.A.: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2000 [accessed from Ancestry.com 11/5/21].

