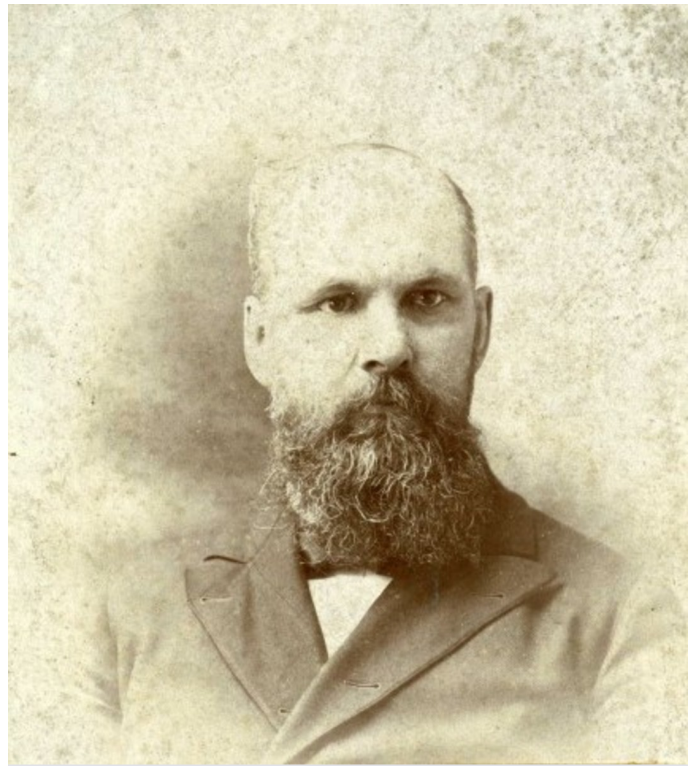


Hyatt, William Spencer (1857–1936) and Sarah “Sadie” Melvina (Armitage) (1860–1938)



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William S. Hyatt

Photo courtesy of Center for Adventist Research.

William Hyatt and Sarah Armitage were pioneer missionaries to Texas and Africa. William was a minister, evangelist, revivalist, and administrator; Sadie was an educator. William became the first documented Adventist missionary to use the glass lantern slide projector after his return from the 1905 General Conference Session. He was highly regarded for his organizational skills and developed regular training for church workers to mobilize them to distribute literature, conduct Bible studies, and hold evangelistic [camp meetings](#) to organize and build up new congregations.

Early Life

William Spencer Hyatt was born in Williamstown, New York, on May 11, 1857, to William (1824-1865) and Sarah Ann née Spencer (1828-1906) Hyatt.¹ His father and grandfather, Harvey Spencer (1801-1882), were among those who were disappointed waiting for Christ to return in 1844. His grandparents' home burned in 1844 after the careless mistake of his eight-year-old cousin, who built a smoldering fire and left it unattended while his mother, Sarah, took a nap, causing the house and barn to burn to the ground. The family, firmly believing in

Christ's return, chose not to rebuild that summer and lived in a shanty as an expression of their faith. The family was later introduced to the seventh-day Sabbath by Joseph Bates in 1848.² His father witnessed Ellen White taken off in vision and "examined her to see if her condition was similar to that of the prophets of old." He stated that "she neither breathed nor saw, although her eyes were open."³ His parents were married eleven years when they felt God answered their prayers with the birth of a son.⁴

Sarah, or "Sadie" as she was known, was born near Darlington, Wisconsin, on December 25, 1860. Her parents, Benjamin (1830-1910) and Mary (1839-1888) Armitage, accepted the Adventist message in 1862 when William S. Ingraham held meetings in their community. Meetings were often held in her home, and when she was 12 years old, she remembered hearing Ellen White give "a searching personal testimony" while attending the Illinois campmeeting. "Those who ever had the privilege of hearing one of these testimonies," she wrote, "can never forget it."⁵ Her younger brother, Frank B. Armitage (1864-1952), was a pioneer missionary to Africa with whom she worked closely with during their many years of service in Africa.

Evangelism in New York and Wisconsin

William attended Battle Creek College, where he met Sadie Armitage, and the two were married on December 25, 1882. He afterward began ministerial labors in New York.⁶ In early 1884, they moved to Wisconsin.⁷ In early 1886, as he was about to start meetings in Pine River, Wisconsin, his bible worker, a young 23-year-old student from Battle Creek College, Peter Christianson, tragically drowned the day before they were supposed to begin meetings.⁸ Yet William persevered. At the 1886 campmeeting, he was ordained with [F. H. Westphal](#), both of whom later became pioneer missionaries.⁹ The service was conducted by [S. N. Haskell](#) and [G. I. Butler](#).

William attended the [1888 Minneapolis General Conference session](#), where the preaching of [A. T. Jones](#) and [E. J. Waggoner](#) had a profound personal impact upon his life. After the session, he was rebaptized because he felt this new spiritual experience was so impactful and lifechanging. He would, for the rest of his life, remain firmly committed to preaching about righteousness by faith and the need to experience justification by faith as part of his Adventist experience.¹⁰ At this same gathering, he was appointed to serve as [Texas Conference](#) president and to also coordinate their tract and missionary work.¹¹ He finished up another round of visits to encourage church members later that November and left on December 24th for his new field of labor.¹²

Missionary to Texas (1889-1892)

William reached Peoria, Texas, on January 1, 1889, in time to participate in a "general meeting" to lay plans for the work. "When the meeting closed," he wrote, "all seemed to feel that it had been a profitable occasion, not only for ourselves, but also for the cause in general."¹³ He afterward toured the churches across Texas.¹⁴ From May 2-21, he participated in a special Kansas Institute and Campmeeting featuring Ellen White, A. T. Jones, and other church workers. An estimated 800 to 1,000 people attended the subsequent campmeeting held in Forest

Park, Ottawa, Kansas.¹⁵

At the next workers' meeting (beginning August 20) held in Garland, Texas, he had the opportunity to offer additional training to church members. A special focus was on the National Reform movement and the subject of justification by faith.¹⁶ Then he spent eight weeks at Wylie pitching a tent in preparation for the camp meeting.¹⁷ As the work progressed, and as the weather allowed, some 350 to 400 people attended.¹⁸ The official campmeeting took place from August 27 to September 3, 1889.¹⁹ The meetings concluded in time for Hyatt to attend the 1889 General Conference Session in Battle Creek, Michigan.²⁰ He happily reported that, by the end of 1889, they had sold twice as many books more than the year before.²¹ He also reported that Brethren Roberson and Huguley were establishing a job printing office. They would now be able to publish *The Southern Sentinel*, which he believed would "be an important factor" in the scattering "a knowledge of the third angel's message in the sunny South."²²

The first part of 1890 was spent by Hyatt visiting various churches. In the spring of 1890 (April 1-8), he held a special "spring camp meeting" that would feature a canvassers' institute. Special features included [W. R. Smith](#), who would conduct the institute, with participation by Ellen G. White and [E. H. Gates](#).²³ Another campmeeting was held in Dallas from August 19-26, 1890. Here, Hyatt was re-elected again as president.²⁴ A notable feature of this gathering was a cooking school, a Sabbath School convention, and instruction in canvassing.²⁵ Some 630 people were encamped on the grounds in Dallas,²⁶ which concluded with Hyatt baptizing 31 persons.²⁷

From March 5 to 25, 1891, Hyatt attended the General Conference Session, serving on the committees for nominations and another on resolutions.²⁸ He played a significant role in helping to draft a new constitution for the [International Tract and Missionary Society](#).²⁹ He returned (April 7-21) to attend another Spring Campmeeting with a strong focus on Bible study and revival, and offering training for colporteurs about how to increasingly circulate Adventist literature.³⁰ During this meeting, they decided to strategically place the one evangelistic tent in Corpus Christi.³¹ They prepared a corps of 30 canvassers who were ready to distribute literature as he described a spiritual revival taking place as a result of in-depth Bible study and social meetings.³²

Hyatt arrived back in time to conduct a workers' meeting (August 4-11) followed by another campmeeting (August 11-18) in Oak Cliff, Texas.³³ Hyatt developed a pattern that became prevalent in the American South during the hottest part of the summer of pushing campmeetings to the early spring (March/April) or to the fall (August/September), thereby avoiding the hottest part of the summer. Hyatt next spoke at the Missouri and Arkansas campmeetings in late August through September.³⁴ Then by October, W. S. Hyatt was holding evangelistic meetings again with W. A. McCutchen with an attendance of 75 to 300 per meeting.³⁵

In early 1892, he attended another institute in Moline, Kansas, before returning to Texas to visit the Corsicana Church where he held revival meetings for ten days for the young people.³⁶ In 1892, they held two six-week canvassing schools that resulted in 80 men and women being trained to serve the Lord.³⁷ The first was held

February 25 to April 10 in Oak Cliff, and the conference agreed to provide free tents for all who would come so long as they brought their own bedding and dishes.³⁸ In March 1892, the General Conference Committee assigned Hyatt to serve in Missouri.³⁹

Missouri (1892-1896)

From August 17-30, 1892, W. S. Hyatt organized the Missouri Campmeeting in Sedalia, Missouri.⁴⁰ In the meantime, he visited churches in Winston, Hamilton, Utica, and New Boston.⁴¹ He returned to preside over the Texas Conference Campmeeting, during which W. S. Greer was elected as Texas Conference president.⁴² He then participated in the Kansas Campmeeting in Herington, Kansas (September 15-25, 1892). He reported that there were 125 tents with 750 camped, with a significant number of German immigrants. At the conclusion, 72 were baptized.⁴³ He then spent October and November, starting in Kansas City, and finishing in St. Louis, making a tour of the northern Missouri churches.⁴⁴

From April 21 to May 8, 1893, W. S. Hyatt organized an institute for ministers and Bible workers. He reported that they had four tents in the field and hoped to have another one soon for German immigrants. From August 22-29, 1893, he participated in the Nebraska Campmeeting, followed by the Colorado Campmeeting (August 31 to Sept. 10, 1893).⁴⁵ Then Hyatt led out in the Missouri Campmeeting once again in Sedalia (Sept. 13-24, 1893).⁴⁶ He attended the Oklahoma Campmeeting, and then he did a tour of churches across Missouri. Of particular note was a revival that took place in Goldsberry, Missouri, in which 17 were baptized and 20 more joined the SDA Church. Before he left, they dedicated a new house of worship.⁴⁷

In early 1894 (beginning January 10), there were 90 people participating in a Bible School at Kansas City.⁴⁸ Later that year, they held campmeeting in Pertle Springs (September 21 to October 1, 1894). He reported the organization of five new churches and the adding of 200 additional members over the previous year.⁴⁹ He was especially pleased that they were able to purchase a lot and begin work on building a house of worship in Kansas City. He reported about the progress of the fledgling Union College and encouraged parents in Missouri to send their sons and daughters to this school.⁵⁰

In February 1895, Hyatt was a delegate to the General Conference Session in Battle Creek, Michigan.⁵¹ He served as a member of the Executive Board of the General Conference Association.⁵² During the summer of 1895, they developed a program designed to enter new parts of Missouri. They held five local campmeetings in connection with the evangelistic tent work.⁵³ From September 25 to October 6, 1895, they held another campmeeting at Pertle Springs, Missouri.⁵⁴ By now, they had seven active evangelistic tents and reported organizing five new churches.⁵⁵ On March 19, 1896, the General Conference Committee voted to request Hyatt to move to Kansas to serve as conference president.⁵⁶

Kansas and Battle Creek (1896-1898)

From August 26 to September 7, 1896, W. S. Hyatt led out in the Kansas Campmeeting in Council Grove, Kansas.⁵⁷ Later, during the October meeting of the General Conference Association, [I. H. Evans](#), J. I. Gibson, and [O. A. Olsen](#) were appointed to form new corporations in Nebraska and Colorado for holding property. On December 6, 1896, they arrived in Denver, Colorado, and went to Boulder to visit the new [Colorado Sanitarium](#). Before they left, they formed The Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Western Association with seven trustees, including Hyatt.⁵⁸ Hyatt continued to visit the churches across Kansas. He was happy to report that within a short time, tithe increased and active evangelism resulted in membership growth.⁵⁹ Hyatt spent two months in the northwestern part of the state where he organized a church at Courtland.⁶⁰

On August 18, 1897, Hyatt was invited to become a member of the Foreign Mission Board.⁶¹ While he was in Kansas, the Conference sponsored the work of C. A. Hall in Jamaica.⁶² Hyatt participated in the campmeeting in Council Grove, Kansas (August 25 to September 6, 1897).⁶³ Such gatherings were opportunities for church members to support missionary work. Initially, as a member of the Foreign Mission Board, he was asked to visit the Matabele Mission to evaluate and make recommendations about evangelism.⁶⁴ Then Hyatt resigned his position on the committee.⁶⁵ Church leaders instead discussed sending him as the general superintendent of the South African Mission field.⁶⁶ In December 1897, Hyatt was formally asked to step aside from the presidency of the Kansas Conference to “labor” in Battle Creek, Michigan.⁶⁷ He replaced Albion F. Ballenger as pastor of the Battle Creek Church with a membership of about 2,700 at that time. On January 1, 1898, he held a revival meeting after which he ordained newly elected elders and deacons. They divided up the church into 12 districts, each with their own elder and deacon.⁶⁸

During the Spring Council of the General Conference (March 10 to April 3, 1898), they received a call to go to [South Africa](#), and that H. E. Robinson would take Hyatt’s place overseeing the work in Battle Creek.⁶⁹ Hyatt, in turn, replaced O. A. Olsen, who would then be freed up to serve in Europe.⁷⁰ Friends shared that he left with a “light heart believing that he was in line of duty.”⁷¹ They left with their three children sailing on the *Paris* on April 13, connecting in Southampton, and then continuing on the *Avondale Castle*, reaching Cape Town on May 15, 1898 at 12:30 p.m.⁷²

Mission to Africa

When they arrived in Africa, their ship was overdue, and the believers in Cape Town were not expecting them. Their luggage was due on another vessel that took even longer, so they initially stayed at the College Home while they looked for a cottage. They reported how this was a beautiful place, even though Sadie’s brother, Frank Armitage (1864-1952) whose wife, Anna Olsen (1859-1898), had just tragically passed away.⁷³

Immediately upon arrival, Hyatt preached at the Claremont Church. “The Spirit of the Lord made it manifest that we should continue this work,” he wrote, “which we did for four weeks. The message, ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost,’ was received with thankfulness by many.”⁷⁴ After four months, he expressed his surprise at meeting so

many Americans and come across so many “American wares for sale.”⁷⁵ The next place he visited was the Beaconsfield Church, in a suburb of Kimberley, about 650 miles north.⁷⁶ He then left Kimberley for Bulawayo on November 8, 1898, returning to Kimberley on December 11, 1898. He viewed a new piece of property, but also noted that they had lost two prime opportunities by being indecisive. Of special note were 30 starving children who were part of an orphanage. Hyatt believed that what was needed was a school at the new mission station. He described their methods:

The last Sabbath I was there, we spent a long time, first singing a stanza of some good hymn, then having it explained to the natives. We would sing until they had learned it. In this way we taught them several stanzas of different hymns, and at the same time explain to them the meaning of what they were singing. We found this a good way to instruct them. Every morning the workers have a short service of song, Scripture reading, and prayer, at which they not only gather in their own children, but also all the native children that are about.⁷⁷

This was a significant milestone for the development of Adventism in Africa, especially in light of Hyatt’s strong support and participation in campmeetings in America, as he organized the very first Adventist campmeeting ever held in Africa.⁷⁸ The event took place in Wynberg (a suburb of Cape Town) that lasted until January 2, 1899. It was situated in a pine grove near the electric street-car line with about 30 tents pitched on the grounds. Two were large tents in which meetings were held in English, Dutch, and German. On Sabbath, about 300 were present, and a revival took place despite some opposition from other Christians who distributed flyers warning the people about the meetings. At this gathering, they made plans to translate *Steps to Christ* into the Bantu language.⁷⁹ During the meeting, Hyatt was officially elected as president of the South African Conference.⁸⁰

Upon his return to Cape Town, he noted that Sister Starr was with them. They printed 2,500 copies of the special war issue of the *Sentinel*, as the Anglo-Boer (Second Boer War) conflict broke out that year. As the war continued, limited supplies reduced their ability to conduct evangelism. The teachers at the college held street meetings. “This is a hard field,” he warned, “and we need the help of every loyal worker.”⁸¹ Four months later, he noted that conditions had deteriorated even as the work was “being greatly hindered by the war.”⁸² Finances were low, and most of the 400 Sabbathkeepers there were poor. Yet they remained faithful, and they continued to support those faithful workers who agreed to reduce their wages. They believed “brighter days” were still ahead.⁸³ They tried to place thousands of tracts in the hands of soldiers and sailors in coastal cities.⁸⁴ At one point, Ellen White wrote a letter of encouragement to Hyatt, emphasizing the importance of the priesthood of all believers.⁸⁵ Consequently, she urged him to work to break down racial barriers:

When the love of Christ is cherished in the heart as it should be . . . there will be no caste, no pride of nationality; not difference will be made because of the colour of the skin. . . . The colour of the skin is no criterion as to the value of the soul . . . God has taken us, all classes, all nations, all languages . . . and brought us into His workshop, to be prepared for His temple.⁸⁶

In late 1900, W. S. Hyatt spent seven weeks in Natal, where he visited Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith, Gray Town, and traveled to American mission station 20 miles south of Durban. Interest in health reform, natural treatments, and especially healthful foods were opening new opportunities to start a treatment room and a vegetarian restaurant. During this trip, he preached ten sermons, gave 30 Bible readings, made 30 family visits, obtained 53 subscriptions for the *Sentinel*, and baptized seven persons.⁸⁷ From September 27 to October 6, 1901, delegates participated in the ninth session of the South African Conference. Martial law prevented them from having a campmeeting. They decided to reopen the Plumstead Orphanage, which had been temporarily closed. The [Claremont Sanitarium](#) passed from control of the Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association to a private syndicate.⁸⁸

On January 21, 1902, the Foreign Mission Board voted to have Hyatt serve in Natal.⁸⁹ On January 29, 1902, W. S. Hyatt noted that they were distributing literature and had just opened a new school in Cape Town.⁹⁰ In early 1902, he reported having a special school for training workers similar to what he had done in America, with 15 students who were learning how to canvass, give Bible readings, and administer simple treatments.⁹¹ "If there is one work in which I have felt greater interest than in another," wrote Hyatt, "it is that of placing our literature before the people." The recent war and plague still hindered the work, but now that things had stabilized, they were becoming successful in distributing the *Sentinel* in larger quantities.⁹² Hyatt made rounds among the refugee camps near Kimberley distributing tracts and papers. If only he had more literature, he believed, he could do even more.⁹³ About this time, William and Sadie's daughter, Helen, who graduated from Claremont Union College, opened the third Adventist school in South Africa located in Cape Town.⁹⁴

Hyatt was re-elected at the tenth annual session of the South African Conference (January 15-26, 1903) as president for another term.⁹⁵ Hyatt returned to church headquarters as a delegate to the 1903 General Conference Session (March 27 to April 13, 1903).⁹⁶ While he was away, a terrible drought hit South Africa, causing significant hunger, suffering, and even death.⁹⁷ On June 10, 1903, he left to travel 1,500 miles north to Gwelo (in Basutoland or Lesotho as it is known today) for the first time. He expressed particular appreciation for the ministry of [David Kalaka](#) (1844-1904), who had pioneered the work there with S. N. Haskell (1833-1922).⁹⁸ It was during this visit that Hyatt baptized the first eight young men at the mission.⁹⁹ In order to assist Frank Armitage, Sadie went to spend five or six months with her brother, to help him in teaching classes at the Gwelo Mission, where he had spent the previous two years.¹⁰⁰ From here, he went on to the Somobula Mission under the leadership of Pastor [M. C. Sturdevant](#) (1865-1933) that was another 140 miles further.¹⁰¹ Here he found 75 students with three more "native" schools in nearby villages being taught by the same students they were training. [Christopher R. Sparrow](#) (1862-1935), [Frank B. Armitage](#), and Hyatt traveled together for three weeks to "spy out the country" as they looked for more potential mission sites in Basutoland.¹⁰² They were cautious because of lions who had killed cattle not far from the mission, but they believed that God would protect them.

In 1904, a large number of our people who came together at Maritzburg. Elder Herbert J. Edmed (1863-1934) was chosen president of the Natal-Transvaal Conference, with [J. H. Camp](#) as secretary/treasurer. They purchased a printing outfit to relocate in Maritzburg.¹⁰⁴ Hyatt was a relentless advocate for Adventist missions. In July 1904, he reported that there were now five small mission stations across Africa, some barely in running order, and therefore only able to accomplish a little. The opportunities, he felt, were strategically important. He opined over the tragic death of Joseph H. Watson (1869-1903). When “a warrior drops in the field, the work of God will not stop.” Who will pick up “the banner” of truth? He asked.¹⁰⁵

At the Buluwayo Mission, he described a class of young people preparing for baptism. To make sure that they are ready, they formed a class that met for several months. On June 18, 1904, after Sabbath School, they went to the river with about 250 observers. Then they returned to the mission for lunch, and afterward celebrated the Lord's Supper.¹⁰⁶ On June 26, 1904, Hyatt left the mission farm near Buluwayo and started for Nyassaland, stopping in Gwelo, and then he visited the Somabula Mission. From Gwelo he took the train arriving in Beira on July 11.¹⁰⁷ He next caught a steamboat heading toward Chinde, then another river steamer, and that evening started for Chiromo, a distance of 200 miles, which took another nine days. They spent one night at the Shupanga Mission and visited the grave of Mary Moffat Livingstone (1821-1862) on the Shire River.¹⁰⁸ She was the wife of David Livingstone (1813-1873), who died on her way to join her husband in his great missionary endeavor. From here they were able to make it to the Plainfield Mission (later named Malamulo Mission in 1907) after traveling another 50 miles in a manchila canvas hammock fastened between two long poles. It had taken three weeks from Somabula Mission where they were welcomed by [Thomas and Henrietta Branch](#), along with a native teacher, Edward, at the first Adventist mission station in Malawi.¹⁰⁹ On Sabbath, he reported 164 adults who attended the church service. The mission farm of 2,000 acres was in a hilly region, with lots of good soil and timber, enjoying an abundance of rain. Brother Branch had 90 acres under cultivation. Recently, when some farm equipment broke down, a lion had taken one of the oxen. “My soul is often sad,” he wrote, “as I think of the little that we are doing in view of the greatness of the work there is to be done, and the short time in which we have to do it.”¹¹⁰ Hyatt's stay lasted from July 25 to August 24, 1904.¹¹¹

After this extensive tour through Africa in 1904, he returned to the Cape “with his soul mightily stirred by the signs” according to friends because he had seen “of the opening providence of God before us in Africa.”¹¹² He felt particularly burdened for the “native work.” A major burden of Hyatt was to shift the emphasis of Adventist missions in South Africa from a focus on colonial ex-patriots, whether British or Dutch, to focus on the many native tribes who were waiting to hear the Adventist message.¹¹³

Institutional Foundations (1905-1908)

From February 16-26, 1905, Hyatt attended the second annual meeting of the Natal-Transvaal Conference held in conjunction with a campmeeting. Despite being such a small conference, with only three churches and a

membership of only about one hundred, the members were supportive. Hyatt believed campmeetings were strategic outreach events. The area was first canvassed, and as the campmeeting took place, then the believers visited all the homes in the community. "They distributed invitations, sold papers and tracts, and in various ways endeavored to reach the people." Despite considerable rain, a "goodly number" came to hear the preaching. On Sabbath, they preached on the sin of Achan and called for people to put away anything from Babylon. "Rings, chains, feathers, and various other ornaments were brought and laid upon the altar as gifts to the cause of God." Afterward, they held a three-week training class. This was the first campmeeting held in that region of Africa.¹¹⁴

In early 1905, after having traveled extensively the year before across portions of Africa, this enabled Hyatt to begin to make some strategic missional adjustments. First, they needed to rebuild the medical missionary program after the tragic loss of the Claremont Sanitarium due to the war. The Plumstead orphanage was going to be converted into a sanitarium and replace this medical missionary outreach.¹¹⁵ Next he believed that there needed to be a strong emphasis to train African workers by developing schools. These indigenous individuals knew their own people, "their ways, and their languages," making it possible for them to "go from village to village, eating and sleeping among them, and teaching them the Word of God."¹¹⁶ It was vital that, following the example of Jesus who trained His disciples, that this would become far more effective than foreign missionaries moving forward. At that juncture, they had some 450 young people who were being trained at four missions and ten village schools. Yet "this is only a drop in the bucket."¹¹⁷

Hyatt attended the 1905 General Conference Session (May 11-30, 1905) held in Takoma Park, Maryland.¹¹⁸ On the opening Friday evening of General Conference Session, Hyatt spoke for vespers about the missionary work in Africa, and the many calls received from those who had been evangelized.¹¹⁹ At one point he shared about fallen missionaries in Africa, which was a point of encouragement to others who lost loved ones.¹²⁰ With "confidence" he shared about "the wonderful openings in Africa" that resulted in the message "spreading like wildfire" among the African peoples.¹²¹ During the meeting, he joined a group of church leaders, led by [A. G. Daniells](#), to meet President Roosevelt in the White House, in which they emphasized Adventist views on civil government.¹²²

While in America, Hyatt spoke at the Wisconsin campmeeting.¹²³ He made another stop at Michigan campmeeting where he "presented the [spiritual] needs of darkest Africa, and the opening providence of God in opening the way to spread the truth."¹²⁴ Then Elder Hyatt spent a few days back in Washington where he spoke at two of the Washington, D.C., churches before setting sail for England on August 3, 1905.¹²⁵ During his stopover, he spent a few days at a combined meeting of the North and South England, along with the Welsh Mission, held at Birmingham, England.¹²⁶

On November 11, Hyatt participated in a baptism of 11 individuals at the Somabula Mission. He rejoiced that he met eight of the young men who remained faithful after their baptism there two years earlier.¹²⁷ Then he went

to Solusi Misison where, the following Sabbath, they dedicated the first church (26 by 43 feet) made of brick with a corrugated metal roof. Hyatt reported some 54 young people enrolled at Solusi.¹²⁸ Then they spent four days with Brother and Sister Sparrow at the Mkupavula Mission, where they were conducting self-supporting work. Then they returned for a few more days at Solusi before stopping to hold services at Kimberley on their way back to Cape Town.¹²⁹

In March 1906, Hyatt spent two weeks visiting the Kolo Mission in Basutoland (now Lesotho). He encouraged Brother and Sister Chaney, who worked to build up this mission through medical missionary and educational outreach.¹³⁰ From April 12-22, 1906, Hyatt went with Edmed to the campmeeting and fourth annual session for the Natal-Transvaal Conference held at Pretoria. Between 80-90 persons were present with 21 family tents and two large pavilions. Edmed had held evangelistic meetings for the previous six weeks, and as the campmeeting began, there were 17 preparing for baptism.¹³¹ Later on in 1906, Hyatt returned to visit the Somabula Mission where he baptized eight young people, and then in Solusi baptized nine more.¹³² For the first time, he reported using his glass lantern slide projector:

Having my magic lantern with me, I gave several exhibitions during my visit. The natives were deeply impressed, as they had never seen anything of the kind before. They do not know how to read a book, but they do know how to read a picture understandingly. Some came several miles to attend the services. We feel sure that a lantern would be a great help to any mission, since it attracts the people, and thus enables the missionary to present the gospel to them. I firmly believe that every honest means, such as the lantern and music, should be provided and used in this work.¹³³

After several years of looking to establish a second Mission, now one was established in Lesotho in 1906 under the direction of G. W. Shone, called the Maranatha Mission. Charles Sparrow had purchased a farm 25 miles northeast of Grahamstown. He agreed to lease land "on very reasonable terms" that gave them the use of 450 acres, allowing them to "open work there."¹³⁴ They paid 12 pounds the first year and 20 pounds thereafter, and Sparrow let them graze 20 head of cattle and 12 ostriches on his pasture lands, which helped support the Mission. The new Mission was only a few miles from the Indian Ocean with overlooks of the ocean from the new Mission property.¹³⁵ F. B. Armitage observed that, in starting this new Mission, they took with them eight students from the Somabula Mission to help them get started. Hyatt helped, "equipped with the Bible, a magic lantern, a small supply of simple medicines, and some fomentation cloths." As they worked together, the locals "marveled," observed Hyatt, because they "had never seen white men going about among them and freely assisting them."¹³⁶ He wrote:

At one place a man came with his little daughter, who had returned from a hospital a few days before, and was rapidly getting worse. We gave her a few treatments, seeking God's blessing, and he did not disappoint us. One day this father came, saying, "Elder, we have heard of the love of God, and have read of it, but this is the first time we ever saw it." One native teacher, a bright, devoted girl, said: "I am sure your treatments have saved my

life. I have heard of the love of God, but never saw it before."¹³⁷

Hyatt was forced to remain at the Mission a few additional weeks because of some fractured ribs, "the result of the capsizing of our wagon."¹³⁸ Missionary life was never dull, and running a mission station often required flexibility to effectively run a farm, train young people at school, conduct medical missionary work as needed, and then hold religious services. He added:

It is true that the work is wearisome, but it is interesting, nevertheless. There is no time in which to get lonely. Sabbaths are usually very busy days. Sabbath School and the service takes the time of the forenoon, and after dinner there are village meetings to be held, or some other service. Mission stations are no place for those who desire an easy time.¹³⁹

He described how a chief had come to the Somabula Mission from north of the Zambesi River. Although anxious to learn, he was unable to read. When he was ready to return home, he asked for a "Jesus book," so they gave him a Zulu edition of *Christ Our Saviour* with pictures that would help him "tell his people all about Jesus."¹⁴⁰ Always someone who loved to pioneer into new areas, he requested relief from his administrative responsibilities as president so that he could go into the interior to enter and establish a new mission.¹⁴¹ Despite his appeals, he was re-elected as union president. He did, however, persuade leaders to move the Union Conference headquarters from Cape Town some 650 miles to Kimberley.¹⁴² Since the Adventist work was expanding further northward, along with easy access to trains, this would help facilitate their outreach efforts. In 1907, Hyatt spent time in May and June 1907 to stay at the Solusi Mission while Melvin and M. J. Sturdevant traveled 600 miles farther north to establish a new Mission Station. This was 200 miles past W. H. Anderson's new Mission and pioneering the furthest any Adventist missionary had gone into the interior of Africa up to that point.¹⁴³

Training Missionaries

Hyatt was especially concerned about the training of missionaries. It wasn't enough to send people who were intelligent and had school training, but they needed to be humble, willing to learn, and sensitive to the needs of the people. Missionaries who exhibited any kind of air of superiority would not be effective because the Africans could easily recognize someone who was phony or selfish. And while all missionaries would undoubtedly make mistakes, there was a need to learn to appreciate the culture and love the people that was a crucial component of mission service. To help accomplish this, he recommended missionaries take more time to learn the culture and language when they first arrive, mentoring from those who were more experienced missionaries. And ultimately, being a missionary, he believed, had a certain element of "gumption" to it.

In 1908, he expressed special appreciation for [Jim Mainza](#) (1881-1949) and [Richard Moko](#) (1850-1932), both of whom were diligent Bible students who had become extremely successful at reaching their own peoples.¹⁴⁴ The

future of Adventism was, he believed, going to be through education. At the same time, missionary work also had a high cost, as he was reminded with the passing of [Nora Anderson](#) (1867-1908), who tragically died at the [Plumstead Sanitarium](#) on February 4, 1908, after battling blackwater fever.¹⁴⁵ “The loss of Sister Anderson,” he wrote, “will be greatly felt in Barotseland. We now invite others to take up the task which she bore so faithfully, but now has laid down.”¹⁴⁶

The large influx of students at places like Solusi and Malamulo were indications of a bright future, he believed. W. C. Walston similarly reported about the “large number” applying to enter the Somabula Mission.¹⁴⁷ “This desire on the part of the native gives us the opportunity to teach him the truths of the gospel.”¹⁴⁸ He especially called for missionaries to help him open up the work in Basutoland and Zululand. “These are two of the most important fields in South Africa,” he added. “If our work is to succeed in these fields, we need men well qualified to go there and be missionaries to both white and black. Some of our best talent is needed, and needed badly, for these two neglected fields.”¹⁴⁹

Finally, in early 1908, the General Conference voted to send [Roscoe and Harriet Porter](#) to Africa where Roscoe would take up the presidency of the South African Union, releasing Hyatt to return to America.¹⁵⁰ Until Porter’s arrival, he continued his heavy administrative responsibilities. From April 2-12, he participated with E. R. Williams in the campmeeting in Durban as part of the Natal-Transvaal Conference.¹⁵¹ On May 25, in response to his repeated urging, the Foreign Mission Board sent three missionary couples to help reinforce the missions in Africa: S. M. Konigsmacher (to go to Malamulo with Joel Rogers), [J. R. Campbell](#) (to go to Solusi to assist the Sturdevants), and H. C. Olmstead (to go to Barotseland to assist W. H. Anderson).¹⁵² For his part, Hyatt personally went to the Somabula Mission to help A. Butterfield who, with his wife and little girl, were suffering from fever. W. C. Walston had also been there with them treating the sick.¹⁵³ Meanwhile at Somabula, Brother Armitage had just finished building a new church and school, quarried from stone on the Mission property. This last Mission had experienced a particularly bad drought, destroying their crops, which would require additional outside support to maintain this mission.¹⁵⁴

In early September 1908, Hyatt visited the Kolo Mission, which took two days by rail and one by wagon, after departing from Cape Town.¹⁵⁵ H. C. Olmstead had to leave Barotseland due to the climate, so he was assigned to assist Brother Emerson at Kolo instead. On October 4, 1908, he left Kolo for Maranatha Mission to participate in the dedication of the new church building there. Since the dedication was postponed, he went with F. B. Armitage in a covered spring wagon with six bullocks on an evangelistic trip. They returned in time to dedicate the new church at the Maranatha Mission. The new stone building was 26 by 36 feet and interested both white and black people who attended the dedication. Hyatt used the occasion to hold a lantern evangelistic meeting. “The Bible scenes deeply impress the native mind,” he observed. “Many of them think that the gospel story is only a white man’s lie.”¹⁵⁶ It was only through their lived experience, as people saw that they genuinely came to help them and viewed themselves in an incarnational way as someone who only desired their good and truly

loved them and appreciated their culture, that they could become effective in reaching the indigenous African tribes around them.

Gospel Wagon

Hyatt returned to the Cape in time to meet R. C. Porter and his wife, Hattie, on November 2, 1908.¹⁵⁷ Porter officially became president during the fourth session of the South African Union Conference (Dec. 24, 1908 to Jan. 3, 1909), and W. S. Hyatt served as vice-president.¹⁵⁸ Now that a new administrator had finally arrived, he was able to assist with the Maranatha Mission. He went with his brother-in-law, F. B. Armitage, to hold more evangelistic meetings.¹⁵⁹ A key ingredient to their evangelism was their school taught by Victoria Sutherland.¹⁶⁰ Most schools required students to pay \$5 a month, but the Adventist Mission featured an industrial school so that students could earn their way. "This has brought our work and teaching prominently before the people," he noted.¹⁶¹ Soon 30 students were enrolled.¹⁶² While Armitage worked on the school, he took a "covered wagon" from village to village, "holding services with the aid of a magic lantern; also doing Christian Help work, and selling and giving away literature."¹⁶³ He explained his strategy:

Wherever we go, the "little wagon" is known, and the people come flocking to us for help. We have given as many as thirty-five fomentations in one day. They come to us with sore eyes, and ears that must be treated, lame shoulders and backs that are hurting them, teeth that must be extracted, and many other complaints. We do what we can for each of these, and seek heaven's blessing upon our efforts, and the Lord does not disappoint us. This work has astonished the natives, for they have never seen a white man assisting them with his own hands before, and making no charges. Many can not [*sic*] understand it. . . . Several persons told me that they had heard about the love of God from their ministers, but this was the first time that they had ever seen it. O that Jesus may be lifted up in our lives that we may reveal him to this poor people!¹⁶⁴

During another ten-day tour, he reported that he conducted 18 services in eight different villages. They offered 150 persons treatments. And when he turned on the magic lantern with its "bright picture on the screen," many of those listening expressed their utter "surprise" that could be better "imagined than expressed in words."¹⁶⁵

From October 15-25, Hyatt participated in the Natal-Transvaal Conference and campmeeting at Troyeville, a suburb of Johannesburg. He noted that R. C. Porter gave "a clear and decided message," calling upon those present to "seek for the unity of the Spirit, and to put away everything that savored of condemnation." Hyatt added that it was the "old covenant" that harbored a spirit of "condemnation," but "the new is joy and peace in the Holy Ghost."¹⁶⁶ As a result of this campmeeting, H. J. Edmed was going to take a "company of workers" to open Mission work in Johannesburg, and the Union Conference committee would start a new quarterly magazine, *South African Signs of the Times*.¹⁶⁷

In early 1910, Hyatt participated with the Porters and other leaders in a Grahamstown Campmeeting on the Cape. About 800 to 1,000 people attended the evening meetings, with 25 tents pitched including a large 50-by-75 foot meeting tent and another dining tent. "Never before have we seen such an interest in South Africa," wrote H. J. Edmed.¹⁶⁸ On May 14, 1910, Hyatt reported a baptism of four young people. "This is the result of the faithful labors of Brother and Sister F. B. Armitage. They sowed the seed; we reaped the harvest."¹⁶⁹ He also reported on two dormitories in addition to a dining room and kitchen. The "varied duties" included gathering the crops and building fences, among other tasks. "The native work in Grahamstown is slowly taking root, and a number are now keeping the Sabbath"¹⁷⁰ He later admitted that "it has seemed well-nigh impossible to reach these people," but by early 1911, he reported that two families had moved out to be closer to the Mission and that school enrollment had increased to 54 pupils.¹⁷¹

Hyatt was ever the believer in distributing Adventist literature, and by 1910, a new edition of *Bible Readings* was translated into the Zulu language. Hyatt had secured a Zulu scholar to read the proof pages, and he hoped that having this book available in the Zulu language would make a significant impact.¹⁷² When F. B. Armitage went to start a new Mission station among the Zulus, the Hyatts took their place at the Maranatha Mission. A special point of rejoicing came in 1911 when Hyatt reported organizing a church at Maranatha Mission.¹⁷³ Soon they had a school with 48 pupils and 14 were baptized. In early 1911, they organized the Maranatha Church with a membership of 27. When W. S. Hyatt was called to become president of the Cape Conference, Claude Tarr took over as superintendent of the Maranatha Mission.¹⁷⁴ The church swelled to 32 members, including 10 Europeans and 22 Africans. Seven more Africans had begun keeping the Sabbath. The province they worked in was larger than the state of Texas, with 1.8 million Africans of this 1.5 million speaking the local language. "There are more natives in the Cape province than there are Europeans in all South Africa. This people must have the truth. It seems to me that plans must be laid to do more for the tens of thousands of civilized and semicivilized natives, and also the large number of heathen among us."¹⁷⁵

From March 16-26, 1911, Hyatt led out in the Bloemfontein Campmeeting, which was jointly supported by the Natal-Transvaal and Cape Colony conferences, along with a meeting of the South African Union Conference. Hyatt was elected president of the Cape Colony Conference with J. V. Wilson as secretary/treasurer.¹⁷⁶ In early 1912, Hyatt was part of the search committee that recommended the purchase of 2,200-acre Spion Kop property to build a new school. The property was the scene of one of the deadliest battles (Jan. 24, 1900) of the Boer conflict, 18 miles outside of Ladysmith.¹⁷⁷

On January 3-19, 1913, he attended the Claremont Campmeeting, where representatives from across Africa were gathered so that they could concurrently also hold the South African Union Conference along with biennial sessions of the Cape and Natal-Transvaal Conferences. Hyatt was especially encouraged by a revival that took place at this campmeeting:

During the fifteen years that I have been in this field, I have never known the Saviour to be presented so clearly and with such power. At the beginning of the meeting the steps to Christ were clearly pointed out, and nearly every one found forgiveness, acceptance, and peace in believing. Then came a call to the higher life in Christ,—the life of continual victory through faith. As the possibility of such a life was presented, God witnessed to the preaching of his word and placed his seal upon this truth. Then as faith grasped these promises of continual victory and the power to live a blameless life in Christ, expressions of confidence such as we seldom hear were heard in the camp.¹⁷⁸

Hyatt, who was especially touched by the Minneapolis 1888 revival with its emphasis upon “Christ and His Righteousness” and its strong holiness emphasis, was now reflecting language that was in line with the growing Victorious Life movement that was an outgrowth of the continued holiness emphasis within Protestant Christianity that rose to prominence with the rise of Fundamentalism during the 1910s. Another important change that occurred at this campmeeting was that participants felt that a change in leadership would be helpful. So, Pastor Herbert J. Edmed was placed in charge of the [Cape Conference](#), and Hyatt became president of the Natal-Transvaal Conference, effectively swapping places with one another.¹⁷⁹

In 1913, Sadie Hyatt requested, after 18 years of service, the opportunity to return on furlough with her daughter Helen.¹⁸⁰ In the meantime, during the summer of 1913, William went on a tour of Missions in Southern Rhodesia, meeting with workers and making plans for the future.¹⁸¹ Meanwhile, the General Conference Committee voted that, should Elder Hyatt see a need to change his field of labor, they would find him a place of service for him back in the United States.¹⁸² Hyatt continued on as acting president of the [South Africa Union](#) while Porter returned to the United States on furlough.¹⁸³ Similarly, Sadie and Helen arrived back in the United States on furlough, finally, in mid-May 1914.¹⁸⁴ They stayed until the beginning of October when they caught a ship from New York bound for England and onward to Cape Town, South Africa.¹⁸⁵ No doubt, as tensions increased and war seemed eminent, especially after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, they knew they had to hurry to return home to Africa before things got worse.

In 1915, Hyatt was re-elected as president of the Natal-Transvaal Conference. He reported that the distribution of literature was having a wonderful effect.¹⁸⁶ Despite the war in Europe, evangelism in South Africa continued. By the end of 1915, he was happy to share that in the previous year, they had added 40 new believers.¹⁸⁷ A major part of this strategy came about from reading Ellen White’s writings about the distribution of Adventist literature. Hyatt shared how this had challenged them to think about how to reach the many rural farmers in the Natal-Transvaal region. By finding a farm directory, they began to mail the *Sentinel* to these farms. They also advertised the booklet, *The World's Crisis*, in three of the leading newspapers, which again prompted deep interest. By 1917, he was happy that they now had 200 members in the Natal-Transvaal and, in addition, they recently built and dedicated a church in Durban.¹⁸⁸ Hyatt called for there to be a church in Johannesburg, and also worked by having two women canvass Pretoria as an entering wedge from which they planned to do more

evangelism.¹⁸⁹ From January 3-13, 1918, they held the biennial meeting of the Natal-Transvaal Conference in the newly constructed Johannesburg church building.¹⁹⁰ They baptized 12 and dedicated the new church on the final Sunday of the session.¹⁹¹

By 1919, with the outbreak of the global influenza pandemic, the church was forced to curtail public evangelism.¹⁹² He also reported that one of his greatest challenges, in a region where the Dutch language was so predominant, the inability to find people who could speak the language. At the 1920 Spion Kop Campmeeting, William Hyatt's son, W. L. Hyatt, along with J. J. Birkenstock, were ordained to the gospel ministry.¹⁹³ Four new churches were admitted into the sisterhood of churches (bringing the total to eight), and their membership was now 308 (an increase of 55 members over the past year).¹⁹⁴ In 1921, after many years of service, Hyatt was called to leave the Natal-Transvaal Conference to serve as secretary of the Home Missionary Department for the South African Union Conference.¹⁹⁵

When W. H. Anderson went to seek out new mission openings, Hyatt went with him in March 1921 to the Bechuanaland Mission to support the pioneer work begun there. He afterward held three evangelistic meetings at that Mission. At the Mission headquarters at Mafeking, there was a school with 80 students. In places where they field was "closed" to them, they were mailing a "club" of Adventist periodicals.¹⁹⁶ His "many years of faithful service" gave him stability as he "efficiently" carried out "the burdens of superintendent of the Bechuanaland Mission."¹⁹⁷ This effectively freed up Anderson, who went with Arthur H. Kretchmar to follow up on an opportunity to enter Mafeking. Twice they were given permission, and twice this permission was revoked. Thanks to the intervention of Nora Anderson, they were given permission a third time to conduct medical missionary work so long as they didn't hold church services or establish a school.¹⁹⁸ Then at the Union camp meeting in Bloemfontein (November 23 to December 3, 1922), Hyatt was elected as president of the Natal-Transvaal Conference once again (with Anderson returning to the Bechuanaland Mission).¹⁹⁹ Hyatt also noted that at this strategically significant meeting, with George B. Thompson and W. E. Howell who were with them from the General Conference, they voted to unite the "native work" with the "European." Before this, they had "been kept quite separate" with "different management," but it was felt if they united them together this be a "great change" that would be more financially and administratively efficient.²⁰⁰

Hyatt continued to be interested in other groups that might otherwise be overlooked, notably "a large number of the natives of India" who had emigrated to South Africa as servants on various plantations.²⁰¹ Sometime earlier, M. C. Sturdevant had begun work and converted several Indian nationals. Now, Hyatt with S. J. Stevenson were holding meetings in Durban and attracting attention from this ethnic group. He reported that that they were especially responsive, like other people groups, to listening to presentations with the "magic lantern."²⁰²

In 1924 at the annual conference, leaders realized that, due to his health and many years of service, it was time "that a younger man should be chosen to lead out in this conference."²⁰³ The General Conference, with great reluctance, released W. S. Hyatt and F. B. Armitage, on permanent return.²⁰⁴ Before leaving, he spent August and

September 1924 participating in six meetings in Rhoesia.²⁰⁵ On November 25, 1924, he wrote that he “never expected to become an old man, for I felt sure that Jesus would come before that time; but still He tarries and now they call me the ‘old man.’”²⁰⁶ He professed his continued faith that the return of Jesus was near.

Later Service and Legacy

The Hyatts returned to the United States, arriving in New York on May 27, 1925. They arrived with their two daughters and traveled with F. B. Armitage and his wife and two daughters.²⁰⁷ Upon their return to the United States, the Hyatts regularly spoke at Adventist campmeetings, raising awareness about Adventist missions. He rejoiced that, since the early beginnings, over their 27 years, they rejoiced that now there was over 15,000 believers.²⁰⁸ Ever the revivalist, he was popular for his Christ-centered presentations that exalted Christ.²⁰⁹

Hyatt was a delegate at the 1926 General Conference Session, his first one since 1905.²¹⁰ He reported on the “wonderful privilege” it was to attend and reported on the great work Christ had done in his own personal life. In 1927, they spent time in the Lake Union assisting with training workers and outreach efforts in Chicago.²¹¹ By early 1928, the African Division extended an invitation for them to return to Africa.²¹² In early June 1928, he conducted the funeral for his lifelong friend, James Edson White (1849-1928), in Otsego, Michigan.²¹³

On December 22, 1928, they sailed on the *City of Palermo* during their return to Africa.²¹⁴ He pastored the Pretoria Church until declining health caused him to retire to Durban, where he lived with his daughter. In his later years, he wrote articles, prepared sermons, and wrote many encouraging letters. A favorite theme of his, no doubt from the 1888 General Conference, was sharing about the “righteousness of Christ.” He expressed gratitude that he could return to serve in Africa. In America, there was an abundance of older workers, but in South Africa there were many important churches that didn’t necessarily have a regular preacher. He felt this was a ministry he could do while mentoring a younger generation of church workers. He was especially happy that Africa had now supplied more workers than had come over from the United States, a significant turning point in his estimation.²¹⁵ At the 1930 General Conference Session, after the 1929 Stock Market Crash, John L. Shaw as treasurer of the General Conference made an appeal that the denomination faced a crisis before the Mission Board due to the “sharp recession in revenue since the crash in the financial world.” Those present pledged \$92,000 including a personal check from W. S. & Sadie Hyatt for \$500 to support the worldwide missionary work of the Adventist Church. Although they had been lifelong missionaries, they gave sacrificially from their own personal savings.²¹⁶ By 1932, he noted that over the previous four years, the Pretoria Church had grown from 56 to 141 members.²¹⁷ They also began making plans to start a church school.²¹⁸ All the way to the end of his life, he continued to try to help people understand a more grace-based understanding of Adventist theology. One of his very last articles was focused on Jesus Christ as “Our Advocate” in the heavenly courts above in need of divine grace.²¹⁹

William Hyatt died at Helderberg, South Africa, on January 14, 1936. He was buried in [Helderberg College Cemetery](#).²²⁰ Sadie died on April 28, 1938, and is buried in Stellawood Cemetery in Durban.²²¹ Sadie was described as being “much loved by the African people.”²²² William was especially known for his organizational and financial ability. M. E. Kern described him as “an untiring worker and a valued counselor” whose example was “of a well-spent life.”²²³ At the 1936 General Conference Session, he was listed in the honor role of church workers who had passed away.²²⁴ Another person described him as a “noble soul” who was an “earnest laborer” in the cause.²²⁵ Mrs. F. MacDonald remembered Elder Hyatt “as one of our bravest and most rigorous leaders” as she grew up. “His voice rang out thousands of times, calling to godliness and consecration.”²²⁶

The Hyatts had two daughters and a son: Helen Mary Hyatt (1883-1966), Hattie Sarah Hocking (1886-1979), and Willis Leroy Hyatt (1891-1968). They also had one adopted daughter: Rose Dell Watts (1901-1979).

Hyatt was a major force in pushing the missionary work of Adventism to shift from a focus on those descended from the “European races” to working for the “native” or African peoples. He reflected that, during his first few years, his time was exclusively devoted to reaching those Europeans, and then shifted to dividing time between working for both, and then from about 1908 onward, he “labored almost exclusively for the natives.” He then resumed administrative work, but a hallmark of his missionary leadership and example was to focus the missionary work of the Adventist Church in South Africa to reach the indigenous people groups.²²⁷

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