

# Boyd, Clarence Jesse (1877–1966)

GLENN O. PHILLIPS

Glenn O. Phillips, Ph.D. (Howard University, Washington, D.C.), although retired, is actively writing, researching, lecturing, and publishing. He was a professor at Morgan State University, Howard University, and the University of the Southern Caribbean. He has authored and published numerous articles, book reviews, and books, including "The African Diaspora Experience," "Singing in a Strange Land: The History of the Hanson Place Church," "African American Leaders of Maryland," and "The Caribbean Basin Initiative."

Clarence Boyd was a pioneering educator and administrator, serving for more than 40 years within the United States of America and in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Clarence Jesse Boyd was the oldest son of a U.S. Midwest farmer-carpenter and his wife. He was born in Muncie, Indiana, on October 10, 1877.<sup>1</sup> His early education was stretched out over many years and schools because of his need to assist his father in his work as a farmer. Nevertheless, he persevered and completed high school. Soon after becoming a Seventh-day Adventist, Boyd enrolled at the Battle Creek College in 1899.<sup>2</sup>

Boyd had completed only two years at Battle Creek College when he was invited to teach at the Sheridan Industrial School (now Fox River Academy) in Sheridan, Illinois. After a year there, he was invited to the Beechwood Manual Junior Academy in Fairland, Indiana, where he taught during the 1902–1904 school years.

Boyd's first leadership position was at the Alpharetta Intermediate School in Georgia, where his young wife, Marie, was the only other teacher.<sup>3</sup> She had been one of the leading teachers at the previous school. They taught there for two years, and after this adventure, Professor Boyd and his wife were asked to join the teaching staff at Oakwood Junior College in Huntsville, Alabama. They remained there for 11 years. For his last 4 years



Clarence Jesse Boyd.

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

there, he was the principal, and he served in that position for the longest period of any principal up to that time. Under his leadership, the Oakwood Junior College expanded its academic offerings to students and graduated its first theology student in 1911.<sup>4</sup>

At the end of World War I, Professor Boyd envisioned establishing an Adventist training school for Africans in South Africa, but government authorities there declined the offer. So, he agreed to attempt a similar boarding school when the newly formed Inter-American Division was created in 1922 and headquartered in the American Canal Zone bordering Panama, where thousands of West Indians worked.

In the Canal Zone, Professor Boyd quickly established the West Caribbean Junior College with a beautiful campus and led out in the operation of this boarding school from 1920 to 1924.<sup>5</sup> He was next assigned to create a similar school in Trinidad, which he named East Caribbean Training School and located it in the Maracas Valley in the heart of the island's northern mountain range.

Boyd founded this school on August 27, 1927, and proved to be one of the most transformational principals of this boarding school. The name of the school changed over the decades as the mission and programs changed, and the academic offerings expanded until it received university status in March 2006.<sup>6</sup> It is a respected institution of higher learning in the eastern Caribbean, presently named the University of the Southern Caribbean, located on the same 59 hectares (146 acres) that he personally selected after visiting more than 40 sites across the Trinidadian landscape.

During his first and only year at the helm of this institution, Boyd almost single-handedly set in motion various activities on the new campus, inaugurating a building plan on the former cocoa plantation and developing an academic program that was followed for decades. He set out to construct a series of buildings from a master plan that he created and most of the subsequent early principals followed. He oversaw the construction of the first building, Cedar Hall, which housed a wide cross section of campus activities from administrative offices to classrooms, dining hall, and men's residence hall, using student labor. Cedar Hall, constructed of primarily Trinidadian lumber, remained in use for 88 years.<sup>7</sup>

Boyd's sudden departure from the school was the result of escalating health challenges. He retired from his mission field challenges to receive medical care and later worked at Loma Linda Sanitarium and Hospital for more than 10 years.

Professor and Mrs. Boyd had one son, Harold, who attended Emanuel Missionary College (now Andrews University) with his father, graduating at the same time in 1925. He later studied medicine at Loma Linda University Medical School, followed by successfully practicing his profession in California. Mrs. Boyd predeceased her husband after an automobile accident near their home on January 20, 1964, less than a year after their 60th wedding anniversary. Boyd completed his autobiography soon after her untimely death, entitled, "School Memories, Seventh-day Adventist Schools as I Saw Them," and dedicated its contents to the memory of his wife, whom he wrote was equally responsible for all that they had accomplished during their decades of

service to Adventist schools both in the United States and the Caribbean. He died in Loma Linda, California, on December 13, 1966,<sup>8</sup> and was interred there.

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## NOTES

1. "Clarence J. Boyd obituary," *Pacific Union Recorder*, May 8, 1967, 7.
2. Clarence J. Boyd, "School Memories, Seventh-day Adventist Schools as I Saw Them" (unpublished autobiography, Loma Linda, Calif., 1965).
3. Ibid.
4. Mervyn A Warren, *Oakwood! A Vision Splendid, 1896–1996* ([Huntsville, Ala.]: Oakwood College, 1996), 90.
5. E. E. Andross, "The West Caribbean Training School," *Inter-American Messenger* 1, no. 2 (October 1927).
6. Glenn O. Phillips, *The Making of a Christian College: Caribbean Union College, 1927–1977* ([Port-of-Spain], Trinidad: College Press, 1977), 13–22.
7. Glenn O. Phillips. "Commemorating the Ninetieth Anniversary of USC, 1927–2017." *USC Celebratory Ninetieth Commemorative Journal* ([Port-of-Spain], Trinidad: College Press, March 19, 2017).
8. "Clarence J. Boyd obituary"; Phillips, "Commemorating the Ninetieth Anniversary of USC."

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