



Boys Hostel, Coimbatore, 1915

The Chronicles of Spicer- Episode II

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Welcome back to The Chronicles of Spicer! In the first episode, we glimpsed the founding of South India Training School (SITS) at Coimbatore in 1915. We highlighted that missionaries established the school to train Adventist youth for gospel missions. In this episode, we will visit the story of SITS during its roughly two years stay at Coimbatore. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of historical data concerning the Coimbatore years. Therefore, our story is based on scantily available information.

SITS MAKES PROGRESS

When SITS began operating in 1915 in rented quarters, they had up to the ninth grade. It was upgraded to the tenth grade by January 1916, making it the only Adventist mission school in the country aside from Annfield school (later Vincent Hill School) in Mussoorie to offer up to the tenth grade. In the last episode, it was

pointed out that students of grades 1-4 were taught in the vernacular language, students of grades 5-7 in both the vernacular and English, and students of grades 8-10 in English. This learning method was most likely adopted to facilitate the learning process and acclimate the students to the English language. This is understandable, and a wise move, as most students had no prior knowledge of English before joining SITS.

Students were instructed in many subjects to give them a well-rounded education possible. The Bible was the core subject for all students. It was compulsory for grade 9 and 10 students to study the course Bible Doctrines, which dealt with the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Grade 8 students had to study the Acts of the Apostles and the Life and Works of Apostle Paul. The lower classes studied the Old Testament History course. Students also received practical training.

Some boys worked in the office while the girls learned sewing. Such efforts not only helped the students to become more effective workers but also increased the financial sufficiency of the institution in some ways. Work programs would become the hallmark of SITS and Spicer for more than a century after its establishment.

Many graduates of SITS entered denominational service. In 1917, five of the seven students who completed the tenth standard entered mission work. Two students joined Nazareth school as teachers in 1917. Most of the mission workers in various mission entities of South India Mission were trained at SITS, thus, making it indispensable for Adventist work in India.

MISSIONARY LABORS

Principal Gentry G. Lowry wasted no time carrying out the South India Training School plans. True to its purpose, the school became a station to carry out missionary work. Students were organized into bands under leaders and sent out to conduct gospel meetings and distribute literature in the surrounding villages. Besides, some students formed a preaching band to engage in preaching. As a result of such efforts, new members were added, and new churches were established in nearby villages. One such church was organized in mid-1916 with 29 members.

There were many challenges, such as the plague outbreak, which was not uncommon in India. In 1915, one broke out, which affected Coimbatore and made educational and mission work difficult. However, mission workers continued their visitation and preaching on a reduced scale and with precautionary measures. Such was the commitment of workers.

It was apparent to Adventists that SITS was becoming the center of denominational activities. It often served

the south Indian territory as the venue for many mission general meetings. It also facilitated baptisms in the area. For instance, on September 23, 1916, nine people were baptized, which included two Tamils and seven Malayalees. SITS was one of only six places in the India Union Mission with an organized Young People's Missionary Volunteer society (YPMV). This society played a pivotal role in helping Adventist youth to participate in missionary activities.

PIVOTAL CHANGES

The India Union Mission, during its 1916 biennial conference, passed important resolutions concerning mission educational schools in the region, including the organization of mission schools into three levels. Elementary schools would have lower standards up to the seventh grade to prepare students for the mission training schools. This meant that the elementary schools were to serve as feeder-schools for the higher mission schools. Next, mission training schools would have up to the tenth standard to prepare evangelists, teachers, and other workers for the mission field in a particular region, besides preparing students for the Union Training School. The Union Training School, offering two years above the mission training schools, would be the top-tier mission school to prepare evangelists, teachers, and other workers for the field. Such an organization meant that SITS fell in the mission training schools category.

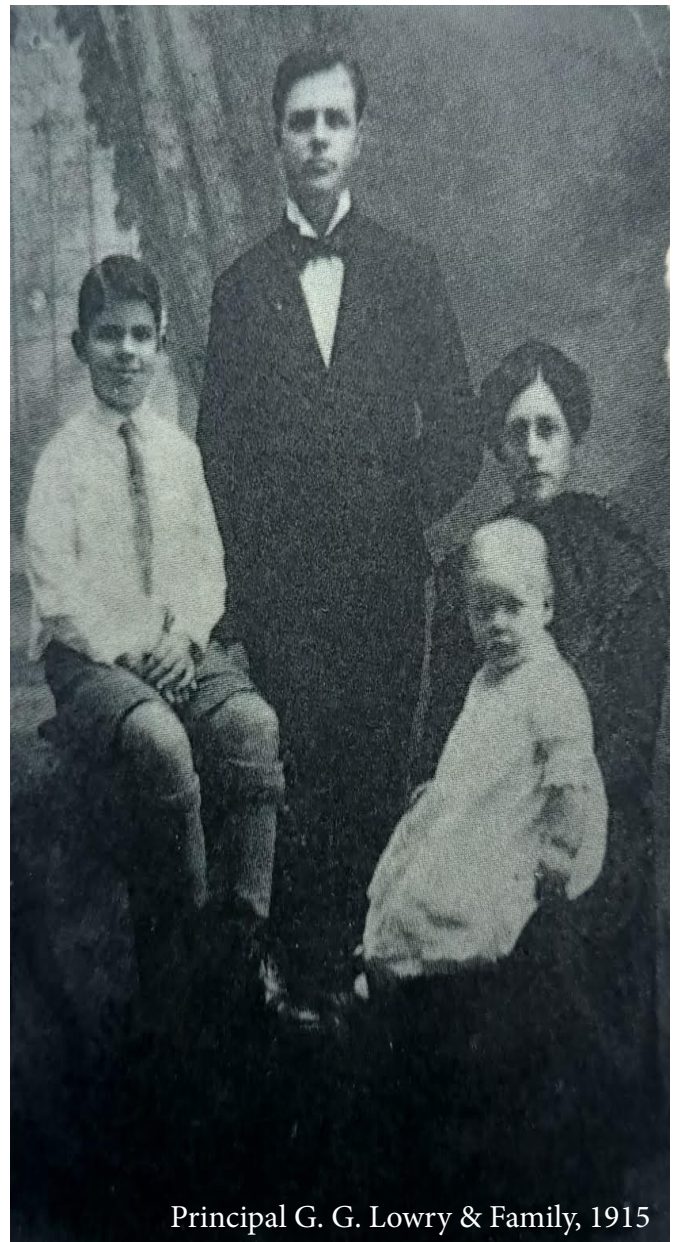
The other pivotal resolution adopted by the union committee during its biennial conference was the recommendation that Adventist mission schools should not seek government recognition. This decision had a long-lasting impact on Spicer as it remained a non-government-recognized institution for

more than a century except for its high school section. They also set up a permanent educational board for the India Union Mission. The board was tasked to supervise all the mission schools throughout the India Union Mission; to provide a uniform course of study; to assist in maintaining proper standards of teaching; to examine and recommend textbooks, and to assist in the development of denominational educational literature. These committee decisions heralded the beginning of more robust supervision and operation of Seventh-day Adventist educational institutions across India Union Mission territory. This had an immediate and direct impact on South India Training School.

SITS MOVES TO BANGALORE

During the annual meeting of the South India Mission, held June 1-10, 1917, at Coimbatore, church leaders voted to relocate the school from Coimbatore to Bangalore, close to the headquarters of the South India Union Mission. Principal Lowry spent three days looking for a suitable place and found a few sites. He eventually settled on a property some miles from Bangalore city. The move from its first home at Coimbatore to Bangalore was made in November 1917, providentially leading to the birth of another institution in the coming years. We will pause the story of SITS here and pick it up in the next episode. Until then, let us labor faithfully for the Lord.

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Principal G. G. Lowry & Family, 1915

*Stay Tuned for
Episode III*