

The Chronicles of Spicer

Episode 1

The Founding of Spicer Adventist University

Our beloved Spicer Adventist University is 106 years old and still surviving. Established by missionaries to train Adventist youth for gospel mission, it remains committed to its purpose. The Chronicles of Spicer is an attempt to trace the history of our alma mater and savor its many beautiful moments over the years. I hope that we will find some pleasure as we revisit the amazing story of Spicer, its vicissitudes, and development through the pages of *The Spicerian*, the voice of Spicer. I sincerely thank Santosh Kumar (editor-in-chief) and his dedicated team for embracing this idea with an open mind and generous heart. I invite you as we begin this epic journey.

Mission School in Nazareth

The history of Spicer has some connection with the mission school in Nazareth town in the beautiful state of Tamil Nadu. A group of Tamils had become Sabbath-keepers through the teaching of Chittampillai, a former Anglican priest. Seventh-day Adventists made communication with these indigenous Sabbath-keepers. These Tamils rejoiced upon learning that there were fellow Sabbath-keepers. They urged the Seventh-day Adventists to visit them and establish a mission school for their children. In 1908, missionary Judson S. James and his family settled among them. The following year, he established a school, the first Adventist mission school in south India. It served as an important educational institution for the Tamil community.

Birth of South India Training School

The increase in school enrollment at Nazareth school and the need to provide higher education for south India necessitated the establishment of another school. Missionaries Judson S. James and Gentry G. Lowry visited Nagercoil, Trivandrum, and Quilon, searching for a site for the new school. After a month-long search, they settled on a plot of land in Coimbatore. The school became known as the South India Training School (SITS), designated as a training school for the South India Mission. By this time, Seventh-day Adventists had caught on the spirit of establishing mission training schools worldwide where they emphasized work and study. Coimbatore was selected due to its favorable climate and proximity to the borders of three language areas (Tamil, Malayalam, and Kanarese). It also had a cooler climate with access to railway connections.

On July 12, 1915, the school opened just four days before Ellen G. White died. It began in a large cotton warehouse with thirteen students—seven girls and six boys. Senior students from the Nazareth

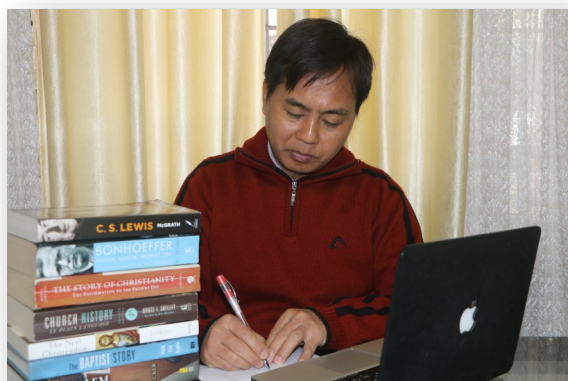
school were transferred to SITS. The warehouse was partitioned in the middle, half serving as a classroom and the other as a residence for boys while the girls were accommodated in a small house near G. G. Lowry's bungalow. Lowry served as the founding principal.

In the first year of SITS, students came from Nazareth, Pondicherry, the Telugu area, and Coimbatore. Initially, instruction for standards 1-4 was given in vernacular; for standards 5-7 in vernacular and English; and for standards 8-10, in English. Students who wished to pursue further education were expected to join the Union Training School in Lucknow. Students were taught various subjects, including Old Testament history, New Testament history, Bible doctrines, church history, English language and literature, vernacular language and literature, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, general knowledge, history of India, geography, chemistry, physics, and physiology. In the first year, there were five teachers. Chinnadoria, a young Tamil with a BA degree who served as the headmaster, taught the higher classes. Gnanasegamoni, the former headmaster of Nazareth school, was another teacher who also acted as the boarding master for the boys. Chinnadoria's wife, who had completed tenth standard, taught most of the classes for the girls. A Bible woman of the Church of England served as the matron for the girls. G. G. Lowry taught the Bible for the higher classes.



Gentry G. & Bertha Lowry

True to its Adventist educational philosophy, students were engaged in valuable and productive manual activities. Besides, students under the leadership of their teachers engaged in evangelistic activities such as distributing literature, visiting villages, and holding meetings. Principal Lowry, in 1915 reported that about one-half of the student body became members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He also expressed his hope that before the end of the school year, every student would have given his or "heart to God and for service throughout the South India mission field. As envisioned by missionaries, SITS truly served the community and the church as a missionary institution during its short residence in Coimbatore.



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