

Claude Lockyer Blandford (1892 – 1968), Ida Mae Matson Blandford (1889 – 1922), and Lillian Louise Thompson Blandford (1895 – 1986)

Gordon E. Blandford (Grandson), August 2016

Source: <http://www.adventisminchina.org/individual-name/expatriates/blandfordcl>

Basic Biographical Information



Vital Statistics: Claude Lockyer Blandford was born on March 2, 1892 in St. John's, Newfoundland and died on March 24, 1968 in Takoma Park, Maryland; Ida Mae Matson Blandford was born on February 26, 1889, in Fitchburg, Massachusetts and died on May 5, 1922 in Chengdu, China; Lillian Louise Thompson Blandford was born on September 24, 1895 in Moosup, Connecticut and died on February 7, 1986 in Hyannis, Massachusetts.

Parentage: Claude L. Blandford was the second son of Capt. Archibald Blandford and Sarah Mary Lockyer Blandford.

Siblings: John Sabbin Blandford, Katie Cecelia Blandford, Maxwell Morrell Blandford, Mona Elizabeth Blandford, Reginald Blandford, Austin B. Blandford, Eloise Blandford, John A. Blandford, Archibald P. Blandford, Jr. and Kenneth Blandford.



Claude & Lillian 1

Marriages: Claude L. Blandford married Ida M. Matson on July 1, 1914. After Ida Mae died in China, Blandford's second marriage was to Lillian Louise Thompson May 24, 1923.

Children: Claude and Lillian adopted a 3-year old of Russian and German heritage from Harbin, Manchuria whom they named Gordon Thompson Blandford.

Education: Ida M. Matson and Lillian L. Thompson, both received their degrees in nursing at the New England Sanitarium. Ida in 1913. Lillian in 1920. Following Ida's marriage to C. L. Blandford on July 1, 1914, Claude and Ida attended Washington Missionary

College where they both were placed under provisional appointment in the Foreign Seminary Department.

Summary of Service: In 1916 they responded to a call from the General Conference to go to China. Claude L. Blandford served as a Seventh-day Adventist minister for more than 52 years, with 21 years in foreign service in China. He was among the first group of missionaries that opened up the Adventist mission in the remote western part of China.

[Family Background and Early Years](#)

When two lay missionary couples, Mr. & Mrs. E. A. Parker and Mr. and Mrs. L.T. Ayres, embraced the gospel commission to go to Newfoundland in 1893, they could not know how far reaching their initial efforts would be. While traveling from Battle Creek to St. Johns, Mrs. Ayres struck up a friendship with Mrs. Anna Pippy, the wife of a St. Johns businessman. Mrs. Ayres shared her faith with Anna, which resulted in her joining the church. She was the first Seventh-day Adventist convert in Newfoundland. Anna shared the message with her sister, Elizabeth Milley, who also embraced the Adventist message of hope and salvation. In 1905, the two ladies started a school in the Pippy home for the children of Adventist members. Elizabeth, who had lost her teaching position with the Church of

England after becoming a Seventh-day Adventist, became Newfoundland's first Adventist church school teacher.

As a result of the ministry of these early converts and lay missionaries, Sarah Lockyer Blandford, wife of Sea Captain Archibald Blandford, joined the Seventh-day Adventist church and shared these truths with her family.

The Blandford's had ten children. Their firstborn, John, only lived a month, but their second son, Claude Lockyer Blandford, would live for 76 years. In spite of the pressure on him to continue in the Blandford's long heritage of seafaring fishermen and boat captains, Claude chose early in life to respond to the call of another "Captain" and become for Jesus Christ a "fisher of men." He would spread the gospel of God's love and grace from Nova Scotia and St. Johns, Newfoundland, more than 10,000 miles away to the Chinese population—a people who, for thousands of years, had no knowledge of a personal living God and yet thought that through their practices and traditions, they could escape pain, embrace love, and become enlightened. They knew not of a living God who loved and cared for them and whose Light could shine upon and through them forever. Claude's heart yearned to bring them this Good News.

At the young age of eight, Claude Blandford was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in St. Johns, Newfoundland. The year was 1900. Five years later, he with two of his younger siblings became Elizabeth Milley's first students in Anna Pippy's home church school. After his completion of elementary school in St. Johns, Claude attended the Seventh-day Adventist academy in Williamsdale, Nova Scotia where he became actively involved in the Missionary Volunteer Society, the Temperance Society, and the raising of money for China missions. The following two passages were from the Canadian Union Messenger published in 1911. These reports give insight into Claude's character and industry—and the fact that China was already on his mind as he entered adulthood.

*“Claude Blandford, the leader of the Young People's Society, is making a strong effort to promote the practice of individual missionary work among the members of the society, by obtaining the promise of nearly all the members to write a missionary letter the following week....”*¹

“A live and active Missionary Society, led by Claude Blandford, served not only to stimulate that spirit of Missionary work in the school, but also afforded a good opportunity to exercise that spirit..... The genuine spirit of self denial is shown by the fact that they (the students) unanimously voted to forgo one of their meals per

day for a stipulated length of time and send the money value for these meals to the famine sufferers in China.”²

After graduating from the academy, he chose to work as a colporteur in Ecum Secum, Nova Scotia. Claude, then twenty years of age, emigrated from Canada to the United States of America, and that summer of 1912 found him in Lowell, Massachusetts, where he assisted with a series of tent meetings.

On July 1, 1914, Claude married Ida Mae Matson. They then moved to Takoma Park, Maryland and enrolled in the Foreign Seminary Department at Washington Missionary College where they took courses to prepare them for their years in mission service. In 1916, they accepted the call of the General Conference to go to serve the Lord in the mission field of China.

Entry to China--1916



On July 26, 1916, they sailed on the steamship “China” with the largest company of missionaries ever sent out by this denomination to the Asiatic Division.

“China always seemed to me the land of greatest need,” wrote Blandford in a statement co-signed by Ida Mae, “Today we are satisfied that the need of China is greater than we ever anticipated. And to have the opportunity of laboring for these people is a joy indeed. Our ideas of hardship in this field have vanished. It seems that our pathway lies in pleasant places. While we expect to meet great difficulties, our help is sufficient. It is

God’s work. He will not forsake it. Why should we?”³

Soon after the group of missionaries arrived in Shanghai it was voted that Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Blandford and Dr. and Mrs. J. N. Andrews should head West some 900 miles to Sichuan 四川 (Also been romanized as Szechwan or Szechuan in some of the earlier literature), the largest province in China, with a population of close to 70 million. Elder and Mrs. M. C. Warren were heading up the work in Chongqing 重庆 (Also been romanized as Chunking), the commercial and industrial center of

China. At the time, this was the only place in the area with an established Seventh-day Adventist Mission.



Opening the Work at Chengdu, Sichuan

Chengdu 成都 (Also been romanized as Chengtu), the capital of the province of Sichuan, West China, situated in the center of a plain of the same name, is 1,678 feet above sea level and has a population of nearly half a million.^{4a,15} From the time of the Chou dynasty (1122-255 B.C.) onward, it has been the most important city in West China--a rich city of business and learning. Aside, from the various imperial capitals, Chengdu has exercised a more decisive influence upon China's history than any other city.

Greetings of Our Missionaries from Across the Pacific

We, the members of the missionary party en route to the Far East, thinking you would appreciate a message from the largest party of missionaries ever sent out by the Seventh-day Adventists, send you this letter with our signatures. Our party numbers forty-two adults and six children. A man and his wife will locate in Japan, one or two families in the Philippines, one in Malaysia, and the rest in China.

Our voyage has been a safe and very pleasant one, with but little seasickness and few stormy days. We appreciate very much the privilege we have had of associating together for almost a month, and the ties of friendship formed will not

soon be broken. We have enjoyed Elder Porter's Bible studies and Elder Cottrell's language lessons.

We were privileged to spend one day in Hooahala, where one hundred and twenty sat down and dined picnic fashion in the shade of a banyan tree, and we spent three days in Yokohama. In both places our brethren made our stay very pleasant and profitable.

Our experiences during this voyage have increased our faith in the promise of God, and have led us to understand better our mission to the East. Realizing that there will be a glad reunion when the work is finished, we give ourselves heart and soul to our task, and feel assured that you will share in the reward for whatever success God may give us.

R. F. Cottrell	Rob. Porter
Myrtle B. Cottrell	Wm. R. C. Pettit
Henry B. Parker	E. J. Wagoner
Mrs. Irene S. Parker	Wm. Wagoner
Judith S. White	S. L. Frost
Alice Jane White	Ella K. Frost
Otto B. Kuhn	Blanche R. Blandford
Mary Gola-Kuhn	Jan. Matson Blandford
Emel Payne White	Lottie Lucas Springer
Ray D. Loveland	M. G. Conger
Wm. Wagoner	Wayne P. Barts
Richard J. Briggs	Edith Baines Barts
Clara Richmond Brown	Dr. John N. Andring
R. C. Morris	Brotherpieces Andrews
Florence Sherman Morris	H. R. Stewart
Anna Matthews Wink	Mrs. H. O. Stewart
Mrs. J. E. Fulton	S. Amy Jacques
Jessie E. Fulton	Mrs. David R. Jacques
Charles Frank Lawrence	Mrs. M. M. R. Jacques
Napier Blandford	Mrs. M. M. R. Jacques

After spending months in Language study and training to minister to the Chinese people, the Blandfords gathered their belongings and headed to Chengdu. Chengdu was the second Adventist Mission station to be opened in Sichuan province. It was about 400 miles by road, northwest of Chongqing, where the first Adventist mission station was located, headed by M.C. Warren. Claude described their journey:

"It is distant from Chungking, our nearest mission station, about four hundred miles by road, but in point of time, it is farther than from Boston to San Francisco. The mode of travel is by sedan chair or on horseback. The dangers of travel in the province at the present time are very great. On November 12, 1917, accompanied by Mrs. Blandford, a native evangelist, his family, and a Bible worker, we

started from Chungking to Chengdu. I rode my horse, while the others rode in sedan chairs. With six chairs, and about thirty men carrying our combined goods we formed quite a caravan.

"...after traveling for 11 days, we arrived in Chengdu and took possession of the Chinese house that Brother M. C. Warren and I had rented on a previous trip. The house is new and clean, but has only paper windows so far. We have had a chimney built, and expect to have glass put in the windows soon."^{4a}



As the sun set in the western sky of China that Friday evening, Ida and Claude, more than 400 miles from their fellow missionaries, welcomed in the Sabbath with hearts full of joy, thanksgiving, and anticipation. They were thrilled to be an integral part in the Great Advent Movement. They sensed God's presence and knew that the Holy Spirit would guide them in their ministry as they told the waiting hearts of the love of God. Claude penned the following record of the beginnings of their efforts:

“After our arrival we placed a notice in the daily newspaper, inviting those who had become interested in our message during our former visits and through the Signs magazine to call on us. Every day now interested persons come, and at all hours of the day I hear our native evangelist Brother Li Fah Kung, giving studies on the Sabbath, the Second Coming, and the books of Daniel and Revelation. Our evangelist is a thorough man, and trains the interested ones in an in-depth way. We believe we are building our work here on a rock foundation. Our budget calls for a new family for Chengdu in 1918. We wonder who will join us in the work here. Pray for us here in Chengdu.”^{4a}

There were several incidents in this period of time that Claude Blandford recounted to his son in later years. At one stage, the Blandford's stayed in a house that was not too far from a Buddhist monastery in Tibet. Claude recalled how he was awoken in somewhat of a fright one morning at 4 am by the loud chants of 400 Buddhist monks. Due to the mountainous ranges, Claude had to travel by horse back for some 350 miles almost each week to visit his churches and congregations.

During one of these journeys, he met a 16 year old Chinese college graduate by the name of Huang Zijing 黃子敬, with whom he had Bible studies. Soon Huang decided to be baptized and joined the Adventist Church. Huang was among the early Chinese who were ordained to the Adventist ministry. Later on, Huang joined the teaching staff at the China Training Institute at Chiao Tao Tseng. Sadly, Huang was killed by the Japanese military during a raid of our Chiao Tao Tsseng institution. He became a well-known martyr in Chinese Adventist circle and was among those remembered by a bell tower memorial erected at the ground of Hong Kong Adventist College .⁵

Claude's record of their ministry continues to give us some insight into their pioneering experience in Chengdu:

"We are well into our second year of work at this station. Our first year began with nothing but hopes and ended with a realization of some of these: one of which is an organized church, which now consists of thirteen members."^{4b}

Organizing The West China Union Mission



The West China Meeting opened May 16, 1919 in Chunking. In attendance were Brother and Sister C. L. Blandford, who with a delegation of four, besides evangelist Li and his family, came from Chengdu down the Min and the Yangtse Rivers by houseboat.

"I was glad to find Brother and Sister Blandford looking hardy and strong, and to note their courage in the work. It seemed hard, however, to bid them

goodbye as they started back to the populous Chengdu Plain with no evangelist to go with them. Evangelist Li, who has pioneered the way with them, has failed in health, and must return to his Hunan home. There was no one to take his place.”

“In organizing the union mission, three missions were formed out of Szechwan. These are East Szechwan, population about 35,000,000, headquarters in Chungking, Elder Warren acting superintendent. West Szechwan, Chengdu the headquarters, with about 25,000,000, C. L. Blandford superintendent. The Tibetan Mission, the border land, 8,000,000 population, Dr. J. N. Andrews, superintendent, Tatsienlu, the headquarters.”⁶

Blandford Ordained, September 1921

According to I.H. Evans, the then President of the Asiatic Division, Brother and Sister Blandford continued to labor alone for four years in the West Sichuan Mission. In fact, West Sichuan had led in the number of baptisms during this period

“At this time our membership is twenty-two. Our work in Chengdu, Szechuan, was opened in the fall of 1917. During the union meeting held in the spring of 1919, Chengdu with its surrounding' territory was organized with the standing of a provincial mission, and is now known as the West Szechuan Mission. The territory of this mission is about as large as the province of Hunan, and with a population equal to, if not larger than, that province. “Besides our work in Chengdu we have one out-station where there is a small company of believers. There are calls coming to us to open work in two other places, at one of which there are several Sabbath-keepers. “We are conducting one boys' school of Primary and Higher Primary grade, with an enrollment of sixty-two pupils. With a better force of native workers, we expect to have much larger results in all departments next year. “We have recently purchased a piece of land in the city for homes and headquarters. The lot measures 188 feet, with an outlook upon several temples with acres of large trees. With new buildings, returning students, and the Lord's added blessing, we expect much fruit from this very prosperous section of Szechuan.”⁷

On the last Sabbath of the West China Union Mission meetings, September 3-13, 1921 in Chongqing, the new Chongqing chapel was dedicated, and a consecration service was held at the same time, in which all the members present rededicated

their lives to the finishing of this work. . . .Brethren C.L. Blandford and Hsu Ru Lin were ordained at the close of the service.

The hearts of the workers in West China were greatly cheered to have three new families join their working force. It was arranged that Brother S.H. Lindt should go to Chengdu to become acquainted with the work and carry it on while Brother Blandford is absent next year on furlough.

Passing of Ida Mae Blandford

The Blandford's returned to Chengdu and for the first time in four years had a new home to live in as well as fellow laborer's to work with. After four years of being ten days distance from any foreign colleagues, Mr. & Mrs. S.H. Lindt joined them, and together they worked side by side in preaching the message of salvation. Truly it was a time to be encouraged and happy.

Ida Blandford, with her bubbling personality, served as secretary of the West Szechwan Mission Sabbath School. She also used her God-given talents as she taught four classes in the Primary Mission School which they had established as one of their first missionary endeavors. She was deeply loved and appreciated for her selfless, dedicated service to the Chinese children and their families. Without warning, at age 32, she was struck down with illness. She developed pleurisy which turned into pneumonia which became complicated by meningitis. In spite of desperate medical attempts to save her, she died on May 5, 1922, and was buried in a little cemetery just outside the city. Grieving friends and students took solace in the words and scripture which Brother Lindt shared. "She rests from her labors but her works follow her. The Savior for whom she labored will call forth His sleeping servants, and take them to be forever with Him."

*"The West Szechwan Mission has its headquarters at Chengdu, the capital of Szechwan, with a population of over half a million. Pioneer work in this field was done by Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Blandford, who entered the field in 1917, and labored on alone for four years in sickness and war and plague, hoping monthly that help would come. Not till the fall of 1921 was it possible to send Mr. and Mrs. S. H. Lindt to assist them. Outstations were then opened. As the work was being thus established on a strong footing, Mrs. Blandford was removed by death."*⁸

After Ida Mae died, Claude continued working at Chengdu for another nine months. Tribal wars had ravaged the territory and Claude often preached three

times a day to encourage the people. With broken heart and broken health, he returned to the United States for furlough and medical care on March 24, 1923.

Return to China



While under treatment at the New England Sanitarium and Hospital, he was often assigned to nurse Lillian Thompson. He became impressed with her skills and compassion and she with his stories of China and his sense of humor. They continued to see each other after his discharge from the hospital and started planning a life of service together in China. They married in May of 1923.

When it was determined that both Lillian and Claude Blandford were in sufficient good health, they sailed from Vancouver on July 31, 1924 to resume the work at Chengdu. Blandford gave a report of the many changes that took place during the next two years:

“During the past two years great changes have taken place in the city of Chengdu. At the order of General Yang Sen streets have been widened, and most of the main thoroughfares are now paved. A similar work is going forward on all other streets. Ricksha companies are running several thousand good rickshas. Two motor companies have been organized and motor buses are running across town. Several motor roads have been opened to nearby cities and bus service has commenced to these points.”

“Such modern changes mean much to the finishing of the work in West Szechwan. Recently I made a trip by bus in a little over two hours that formerly had occupied a full day on horseback.

“The work in West Szechwan during the past two years has made progress. Last year seventeen believers were baptized and new interests were opened in three places. Our literature returns for the first quarter of 1926 were greater than the whole of 1925. A recent report from one worker is the sale of \$240 worth of literature to a single individual in Chengdu. There are good gains in other departments. We expect the tithe receipts for 1926 to more than double those of 1925. A German business man, twenty-four years in China, accepted present truth this year in Chengdu.

“We regret that on account of ill health (we) have had to lay down the work in Chengdu, the mission in this place having been opened by the writer in 1917. Recently the committee voted our return to America. However, since arrival in Shanghai, Mrs. Blandford has made considerable gain. We therefore surrendered our tickets and plan to spend the summer at Tsingtao. If there is continued improvement, we hope to continue in this field where health conditions are favorable.

“We are glad to report the safe arrival of Brother and Sister C. L. Blandford in Shanghai from Chengdu, West China, after a somewhat perilous journey down river. On several occasions during the trip their boat was fired on, and it was only by crouching down on the floor of their cabin in the safest place they could find that they escaped the bullets that entered through the portholes. When the danger was past, and they could investigate the damage done by the firing, they counted nineteen bullet holes in garments that had been hanging up in the cabin. Surely the angel of the Lord was at hand to protect those workers in this time of danger.”⁹

God continued to bless their efforts. From Beijing (formerly Peking), October 2, 1927 Claude writes, “On the last Sabbath of the quarter we held, in Tientsin, a baptismal service in which twelve received this rite. Yesterday eight were baptized here in Peking.”

As Claude worked in the Manchurian Union eventually the way was opened for him to go to Dairen.

*“For many years we have wanted to open work in the city of Dairen, Manchuria's large seaport, but the excessive rent has forbidden the rental of even a place for a worker to live and do personal work. This year the Lord has opened the way, and C. L. Blandford has settled there to open work. We secured a large room, part of the Chamber of Commerce building, in which to hold meetings, and this location will be a great help in advertising. So the Lord is with His work here in Manchuria, and it is going forward. . . .”*¹⁰

It was during their time in Manchuria that Claude and Lillian learned about a homeless boy from Harbin. Without meeting the boy in person, the couple decided to adopt him as their own son and provided a home for him. Because it took over two days journey to go from Dairen to Harbin, it was Elder Nathan Brewer who brought the child from Harbin to the Blandford's. That boy was originally from Russia and could not speak a single word of English. But now he found a Christian home in which Claude and Lillian loved him as their own child. It was providential that, a homeless drifter on the streets of Harbin, who is now known to us as Gordon Thompson Blandford, had become the son of the Seventh-day Adventist missionary couple, Claude and Lillian, in the remote northeastern part of China. Elder Gordon Thompson Blandford later became a minister of the Gospel and served the church for over forty years.⁵

After some time in Dairen, Claude and Lillian were invited to join the staff of the China Training Institute in Chiao Tou Tseng. Lillian taught music, while Claude served as the Bible and History teacher. Their time of service was cut short however when the Japanese occupation forced the evacuation of staff on September 2, 1937. The Blandford's chose to take their furlough with the intent of returning in 1938, but due to the continued occupation, their return was delayed and sadly their time of service in China ended.

From 1916-1937 Claude's ministry in China included service as a Mission Director, Pastor, Evangelist, Editorial assistant, Chaplain, and Professor.

Service in United States Home Field

Upon returning to the USA, the Blandford's bought a small farm in Atkinson, New Hampshire in 1937, where he hoped to regain his health and strength to return to his beloved China. While on furlough and physically able to fulfill the role, Claude served as Chaplain at the New England Sanitarium and Hospital. Lillian also joined the staff of that institution. Claude often shared his experiences from his

years of service in China. When the Reading Rotary Club held their monthly meeting at the Sanitarium, they invited Elder C. L. Blandford to be the principal speaker for their luncheon. He spoke of the Sino-Japanese situation in a very enlightening and educational way. His presentation was voted as the best talk of the entire year. China, and the beloved people he had grown to love as family were often on his mind. He longed to return, but a fall from a roof, resulting in several serious bone fractures, dashed his hopes of further mission service.

That did not dampen the Blandfords' fervor for the Gospel. Wherever they were, he and Lillian poured themselves into service for the Lord. In 1943, Claude accepted a call as pastor of the Philadelphia Temple Church, a group that, at the time, had no church building. On the centennial anniversary of the Great Disappointment, Nov. 23, 1944, the Temple Church dedicated the beautiful building they had acquired that year¹¹. Two years later, Pastor Blandford was broadcasting portions of the Sabbath services of that church over Radio Station WNAR.

In 1946, once again The China Union Mission invited Claude to return to service in China. His previous years of service however had taken a toll on his health. Due to his inability to pass the required medical exam, he informed them with deep regret that he would not be able to accept the call.

Retirement

In retirement, he as first elder, and Lillian as Sabbath School Superintendent, served the Haverhill church district in Massachusetts. Pastor Russell Burrill shares how, when at age 15, he met Pastor Blandford at the Haverhill Church¹². He'd been taking the Voice of Prophecy Bible lessons, to which his parents were strongly opposed. Blandford was teaching the Adult Sabbath School lesson and even at his young age, Burrill appreciated the depth of biblical understanding Blandford conveyed.

After much effort, Russell persuaded his family to attend church with him. The Holy Spirit used Elder Blandford's teaching of the Sabbath School lesson as a means to reach the hearts of the Burrill's. Eventually the entire family was baptized and became members of the Haverhill church. Russell went on to become a pastor himself, and when his beloved Pastor Blandford died, he gave the graveside eulogy, quoting in part, Edwin Markham's poem:

And when he fell in the whirlwind, he went down
As when a lordly cedar, green with boughs,
Goes down with a great shout upon the hills
And leaves a lonesome place against the sky.

Burrill closed the service with these words of conviction about Claude's life¹²: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing."² Timothy 4:7, 8 (KJV).

Claude L. Blandford died on March 24, 1968 in Grasonville, MD and was buried in Moosup, CT. He was a minister for more than 50 years and served 21 years in China. He was survived by his wife, Lillian, and son, Elder Gordon Blandford Sr, pastor of the Grasonville, Maryland SDA Church.

Lillian, who continued to make herself useful wherever she was, lived to age 90, passing peacefully away on February 7, 1986. She was buried in Moosup, CT beside her beloved husband.

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The original article was written by Gordon E. Blandford, grandson of C.L. Blandford

Last updated 10/06/ 2016 by B. Lo