

Mwami Mission Hospital July 1, 2001

I served at Mwami Adventist Hospital in the late 1990's. We celebrated the 70th anniversary of the founding of the hospital in 1997. I collected some of the historical data for that event.

The property for Mwami was purchased from a British farming corporation in 1926 during the British colonial period. The farming corporation held 7,000 acres and they sold half of it (3,500 acres) to the Seventh-day Adventist Church for the Mwami Mission. The original survey had been done in 1901 and they didn't bother to resurvey it at the time of the sale. They just drew a line on the map between two of the existing survey markers splitting the farm down the middle. The original bill of sale is still at Mwami Hospital. While I was there I traced out the property boundaries and found several of the old original survey monuments. Others were missing so I had the government land surveyors come in and resurvey the entire property cutting out the survey lines 20 feet wide. The line that had been drawn on the map in 1926 splitting the original property in half had never been cut out through the wooded areas as is usual when a proper survey is done so I had the surveyors cut it out for the first time

For the 70th anniversary we also erected some cairns identifying the place on the property where Dr. Marcus set up his tent and performed the first surgical operations under a large tree (the tree is still there and is some distance from the present hospital). While clearing the site for the cairn marking the place where Dr. Marcus set up his tent and started surgery on a household table they discovered a pair of old scissors just below the present surface that must have fallen off the operating table onto the ground and got lost. Another cairn was erected at the site of the original water well on the property, which had been long since abandoned and had caved in. Some of the old nationals remembered the spot and pointed out the old depression to me.

Dr. George Marcus was an American and had taken his medical training in the US and when he was appointed by the mission board to go and open the mission hospital at Mwami the British colonial authorities refused to accept his American medical degree and insisted that he take one year additional training in England before they would permit him to practice in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). That delayed the original start up for one year.

Dr. Marcus travelled from Lusaka to Chipata I am told by ox cart. It is a distance of 600 km (375 miles) today. He was deposited at the Mwami Mission property and told to get on with the construction of the hospital. They left him alone and by himself with the nationals and to his own ends. He personally had to oversee the firing of the bricks (in the traditional African way still used today by

the people in rural Zambia) and he had to oversee virtually everything else for the construction of the original hospital building. There were no buildings on the property at that time. It took some real grit to be a pioneer Adventist medical missionary in those days.

A short while after Dr. Marcus arrived at the new Mwami Mission site he was wandering around on the property trying to decide how to get started and he came face to face with a lion. Fortunately they each decided to go their own separate ways and apart from an extra rush of adrenaline Dr. Marcus was unharmed. Today there are no large wild African animals left in that part of Zambia.

Hope you find this information useful for your site.

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