

First Missions – South America

First Missions – Pioneering Workers – South America

Argentina, South America-1919

Revised August 8, 2025

Maurice Hawkins Account

Jack Jackson

Lee Irish Account

William Berger Account

Maurice Hawkins was one of the FIRST four workers to go to South America. His brothers Edgar, Willie, Farring, George and sisters, Leah (Beam), Ida and Elizabeth (Bessie) Hawkins were Americans who professed through George Walker in 1906, after he knocked on the door of their parents' home in Brooklyn, Maryland, and all became workers except Willie.

Jack Jackson is listed on the 1905 Workers list as entering the work in 1901. He came to America in 1904. Jackson remained in South America as Overseer until his death in 1966. He is buried in the British Cemetery in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Robert Darling (on 1905 workers list – died June 9, in 1970) and Millie Griffin (1983) are also buried in the same grave with Jack Jackson, where the custom is to bury three bodies in one grave.

[Additional comments added in bold in brackets.]

Excerpt of an Account by Maurice Hawkins

Jack Jackson **[from Ireland but already working in North America for a number of years]**, Glenn Smith **[Nebraska]**, Herbert Vitzthum **[Minnesota]** and I **[Maurice Hawkins from Maryland]** arrived in Buenos Aires [Argentina] on Dec. 19, 1919, after 28 days on a boat from New York. We spent a week there together... then Glenn and Herbert went on to Rosario. Jack and I hunted a room in a private home in Belgrano **[neighborhood of Buenos Aires]**—quite a task with our limited Spanish. Then we decided to get a job while we learned Spanish, as all our mail was robbed in the Buenos Aires post office. Jack got a teaching job in the National City Bank of New York, Foreign Exchange Division, but had to attend Spanish classes four nights a week, which was fine with me. Glenn and Herbert had the same trouble with their mail in Rosario and their funds were depleted, so Jack advised them to return to Buenos Aires after 3 months. Then Jack and Glenn roomed together, while Herb and I were companions. Glenn got a job at Berlitz, Herbert at Ford Motors.

In November 1920, Ernest Benton **[England]** and Willie Sutter **[not sure where he was from]** arrived in Buenos Aires, and the next week Jack and I went to Córdoba, as Jack was anxious to see that area. We were 3 months there, and then we returned to Buenos Aires and had a couple of days in the park there. Jack and Ernest stayed on in B.A., Herbert and Willie Sutter went to Rosario, and Glenn and I went to Santa Fe. This was Feb. 1921. We got a room with an Italian family and little by little met others, amongst them a German family whom we had visited. In June 1921 we rented an empty room which they had, and after a couple of months we made benches, etc., and began meetings two nights a week. We attended the other churches on the other nights, and quite a number of them came to our meetings, and toward the end of November 1921, some 8 adults had decided. We all returned to B. Aires for our gathering in the park again in Feb. 1922. After that, Jack and Willie Sutter—B.A., Glenn and Ernest B. to Santa Fe, and Herbert and I to Rosario. Jack had met quite a few in B. Aires by this time— amongst them Basilio Alvarez—so in Aug. Herbert went to join Jack and Willie came to Rosario with me. Then Jack and Herbert started meetings and 3 or 4 professed, among them Basilio. **[Basilio was a Spaniard who had emigrated to Argentina at an early age—perhaps with his parents (not sure). Whatever the case, he was only 21 when he started in the work in Argentina in 1924, the first to start in South America. Workers from other parts of Europe had preached in Spain before the Spanish Civil War. After the war, Basilio went back to Spain and spent the rest of his life overseeing the work there until he died in 1985.]**

John Pattison **[Ireland, son of Goodhand Pattison]** and Willie Boles **[Ireland]** arrived in B.A. early in 1923, and at the same time Ruby Pellett **[Minnesota]** and Leah Hawkins **[Maryland, sister of Maurice]** came also, so we had our first real convention in Dalla Rivas' home in Feb. 1923. Bob Darling **[Scotland]** arrived just a week before, so we had 11 workers and about the same number of saints. It was indeed a humble start. **[John Pattison died in Bolivia in 1978.]**

Then on Mar, 16, 1923, Jack and I arrived in Santiago, Chile; after a couple of days we got a room in Providencia **[neighborhood of Santiago]**, and after a couple of months we started meetings in our room, and always seemed to have some attend. In Aug. 1923, Willie Walters **[South Dakota]** and Ernest Hamon **[Ontario]** arrived in Valparaiso **[main port city of Chile]**, and John P. having crossed from Argentina, the five spent a couple of weeks together. Jack then returned to Argentina, and in a few weeks he and B. Smith **[This would be John Robert "Bob" Smith from Virginia, who later married Martha Hogg from Ireland. Bob and Martha worked in many remote areas of Brazil for many years and were definitely the most successful evangelists among the**

workers in Brazil during those years.] went to Brazil. Jack returned to the USA for a visit in 1924. John Pattison and Ernest Hamon went to Chillán; Willie Walters and I in Santiago...**[These last places are in Chile, where Maurice evidently stayed for the rest of his time in South America.]**

[Jack Jackson remained in South America as overseer until his death in Argentina in 1966. Glenn and Maurice later left the work and returned to USA. Herbert returned to USA in 1935 and spent most of the rest of his life as overseer of the US Spanish work based in New Mexico, but covering all the Spanish-speaking areas of the Southwest. Willie Walters and Willie Boles remained in South America until they were very elderly. Robert (Bob) Darling died in Argentina in 1970, and is buried in the same grave as Jack Jackson.]

**Excerpt of Jack Jackson's letter to Andrew Abernethy
November 1929 from South America**

To know there are those who follow us with interest in these lands often stimulates and helps us. Ten years ago today, we were two days out from New York bound southward to the unknown and untried. There isn't so very much to show for the time, but I'd sure hate to have missed the privilege, and we're glad, as also are a few others, that God directed our steps thus. There are also those who will yet rejoice, and it's only God who knows how many on that final day will share in the reward. However, there is no doubt in my mind but that a good share of the same will go to some who never have seen or will see these lands, but yet their prayers and fellowship meant and mean so much. **Our forces now number 40: eight in Brazil, four in Uruguay, 18 in Argentina, 10 in Chile.** About 8 days journey separate the furthest north in Brazil from the furthest south in Chile.

**ARGENTINA by Lee Irish
After visiting South America**

"Reg Edwards came from England to labor in Argentina and was with Basilio in 1931, when Reg fell sick of typhoid fever and died at the age of 31. He was buried in San Rafael, Mendoza, Argentina where he and Basilio were laboring. Reg was the first worker to die and be buried in Argentina. His grave was a simple one with a headstone that had the date of his birth and death and with the words "Un Siervo Fiel del Señor," or "A Faithful Servant of the Lord." Cándida Rodríguez, who was a young lady and a very devout Catholic at the time, saw the grave with the tombstone in its place and was very much impressed with the words on the tombstone...A Faithful Servant of the Lord...She kneeled down at the side of the grave and asked the Lord to help her to have a testimony like that of the person buried there.

"Later, where the workers had their bach in San Rafael, a sister of Cándida lived across the street from the bach and because of this, Cándida knew of the meetings, and this was before she knew of Reg being a worker. Bernard McGovern went to Argentina from the U.S. and was the one that went to be with Basilio after Reg's death, but we can't say who was with Basilio when Candida **[Rodriguez]** began to listen. Cándida and her mother went to a meeting to listen, but only stood at the door when a young man came on a motorbike to the mtg. and he gave the ladies a little shove to enter the room; and being on the inside they had to take a seat. Cándida didn't know it at the time but that man was already professing. Cándida continued to show interest, but the Catholic mother didn't...With time, Cándida professed, but with great opposition in the home. She was already around 30 years of age but still lived at home. Cándida made the connection between the workers and the grave of Reg Edwards in the cemetery. She offered for the work but had to wait for three years for a place with a companion. In 1938 she was given a place. The Catholic mother was so upset with Cándida that she told Cándida that she never wanted to see her again, but Cándida continued to be friendly with her mother through the years and even helped with her care in her last years.

"After some time with a companion in Argentina, Cándida went to Spain to labor where she spent 22 years of her life in the harvest field. She then returned to her native land to spend her last years; and in 1990 she passed from time into eternity and finished with the testimony, "A Faithful Servant of the Lord" that she had prayed for. Since the custom here in Argentina is to put up to three bodies in the same tomb, it was planned that Cándida be buried in the same tomb as Reg Edwards in San Rafael. Two years ago another faithful servant of the Lord finished his race after the conventions in San Rafael, and now Aldo Burzichelli is buried in the same tomb with Reg and Cándida.

"While in San Rafael after the convention meetings, I walked by the place where the workers had their bach when Cándida listened to the Gospel in the early 1930's. The building made of adobe with wooden doors is still standing and a part of it is used as a store. We counted twelve workers that are buried here in Argentina. We passed by the tomb of John Tuft this morning here in Mendoza. He died in 1982 at the age of 78; and since then a native Argentine sister worker, Matea Rodríguez, has been buried in the same tomb. I remember John Tuft being at our conventions in Texas in the 1960's. The great cloud of witnesses that have finished their race encourage us with their silent voice of testimony and as we read....'Though being dead yet speaketh..'"

Account by William Berger

Four workers left from the east coast of the U.S.A. in 1919 to travel by ship to Argentina to carry the Gospel to that land. They were **Jack Jackson, Glen Smith, Herbert Vitzthum, and Maurice Hawkins.** Teaching English, Jack Jackson had Basilio Alvarez as a student. Basilio professed and was the first native worker in Argentina. He later went to Spain to labor in 1946. **Reginaldo Edwards** came from England to labor in Argentina and was with Basilio in 1931 when Reginaldo fell sick of typhoid fever and died at the age of 31. He was buried in San Rafael, Mendoza, Argentina where he and Basilio were laboring. Reginaldo was the first worker to die and

be buried in Argentina. His grave was a simple one with a headstone that had the date of his birth and death and with the words "Un Fiel Siervo Del Senyor", or "A Faithful Servant of The Lord."

Candida Rodriguez, who was a young lady and a very devout Catholic at the time, saw the grave with the tombstone in its place and was very much impressed with the words on the tombstone...A Faithful Servant of The Lord. She kneeled down at the side of the grave and asked the Lord to help her to have a testimony like the one buried there. Later, where the workers had their bach in San Rafael, a sister of Candida lived across the street from the bach and because of this Candida knew of the meetings, and this before she knew of Reginaldo being a worker.

Bernard McGovern went to Argentina from the U.S. and was the one that went to be with Basilio after Reginaldo's death, but we can't say who was with Basilio when Candida began to listen. Candida and her mother went to a meeting to listen but only stood at the door when a young man came on a motorbike to the meeting and he gave the ladies a little shove to enter the room; and being on the inside, they had to take a seat. Candida didn't know it at the time but that man was already professing.

Candida [Rodriguez] continued to show interest but the Catholic mother didn't. With time, Candida professed with great opposition in the home. She was already around 30 years of age but still lived at home. Candida made the connection between the workers and the grave of Reginaldo Edwards in the cemetery. She offered for the work but had to wait for three years for a place with a companion. In 1938 she was given a place. The Catholic mother was so upset with Candida that the mother told Candida that she never wanted to see her again, but Candida continued to be friendly with her mother through the years and even helped with the care of the mother in her last years.

After some time with a companion in Argentina, Candida went to Spain to labor where she spent 22 years of her life in the harvest field. She then returned to her native land to spend her last years and in 1990 she passed from time into eternity and finished with the testimony, "A Faithful Servant of The Lord" that she had prayed for. Since the custom here in Argentina is to put up to three bodies in the same tomb, it was planned that Candida be buried in the same tomb as Reginaldo Edwards in San Rafael. Two years ago another faithful servant of the Lord finished his race after the conventions in San Rafael and now **Aldo Burcichelli** is buried in the same tomb with Reginaldo and Candida.

While in San Rafael after the convention meetings I walked by the place where the workers had their bach when Candida listened to the Gospel in the early 30's. The building made of adobe with wooden doors is still standing and a part of it is used as a store.

We counted twelve workers that are buried here in Argentina. We passed by the tomb of **John Tuft** this morning here in Mendoza. He died in 1982 at the age of 78 and since then a native Argentine sister worker, **Matea Rodriguez** has been buried in the same tomb. I remember John Tuft being at our conventions in Texas in the 60's.

The great cloud of witnesses that have finished their race encourage us with their silent voice of testimony and as we read...Though being dead, yet speaketh...

A brother,

William Berger

1947 Workers List for SOUTH AMERICA

CHILE: Enrique Savage, Carlos Varela, Guillermo Walters, Julio Herrerra, Juan Tuft, Mario Gonzalez, Guillermo Bules Esther Jones, Muriel McKirdy, Josefina Puebla, Morelia Zapata, Margarita Lewis, Violeta Wilson

ARGENTINA: Alton Myers, Carlos Salkeld, Marcelo Marquez, Edgardo Roderick, Jorge Brunick, Juan Baldini, Esteban Stivers, Custodio Rodriguez, Manuel Gallardo, Juan Jackson, Ramon Lynn, Juan Patterson, Reginaldo Beer, Basillio Alvarez Ruby Pellet, Maten Rodriguez, Adelina McGovern, Constancia Sposato, Candida Rodriguez, Sara Camelino, Gladys Coburn, Isabel Misdaris, Violeta Carlyle, Guillermina Vargas, Luela Colman, Angela Lopez, Olivia Nelson, Margarita Craig, Mirta Darnell

URUGUAY: Robert Sterling, Leon Parks, Rubustiano Ferreiro, Domingo Rosso, Albysiline Vazquez Emilia Griffin, Mabel Boles, Adalia Alano, Diamantina Aspiroz

BRASIL: Van Miller, Lyall Kirkup, Carlos Schupbach, Robert Hendy, Carlos Miles, Gilberto Neundorf, Nicolau Chiorniavi, Donald Henderson, Alfred Absalonsen, Enrique Burchill, Lenard Johnson, John R. Smith, Martha H. Smith Sara Sutton, Carlota Hendy, Rose Sparks, Lourdes Mariano, Noemia Gibson, May Abalonsen, Irene Iost, Elisa Anacleto, Jenell Wetzel, Lily F. Wetzel, Mabel Tenniswood

List of Countries included in the South American Work: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Falkland Islands (UK), French Guiana (France), Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela,