

Paap, Ella Sisley (Boyd) (1883–1951)

LESTER DEVINE

Originally trained as a secondary history teacher, a career long Adventist educator, Lester Devine, Ed.D., has taught at elementary, secondary and higher education levels and spent more than three decades in elected educational leadership positions in two divisions of the world Church, NAD (1969-1982) and SPD (1982-2005). He completed his forty years of denominational service with a term as director of the Ellen G. White/Adventist Research Centre at Avondale University College in Australia where his life-long hobby of learning and presenting on Adventist heritage issues became his vocation.

Ella Boyd taught in Queensland, Tasmania, Tonga, and Avondale before marrying Leonard Paap, with whom she ministered in Tonga, New Zealand, and Australia.

Early Life and Family Background

Ella Boyd came from a distinguished early Seventh-day Adventist family. Ella's mother, Maud Sisley, had emigrated from England to America in 1863 when she was 11 years old with her widowed mother and siblings. She soon became a Seventh-day Adventist. She and her family heard Ellen White preach the first summer they were in Michigan, and she, in turn, was to note, "The Lord has shown me that every one of these children will become a worker in His cause"; and in time they did!

Maud helped set up the first camp meeting in Michigan in 1868, worked in the Review office, and before long, took six months leave to sell Adventist literature. In 1877 Maud was the first woman² ever, to be called into Adventist foreign mission service, joining J. N. Andrews in Switzerland³ where she set type before becoming a Bible worker in England. Returning to America when she was 28, Maud married Charles Boyd, a widowed pastor, and together from 1882 they pioneered for the Church in the American Northwest. In 1887 with their two daughters, Ella and Ethel, the family joined the first group of missionaries to Cape Town in South Africa. During their four years in South Africa, Ethel died, and soon after, the family returned to America, where Charles, too,



Ella Boyd Paap

Photo courtesy of Lester Devine.

became ill and died. But with her passion for service undiminished, Maud and 17-year-old daughter Ella sailed for Australia, and for the next nine years, Maud worked at the new college, Avondale, as the matron and as the dean of women and did some teaching. Following that, she spent three more years as a Bible worker; she was one of those people who seemed able to do anything. After 17 more years as a Bible instructor back in America, Maud retired and returned to Australia to live once again in the Avondale community with her daughter, Ella. Like her mother before her, Maud became the “grandmother” of the community and, after 70 years of service⁴ to the Church, today shares her mother’s grave in the Avondale cemetery. Maud Sisley was a woman of talent, endurance, and courage, one who could rise above hardship and loss and lived a life of devout commitment.⁵

Ella was born on January 3, 1883, in Oregon, United States.⁶ She attended Avondale School for Christian Workers, completing the teaching course in 1902.⁷ While there, she was involved in an accident on December 3, 1899, in which she and Sara Peck almost perished. The horse they were using backed their carriage into Dora Creek. Miss Peck was trampled by the horse, and Miss Boyd managed to escape after being trapped under the water for a short time. Elsie Gates, sister of Pastor E. H. Gates, lost her life.⁸

Ministry and Family

Ella, like her mother, was a woman of strong commitment. Her first appointment was to Brisbane, Queensland, to teach in a small school of 20 pupils in South Brisbane.⁹ In 1904 she was relocated to Launceston, Tasmania.¹⁰ In August of that year, the *Union Conference Record* reported that she had been appointed to “connect with the work in Tonga as a teacher.”¹¹ She left Sydney on November 9 aboard the SS *Mokoia*.¹² For a young single woman to leave her homeland, immerse herself in a totally new culture, and live on her own at a time when travel was difficult and communications poor must have been a very lonely prospect, but one she accepted. She served in Tonga for several years and made an impact on her community.

Boyd returned home on furlough, arriving in Sydney on November 16, 1906, expecting to return to Tonga. However, the Avondale School Board invited her to accept a teaching role at the school.¹³ She was there only one year (1907) and then went back to Tonga.¹⁴ Again, she was there just one year (1908) and then returned to Avondale.¹⁵

On January 31, 1910, Ella Boyd married a New Zealander, Leonard Paap, at Avondale.¹⁶ He had been born on November 19, 1876, in Kaikoura, New Zealand.¹⁷ They had been students together and associated together back in 1900 at the Avondale School.¹⁸ He had more recently been studying and teaching in America. On February 3, the newly married couple sailed for Haapai, Tonga, where they spent about eighteen months. During that time Leonard was canvassing the Tongan-language version of *Bible Readings* but it does not appear that Ella was teaching.¹⁹ By November 1912 they were back in New Zealand and Leonard was canvassing *Practical Guide to Health* in Napier.²⁰ After the New Zealand camp-meeting that was conducted at Mount Eden, Auckland in January

1913, it was planned that the Paaps remain in Auckland to follow up the interest that had been created by the camp-meeting.²¹ However, it was shortly thereafter reported that after delivering some books in Napier, the couple transferred to Dunedin.²² There, they cared for the fledgling company of believers until they were appointed to the new Oroua School at Longburn at the end of 1914.²³ There is no further report of the later activities of Leonard or Ella Paap in denominational literature.

Two daughters were born into the family: Lenona (Coombs), born on January 9, 1920, and Halcyon, born on February 6, 1922.²⁴

Ella died in 1951 and was buried in the Northern Suburbs Cemetery, Sydney, on February 7, 1951. The cemetery is now called the Macquarie Park Cemetery, and it is located at North Ryde, New South Wales Australia. She was survived by her husband and two daughters.²⁵ Leonard died on January 4, 1955.²⁶

Legacy

For many years the chapel upstairs in College Hall at Avondale had on its rear wall a large framed world map with many pins indicating where graduates had or were still serving around the globe as missionaries. Ella Boyd was among the first Avondale graduates to serve as a foreign missionary, and it is altogether fitting that her contribution be remembered because she was a pioneer among a torrent of missionary graduates over the past century who have gone out from Avondale to promote the cause of Christ. While the college has changed over the decades, its fundamental purpose has not. Ella and those who followed her example have all had “a greater vision of world needs.”

In 1989, Avondale College of Higher Education opened a new dormitory for women and named it after Ella Boyd.

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NOTES

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4. Maud Sisley Boyd, "Early Experiences," *Australasian Record*, June 7, 1937, 1.
5. Ibid.
6. Robin Coombs (grandson of Ella and Leonard Paap), interview with Barry Oliver, March 22, 2018.

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