



Avondale Press bindery, c. 1930.

Photo courtesy of Sanitarium Health and Well Being Company.

Avondale Press, Australia

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Avondale Press was a printing establishment that operated in Cooranbong, New South Wales, from 1899 until 1919, when it became part of an entity named Avondale Industries.

Small Beginnings

Most major Seventh-day Adventist Church enterprises in Australia were in debt in 1899, but that did not deter officials from starting another printing establishment.¹ It was decided that a print shop should be set up in the carpentry shed at the Avondale School for Christian Workers, Cooranbong, New South Wales. The church-owned Echo Publishing Company in Melbourne, Victoria, donated a platen jobbing press.²

The location of the press at the Avondale School was a deliberate move to utilize the few Pacific Island students as translators, enable other students to earn their school fees, and instruct some in the printing trade who may, in turn, operate their own print shops in the mission field.

Printing began on the jobbing press on November 13, 1899. Leslie Irwin was the first to operate it. Frances Nicholas, a student well versed in the Rarotongan language, had done some translation of tracts before she left the school to marry in December. One of her Rarotongan tracts, titled *Home of the Saved*, was the first item to be printed.³

Meanwhile, arrangements were well advanced for an experienced printer, Elliott Chapman, to transfer from Pacific Press in California and manage the fledgling enterprise. He and his wife arrived in Sydney on February 18, 1900.⁴

Steady Growth

Chapman persuaded church officials to add a larger machine, a Cottrell cylinder press costing 225 pounds. It was purchased in March and fully installed by May.⁵ The July 1900 issue of the *Union Conference Record* was the first major job to be completed on this machine.⁶ The larger press drove the infant project into debt, but the first quarter Sabbath School offerings of 1901 were used to wipe out the debt.⁷ Unlike the Echo Publishing Company, the Avondale Press was in a rural area with little access to commercial contracts; therefore, circumstances led the enterprise to specialize in church assignments. The platen press was used to print small items such as tracts in the Fijian language, translated by Elder John Fulton, and Maori tracts translated by a student named Mikaera. In addition to the *Union Conference Record*, other large periodicals such as *Herald of Health* were printed on the Cottrell machine.⁸

During the earliest years the enterprise was operated by a board under the auspices of the Australasian Union Conference.⁹ By 1904 control had been given to the Avondale School Board, and from that point onwards the print shop was increasingly referred to as the Avondale School Press.¹⁰ Printing jobs grew to include assignments for the Australasian Union Conference, the New South Wales Conference, and the Avondale School itself. A major step involved learning how to produce cartons and paper bags for the health food factory located near their premises. Each year they made a modest profit.¹¹

The carpentry shed soon became dangerously overcrowded, so a commodious weatherboard building was constructed to accommodate the increasing volume of work. It was located near the health food factory in order

to continue the use of steam supplies from their boiler for the presses. The new print shop was dedicated on April 14, 1907. It printed tracts, periodicals, and books in eight different languages and employed approximately 20 students.¹²

Chapman chose to return to America because his wife was in poor health. They sailed from Sydney on August 3, 1908.¹³ Elder Lewis Hoopes, the Avondale School Bible teacher, acted as manager of the enterprise until the end of the year.¹⁴

New Management

John Aitken was appointed to transfer from the Signs Publishing Company, Melbourne, to manage the Avondale School Press. He began his new duties at Cooranbong in January 1909.¹⁵ Work assignments continued to escalate. In 1910 they were coping with ten different languages of southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands, including Samoan and Niuean. A Tongan book titled *Bible Readings* was printed, and Elder Fulton organized the translation and production of a Fijian book on physiology. Church office stationary and labels for health food products were in constant demand.¹⁶

When the Avondale School for Christian Workers changed its name in 1911 to Australasian Missionary College (AMC), the print shop then reverted to its original name, Avondale Press.

In 1914 a new periodical titled *The Missionary Leader* was launched and printed at Avondale Press. Sabbath School quarterly study pamphlets began to roll off the presses. Aitken also reported the printing of a hymn book and *Thoughts on Daniel* in Tahitian, *Bible Readings* in Rarotongan, Fijian, Maori, Samoan and Java-Malay, and *Early Writings* in Fijian.¹⁷

Appeal for Missions magazines and Morning Watch Calendars became a part of their production by 1918. In his quadrennial report Elder Ludwig Lemke, principal of AMC, noted the printing of Elder Robert Hare's book *The Jew and Jerusalem, Past and Future* and ten thousand copies of *Christ's Object Lessons*. Aitken was fortunate to find enough paper supplies to meet all his requirements during the difficult years of the First World War.¹⁸

Transfer

In 1919 Avondale Press was absorbed by the health food factory for its own commercial purposes as part of an entity named Avondale Industries. Aitken remained as manager of the press, and some college students continued as part-time employees to earn their tuition fees. At the time the establishment owned two platen presses, two Cottrell cylinder presses, and a universal press. Every year nearly three million cartons, labels, and wrappers were being printed for the health food business, so it made sense to transfer this large volume of work to the food factory.¹⁹ Beginning in January 1920, printing of the *Australasian Record* took place at the Signs Publishing Company, Warburton, Victoria,²⁰ and foreign language publications were printed in the Pacific

Islands.

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