



The old Ponsonby church (left foreground) converted for use as a social hall in 1967. The new church building is in the background, with Welfare center, kitchen, and Sabbath school classrooms underneath.

From *Australasian Record*, March 6, 1967.

# Ponsonby Seventh-day Adventist Church, New Zealand

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## ROSS GOLDSTONE

Ross Goldstone, M.A. (Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia) retired in 1998 as Senior Pastor, Avondale Memorial Church, Cooranbong, NSW, Australia. New Zealand born, Goldstone has served the Church as a pastor, Conference Youth Director, teacher, and Sessional Lecturer at Avondale College. He has authored nine books relating to Adventist history, including *The Angel Said Australia*. He is also co-author of four other books on Adventist history in Australasia. In retirement Ross Goldstone continues to research and write Adventist Church history.

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Originally known as the Surrey Hills Church because of its locality in what was then known as Surrey Hills, an inner suburb of Auckland, New Zealand, the Ponsonby church was the first Seventh-day Adventist church building in Australasia and has been a center of worship in the city of Auckland since 1887.

## Early History

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was introduced into New Zealand with the visit of Pastor Stephen Haskell in 1886. On arrival in Auckland from Melbourne, Australia, he was given accommodation in the home of Edward Hare in Turner Street. As a result of ensuing discussions, Edward Hare and his wife, Elizabeth, became Seventh-day Adventists and encouraged Haskell to visit the extended Hare family in Kaeo, a small village approximately 209 kilometers (130 miles) north of Auckland.<sup>1</sup> The result was the conversion of most of the members of that large family and the formation of the first church in New Zealand.<sup>2</sup>

When Haskell returned to America at the end of 1886, he gave glowing reports of the progress of the church “down under,” and as a result, Pastor Arthur Daniells was sent to pioneer evangelism in Auckland. He pitched his tent on a prominent position beside Ponsonby Road in the suburb of Surrey Hills, later known as Ponsonby. The first meeting was held on Wednesday evening, December 29, 1886, and the meetings continued until April 25, 1887, when the tent was lowered.<sup>3</sup> In spite of favorable comment from the newspapers, the meetings stirred up theological controversy. However, with the assistance of the Hare family, Daniells’s meetings proved successful, resulting in 54 people deciding to keep the seventh-day Sabbath, and a Sabbath School of 78 members was formed.<sup>4</sup>

A property was purchased in Mackelvie Street, just around the corner from the location where the tent had been pitched, and the building of the church commenced with those not yet baptized participating in the work. The Hare family made a major contribution to the effort and supplied the timber from which the pews were constructed. The building was completed in July 1887, but Pastor Daniells delayed baptizing the new converts until he was sure they were ready and fully committed.

On Sabbath afternoon, October 15, 1887, the new believers met to organize themselves into a church. Sixty-seven people presented themselves for baptism and membership. Edward Hare and his wife, Elizabeth, were the founding members as this new church was formed and the building dedicated.<sup>5</sup> They remained members of their beloved Ponsonby church throughout their long lives. On November 6, 1996, a new Ponsonby church building was officially opened by the mayor of Auckland, and the original building became the church hall<sup>6</sup>

## Ponsonby Members Fulfill the Gospel Commission

A number of Ponsonby members from those early years contributed to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in New Zealand and overseas. Metcalfe Hare left Kaeo to assist in the Ponsonby evangelistic

series, and he manufactured the pews for the church from the timber that his family shipped to Auckland from Kaeo. Later, Metcalfe Hare moved to Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia, and was heavily involved in clearing the Brettville Estate and establishing the Avondale School for Christian Workers. He was also involved in the early days of the Sanitarium Health Food Factory in Cooranbong.<sup>7</sup> Fairley Masters left secular employment to become a colporteur and missionary to India.<sup>8</sup> Mrs. Mary Boucher Hill was one of the first candidates baptized by Pastor Daniells. Her daughters, Edith and Annie Hill, moved south to Raglan, where they initiated work for the local Maori people.<sup>9</sup> Pastor John Howse, a missionary, youth leader, and church pastor, was the son of Edith, and he was the pastor of the Ponsonby church at the time the new church building was constructed in 1966.<sup>10</sup> Two of Daniells's converts, Grace Attewell and Sister Hardy, moved to Sydney and, independently of each other, successfully conducted home meetings before any ministers were sent to commence the work of the church in New South Wales.<sup>11</sup>

The Pallant family was converted by Pastor Daniells and made a considerable contribution to the church in Australasia. Jesse Pallant became involved in ship evangelism and later became the president of the West Australian Conference, the Tasmanian Conference, and later, the North New Zealand Conference. His sister, Mary, was one of the first Seventh-day Adventists to graduate as a nurse and worked with Alfred and Martha Semmens in the Summer Hill Sanitarium in New South Wales before marrying Arthur Mountain. Martha Semmens was Mary Pallant's sister.<sup>12</sup>

A significant person in the life and history of the Ponsonby church was James Bell Donald. Baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1910, this noted Auckland businessman and politician was recognized in the wider community as a loyal and committed Seventh-day Adventist. He was elected to the New Zealand Parliament in 1928, became a cabinet minister, and was knighted in 1969. Sir James Donald used both his leadership qualities and his finance to support the Ponsonby church over many years.<sup>13</sup>

## Ponsonby: Auckland's Mother Church

The city of Auckland is home to the largest population of Polynesians of any city in the world. This demographic is reflected in the number of Polynesian ethnic churches in the Greater Auckland area, most of which grew, either directly or indirectly, from membership links with the Ponsonby church. Thus the Ponsonby church is now referenced as "the mother church" of Polynesian Seventh-day Adventists in Auckland.

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## NOTES

1. *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Basel, Switzerland: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 103.
2. *Ibid.*, 105.
3. S. Ross Goldstone, *The Angel Said Australia* (Warburton, Victoria: Signs Publishing Company, 1980), 54, 55.
4. *Ibid.*, 55.
5. A. G. Daniells, "New Zealand," *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, December 1887, 187. Goldstone, *The Angel Said Australia*, 56.
6. J. T. Howse, "Ponsonby Church Dedication," *Australasian Record*, August 28, 1967, 3.
7. J. E. Fulton, "Metcalf Hare obituary," *Pacific Union Recorder*, September 28, 1938, 14. See also Hare, Metcalfe on the ESDA.
8. Fairley Masters, "Attended the First Tent Mission in New Zealand," *Australasian Record*, July 29, 1935, 8.
9. Annie B. Hill, "When Brother and Sister Daniells . . .," *Australasian Record*, November 4, 1935, 5.
10. J. T. Howse, "Ponsonby Church Dedication," *Australasian Record*, August 28, 1967, 3, 4.
11. "A Brief Auto-Biography of Sister Hardy," *Australasian Record*, May 21, 1923, 6; G. C. Tenney, "The Cause in Australia," *ARH*, April 23, 1889, 265.
12. A. G. Stewart, "Mary Pallant Mountain obituary," *Australasian Record*, December 8, 1947, 7.

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