



Metcalfe and Maria Dixon Hare's Family. From left - Maria, Alfreda Emmerson (Robert's wife), Milton jnr, Milton Metcalfe, Metcalfe, Hannah Kleinmeyer (Milton Metcalfe's wife), Robert

Metcalfe Hare and family

Photo courtesy of Raymond Wilkinson.

Hare, Metcalfe (1855–1938)

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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.

Metcalfe Hare played a crucial role in the establishment of Avondale College and helped in turning the fledgling Australian Health Food industry into a profitable enterprise.

Early Life and Conversion to the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Metcalfe Hare was born on the November 6, 1855 in Lurgan, Armagh, Ireland, the sixth son of Joseph and Margaret Hare.¹ As a nine-year old, he, with his parents and siblings, travelled from London to New Zealand aboard the *Lancashire Witch*, settling in Kaeo some 130 miles to the north of Auckland.² As with other members of the Hare family, Metcalfe was a committed Methodist and a pillar of that denomination in Kaeo.³ In 1883, while living in Kaeo, Metcalfe married Maria Dixon. Two sons were born to the marriage - Milton and Robert.⁴ As a builder of both houses and boats, he used his skills in assisting in the building of the Kaeo Methodist Church and, later, the Kaeo Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Chapel. His acceptance of the Seventh-day Adventist faith, as a result of the visit of Stephen Haskell to Kaeo in 1885 and early 1886, brought a change of direction in his life. He gave up lucrative employment for twelve months to become the tentmaster for the Auckland tent missions run by Pastor Arthur G. Daniells and assisted in the construction of the Surrey Hills (Ponsonby) Church, officially opened on October 15, 1887. It was Metcalfe Hare who built the pews which provided the seating in that church for many years.⁵

Contribution to the Church in Australia

In 1893 Hare was living back in Kaeo. There he was closely associated with his brothers, Joseph Jr. and Wesley, as they were joint owners of a twenty-room boarding house known as the Settler's Hotel.⁶ When Ellen White visited the area that year, she noted that the environment was not conducive to Metcalfe's spiritual well-being and saw an urgent need for Metcalfe to move away from the family associations.⁷

William C. White attended the December 1894 camp meeting in Auckland where he promoted the establishment of the proposed training school at Cooranbong. He also recognized the need for men of experience in land clearing and building to assist in the development of the institution. Metcalfe Hare caught a vision for service and benefitted the Church through his skills in the timber industry, milling, road-building, ship-building, and general building construction.⁸ Apart from these acquired skills, he revealed good business acumen, as he had grown up in a home in which careful management of finances was deemed a virtue.

Following a brief stay in Melbourne, where he attended the St. Kilda school, 1895 found Hare, together with his wife, Maria, and two sons, living in Cooranbong, New South Wales, where they were the first of the pioneers to

reside on the recently acquired Brettville Estate. Their home was a tent amongst the tall trees, their companions being possums, snakes, lizards, bush rats, and kangaroos - a far cry from the civilised life-style they had left in New Zealand. Others of the pioneering group either lived in the rented Healey's Hotel or, as prospective students, in tents pitched adjacent to the hotel. Metcalfe vigorously led out in the clearing and draining of the land, building roads, and felling the trees. Accustomed to working with the Kauri trees in New Zealand, Metcalfe found the rock-hard eucalyptus trees of Australia a different proposition. He was never in doubt as to the durability of the timber once milled. He purchased some second-hand timber milling machinery from Sydney and erected a mill on the banks of Dora Creek and milled the felled timber to be used in the construction of the school buildings. This mill constructed by Hare was later converted into the early Health Food Factory.⁹

Australia was in a deep financial recession in the mid-1890s. Unemployment was widespread particularly for those who declined to work on the Sabbath. The situation demanded sacrificial giving and economy of expenditure to meet the ever burgeoning financial demands.

When construction began it was under the supervision of Metcalfe Hare who not only over-saw the workmanship but also managed the financial outlays involved.¹⁰ Ultimately, he demonstrated his long-term commitment to the project by purchasing land and building a home fronting the road into Newcastle. It was on this land that clay was dug for the bricks used as foundations for the school buildings. Perhaps the last contribution Metcalfe Hare made to the development of the school prior to leaving for America in 1898 was the drawing up of the plans and supervision of the residence for young men.¹¹

In 1904 the management of the fledgling Health Food work was transferred to the Avondale School for Christian Workers with Metcalfe Hare appointed as factory superintendent.¹² His managerial skills resulted in a marked improvement in production and sales resulting in the health food operations actually making a profit.¹³ Quite apart from this, employment was also provided for unemployed Adventists who had lost their jobs because of Sabbath-keeping as well as for students struggling to pay their school fees.

Transportation of products to the Dora Creek station was a major problem but Metcalfe Hare had the answer. He used his boat-building skills to construct a thirty-five foot Kauri-planked boat capable of carrying five tons of Sanitarium products down river to the station. Given the name "Avondale", it was used for many purposes including the transportation of students.¹⁴ The cost involved in the construction of the boat was made a Thirteenth Sabbath School offering project.¹⁵

In the years Metcalfe Hare was superintendent of the factory he introduced a number of new nut products to the market. He also brought the financial books to Cooranbong, and appointed his son, Robert, as the book-keeper. Hence, he was able to monitor the balance between production costs and sales. Metcalfe Hare's success in turning the health food company into a profitable operation did not go unnoticed overseas.¹⁶ In 1907 he received an invitation to establish a health food company in Madison, Tennessee.¹⁷ By this time his young son, Milton, had chosen to travel to America for educational purposes and later was followed by his brother Robert.

Both sons eventually became highly respected medical practitioners employed by the SDA Church. The invitation extended to Metcalfe and Maria meant the family could be together on the same continent. Needless to say, the Hares accepted the invitation and departed in 1908 taking with them the recipes for the nut foods, he had so successfully introduced to the Australian market.¹⁸

Metcalfe Hare's contribution to the development of the work of the church in America was in three locations, Nashville Tennessee, the Sanitarium in Washington D.C. and later at Loma Linda Sanitarium in California. The last thirty years of his life were spent in the United States. Whereas both Metcalfe's brothers died in either New Zealand or Australia, Metcalfe's death occurred in Eagle Rock, California on August 22, 1938, after a prolonged illness.¹⁹ His wife preceded him in death one year earlier. Both of his sons were present at his funeral conducted by Pastors J. L. McElhany, H.M.S. Richards, and John E. Fulton.²⁰

Metcalfe Hare's Relationship with Ellen White

In almost every issue involved with the establishment of the Avondale School Metcalfe Hare and Ellen White were in accord. In technical matters relating to the buildings he was her "advisor." She saw him as "as staunch and true a friend as I could have..." For his part, he took the attitude that whatever Ellen White requested should be done, and would be done.²¹

However, there was one notable exception. When the decision was made in 1897 to build a house of worship, Hare strongly took the position that it should be built adjacent to the school buildings for ease of access to the student body. In winter months the road access to the College was muddy and problematic for ladies who, in those days, wore skirts to floor level. Ellen White and Stephen Haskell wanted it built on land facing the road through to Newcastle where it would be a witness to the community. Tensions developed over the issue.²² Much to Hare's dissatisfaction the church was erected on the site chosen by Ellen White, the present location of the Avondale Memorial Church. Hare distanced himself from anything to do with the construction of the church, and he began to harbor a negative attitude towards Pastor and Mrs Haskell.²³ This negative attitude drew letters of rebuke from Ellen White; particularly, as it was fuelling an atmosphere of disunity within the school family where criticism was also being levelled at the Haskells because they were not trained teachers. This was exacerbated by a growing dissatisfaction among Australasian-born leaders who considered that leaders from overseas, Americans in particular, were exercising too much authority in local matters. It appears that Edward Hare shared this concern, particularly over the location of the church.

Certainly, Ellen White was both supportive and enthusiastic about the Hare's appointment to Nashville.²⁴ Having worked closely with him in Cooranbong she was aware of his strengths. She recognised that his experience would be of significant advantage, especially as those associated with the work in Nashville lacked the practical and managerial experience in health food work that Hare had gained in Cooranbong. She was aware that he

possessed a, "naturally despondent temperament", but she encouraged him to accept the challenge of producing good healthful food in his assigned position.²⁵ Because her son, Edson White, had pioneered the work in the southern mission field, Ellen White had a deep interest in its progress and was keen to hear from Metcalfe Hare as to his evaluation.

Contribution

Metcalfe Hare had both strengths and weaknesses as all men do. Inter-personal relationships aside, he played a crucial role in the establishment of Avondale College at a time of financial recession and social distress. His many practical skills and business acumen matched the needs of the times. He was also successful in turning the fledgling Australian Health Food industry into a profitable enterprise. His commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist denomination was reflected in the lives of his two sons. He has been called "one of the unsung heroes among the pioneers," and "a man before his time."²⁶

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