

Prickett, Rowen Augustus (1870–1963) and Pauline (Sorenson) (1869–1908)

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Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian, Gospel Revivalist* the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.



Pitcairn in full sail.

Photo courtesy of Center for Adventist Research.

Rowen and Lena Pickett, both nurses, took the fourth voyage of the *Pitcairn* in 1895 to Tahiti and, after a brief term of service there, returned to the United States for further service.

Early Life, Education, and Marriage

Rowen Augustus Prickett was born on July 3, 1870, in Williams County, northwestern Ohio.¹ His parents, James and Eunice (Gleason) Prickett,² were members of the Christian Church. Rowen had a younger sister, Eunice, and an older half-brother from his mother's earlier brief marriage. The Pricketts became Seventh-day Adventists in 1884 and moved to California.³ James Prickett was a carpenter,⁴ a trade that Rowen himself learned. Electoral rolls record the fact that Rowen was 172cm (5' 8") in height, of light complexion with blue eyes and sandy-colored hair.⁵

In California Rowen first worked at Pacific Press Publishing Association and later entered the St. Helena Sanitarium to train as a nurse. He graduated in 1892, part of the first class to complete their course at that institution.⁶ During his studies he met and married fellow nurse Pauline (Lena) Sorenson of Denmark on September 24, 1891. John Durland performed the ceremony at Healdsburg.⁷ With three special skills to their credit – carpentry, printing and nursing – they were the ideal couple to appoint to overseas mission service where all their abilities were in demand.

In Tahiti

Rowen and Lena accepted an appointment to sail on the fourth voyage of the *Pitcairn* and succeed Elliott Chapman at the mission printing press in Tahiti. They sailed from San Francisco on April 30, 1895, arriving via Pitcairn Island on June 30.⁸ For twelve months they gave treatments to the sick, printed tracts on the little printing press and nurtured a Sabbath School at Pa'ea, the first organized in Tahiti.⁹

Rowen did not stay to build their church for them. Instead, when the *Pitcairn* called on its fifth voyage in 1896 they embarked to transfer to Rarotonga, assigned to help Joseph Caldwell with his medical work.¹⁰ Their skills could have been well-utilized to give assistance along these lines, or in building a mission home for the Rice family on Rarotonga, or perhaps on Aitutaki Island where there was a call for a missionary. For some reason, though, they remained with the ship. The return trip was the longest undertaken by the *Pitcairn*, a journey of four months via the Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, New Hebrides, Nauru, and the Marshall Islands. The leg from Fiji was essentially an exploratory one anticipating mission expansion to the north. The vessel docked at Oakland, California, on November 27, 1896, with all on board in good health.¹¹

Back in America

The Los Angeles area became the Pricketts' home base, Lena serving as church clerk while they lived at suburban Pomona.¹² During this period Rowen helped to build Champion Academy in Loveland, Colorado. Lena, however, began to suffer with "a complication of diseases" and passed away in the Glendale Sanitarium on August 12, 1908. She was only 39 years of age.

Rowen took up nursing at the Paradise Valley Sanitarium, National City, San Diego,¹³ and married Hope Lillian Spencer.¹⁴ Soon after they moved to Byron Center, Michigan. Two children were born to this marriage.¹⁵ Tragedy visited a second time when Hope developed pellagra and entered care at the Michigan Home for Girls at nearby Gaines Township. She passed away on August 5, 1915, at the age of 36.¹⁶

Rowen eventually moved west to British Columbia and helped to build the Resthaven Sanitarium at Sidney near Victoria.¹⁷ There, on August 16, 1923, he married a spinster nurse named Louise Unruh of Russian heritage. The marriage certificate mentions he was the manager of Seattle Sanitarium, which had been established in 1921 by

its medical director, Dr. W.B. Scott.¹⁸ In later years the couple resided nearby at Port Townsend, Washington, Louise doing nursing and Rowen working as a carpenter.¹⁹ In retirement they moved across Puget Sound to Marysville and became active with the local church. Rowen passed away at his home in September 1963, aged 93.²⁰ He was laid to rest in Evergreen Cemetery, Everett, Washington.²¹ A few months later Louise passed away at Riverside, California, on January 13, 1964, and was taken back to Everett to be interred alongside Rowen.²²

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