



Auckland, New Zealand.

Photo courtesy of Barry Oliver.

New Zealand

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New Zealand consists of two main islands in the South Pacific Ocean just west of 180° longitude.

Introduction

The original inhabitants, the Māori people, are Polynesians who navigated the oceans by observing the stars, and wind and ocean currents. It is thought they settled there between 1200 and 1300 AD. The first Europeans to arrive were led by a Dutch explorer, Abel Tasman, in 1642. A Dutch mapmaker named their discovery Nieuw Zeeland. British and French explorers arrived much later, notably James Cook in 1769. Whalers, sealers, traders, and missionaries followed. On February 6, 1840, the Māori chiefs and a representative of the British Crown signed the Treaty of Waitangi, ostensibly a friendship agreement, but one which eventually enabled British settlers to buy or take over Māori lands. In the 1860s, war broke out over property rights as the Māoris realized they were being squeezed from their ancestral holdings. The Māoris were no match for British muskets. Today, the majority of New Zealand's population is of European descent (70 percent), with the indigenous Māori being the largest minority (15 percent), followed by Asians (15.3 percent), and non-Māori Pacific Islanders (9.0 percent).¹ Queen Elizabeth II is the constitutional Head of State.

Coming of Seventh-day Adventist Missionaries

In early June 1885, Stephen Haskell visited Auckland on his way to Australia, tossing overboard sealed bottles stuffed with Bible studies in the hope that some would float to shore and trigger an interest in his message. During his stop-over in the harbor, he explored possibilities for evangelism, concluding that the libraries of the Mechanic's Institutes would gladly receive his denominational books. He appealed for someone in America to donate \$5,000 for the initiative.²

After helping to establish the Seventh-day Adventist mission in Australia, Haskell hurried back to New Zealand, as he said, "to try my hand alone." He carried a letter of introduction to the American Consul in Auckland. Fortuitously, this gentleman recommended a boarding house for Haskell, one operated by Edward Hare. Hare was a family member of one of the early European settlers, former Methodists who had severed their connections with the church "on account of their peculiar views." Edward Hare was an Orangeman and a member of the Blue Ribbon Club, a temperance organization. There were, therefore, a number of common interests between Hare and Haskell, and within weeks Hare and his wife began to observe Saturday as the Sabbath. Hare began to canvass denominational books and periodicals with some success.³

Haskell spent over a month in Auckland, conducting Bible studies and establishing a small company of Sabbath-keepers who began meeting regularly in the Temperance Hall at Mount Eden. Edward Hare then escorted Haskell north to remote Kaeo where the rest of the Hare clan lived. During a visit of three weeks, filled with extensive Bible studies, the family decided to observe Saturday, forming a second company of adherents. These were the first groups of Adventist believers in New Zealand.⁴

The early converts met with resistance from other faiths, two in Kaeo being summoned to appear before the resident magistrate for working inside their own home on a Sunday.⁵ Nevertheless, the believers were resolute and formed tract societies to distribute Adventist literature among friend and foe alike. The Kaeo company was the first to form a tract society in 1886,⁶ followed by the Auckland members in 1887.⁷ In 1889, the New Zealand Tract Society was formed to coordinate the distribution of literature by a growing number of Adventist companies throughout the North Island.⁸ At the same time, the Auckland members, under the ministry of Arthur Daniells, were busy building their own church structure in MacKelvie Street, suburban Ponsonby. They began to use it in June 1887 before it was completed a few months later. It was the first Seventh-day Adventist church in New Zealand.⁹

Expansion and Diversification

Further evangelistic campaigns resulted in additional converts in large centers such as Napier and Wellington. These extended across the Cook Strait, Mendel Israel being the first to pioneer the South Island with a crusade at Blenheim in 1891.¹⁰ In order to provide a sense of unity among the scattered membership, a camp meeting was held at Napier in March 1893. It was the first American-style camp meeting held in Australasia, the preaching enjoyed by all present and the initiative declared to be “an unqualified success.”¹¹

After approximately twelve years of evangelism, there were twelve organized Adventist churches throughout New Zealand.¹² Records also indicated there were twelve book sellers working from door-to-door selling titles such as *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Man the Masterpiece*, and *Ladies' Guide*.¹³ In the same year, 1898, health evangelism was initiated when Adolf and Florence Brandstater began offering hydrotherapy treatments in Christchurch.¹⁴ This work was enlarged with the opening of the Christchurch Sanitarium in the suburb of Papanui in 1900.¹⁵

Up until 1900, the focus of mission endeavors was entirely on the European population. One Māori woman had been baptized at Kaeo¹⁶ and a small number had become members of the company at Tolago Bay. Not until 1901 was a missionary appointed to specifically work among the Māoris. Dr. Joseph Caldwell and his wife, Julia, settled at Raglan to engage in medical work among the Māoris. However, Julia Caldwell tragically succumbed to malarial fever a few months later and Joseph returned to America. William James Smith resumed the work in 1906, locating at Gisborne. During his term, a monthly Māori periodical, *Te Karere o te Pono* (Messenger of Truth), was published. Read Smith, a nursing graduate, replaced William Smith, but unfortunately after less than two years he contracted typhoid fever from his Māori patients and died in 1910. In 1914, Reginald Piper began evangelism among the Ringatu clan in the Bay of Plenty region. High hopes were held for this enterprise because the Ringatus were Saturday keepers.¹⁷ These people resisted other teachings of the Adventist faith and specialized efforts for the Māoris were soon abandoned in favor of pitching crusades to attract all races.¹⁸

Efforts to serve people's health needs through hydrotherapy facilities and direct nursing reduced prejudice against Adventists in New Zealand. The operation of cafeterias and the production of health foods in the name of preventive medicine also garnered good will. The Adventist-owned Sanitarium Health Food Company (SHF) opened its first New Zealand manufacturing factory in suburban Papanui, Christchurch, in 1900. Later, two more factories were opened, one in Auckland and another at Longburn, north of Wellington.¹⁹ The first SHF cafeteria in New Zealand began business in November 1906 in the heart of Wellington.²⁰ Subsequently, a network of cafeterias and retail shops were developed throughout the major cities.

A significant venture into health services by the Adventist Church occurred with the opening of the Auckland Adventist Hospital in January 1974.²¹ A high standard of care was maintained, but recurring heavy operational costs forced its sale in December 1999.²²

From the time that the first Adventist converts were made in New Zealand, young men and women who wished to train in medical or ministerial lines had to make the long and expensive journey to California or Australia. Church officials soon recognized that a training school on home soil would serve their purpose admirably. For this reason, a boarding school was opened on a rural property near Cambridge in the center of the North Island. It came to be known as Pukekura, meaning in the Māori language "I love the place."²³ The building was dedicated on February 3, 1908.²⁴ In under five years, plans were made to sell Pukekura and move south to another property closer to the developing membership in the South Island, one which provided better soil for agriculture. Farmland was purchased at Longburn near Palmerston North and a Tudor-style building was erected in 1912. It was named Oroua Missionary School, dedicated on April 30, 1913.²⁵ Today it is called Longburn Adventist College.²⁶ In addition to this major training institution, many elementary schools have functioned in both islands, the earliest being at Cambridge when Pukekura closed. The second elementary school opened at Christchurch in 1914.²⁷ By 1934, these two schools were closed and three others were operating, one at Hamilton and others at Gisborne and Papanui.²⁸ During and after the Second World War years, more Adventist elementary schools were opened.

Current Situation

The New Zealand Pacific Union Conference is administered from offices at 18 Fencible Drive, Howick, Auckland.²⁹ Within its territory lie the North New Zealand Conference (NNZC)³⁰ and the South New Zealand Conference (SNZC).³¹ The NNZC office, located at 47 Ben Lamond Crescent, Pakuranga Heights, Auckland, administers sixty-three churches with a membership of 11,013. The SNZC office, located at 614 Sir William Pickering Drive, Russley, Christchurch, administers twenty-two churches with a membership of 2,270. No medical institutions are conducted but three main secondary schools are maintained. These are located at Auckland, Longburn, and Christchurch.³²

Radio and television evangelism is conducted through Hope Channel. Radio programs are aired on FM radio and television screening is scheduled 24/7.³³

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) New Zealand has a central office at 124 Pah Road, Royal Oak, Auckland, from where Pacific Island charitable projects are initiated and emergency services are on stand-by.³⁴

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