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.

Australia

Australia is the only independent country that occupies a whole continent. Located in the Southern hemisphere it has a population of some 25.5 million people. The Seventh-day Adventist Church commenced its work in Australia in Melbourne, Victoria in 1885.

Ancient cave art dots the Australian continent in the southern hemisphere. It testifies to the existence of Aboriginal Australians from a very early time. They have no written history and their oral history extends back into myth. A genetic study of their genomes indicates their origin to be African. By nature semi-nomadic fishers, hunters, and gatherers, they have lost much of their traditional lands through the encroachment of European settlement.
It is conjectured that Asian fishermen visiting the northern waters of the continent made early contact with the Aborigines. Portuguese explorers may also have sailed along the shores of the continent, referring to it as “terra australis incognita.” Spanish, Dutch, and French explorers certainly visited in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. British explorers also sailed into the waters, including William Dampier and James Cook. The British government sent Arthur Phillip with a small fleet of ships to settle at Botany Bay on the east coast in 1788. From that time free settlers, soldiers, and convicts continued to arrive from the British Isles. They established six widely separated colonies of immigrants that eventually formed six states, namely New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, West Australia, and Queensland. By vote of the male European population the states constituted the Commonwealth of Australia on January 1, 1901.  

Mission beginnings

The path to the opening of the Seventh-day Adventist mission in Australia was a long and winding one. It began in America at the 1861 funeral of Brigadier-General Lyons of the Union Army. Missionary Hannah More attended the funeral in Eastford, Connecticut, where Stephen Haskell was then conducting public meetings. While in town More came to Haskell’s meetings and left with a handful of printed material. She took the reading back to her mission in Africa and became convinced that she should keep the Saturday Sabbath. When she shared the literature with fellow missionary Alexander Dickson of Australia, he also began to observe Saturday. Their English mission sponsors dismissed both of them because of their convictions. Haskell, learning of the developments, tried to correspond with Dickson but could not locate him, thinking he lived in Melbourne when his real home was in Maitland, New South Wales. Dickson later transferred to California. There in 1890 Haskell met him by chance and learned that he had given up his Sabbath observance.  

Haskell did not abandon the potential of Australia and the Pacific Islands as being a vast mission field. His contact with Dickson simply whetted his interest in the continent. President of the California Conference at the time, he began having the California Tract and Missionary Society mail Adventist publications to the South Sea regions. Mendel Israel was vice-president of the society. By 1883 its members were using post office directories to obtain more addresses in Australia for sending copies of the Signs of the Times to both individuals and public libraries. The society received some responses but concluded the method was too slow to get significant results and suggested that colporteurs be sent.  

The 1884 California Conference Session issued a call for funds to pay for ship passage for the colporteurs. Many pledged donations. General Conference president George Butler, pressured the wealthy by publishing his own plea in the California periodical, Signs of the Times. He wrote, “There are many persons among us worth from ten to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars … We wonder if these persons really desire to lay up treasure in Heaven, or do they desire to wait and see it burned in the flames of the last days, and very likely themselves with it.” One who was not wealthy, a teenager not yet baptized named Henrietta Johnson who later married New Zealander Robert Hare, sold all her jewellery to fulfil her pledge.  

It was clear that by the time the General Conference Session convened in Battle Creek in October/November 1884 the Californian delegates were already primed to advance their plans. During the eighth meeting, November 7, some delegates proposed that Haskell and John Corliss should go to Australia and Haskell return to the States soon after. Then the vote was rescinded in an obvious ploy to allow further reflection and discussion. Haskell was trying to avoid a repetition of another premature death of an isolated missionary, as had occurred with John Andrews in Europe. Stephen wanted a larger contingent so that they could support each other. The twelfth meeting, five days later, therefore voted to send with Haskell “a competent corps of labourers” including Corliss and colporteur William Arnold  

Haskell returned to California to gather a team to depart for Australia. Subsequently, on May 10, 1885, they sailed from San Francisco aboard the Australia. The 11 individuals included Stephen Haskell as leader; evangelist Mendel Israel and wife Lizzie with daughters Jessie and May; evangelist John Corliss and wife Julia, with children Lulu and Burr; printer Henry Scott; and colporteur William Arnold. They sailed via Hawaii, American Samoa and New Zealand, arriving at Sydney without incident on Sabbath June 6, 1885. After remaining in Sydney long enough to explore mission possibilities, Haskell and Israel then re-joined the team in Melbourne, the most populous Australian city at the time.  

Evangelism in the Australian colonies

Having rented a home called “Sumeride” in Richmond, suburban Melbourne, Haskell visited the public library and found that the Signs of the Times, Good Health, and a number of denominational books posted from California were in its holdings. The group purchased a little taddle printing press and a few fonts of type for Scott to print advertising material in his bedroom. Some Bible studies took place in private homes, and within a few months the Adventists had gathered a handful of converts, but they considered progress to be too slow. Arnold was having success selling copies of Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation. However, the book was complex, and readers needed time to assimilate it.  

To hasten things, the missionaries purchased a larger press and established the Echo Publishing Company. They used further pledge money from the Californians to make a payment of $600 for the large press and $1,500 to register their new periodical, Bible Echo and Signs of the Times. So that Corliss and Israel, eager to start evangelistic series, could avoid the exorbitant rents for public halls, they had a large marquee, or tent, with an extension custom-
The tent meetings began in North Fitzroy on October 25, 1885. The evangelists placed a collection box at the entrance to the tent and used the donations received to cover the costs of advertising and the rent of the site. The results encouraged the evangelists, and on January 10 they officially organized the Melbourne Church with 28 members. In the following weeks the total number increased to 45. Initially they worshipped each Sabbath in the Russell Street Temperance Hall in the inner city, then built their own church in North Fitzroy later.

Corliss moved on to Adelaide without the tent and conducted a series of public lectures in the suburban Norwood Town Hall, beginning about September 1886. Once again he met with success. He formed a Sabbath School of 50 individuals and on November 27 organized a church of 34 members with approximately 10 others preparing for baptism.

The trail-blazing work of colporteur Arnold made the work of the evangelists easier. He trained early converts such as William Wainman and John Stockton. Arnold and Wainman canvassed Hobart in 1887 with Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation. As a result of studying the book, George and Isabella Foster, together with John and Harriet Higgins, began to observe the Saturday Sabbath. Higgins requested that a minister come to Hobart and conduct an evangelistic series. Israel and William Baker responded by taking the mission tent to Sandy Bay, a southern suburb of Hobart, and preaching from February 29 through April 21, 1888. During the winter months they lectured in Federal Hall, central Hobart. Once again, donations from the audience covered most expenses. A Sabbath School of more than 40 converts first met regularly in the Baptist Chapel on Harrington Street, Hobart.

On February 20, 1889, evangelist David Steed began meetings in Bismarck (later named Collinsvale), a hops growing valley northwest of Hobart inhabited mainly by German and Danish immigrants. Most of the meetings took place in the farmhouse of August Darko. Interested farmers and families walked through the forest at night with lanterns to listen to the Bible studies. Israel arrived to assist Steed and conduct baptisms. At the end of the series a Sabbath School of 63 members formed. At the same time a church of 33 baptized adults organized; the total growing to 43 in a few months. They immediately began to build their own chapel and put it into use by the southern summer months, December 1889/January 1890.

Steed transferred to Sydney, New South Wales, in February 1890. A few church members had recently taken up residence in the city. Although Steed encountered apathy and small audiences, he doggedly persisted. In late August 1890 Haskell and George Tenney visited Sydney and conducted a baptism of 12 converts in the Sydney Domain Baths. At the same time, they organized the small group into a church, named the Sydney (Newtown) church, with the hope that numbers would soon grow to 25.

Wainman and Stockton canvassed Brisbane in 1887, delivering 375 copies of Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation. The reading of Adventist publications resulted in some observing the Saturday Sabbath in scattered locations, a few in the vicinity of Rockhampton. Unbeknown to the colporteurs, a few Norwegians baptized earlier by John G. Matteson in their homeland also lived in Townsville. However, when the evangelists entered Queensland, they chose Rockhampton for their first crusade. George Starr and Arthur Hiscox opened their tent series on July 26, 1894. Discovering that their audience had many German immigrants in it, they summoned Michael Bernoth to assist them. Bernoth, a recent convert, was a former Baptist minister of German heritage. He visited among the local Germans and conducted a special series for them in the tent on Sunday mornings. A Sabbath School of 84 individuals formed and three separate baptisms took place. On Sabbath, October 20, 1894, a church of 38 charter members organized. The register included lawyer Alexander Costello of Charters Towers.

In 1890 Stockton sailed from Melbourne to Western Australia to spend a few months selling publications at Fremantle and Perth. He had good success, one report telling of 89 orders for one week’s work. The cost of travel to the distant colony was a deterrent for frequent visiting. The better option was for a literature evangelist to remain there for a prolonged period. Frederick and Marion Reekie accepted the challenge and settled there in early 1893. Johan and Faith Johanson later joined them. Their sales figures were extraordinary, especially Faith Johanson’s tallies when they canvassed the gold-prospectors at Coolgardie.

To capitalize on the excellent sales results, John Corliss and family sailed to Western Australia early in 1896 to conduct tent meetings, accompanied by Joseph Collins as tent-master. They began in Beaufort Street, Perth, with a small audience and then transferred to Charles Street, West Perth. Corliss, suffering from prolonged influenza, had to abort the series before quickly booking passage to America for treatment. A few days prior to departure he organized a group of 14 into the Perth church on April 11, 1896, with Collins as elder, Johanson as deacon, and Reekie as clerk. Collins rented the Y.M.C.A. hall and continued the series in addition to starting another one in the suburb of Bayswater.

**Consolidation and expansion**

When the six Australian colonies united as the Commonwealth of Australia on January 1, 1901, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia was well established.

They had 48 colporteurs scattered across the continent, all well-organized with conference leaders, recording secretaries, central book depositories, and administrative offices. The canvassers were the foot soldiers for the publishing program, the priority enterprise for the early missionaries. Their Echo Publishing Company survived the Depression of the 1890s, continuing to print periodicals, tracts and books. One of their books, The Coming King, was
By 1901 at least 16 camp meetings had convened in Australia as both evangelistic and church community building exercises. The first camp meeting in Australia took place at Middle Brighton, Melbourne, in December 1893. It was also in the 1890s that efforts began to establish health institutions as evangelistic facilities. Starting in 1896 with The Health Home in Sydney and extending to Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Cooranbong, Newcastle, Brisbane and Rockhampton, the enterprises were essentially hydrotherapy treatment rooms, but they all struggled financially and soon ceased operation. Only the Sydney Sanitarium, opened on New Years Day 1903, survived.

Concurrent with the development of health ministries in the 1890s there emerged a decided move to implement a training school for church workers. Most Australians had received little more than an elementary level of education. The institution that church officials planned was a finishing school of sorts with advanced lessons in Bible studies, reading and grammar, mathematics, book-keeping, geography as it affected church missions, history as it related to Bible prophecy, and natural sciences such as human physiology, botany, and astronomy. To this end the Australasian Bible School opened in St. Kilda, suburban Melbourne, on August 24, 1892. It was the predecessor of the Avondale School for Christian Workers that started at rural Cooranbong, New South Wales on April 28, 1897.

The first graduating class of the Avondale School (1902) comprised two educational and three business students. One of the teachers was an American, Ella Boyd, who sailed to Tonga in 1904 to pioneer an isolated mission school. Joseph Mills, one of the first business course students, continued his studies and graduated from the biblical-academic course the following year, proceeding to Singapore in 1906 for mission work. Septimus Carr completed the missionary course in 1903 and toward the end of 1904 pioneered a school in Fiji. But such individuals, while not the first to go from Australia as missionaries (Albert and Hettie Piper went to the Cook Islands in 1900), they were the trail-blazers of a long line from the Avondale School who served in the Pacific Islands, South Africa, and Asia. Another lengthy chain of nursing graduates from the Sydney Sanitarium formed at the same time. Throughout the twentieth century Australia generated hundreds of missionaries, replicating the fervor of the Americans who carried their faith to the South Seas.

It is an interesting statistic that the membership of the Southern California Conference, from where the first party of missionaries sailed, numbered 1,090 in 1901. In the same year the membership in Australia reached 2,383, more than double the parent group.

The first work among Australia’s indigenous people came with William Baker’s 1892 visit to the Cumeroogunga settlement near Moama in far western New South Wales. Another faith group superintended it, but in the Adventist Church press Baker asked for donations of clothing for the aborigines. In 1906 Henry and Annie Cooper, church members in Murgon, Queensland, together with school teacher Ruth Cozens, began conducting a Sabbath School for the nearby Barambah settlement of aborigines. Church leaders concluded that it would be ideal to have their own mission station designated for aborigines where they could exert a continual Christian influence. Procuring land from the government for that purpose near Kuranda, Queensland, Phillip and Isabella Rudge and James and Rose Branford, together with four aborigines from Barambah, pioneered the site in 1913. It came to be known as Monamona, the aboriginal name for the serpentine creek bordering the property.

The missionaries put in a lot of hard manual labor developing Monamona. One of the most pleasing results was the training and appointment of two couples for mission service in coastal Papua. It is thought they were the first and perhaps only aborigines sent to the Pacific Island mission field by any church group. Dick and Jessie Richardson left Australia in November 1930, bound for Aroma mission station southeast of Port Moresby near Vuru. Dick helped to establish a sawmill and worked as a carpenter and evangelist and Jessie assisted in the elementary school. In April 1933 Will and Minnie Shepherd began service at Villirupa, further down the coast to the southeast near Wanigela in the Macfarlane Lagoon. The couples served until the Second World War.

Further evangelistic work for the aborigines took place at Karalundi Mission in Western Australia and at Mirriwinni Gardens in New South Wales. The most recent enterprise is the establishment in 1997 of Mamarapha College (formerly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mission Bible College) at Karragullen, Western Australia.

A further development in the 1930s was the beginning of the use of radio as a vehicle to preach to the masses. The first program aired over 2GB in Sydney on Sunday, April 7, 1935. Later, various stations were added to the log and used to enrol listeners for Bible study courses.

**Australia Today**

The publishing work, begun in 1885 with a small printing press in Scott’s bedroom at “Sumerlide,” functions today at Warburton, Victoria, under the name Signs Publishing Company. From one colporteur in the person of Arnold, active colporteurs in Australia now number 43. The Avondale School for Christian Workers, opened in 1897, has grown in status and now functions under the title Avondale University College with students from various faiths and having a total enrollment of 1,508. Graduates range through the disciplines of nursing, education, theology, commercial business, science, and music. The overall educational picture in Australia includes 30 secondary schools and 44 elementary schools. The Sydney Sanitarium, opened in 1903, remains as a major health institution well-known as Sydney Adventist Hospital. The latest Australian membership report (2018) gives the total number of baptised members as 61,918 worshipping in 432 churches and 114 companies.
“Among the decisions of the Conference…” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, February 1, 1890.


“At the present writing (Nov. 8)…” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, December 1, 1886.


Boyd, Ella S. “Our Tongan Church School.” Union Conference Record, September 15, 1905.

“Bro. S. W. Carr…” Union Conference Record, October 15, 1904.


Haskell, S[tephen] N. “Appeal to the California Conference.” Signs of the Times, October 9, 1884.


“Helped to Send the First Workers to Australia.” Australasian Record, December 16, 1935.


“Meetings were continued in the tent…” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, February 1886.


“Our Canvassers.” Union Conference Record, March 1, 1901.

“Prospectus.” Bible Echo, Supplement, September 1, 1892.

Richardson, Dick and Jessie Richardson, “From Dick and Jessie Richardson.” *Australasian Record*, March 14, 1932.


“The School.” *Bible Echo*, September 15, 1892.


“The editor of the Bible Echo is holding a series…” *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, October 1886.

“The first appointees from our Monamona Mission…” *Australasian Record*, December 7, 1931.

“The series of meetings that were being held…” *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, January 1887.

“The Seventh-day Adventist church of Melbourne…” *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, February 1886.

“We have received from the clerk…” *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, February 15, 1890.


NOTES


12.


15. Ibid.


17. “Meetings were continued in the tent…” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, February 1886, 32.

18. “The Seventh-day Adventist church in Melbourne…” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, February 1886, 32.


20. “At the present writing (Nov. 8)…” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, December 1886, 192.

21. “The series of meetings that were being held…” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times…” January 1887, 16.


28. “We have received from the clerk…” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, February 15, 1890, 64.

29. “Among the decisions of the Conference…” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, February 1, 1890, 48.


34. “We are glad to welcome Bro. J. H. Stockton…” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, January 1, 1891, 16.


39. “Our Canvassers,” Union Conference Record, March 1, 1901, 10.


43. “Prospectus,” Bible Echo, Supplement, September 1, 1892, 16.

44. “The School,” Bible Echo, September 15, 1892, 288.


55. Dick Richardson and Jessie Richardson, “From Dick and Jessie Richardson,” *Australasian Record*, March 14, 1932, 2.


