



Lord Howe Island, South Pacific, where C. D. Baron commenced the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1894.

Photo courtesy of Barry Oliver.

Baron, Charles Dickens (1866–1953) and Beatrice Adelaide (Taylor) (c. 1873-1943)

MILTON HOOK

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.

Charles and Beatrice Baron accepted an appointment on Lord Howe island in 1894. They also served on Norfolk Island, New Zealand and Australia, sometimes as paid workers and sometimes self-supporting.

Early Life

Charles Baron was born in Manchester, England, in 1866, and raised in the Anglican Church.¹ He immigrated to Australia with his parents, John and Margaret Baron.² His parents established a general store in suburban Adelaide, and Charles assisted them in the business.³ At some time he learned carpentry, for he used those skills later in life.

Elder William Curtis conducted a tent crusade in Unley, suburban Adelaide, in March 1889. A regular Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) customer in Baron's shop invited Charles to the meetings. Curtis convinced him of the sanctity of Saturday, and he joined the Sabbath School of forty-five individuals formed as a result of the crusade.⁴

A Bible Institute was held in Melbourne in September 1890. Curtis persuaded Baron to attend with him. There, Baron was further instructed in Seventh-day Adventist teachings, and he learned the protocols of canvassing books door-to-door. He tried his hand at it, starting in Sydney, where he lived in the home of Elder Arthur G. Daniells.⁵

On January 7, 1892, Charles married 19-year-old Beatrice Adelaide Taylor in the North Fitzroy SDA church. Elder George Tenney performed the service. Beatrice, whose father was an auctioneer, was born in Adelaide.⁶

United Service

At the Australian Conference annual session held during the Ashfield camp meeting in suburban Sydney, New South Wales, October 19–30, 1894, Charles and Beatrice were appointed to pioneer mission service on Lord Howe Island.⁷ They sailed from Sydney on December 10,⁸ willing to be self-supporting missionaries but assured they would be supplemented with ten shillings per week. Charles found that the school had burned down and the government had withdrawn support for a teacher, so he rebuilt the premises. He and Beatrice taught sixteen pupils during the week and operated a Sunday school in the same building.⁹

In 1895 the Barons took time out from their work on Lord Howe Island and sailed to Norfolk Island to help rebuild the old prison chapel for use as the Seventh-day Adventist church. The stone walls were retained, but the floor and roof needed replacing. In four months Charles completed his work there, and then they returned to Lord Howe Island. They generated a lot of goodwill on the island, and some of the students later became baptized members.¹⁰

The Barons returned to Australia in time for Charles to help build the church at the entrance to the campus of the Avondale School for Christian Workers, Cooranbong, New South Wales, in August–September 1897. The carpenters earned six shillings a day, often half being returned as donations to buy building materials.¹¹

Late in 1897 the Barons were appointed to the New Zealand Conference.¹² On the eve of sailing, they received a letter from Ellen White advising Charles to form the habit of taking counsel from his peers and recommending that he pursue a nursing career.¹³ Within nine months of arriving in New Zealand, he found himself assisting in the church at Christchurch. At the same time, he took the opportunity to receive some training under Arthur

Brandstater, a nurse at the denomination's newly established Christchurch Sanitarium.¹⁴ The training probably involved elementary physiology, basic dietetics, first aid, and hydrotherapy treatments. It was the era when the church did not condone drugs of any kind. Denominational magazines carried articles against the use of chloroform because it often caused virtuous churchgoers to blaspheme under its influence.¹⁵ Baron later published an article advocating hydrotherapy treatments as an antidote for malarial fevers.¹⁶

Baron stayed with the sanitarium for only a few years. He next appears in the records holding a missionary license¹⁷ and assisting Elder Charles Paap in a tent crusade at Eketahunga, New Zealand, in 1907.¹⁸ His license was renewed in 1908, but in November that year, he was on his way back to Australia under appointment to the Adelaide Sanitarium.

In 1909¹⁹ and 1910 he was granted a missionary license from the South Australian Conference, but his term at the ailing sanitarium was short-lived. The Barons remained in South Australia for a few more years before transferring to Victoria. Charles and Beatrice held medical missionary licenses from the Victorian Conference in 1926–1928.²⁰ In the 1930s, they had moved to Sydney.²¹ In 1938 they briefly served at Tumut church in a self-supporting capacity.²²

Charles and Beatrice finally retired to Cooranbong, where they rented rooms at "Sunnyside." Beatrice passed away on March 25, 1943.²³ Two years later, on May 6, 1945, Charles married Gertrude Lyons Phillips, a member of the Woollahra church, Sydney.²⁴ He passed away in the Sydney Sanitarium on August 29, 1953.²⁵

Retrospect

Charles claimed he was the first Australian to begin Seventh-day Adventist mission work on a Pacific Island. Strictly speaking, that was true, but it should be noted that it was a transfer from one part of New South Wales to another part of the same colony, Lord Howe Island's European inhabitants being administered at the time by a New South Wales magistrate. He also claimed he was the first male nurse to be trained by the denomination in Australasia. This, too, must be qualified with the observation that at the Christchurch Sanitarium where his instruction took place on the job, there was little structure to a curriculum and no certificate issued that was recognized by any medical body. Subsequently, his church employment as a hydrotherapist was based on his brief experience at Christchurch Sanitarium rather than any substantial nursing credentials.

Charles Baron always seemed to be on the move from one short-term church appointment to another, sometimes in paid employment and at other times on a voluntary basis. In between church assignments, he could always turn to his carpentry skills.

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