



Group of the Stellmaker family, reading from left to right: Back row: Mrs. Charles Fehlberg (nee Eliza Stellmaker), Mr. A. Stellmaker, Mr. Charles Fehlberg (the church's first senior elder). Middle row: Mr. August Totenhofer, Mrs. A. Totenhofer. Front row: Mrs. Harry Camp (nee Mary Stellmaker), Mr. Harry Camp, Mrs. A. Stellmaker.

Mary and Thomas Camp, front row, first and second from left.

From *Australasian Record*, November 28, 1955.

Camp, Thomas James Henry "Harry" (1870–1934) and Mary (Stellmacher)

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.

Harry Camp was a gifted salesman who served the church from working as a colporteur to conference leadership in the Australasian Union Conference and South African Union Conference from 1890 to 1922.

Early Life

Thomas James Henry Camp, usually known as Harry, was born in Auckland, New Zealand, on March 26, 1870, the eldest of 15 children. Harry was only three years old when his parents moved south to the Waikato district.¹ His father borrowed money and built the Tamahere Hotel on the main road between Hamilton and Cambridge. They lived in the upstairs rooms, and his father operated a store, a bar, and a blacksmithing business on ground level. Two horsemen riding past the hotel one night in March 1885 noticed flames in the lower level and shouted the alarm. The inner stairs were ablaze, so Harry was directed to save his three younger brothers while his father slid down the lamppost at the front door and brought a ladder to the window for Harry's mother and five sisters. Harry grabbed his 6-year-old brother and carried him down the back fire escape. Then he rushed back in again, only to be beaten by the intensity of the flames. He dived through an upstairs window and broke his arm in the fall. His two brothers, Edward, 4, and Albert, 11, perished. Harry was badly burned about the head and chest, carrying the scars for life.²

Virtually penniless, the family returned to Auckland, where, in 1887, they found Elder Arthur Daniells conducting public meetings. Harry, especially, showed an interest and was later persuaded to travel to Australia and begin work as a colporteur.³

Church Employment

Harry partnered with George Teasdale, another young man from New Zealand, and together pioneered the city of Sydney with Adventist books, selling approximately one thousand copies of *The Great Controversy* in 1890.⁴ Harry had a gift for salesmanship and extended his efforts into the more remote towns of New South Wales (NSW).⁵ The early months of 1892 found him selling in the Richmond River area, together with John Reekie.⁶ At the time, Reekie, Camp, and Fairley Masters were said to be the three best colporteurs in Australasia.⁷

Preparations were under way to open the St. Kilda Bible School in Melbourne, where colporteurs and other prospective church workers would receive further training. Harry made plans to attend. He married Mary Stellmacher, originally from Germany but then a resident of Bismarck, Tasmania. The service took place in the North Fitzroy church on July 25, 1892, conducted by Elder George Tenney.⁸ Harry and Mary were resident students at the Bible School when it opened a month later, on August 24, continuing there until the end of the year. They remained in Melbourne for the birth of their first child, Hilda, and Harry attended the Bible School as a day student from June 6 through November 26, 1894.⁹

Harry and family returned to New Zealand in 1895, where he resumed colporteur work for another five years. During this time, two more daughters were born into their family, Olive and Gladys. Harry was appointed as the general agent for the colporteur ministry in New Zealand.¹⁰ Edwin Palmer, the general agent for the entire Australasian field, later spoke highly of Harry's ability to tutor teams of young men in salesmanship.¹¹ He continued in this work until the end of 1899.¹²

Elder Daniells recommended that Harry transfer to Australia to begin work as a field agent for the health food work, a move readily endorsed by the health food board.¹³ Harry arrived with his family in Sydney on February 14, 1900, to begin his new duties.¹⁴ He first secured the registration of trademarks for the manufactured foods and arranged advantageous freight rates for the foods to be transported by rail.¹⁵ Not only was Harry elected to the health food board, but he also found himself on the medical missionary board governing sanitarium affairs, at that time closely associated because of the common interest in health matters.¹⁶ These appointments were in place for only a few months before changes were made.

In August 1900, at the Australasian Union Conference (AUC) council meetings, Harry was elected as the general colporteur agent for the South Australian Conference.¹⁷ He and his family transferred to Adelaide in September.¹⁸ Once again, his term of office was a relatively short one, approximately 18 months, before he was transferred to South Africa.

Overseas Mission Service

The Echo Publishing Company in Melbourne thought to open a branch office in Durban, South Africa, where they planned to export their books and have them sold by resident colporteurs.¹⁹ Harry Camp, together with Cecil Pretzman, were asked to go and establish the enterprise by renting an office as a depot and begin selling their literature in the city and rural districts.²⁰ It was an audacious move because they were trespassing on sales territory encompassed by the newly formed South African Union Conference (SAUC).

Camp and Pretzman arrived in Durban on June 3, 1902.²¹ Camp's family followed, leaving Melbourne by steamer on July 31.²² Behind the scenes, the SAUC president grumbled about the intrusion into his territory, maintaining he preferred to import colporteur supplies from England because they were reputed to be better quality.²³ However, as soon as the two Australian interlopers gained a foothold, Camp went on to Cape Town and apparently convinced the SAUC president of their good intentions. Camp was elected vice-president of the Natal-Transvaal Conference, and Pretzman was elected as their secretary-treasurer.²⁴ They were also ex-officio members of the SAUC executive committee. When Pretzman returned to Australia, Camp was appointed to replace him as secretary-treasurer.²⁵ Camp remained in the SAUC for a little more than three years before moving into private business ventures that led him to England. Prior to their departure, a fourth daughter, Marjorie, was born in Pietermaritzburg, near Durban.²⁶

Time in England

The 1911 England Census lists Harry as a book publisher living with his family in “Timberstill Cottage,” Caterham, south of London.²⁷ He rejoined church employment in 1918 as one of six directors on the board of the British Health Food Factory, Stanborough Park, Watford.²⁸ His term was brief.²⁹

Back in Australia

Camp returned to Australia in 1920, under appointment by the AUC to be secretary of the Health Food Department.³⁰ His report to the AUC Session in September 1922 spoke of mixed success. The business outlets in Sydney, Adelaide, and Auckland were struggling. Those in Brisbane, Hobart, and Christchurch were more promising. Sales in Melbourne, Perth, and Wellington were the best. Camp observed that the cafes ran at a loss, merely serving as an advertising medium for the manufactured foods.³¹ Camp, at the time of the AUC Session, was under appointment to make yet another major overseas transfer, this time to the health food business in India. He was due to sail on October 3, 1922.³²

Competing in Business

Prior to departure for India, Camp had a disagreement with church officials. He obtained work as sales manager for Cereal Foods Limited in Sydney, a new enterprise that manufactured Vita-Brits, competition for the Seventh-day Adventist health food business.³³ He worked in this capacity for over 10 years until heart trouble forced his retirement. Shortly after retirement, he passed away at his residence, “Stanborough” in Lucinda Avenue, Wahroonga, on November 27, 1934. Elder William Turner conducted his burial service at the Field of Mars Cemetery in Ryde, suburban Sydney.³⁴

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