

Pascoe, William Henry (1874–1954), and Olive May (Bree) (1878–1966)

WILFRED HENRY PASCOE

Wilfred Henry Pascoe, B.A. Theology (Avondale College, New South Wales, Australia) retired in 2012 after 44 years of service. An Australian by birth, Pastor Pascoe served the Adventist Church as pastor, evangelist, and school Chaplain in the North New South Wales and West Australian Conferences. He also served as president of South West Papua Mission. Pastor Pascoe is married to Michelle (Rampton). They have three adult sons and three adult daughters with 14 grandchildren.

William Henry Pascoe was a pioneer Seventh-day Adventist pastor, missionary, evangelist, and church administrator in New Zealand and Australia from 1901 to 1954.

Historical Background

The Pascoes of Cornwall in the United Kingdom were descendants of Protestant families that moved to the United Kingdom from Upper Saxony between the 13th and 15th centuries to escape religious persecution in Europe. While deeply religious, they were nonsectarian Christians, valuing the Bible as their only rule of faith and practice. They believed that men and women were equal in God's sight in every aspect of secular and religious life. They also held that God could speak through men and women of faith equally and empowered both to be leaders according to His choice.¹

Family and Early Life of William Henry Pascoe



William Henry Pascoe

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre, Australia.

Originally from Stithians, Cornwall, England, Simon Pascoe and his brother John immigrated to Australia to join the gold rush at Ballarat, Victoria, in early 1865.² Following success on the goldfields supplying the miners with necessary food and equipment, they bought land near Melbourne, Victoria. This area today is the Melbourne suburb of Pascoe Vale. Simon wrote back home to ask Caroline Levin Martin from Truro near Stithians to come and join him.³ They were married at Ballarat on October 18, 1866.⁴

Soon after their marriage, the couple moved to New Zealand, where they prospered. Eventually, they moved to Macetown near Arrowtown in Central Otago and built roads and bridges in order to access the mining leases. Simon Pascoe later purchased a large property at Tokanui. Eight of their ten children were born at Macetown. The last two were born at Tokanui: Simon (b. 1867), Charles Edward (b. 1870), Albert (b. 1872), William Henry (b. February 9, 1874), Emma Jane (b. 1876), Alice Edith (b. 1878), James (b. 1880), John (b. 1882), Arthur Stephen (b. 1884), and Carolline Louisa (b. 1889).⁵

In his late teenage years, William Pascoe purchased land near his father's property at Tokanui. Needing capital to develop the land, he entered into a succession of road-building contracts with the government.⁶ One day in 1894, while walking above a cutting for the road, he picked up a small portion of muddied paper. He read of a group of Christians who were being challenged by a Jewish rabbi to prove that Sunday was the Sabbath of Scripture.⁷ He went home and, in the following months, read carefully through the Bible twice but was unable to find the proof. Around that time, a Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) colporteur (Pastor Crothers) called on William's father, Simon, and endeavored to sell him *Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation*.⁸ Simon rebuffed him, saying that the Bible alone was sufficient to guide a Christian. The colporteur sold a copy to a neighbor, who loaned it to Simon.⁹ However, William read the book and was deeply impressed.

The Pascoe family was unaware that a church existed that kept Saturday as the Sabbath.¹⁰ In due course, however, they learned of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with its message of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Sabbath meetings were commenced. Learning of an Adventist bookstore in Wellington, they ordered material to read at the meetings. Pastor Crothers visited them. He also ran a short evangelistic series, which led a number of local residents to Christ.¹¹ Crothers urged William Pascoe to do some colporteur work in order to develop his knowledge of scripture and earn money to go to the Avondale School for Christian Workers. Working from Tokanui to the Canterbury plains, he met Pastor George Teasdale, who baptized him on August 27, 1898.

Pascoe arrived at Avondale School for Christian Workers on April 28, 1899. To earn fees for the 1900 school year, he traveled to Tasmania to sell books. At the end of 1900, he was invited to work with the Church in South New Zealand. He would have preferred to stay on at Avondale but had insufficient finance.¹²

He worked in a number of places in South New Zealand, including Dunedin.¹³ After working for some time in South New Zealand, William developed pleurisy. He was admitted to the Christchurch Sanitarium at Papanui and

remained there for three months. There he met a trainee nurse, Olive May Bree.¹⁴

Family and Early Life of Olive May Bree

Helier Bree sailed for the North Island of New Zealand with his Scottish sweetheart Elizabeth Haxton-Lawson, whom he married on April 20, 1870.¹⁵ To their marriage were born 13 children. The fifth child was Olive May Bree, born on May 16, 1878. After attending an SDA evangelistic series in Napier, three of the Bree girls—Lucy, Olive, and Esther, became some of the earliest SDAs in New Zealand, baptized on December 20, 1891. The rest of the family followed on June 14, 1892.

Olive decided she wanted to train as a missionary, so she persuaded her brother, Arthur, to pay her fare to Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. She obtained work at the Echo Publishing Company to pay board and lodging at the School for Gospel Workers in Saint Kilda, Melbourne, in 1894, with Ellen White present as a mentor. However, she suffered extreme homesickness and returned to New Zealand at the end of that year.¹⁶

In 1900, Olive began the nurses' training course at the newly opened Christchurch Sanitarium at Papanui.¹⁷ There Olive met William Pascoe when he was admitted to the sanitarium in 1903. Their relationship developed quickly, and they were married by Pastor Barker on November 5, 1903. Five boys were born to William and Olive Pascoe: Arthur Lesley (b. March 20, 1905), Henry Vincent (b. March 27, 1908), William Lewis (b. February 11, 1912), Helier Martin (b. July 7, 1917), and Lindsay Oliver (b. August 5, 1920). Those five boys, together with their descendants, were to make an amazing contribution to the work of the SDA Church.¹⁸

Life and Ministry

On January 18, 1905, just a few weeks after their marriage, the young couple moved to the North Island of New Zealand. William was paid his first wage of five shillings per week and given a bike to ride for transport. He was ordained to the gospel ministry at the Masterton camp meeting held November 8–18, 1906, by Pastor O. A. Olsen, the General Conference President.¹⁹ During this camp meeting, they were asked to go as missionaries to the Cook Islands.²⁰

They stayed in the Cook Islands for less than two years. Olive's health declined rapidly, and she returned to her parents' home in New Zealand in 1907. After some time, her health issue was diagnosed as a hydatid cyst on her lung, which had to be surgically removed.²¹

Between 1909 and 1911 Pascoe conducted a number of evangelistic series in New Zealand. Then early in 1912, he was appointed as Vice President of the New Zealand Conference with Pastor J. M. Cole as President.²² Concurrently he was the church pastor at Ponsonby Church, the largest in New Zealand at that time.²³ At the conference session held at Napier January 19–31, 1915, New Zealand was divided into two conferences, and Pascoe was appointed as President of the South New Zealand Conference.²⁴ He remained there for just 18

months, and then at the union session held August 29–September 12, 1916, in Sydney, he was appointed as President of the North New Zealand Conference.²⁵

During the years of World War I, William Pascoe and Pastor Frank Rampton approached the New Zealand Government and military officials, eventually establishing an understanding with regard to noncombatance.²⁶ This was a major concession for Seventh-day Adventists in the armed services.

In late 1918 at the union conference session, Pascoe was appointed as President of the Queensland Conference. After two years,²⁷ at the Australasian Union Conference session held in the latter half of 1920, a decision was made to divide the New South Wales Conference. Pascoe was elected as President of the South New South Wales Conference. The family moved to Sydney to take up the position.²⁸

They were not in Sydney for very long. At the 1921 union session, Pascoe was appointed President of the South Australian Conference, which was in debt at the time.²⁹ With effort and sacrifice, the debt was turned into a surplus in two years.³⁰

While William was in Adelaide, an accident occurred that was to have an impact on him for the rest of his life. Alighting from a tram, he slipped and fell, suffering severe brain trauma that affected his health and capacity for work.³¹ As a consequence, he was asked to move to Tasmania at the end of 1923 as Vice President of the Victoria-Tasmania Conference.³² He found the cold weather trying and, for compassionate reasons, was transferred to Melbourne to assist the president and enjoy warmer weather.

In late 1926, he was invited to be the pastor of the Avondale Church, Cooranbong (now Avondale Memorial Church).³³ He continued to carry that responsibility long after his age of retirement. In fact, he served as the pastor of the church to within a few months of his death at the age of 80. He died on October 25, 1954.³⁴ He had served for 26 years at the Avondale Church and given a total of 53 years of service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Olive died on October 22, 1966. They are buried together in the Avondale Cemetery, Cooranbong, New South Wales.

Contribution and Legacy

William Henry Pascoe was a leading first-generation figure in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in New Zealand, Australia, and the Cook Islands. His service was characterized by 12 years of conducting multiple evangelistic series followed by 15 years of administrative leadership followed by 26 years of pastoral leadership. He was the president of five conferences in their formative years. He is remembered in New Zealand for championing the establishment of SDA schools. He cared about women and their role in the church and encouraged them to use their effort and special gifts in reaching the community. He cared about the youth of the church and their training, particularly at Avondale, where the church he pastored served the college and the students. He was delighted to spend 26 years as pastor at Avondale, to preach from the same pulpit used by Ellen White, and to

have in his own home the writing desk used by her in her home at "Sunnyside."³⁵

Reporting on a reunion of the Pascoe family held in 1981, the writer concluded with the question: "What was the greatest achievement of William and Olive Pascoe? Was it the work and the positions they held, or was it the five boys that they reared?"³⁶ Indeed perhaps the greatest legacy is seen in the continuing contribution of the Pascoe family. Arthur spent many years in mission service in the Solomon Islands and in pastoral service in Australia. Vincent spent his career in education ministry in the Church. William became Associate Treasurer of the General Conference. Martin spent 28 years in mission service in Papua New Guinea. Lindsay, a layperson, also worked in education, retiring as executive administration officer of the Port Moresby Teacher's College in Papua New Guinea.³⁷ Their children and grandchildren are continuing the legacy of William and Olive Pascoe.

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NOTES

1. Arthur Lesley Pascoe, *He Leadeth Me* (Morisset, NSW: Robert and Heather Dixon, 2000), 7.
2. Many of the facts in this biography come from the personal knowledge of the author, Wilfred Henry Pascoe, who is the grandson of William and Olive Pascoe.
3. Arthur Lesley Pascoe, *He Leadeth Me*, 7.
4. Victoria marriage no. 4127 (1866), Simon Pascoe and Caroline Martin, Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages, Ballarat, Victoria, Australia; Family Bible Register of William Henry Pascoe, personal collection of Wilfred Henry Pascoe.
5. Ibid.
6. Arthur Lesley Pascoe, *He Leadeth Me*, 12.
7. Arthur Lesley Pascoe et al., "Biographical Recollections Regarding William Henry Pascoe" (unpublished manuscript, n.d.), personal collection of Wilfred Henry Pascoe, 2.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 4.
11. Ibid., 5.
12. Ibid., 9–12.
13. "Brother William Pascoe . . .," *Union Conference Record*, July 1, 1901, 15.
14. Arthur Lesley Pascoe et al., "Biographical Recollections," 8.
15. Ibid., 8.
16. Ibid., 9; Arthur Lesley Pascoe, "W. H. Pascoe: 1901 and Beyond" (unpublished manuscript, n.d.), personal collection of Wilfred Henry Pascoe, 2; Arthur Lesley Pascoe, *He Leadeth Me*, 9.
17. Ibid., 10.

18. Bruce Price, "Pascoe Family Reunion," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, June 15, 1981, 12, 14.
19. Ibid.
20. Arthur Lesley Pascoe, "W. H. Pascoe," 5.
21. Ibid., 8.
22. Ibid., 9.
23. Ibid., 10.
24. "The New Zealand Conference," *Australasian Record*, March 1, 1915, 3.
25. "Distribution of Labour," *Australasian Record*, September 25, 1916, 5.
26. Arthur Lesley Pascoe, "W. H. Pascoe," 11, 12; William Henry Pascoe, "Autobiography" (unpublished manuscript, n.d.), personal collection of Wilfred Henry Pascoe, 24.
27. "Distribution of Labour," *Australasian Record*, November 11, 1918, 37.
28. "The New South Wales Camp Meeting," *Australasian Record*, November 1, 1920, 6.
29. "Distribution of Labour," *Australasian Record*, September 5, 1921, 5.
30. Arthur Lesley Pascoe, "W. H. Pascoe," 15.
31. Ibid., 15; William Henry Pascoe, "Autobiography," 34.
32. "Digest of the Business of the Annual Council," *Australasian Record*, October 29, 1923, 3.
33. "Distribution of Labour," *Australasian Record*, October 4, 1926, 32; Arthur Lesley Pascoe et al., "Biographical Reflections," 16.
34. "A watchman who gave . . .," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, November 15, 1954, 16.
35. Wilfred Henry Pascoe, personal knowledge as the grandson of William and Olive Pascoe.
36. Price, "Pascoe Family Reunion."
37. Ibid.

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