



Seated L-R: Cleora Green, Sophia Whatley, Millie Dexter, Arthur Young (Pitcairner sitting on the ground). Standing L-R: Joseph Green, William Floding, child Leroy Whatley, Jonathon Whatley, Alfred Young (Pitcairner), Herbert Dexter.

1896. *Pitcairn missionaries before the fifth voyage in 1896*. Database on-line. Center for Adventist Research Image Database.

<http://centerforadventistresearch.org/photos> (accessed May 21, 2021).

## Whatley, Jonathan C. (1864–?)

### 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* and the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

Jonathan C. Whatley and his wife, Sophia, were missionaries to Pitcairn Island.

Jonathan C. Whatley was born in Douro, Ontario, Canada, in 1864 to English settlers Charles and Elizabeth Whatley. His siblings were Charlotte (b. 1851), Louisa Mary Harriet (b. 1853), Annie (b. 1857), David (b. 1858) and Clarisa (b. 1868).<sup>1</sup> He was married to a local woman, Sophia Jane Tighe, at Douro on November 14, 1888. The certificate notes that Jonathan was a farmer and an Adventist while Sophia was “a Babtist (sic)”<sup>2</sup>

## Appointed to the South Seas

Jonathan and Sophia were chosen to sail on the fifth voyage of the “Pitcairn” with a group of missionaries to relieve or assist others who had gone on earlier voyages. The vessel departed San Francisco on May 19, 1896. Included among the passengers were Jonathan and Sophia’s six-year-old son Roy. After a month on the high seas, they reached Pitcairn Island safely and found that missionaries William and Rosa Buckner wished to return to America and that the Butz family were transferring elsewhere. Jonathan and Sophia were happy to replace them, teaching the youngsters and nurturing the Pitcairn church members.<sup>3</sup>

No one could have predicted the tragic turn of events 12 months after the Whatley family arrived on Pitcairn Island. A young church member, Harry Albert Christian, murdered his partner, Julia Clara Warren, and their child, Eleanor, and disposed of their bodies over a cliff and into the sea. Harry was tried on the island, confessed, and was convicted and taken to Fiji where he was hanged.<sup>4</sup> The public press was critical of the missionaries and the islanders’ apparent hypocrisy with regard to Christian principles. The fact is that murder can take place among any religious group and the leaders and other members of the group do not necessarily carry culpability. Nevertheless, the episode was traumatic for everyone. It was apparently upsetting for the Whatleys. They departed by a passing steamer. No mention was made of them when the “Pitcairn” arrived at the island on its final voyage in 1899.<sup>5</sup>

## Return to Canada

The subsequent history of the Whatley family remains obscure. The 1926 Canadian Census places them in Main Street, Melfort, Saskatchewan, with Jonathan at age 61.<sup>6</sup> Sophia passed away on May 21, 1958, in San Bernadino, California, at the age of 87.<sup>7</sup> Obituaries for both Jonathan and Sophia are not found in Adventist denominational magazines.

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## NOTES

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