

# Halsey, Edward Clarence (1869–1926)

## W. GLYNN LITSTER

W. Glynn Litster, Ph.D. (The University of Newcastle, Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia), retired in 1994. Litster was born in Melbourne, Australia, and served as an educator and missionary in the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists. His roles included teacher, principal, school supervisor, and education director. Late in his career he researched the history of Sanitarium. During retirement he produced Pacific Islands hymnbooks in 7 languages. He is married to Elva, has two adult children, 6 grandchildren, and 3 great grandchildren.

Edward Clarence Halsey was a baker who was invited to come to Australia from the United States. He was responsible for developing many of the health-food products which were to become icons for Sanitarium Health food Company in the South Pacific.

## Early Life

Edward Clarence Halsey was born in United States, November 5, 1869. He trained as a baker under Doctor John H Kellogg at Battle Creek Sanitarium making health foods: "Under the direction of Dr. J. H. Kellogg. Halsey turned out the first experimental batch of granose (sic) in America."<sup>1</sup>

## Experience in Australia

Ellen White's son, Pastor William C. White, was instrumental in the decision to invite Halsey to Australia where he became the first to manufacture *Granose*, (the fore-runner of *Weet-Bix*) in Australia and New Zealand. The decision had been made at the second biennial session of the Australasian Union Conference held on the Stanmore, New South Wales campground, October 25-31, 1897.<sup>2</sup> The record of the session carried the report that,

Bakery premises have been leased in Northcote, which, at this writing, are being put in proper condition for the manufacture of several lines of health foods. This work will be begun under the supervision of the local committee, in a moderate and economical way, and will be enlarged, as the demand shall increase. Mr Halsey, an experienced baker from the Battle Creek, Michigan, Sanitarium, will have charge of the details of the bakery. It was not deemed advisable to put in anything like an extensive plant for the manufacture of health foods, until it should be decided where the contemplated Sanitarium will be located, as it seems desirable that the bakery establishment should be in the same locality.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning in 1898, Halsey worked for the Australian Union Conference at Northcote, a suburb of Melbourne.<sup>4</sup> In March 1898, it was reported that,

Brother E. C. Halsey has been sent out from the Sanitarium bakery [at Battle Creek] to take charge of the manufacturing, and the work has now begun [at Melbourne, Australia]. We have had to begin slowly and experiment to some extent, but thus far our success has been very encouraging. We are now making Granola, Caramel Cereal, and Nut Butter, which is quite equal to that being put up by the Sanitarium in America. It is being enthusiastically received, and the business is becoming quite brisk... Please do not delay in this matter, but take hold of this new enterprise with a snap, and we will be at your service to please you.<sup>5</sup>



Edward Halsey, the first baker employed by Sanitarium Health Food Company.

Photo courtesy of Sanitarium Health and Well Being.

On June 5 that year, Halsey married Sarah Jane Jeannie Mansell, who had become a Seventh-day Adventist in Mildura.<sup>6</sup> Jeannie had attended the fledgling Australasian Bible School in Melbourne in 1894.<sup>7</sup>

Halsey and his wife moved with the food manufacturing business in early 1899 to Avondale College, Cooranbong, north of Sydney in New South Wales,<sup>8</sup> where on May 29 Halsey produced his first peanut butter.<sup>9</sup> Jeannie worked as the assistant matron of the Avondale Bible School that had opened its doors two years earlier. A child, Vernon, was born in 1899, but Jeannie contracted blood poisoning and pneumonia and died in the Avondale Health Retreat on June 6, 1900. She was buried in the Avondale Cemetery.<sup>10</sup>

## The Move to New Zealand

After losing his wife, Halsey accepted an invitation to transfer with his young child to Papanui, a suburb of Christchurch, New Zealand, there to continue to develop health foods. They left Sydney on December 27, 1900 travelling via Hobart, Tasmania, and Bluff, the southern-most port in New Zealand. They arrived at Lyttelton, the port for Christchurch, disembarking on January 11, 1901.

Halsey established himself in a small building at the rear of the Health Home at Papanui, creating batches of Granola, Caramel Cereal, Unleavened Rolls and bread for the Health Home. One of the supporters of the new health food business in New Zealand was Sidney H. Amyes who left his farm in the hands of a manager and moved into Christchurch, so he could provide funds to develop the new health foods. His funds paid Halsey's wages, built the bake house, bought the needed oven, and later provided the horse and cart to take the large quantity of goods being produced by Halsey to a Mrs Schumaker's ovens about a kilometre away to have the goods baked and then returned to Halsey's shed for packing and despatch. It was reported that Sidney Amyes also made the first denominationally produced 'Nut Meat'.

While in Papanui, Halsey married Alice Louisa Merab Knight in 1902. After working for eight years in Christchurch, Halsey travelled with his son in March 1908 to visit family relatives in the United States, leaving his wife, Alice, in Christchurch. He was away for some nine months.

## Later Years

When the Sanitarium Health Food Company built their new factory on the grounds of the Health Home in 1920 there was no further work for Halsey though he had developed many of the products that were to be manufactured. Instead he made tomato sauce, preserves, and jams in another factory closer to central Christchurch and selling to local residents. Halsey died on November 5, 1926, and was buried in Bromley Cemetery, Christchurch. The service was conducted by W. J. Westerman.<sup>11</sup> His second wife, Alice was often seen riding her bicycle around Papanui, Christchurch till she died on August 10, 1955.<sup>12</sup>

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## NOTES

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2. A. T. Robinson, "Medical Missionary Work," *Union Conference Record*. January/February, 1898, 6.?

3. *Ibid.*?

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6. E. R. Palmer, "Mrs E. C. Halsey obituary," *Union Conference Record*, July 1, 1900, 15.?
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8. "E. C. Halsey and wife . . .," *Union Conference Record*, April 26, 1899, 11.?
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10. Palmer, "Mrs E. C. Halsey obituary," 15.?
11. A. S. Herbert, "Brother Edward Clarence Halsey obituary," *Australasian Record*, January 17, 1927, 7.?
12. Alfred C. Ball, "Alice Louisa Merab Halsey obituary," *Australasian Record*, September 12, 1955, 7.?

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