



Cooranbong Health Food Factory, c. 1899

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre.

Morse, George Warren (1847–1929)

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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.

George Warren Morse worked in the editorial department of the Review and Herald office at Battle Creek and later pioneered publishing work in Canada.

George Warren Morse was one among twelve children of Washington and Olive (Buzzel) Morse. His preferred name was Warren. He was born in Williamstown, Vermont, on April 23, 1847. His father was a Millerite and early Seventh-day Adventist preacher who experienced the Great Disappointment of 1844. In 1855, the family moved to Minnesota, then a frontier Territory, pioneering the area by distributing denominational literature. Despite their undeveloped living conditions Warren managed to obtain a sound education and at an early age he himself started work as a school teacher.¹

At twenty-one years of age Warren married Eliza "Lizzie" Jane Baker in Deerfield, Minnesota, on April 5, 1868. They ventured to take a claim on a tract of farmland in north-western Iowa but the grasshopper invasion won that battle and drove them to familiar territory at Waseca, near Deerfield.² Warren gained success as editor of the Waseca Herald.³

Denominational Service

With his experience in publishing work Warren found enthusiastic acceptance in the editorial department of the Review and Herald office at Battle Creek, Michigan, 1885 through 1889. At the same time he gladly served as superintendent of the Sabbath School in the Dime Tabernacle. It is said that his teaching experience prompted him to introduce some innovative methods that were well received.⁴

In 1889 Warren was appointed to pioneer the publishing work in Canada, operating from a branch office of the Review and Herald as canvassing agent located in Toronto, Ontario. He managed this enterprise until 1898 when he received a request to enter mission service overseas.⁵

Warren and Lizzie were pleased to respond to the invitation to transfer to Australia. Their son, Orwin, accompanied them. They sailed from San Francisco on the "Miowera," arriving in early August 1898. His specific assignment was to manage the struggling health food business, a subsidiary of the medical work. It required him to locate in Melbourne.⁶ His past experience was utilised when he was also elected as one of seven directors of the Echo Publishing Company.⁷

Warren immediately began seeking a different location in order to expand the health food business. In consultation with church officers it was voted to build a food processing plant on the new campus of the Avondale School for Christian Workers at Cooranbong, New South Wales. Warren liked the idea of using student labour to enable them to subsidise their school fees.⁸ The site of the school saw-mill with much of its equipment, including the boiler and cistern, was purchased to include in the functioning of the factory.⁹

It was convenient for Warren and Lizzie to reside at the Summer Hill Sanitarium in suburban Sydney because he was also secretary of the Australasian Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association (AMM&BA), its centre gravitating from Melbourne to Sydney. In this capacity he was a member of the committee that decided to use the Avondale Health Retreat, rather than continue at the Summer Hill Sanitarium, as the practical training

institution for nurses with their theory classes held at the same Cooranbong campus.¹⁰

During the time of the 1899 Australasian Union Conference (AUC) Session at Cooranbong the health food factory was in a position to provide delegates with samples of their products. Bread was being sold in the local community, caramel cereal tea, biscuits and peanut butter were being distributed to retail outlets. The business, albeit small, was operating on a better foundation than what had begun in Melbourne.¹¹

At the turn of the century the medical work in general morphed into a different form of administration. The health food business became a separate entity and the sanitarium work was transferred to the control of the AUC.¹² Having directed both enterprises into relatively stable circumstances Warren moved to Melbourne to give a further twelve months service at the Echo Publishing Company prior to sailing back to San Francisco on September 3, 1901.¹³

Back in America

Warren and Lizzie settled once again in Battle Creek. Warren was chosen to be the senior elder at the Dime Tabernacle, a role he fulfilled until 1907 which included the eventful years of the institutional fires and controversy and Ellen White's advice to scatter from Battle Creek. Seeking an outdoor occupation to improve his health Warren invested in a small orange grove in DeLand, Florida. He and Lizzie became well-known in the community as loyal Seventh-day Adventists and good Bible students. For fifteen years Warren taught a men's scripture class at the First Presbyterian Church. When he passed away on September 14, 1929, the Presbyterian minister conducted the service in the same church.¹⁴ Warren was laid to rest with his father in the family plot at Oakdale Cemetery, DeLand. Lizzie, also, was buried there in 1931 and son Orwin in 1967.¹⁵

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NOTES

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