



Ephraim Giblett, c. 1965.

Photo courtesy of South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.

Giblett, Ephraim Frederick (1914–1997)

GILBERT M. VALENTINE

Gilbert M. Valentine, Ph.D. has served internationally in teaching and senior administrative roles in Adventist higher education in Europe, Asia, the South Pacific and North America. He has written extensively in Adventist studies and has authored several books, including biographies of *W. W. Prescott* (2005) and *J. N. Andrews* (2019). *The Prophet and the Presidents* (2011) explored the political influence of Ellen White. He has also written for the *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* (2013).

A descendant of prominent early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers from the southwest corner of Western Australia, Ephraim Giblett began his forty-four years of service to the Church in the South Pacific as a colporteur

in Queensland before moving into gospel ministry in 1939. He served for nineteen years in pastoral-evangelism in both Queensland and North New Zealand before being called to serve as a departmental leader in three local conferences for a further twenty-one years. In post-retirement years he served as a much-loved volunteer church pastor.

Family Background and Education (1914-1936)

Ephraim Frederick Giblett, (known as Effie to his friends and colleagues) was born on February 28, 1914, on the island of Rarotonga, in the Cook Islands. He was the eldest of four siblings with a brother and two sisters. Giblett's parents had not long resided in Rarotonga when he was born. They were at the beginning of a new assignment to mission service. His father, Ephraim John Giblett (known as John), was the son of fourth generation British immigrants from Sandhurst in Berkshire who had settled near Manjimup in the southwest of Western Australia in the mid-nineteenth century where they had established a large successful farming property. Effie Giblett's grandparents, Jesse Giblett and his wife Eliza had responded to the preaching of an Adventist evangelist in 1902 and with their seven children had been baptized in a local stream becoming founding members of the Manjimup church.¹

John Giblett, Effie Giblett's father, left Manjimup shortly after his baptism to travel to Cooranbong with his sister to attend the recently established Avondale School for Christian Workers (now Avondale College) in 1903.² While yet a student, John Giblett became the manager of the campus Health Food factory, at that time still under the control of the school.³ He was noted for the skills he developed in health food production. In 1912, he married college friend Agnes Goulett from Victoria and in 1913 the couple accepted a call to go to Niue Island as missionaries.⁴ Their visit to Rarotonga was to be temporary while they waited for travel documents and transport. Travel difficulties and Effie's health problems meant that the family's mission service on Rarotonga extended to two years. During a furlough visit back to Sydney Effie's mother, Agnes gave birth to his younger sibling and the family managed a visit to relatives back home in Manjimup before departing again for the Pacific islands.⁵ Unfortunately, they were not able to see Effie's grandmother Eliza, who died of the post-World War I Flu Epidemic just days before they arrived home.⁶

In late 1919, the Giblett family sailed for the remote Pacific island of Niue, sometimes known as Savage Island, 1,400 miles northeast of New Zealand, where the family spent the next four years in lonely and isolated mission work. *Australasian Record* readers understood that Niue was "one of the loneliest outposts in our mission work."⁷ The family learned to subsist largely on canned food, but succeeded in firmly establishing a small company of believers.⁸ In 1925, the family now comprising four children, returned first to New Zealand and then to Cooranbong, Australia, where once more John Giblett worked for the expanding Sanitarium Health Food industry.⁹ According to J. W. Kent, they were the last European missionaries to reside on the island for many years.¹⁰

The campus at Cooranbong hosted an elementary school which it is presumed Effie Giblett attended. His family lived on Avondale road. During the 1930s, the institution, now with the name Australasian Missionary College, experienced unsettled times with repeated changes in principalship and financial difficulties associated with the Great Depression. Giblett appears to have enrolled in the secondary program in 1930 and then proceeded to take the ministerial course. He studied with Alfred J. Kranz and Albert Speck completing his program in 1936.

Early Ministry 1937-1958)

Giblett began denominational employment in March 1937 as a colporteur in Nambour, Queensland, where he bicycled around the district selling books and introducing the *Signs of the Times*.¹¹ After two-and-a-half years in literature ministry, he was called, in November 1939 into fulltime pastoral ministry. A year later, on December 19, 1940 he married twenty-four-year old Tasmanian Ninnion Dorothy Gill at the Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Beaconsfield, not far from her birthplace in Launceston, Tasmania. Ninnion Gill also graduated from Australasian Missionary College, completing the business course in 1937, but it is not clear if she had enrolled earlier and become acquainted with Giblett in his last year. Upon her graduation, a year after Giblett, she was assigned office work in South Australia.¹² However, six months later she was called to Queensland to take up broader responsibilities caring for the conference Sabbath School and the youth departments. This required her to visit isolated families and to travel to distant country churches to assist in developing Sabbath School and youth programs. Howard Rampton and Lance Butler provided transportation.¹³ Her appointment also provided opportunity for courtship. After their marriage, Ephraim and Ninnion Giblett began fulltime evangelistic-pastoral ministry in Nambour where their first child, Dorothy Joy, was born in May 1943. This assignment was followed by an appointment to the Rockhampton church in the north of the Conference.¹⁴

Giblett was ordained to ministry in Brisbane in November 1944. Three months later, in February 1945, he accepted a call to pastoral-evangelism in North New Zealand where he spent the next fourteen years in local church ministry in various locations throughout the North Island. Churches he cared for included Dannevirke where in June 1946 twins Trevor and Beverly were born to the family, Taumararua in the central North Island, Wanganui in the southwest, and Kaitaia in the far north, among numerous others.¹⁵ In later years, when serving as departmental leader in Auckland, he would return to Wanganui to lead out in the annual Ingathering campaign. His infectious enthusiasm motivated a large proportion of the congregation, including its young people, to engage in the three-week-long evening home visitation program.¹⁶

Departmental Leadership (1959-1980)

Recognizing Giblett's enthusiasm and organizational abilities, the North New Zealand constituency called him into conference departmental leadership in the North New Zealand Conference in 1959. In North New Zealand, he was responsible for the home missions, Sabbath School, public relations, and radio departments. Three

years later, in 1961, he was invited to fill the same role in the North New South Wales conference carrying the same departmental assignments. During this time, he partnered with the Trans-Tasman Union Conference and the Australasian Division to launch the first Adventist television outreach in the South Pacific. In April 1964, on RTN Channel 8 at Lismore he was successful in coordinating George Vandeman's *It is Written* telecast attracting an audience in excess of 30,000. Giblett coordinated with the local station and undertook the training of lay people to help follow up the large number of personal contacts that the telecast generated.¹⁷

In January 1966, Giblett moved to Brisbane where he had been called to care for the same cluster of departments in the Queensland Conference. Giblett became widely respected for his enthusiastic cheerfulness and the practical help he was able to give to local churches in the fostering of their local ministry and outreach. Eight months after he moved to Brisbane, he received another call, this time to Sydney to serve in the Trans-Tasman Union Conference. Here again he carried the same departmental responsibilities: home missions now called lay activities, Sabbath School, and radio/television. Four years later, in December 1970, he accepted an invitation to move to the Trans-Commonwealth Union Conference with its office in Melbourne. Here for the next ten years he continued to foster the work of the departments at churches and in conferences in West Australia, South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, and in South New South Wales. In 1972, he relinquished responsibility for the radio/television ministry and undertook leadership of the stewardship department in its place.

Retirement (1981-1997)

Upon Giblett's retirement from ministry in mid-1980 at the age of sixty-six, he moved back to New South Wales and settled at Macksville where for a number of years, on a volunteer-basis, he served as pastor of the local Macksville church. In later years, he became involved in helping to build the Nambucca Heads Adventist church. Giblett died on October 27, 1997, at the hospital in Coffs Harbor and was buried at Nambucca Heads Cemetery.

¹⁸

Legacy

Ephraim Giblett was respected for his organizational leadership, his enthusiasm and energy, his bright infectious optimism, and his ability to motivate and train lay leadership across the South Pacific Division. His forty-four years of service did much to strengthen the Church at the local level.

SOURCES

"Appointments for College Students." *Australasian Record*, September 13, 1937.

"Australia Electoral Rolls: 1903-1980." Ancestry.com. Accessed February 14, 2020. <https://search.ancestry.com>.

"Brother Ephraim Giblett writes..." *Australasian Record*, September 29, 1924.

Brandstater, R. "Jesse Giblett obituary." *Australasian Record*, June 8, 1925.

"Brother and sister Ephraim Giblett..." *Australasian Record*, December 8, 1919.

Colquhoun, P., E. Krause and R. Lumsden. "Ephraim Giblett obituary." *Record*, December 6, 1997.

"Detached Islands." *Australasian Record*, July 29, 1935.

Ephraim Frederick Giblett Biographical Records. South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives.

Giblett, E. F. "That the World May Know." *Australasian Record*, April 5, 1971.

Giblett, E. F. "'It is Written' Programme." *Australasian Record*, May 4, 1964.

Gill, Ninnion D. "My First Itinerary in Queensland." *Australasian Record*, August 15, 1938.

Gill, Ninnion D. "Notes from Queensland." *Australasian Record*, January 2, 1939.

Harker, H. G. "Eliza Giblett obituary." *Australasian Record*, October 27, 1919.

Kent, J. W. "Ephraim J. Giblett obituary." *Australasian Record*, April 15, 1964.

New Zealand Electoral Rolls: 1853-1981." Ancestry.com. Accessed February 14, 2020.
<https://search.ancestry.com>.

"Niue, or Savage Island." *Australasian Record*, September 28, 1914.

"Our Health Food Work." *Australasian Record*, February 7, 1910.

"Returning Missionaries." *Australasian Record*, September 29, 1924.

Stewart, A. G. "Agnes Jean Giblett obituary." *Australasian Record*, July 31, 1961.

NOTES

1. R Brandstater, "Jesse Giblett obituary," *Australasian Record*, June 8, 1925, 8.
2. J. W. Kent, "Ephraim J. Giblett obituary" *Australasian Record*, April 15, 1964, 14.
3. "Our Health Food Work," *Australasian Record*, February 7, 1910, 5.
4. A. G. Stewart, "Agnes Jean Giblett obituary," *Australasian Record*, July 31, 1961, 14.
5. "Brother and sister Ephraim Giblett...", *Australasian Record*, December 8, 1919, 8.
6. H. G. Harker, "Eliza Giblett obituary," *Australasian Record*, October 27, 1919, 7.

7. "Niue, or Savage Island," *Australasian Record*, September 28, 1914, 2; see also "Detached Island," *Australasian Record*, July 29, 1935, 7.
8. Ibid.
9. Census records for 1949 identify his occupation as baker.
10. J. W. Kent, "Ephraim J. Giblett obituary," *Australasian Record*, April 15, 1964, 14.
11. The 1937 Australian Electoral Rolls give his address as 7 O'Connell Terrace, Bowen Hills. Australia Electoral Rolls: 1903-1980, "Ephraim Frederick Giblett," Ancestry.com, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://search.ancestry.com>.
12. "Appointments for College Students," *Australasian Record*, September 13, 1937, 6.
13. Ninnion D. Gill, "My First Itinerary in Queensland," *Australasian Record*, August 15, 1938, 4, 5; Ninnion D. Gill, "Notes from Queensland," *Australasian Record*, January 2, 1939, 6, 7.
14. Ephraim Frederick Giblett Biographical Records, South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives, folder: "Giblett, Ephraim," document: "Biographical Information Blank;" see also Australia Electoral Rolls: 1903-1980, "Ephraim Frederick Giblett," Ancestry.com, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://search.ancestry.com>.
15. New Zealand Electoral Rolls: 1853-1981, "Ephraim Frederick Giblett," Ancestry.com, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://search.ancestry.com>.
16. The author participated in a number of such annual campaigns under Giblett's leadership.
17. E. F. Giblett, "'It is Written' Programme," *Australasian Record*, May 4, 1964, 8.
18. P. Colquhoun, E. Krause & R. Lumsden, "Ephraim F. Giblett obituary," *Australasian Record*, December 6, 1997, 14.

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000