



Young, Sara Mareta (1866–1906)

Sara Mareta Young

Photo courtesy of South Pacific Heritage Centre.

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

Sara Mareta Young, a descendant of the 1789 HMS *Bounty* mutineer Edward (Ned) Young, was one of the first Pitcairn Islanders (if not the first) to travel to other Pacific Islands as a Seventh-day Adventist missionary.

Years on Pitcairn Island

Sara Mareta Young was born on Pitcairn Island on November 23, 1866, the eleventh of thirteen children born to Simon and Mary Buffet (Christian) Young.¹ Although raised in the Anglican faith on Pitcairn Island, she was baptized a Seventh-day Adventist by Elder Albert Read on December 6, 1890, becoming a charter member of the Pitcairn Island SDA Church.²

When a typhus epidemic swept Pitcairn Island Sara's father, Simon Young, was struck down and died on September 26, 1893.³ She also lost two brothers and a sister in the same calamity.⁴ Soon after, during the third voyage of the "Pitcairn," Sara joined the vessel when it left Pitcairn on August 3, 1894,⁵ never again to return to Pitcairn Island.

First Term of Mission Service

Sara disembarked from the "Pitcairn" at remote Rurutu Island with Rodney and Carrie Stringer to assist in their self-supporting mission endeavors.⁶ Rurutu Island is the northernmost island of the Austral group in French Polynesia.

During its fifth voyage, the "Pitcairn" called in at Rurutu in August 1896. The crew found the Stringers struggling against rats that ate their garden vegetables, feral cats that took their poultry, and Sara's illness. The Stringers

persisted a while longer, but it was decided that Sara would be better placed if she was working near medical attention. For that reason, she transferred to Tonga where Dr. Joseph Caldwell and Sara's relative, nurse Maud Young, were located. Sara, together with her older sister Maria, who had joined the vessel earlier, disembarked at Tongatapu. Maria worked as house assistant for missionaries Edwin and Florence Butz and Sara assisted Edward and Ida Hilliard.⁷

Transfer to Australia

Toward the end of 1899 the Hilliards were transferred to Tasmania where Edward would be superintendent of the Tasmanian Mission. Sara remained with them as a valued member of their household.⁸ When the offer was made in 1901 to train nurses at the Avondale Health Retreat, New South Wales, Sara was one of the first to join the initial class. Later, when the Wahroonga Sanitarium opened, all training was removed to Sydney⁹ and it was from that institution, on September 17, 1903, that Sara graduated together with six other candidates.¹⁰

Second Term of Mission Service

Within weeks of her graduation Sara was appointed to mission service in the Pacific Islands.¹¹ Early in 1904 she sailed on the "Manipouri" from Sydney to assist in the Samoa Sanitarium.¹²

The Samoa Sanitarium experienced a succession of American doctors, the last being Dr. Alfred Vollmer who became ill with tuberculosis and returned home in 1905. The two incumbent nurses, James Southon and Sara Young were left to administer treatments to non-surgical cases.¹³ Southon married a local lass and abandoned the mission.¹⁴ Sara was left on her own to continue treatments. She wrote to Australian headquarters, "The Lord is blessing me with plenty of work.... I am keeping well and of good courage."¹⁵ In April 1906 she made a trip to Savai'i Island to minister to simple medical cases. Back in Apia, on July 1, she wrote again to headquarters, "I have been out nursing almost constantly. I do enjoy the work and the Lord blesses me with health and strength."¹⁶ This was to be the last communication she made with church officials. A week later she developed influenza that gravitated to pneumonia. Two nurses of the London Missionary Society learned of her plight and did all they could to treat her, but she passed away on Saturday, July 14, 1906.¹⁷ They arranged for her burial in the European cemetery near Tufuiopa, suburban Apia.¹⁸

Sara's older sister, Rosalind, wrote a touching poetic eulogy:

Rest, loved one, rest! For thee earth's toils are over -
Its wearing cares, perplexities, alarms:
Rest safely 'neath the wings divine that cover,
Pillowed upon the everlasting arms.

Sister, farewell! One less in our home circle,
So often broken by death's cruel powers.
We mourn, but faith points to the many mansions
And bids us wait the resurrection hour.¹⁹

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"Brother and Sister Hilliard, accompanied by . . .," *Union Conference Record*, vol. 3, no. 1, January 1, 1900.

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2. "Church Record of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Pitcairn Island, 1890-1916." South Pacific Division Heritage Center, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW. Box 110.
3. E[dward] H. Gates, "Sickness and Death in Pitcairn Island," *The Bible Echo*, vol. 9, no. 16, April 23, 1894, 126.
4. "Church Record of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Pitcairn Island, 1890-1916," South Pacific Division Heritage Center, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, NSW. Box 110.
5. W[illiam] C. White, "Movements of the "Pitcairn,"" *The Bible Echo*, vol. 9, no. 47, December 3, 1894, 374.
6. Ibid.
7. John E. Graham, "From the "Pitcairn,"" *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, vol. 73, no. 46, November 17, 1896, 736.
8. "Brother and Sister Hilliard, accompanied by . . .," *Union Conference Record*, vol. 3, no. 1, January 1, 1900, 15.
9. D[aniel] H. Kress, "Report of Medical Work," *Union Conference Record*, vol. 7, no. 19, September 22, 1903, 11.
10. G[eorge] B. Starr, "Graduating Exercises," *Union Conference Record*, vol. 7, no. 20, October 1, 1903, 3-4.
11. Ibid.
12. "Miss Sara Young, originally of Pitcairn Island . . .," *Union Conference Record*, vol. 8, no. 9, May 1, 1904, 11.
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