

White, James Henry (1896–1954) and Margaret Polly (Rossiter) (1901–2000)

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.



Henry and Margaret White, c. 1921.

Photo courtesy of the Ellen G. White Estate, Inc. Shared by
Adventism in China Digital Image Repository.

James Henry and Margaret White were Adventist missionaries to China.

Early Life

James Henry White () was one of twin boys born April 6, 1896, to William Clarence White and his wife, Ethel May (Lacey), at Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia. His preferred name was Henry. His twin brother was Herbert Clarence. The twins' younger siblings were Evelyn Grace (b.1900), Arthur Lacey (b.1907) and Francis Edward (b.1913).¹ Their half siblings were Ella May (b.1882) and Mabel Eunice (b.1886).²

The White family returned from Australia in 1900 to settle in California. For ten years Henry attended the St. Helena Sanitarium Intermediate School and was baptized by Elder John Henry Behrens in 1908. He advanced to Pacific Union College (PUC), completing the Academic Course in 1917 and the Business Course in 1921.³ He and his twin brother, Herbert, had learned to operate a small printing press at "Elmshaven," the home of their

grandmother, Ellen G. White. The press was transferred to PUC when they were students and they operated it as the College Press.⁴ During that time Henry served briefly (1915-1916) as an instructor in printing.⁵

On completion of his college education Henry married Margaret Rossiter, better known as Polly, on November 15, 1921.⁶ Within weeks they sailed for China aboard the "China" to serve in the North China Union Mission.

Mission Service in China

Henry and Margaret located at Peking (Beijing). He served as secretary/treasurer of the Kirin Mission and Chihli Mission, entities in the North China Union Mission that spanned the Shanxi, Hebei and Shandong Provinces.⁸ As these missions developed specialized departments were added to their administration and Henry, while retaining his original roles, served as Education secretary and Missionary Volunteers secretary.⁹ He carried these roles until 1927, and then transferred to evangelism in the Shandong province for two years.¹⁰ Three children were born into their family while in China: Winifred Rose (b.1922), Robert Edgar (b.1924) and Donald Rossiter (b.1926). The family returned to San Francisco aboard the "Shinyo Maru" in July 1929.¹¹

Back in the Homeland

On his return to California Henry and his family initially lived in "Elmshaven" with his parents, two brothers and their families and his sister. There were nine adults and five children in the spacious home. A decade later the 1940 Federal Census lists Henry and his family living in Michigan. He was recorded as a lecturer in Chinese art.¹² He returned to California later. It was there, near Sacramento, that he and Margaret met with a tragic car accident on April 18, 1954. Henry was killed and Margaret severely injured. The smash was caused by a sixteen-year-old driving a car filled with other teenagers.¹³ Henry was laid to rest in the Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Glendale, California.¹⁴

Margaret recovered from her injuries and in 1962 married Bible lecturer Edwin Richard Thiele. They made their home in California. He passed away in 1986. Margaret was ninety-eight when she passed away on February 22, 2000. She was interred in Saint Helena Cemetery, California.¹⁵

SOURCES

"Herbert Clarence White." Ellen G. White Estate, 2022. Accessed March 2, 2022, <https://ellenwhite.org/people/1238>.

"James Henry White." Ellen G. White Estate, 2022. Accessed March 2, 2022. <https://ellenwhite.org/people/214>.

"James Henry White." FamilySearch, Intellectual Reserve, 2022. Accessed March 3, 2022. <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/pedigree/landscape/G7QW-M24>

"James Henry White." Find A Grave Memorial, 2022. Accessed March 3, 2022.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/85546663/james-henry-white>

James Henry White. General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, Silver Spring, Maryland. Work Service Records. Versatile Box 7303. Folder: James Henry White. Document: "Biographical Information Form."

"James Henry White." *Pacific Union Recorder*, June 28, 1954.

"Margaret Polly (Rossiter) (White) Thiele." Find A Grave Memorial, 2022. Accessed March 3, 2022.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/48335901/margaret-polly-white_thiele

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1923-1929.

"Traffic Fatality." *Pacific Union Recorder*, May 3, 1954.

NOTES

1. "James Henry White," FamilySearch, Intellectual Reserve, 2022, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/pedigree/landscape/G7QW-M24>.
2. "James Henry White," Find A Grave Memorial, 2022, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/85546663/james-henry-white>.
3. James Henry White. General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, Silver Spring, Maryland. Work Service Records. Versatile Box 7303. Folder: James Henry White. Document: "Biographical information Form."
4. "Herbert Clarence White," Ellen G. White Estate, 2022, accessed March 2, 2022, <https://ellenwhite.org/people/1238>.
5. E.g., "Pacific Union College," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1916), 179-180.
6. "James Henry White," Ellen G. White Estate, 2022, accessed March 2, 2022, <https://ellenwhite.org/people/214>.
7. "James Henry White." FamilySearch, Intellectual Reserve, 2022, accessed March 2, 2022, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/pedigree/landscape/G7QW-M24>.
8. E.g., "Kirin Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1923), 133-134.
9. E.g., "North China Union Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1925), 146.
10. E.g., "Shantung Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1928), 179.

11. "James Henry White," FamilySearch, Intellectual Reserve, 2022, accessed March 3, 2022, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/pedigree/landscape/G7QW-M24>.
12. Ibid.
13. "Traffic Fatality," *Pacific Union Recorder*, May 3, 1954, 8; "James Henry White," *Pacific Union Recorder*, June 28, 1954, 6.
14. "James Henry White," Find A Grave Memorial, 2022. Accessed March 3, 2022, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/85546663/james-henry-white>.
15. "Margaret Polly (Rossiter) (White) Thiele," Find A Grave Memorial, 2022, accessed March 3, 2022, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/48335901/margaret-polly-white_thiele.

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