

Parker, Arthur Frederick (1899–1985) and Muriel (Stace) (1907–1930); later Dorothy (Mills) (1901–1987)



A wedding photo of Arthur and Dorothy (Mills) Parker, 1933.

Photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre, Australia.

LESTER DEVINE

Originally trained as a secondary history teacher, a career long Adventist educator, Lester Devine, Ed.D., has taught at elementary, secondary and higher education levels and spent more than three decades in elected educational leadership positions in two divisions of the world Church, NAD (1969-1982) and SPD (1982-2005). He completed his forty years of denominational service with a term as director of the Ellen G. White/Adventist Research Centre at Avondale University College in Australia where his life-long hobby of learning and presenting on Adventist heritage issues became his vocation.

Arthur Frederick Parker was a pastor who gave over 41 years of service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Together with his first wife Muriel, he served in New South Wales and the Solomon Islands. With his second wife Dorothy, a physician, he served in the Solomon Islands and Victoria, Australia.

Arthur Parker was born June 30, 1899, in Victoria, Australia. He became a Seventh-day Adventist in 1911 after being visited by and taking Bible studies from Adventist ministers. After his baptism he initially worked as a machinist in a sawmill, then as a colporteur. He attended Australasian Missionary College (present-day Avondale) 1923-1925, while also working in the Sanitarium Health Food Company factory located on the campus. Parker graduated in 1926.¹ He entered the organized work of the Church in New South Wales in 1927, remaining there until his appointment to mission service in 1930.²

On November 21, 1928, Arthur Parker married Muriel Stace, a nurse at the Sydney Sanitarium.³ She was the daughter of Joseph Stace of 'Yarrowich' via Walcha, North New South Wales, and the sister of Leslie Stace, who later worked in a number of treasury portfolios for the Church.⁴

In early 1930 the Parkers headed on their way to mission service at Batuna in the Solomon Islands, where he was to be the school principal and she a teacher. In an April 28 letter to her sister, begun on the ship as they travelled to their new field of labour, and completed on arrival, Muriel provided a detailed account of the journey and her first impressions of her new field of service.⁵ A second letter detailed their first weeks of missionary life and her work with the young people in the school. Tragically, Muriel's missionary service was brief, as she died just six weeks after her arrival in the Solomon Islands, on May 16, 1930, following a brief but painful illness. Just before her death at 4:15 a.m. that Friday, Muriel sent a goodbye message to all, and then asked her husband to sing hymn 105 from *Christ in Song*, "I am trusting thee Lord Jesus." Arthur Parker sang by torchlight. Muriel Parker said, "Jesus is all the world to me, my life, my joy, my all," and died. She was buried that evening, as the Sabbath hours were approaching. As she had requested, she was laid to rest near the school, so that even in death she could still witness to the One for whom she had come to the Solomons to work.⁶

After three years working alone, Arthur Parker returned to Australia on furlough. In 1933 he married Dr. Dorothy Mills, born in 1901 and a staff physician for seven years at the Sydney Sanitarium. Thus commenced a marriage which was to last more than 50 years. A 1926 Sydney University graduate, completed a diploma in Tropical Medicine in 1933.⁷ Two daughters were born to this marriage: Dorothy Yvette in 1938 and Lynette Ruth in 1945.⁸

During the next four years back in the Solomon Islands, the Parkers established the first Seventh-day Adventist hospital in the region, on the island of Malaita, before returning to Australia in poor health, probably sometime in 1938, as the formal documentation provides conflicting dates and records of their years of service in the Solomon Islands. After recuperation they worked in Warburton, Victoria, from 1939 to 1941, after which Dr. Parker established a private practice in Geelong, Victoria. She maintained her practice for the next 39 years.⁹ Arthur Parker was ordained to the gospel ministry on January 21, 1945.¹⁰

Parker spent the last 24 years of his denominational service in the Victorian Conference, unusual in an era when pastors were frequently transferred; the last 17 of those years were all in the Geelong area. The Parker home was open to isolated young people who needed a place to stay and enjoy a Christian education.¹¹ Dorothy Parker is also remembered as the doctor caring for medical needs at the annual Victorian Conference camp meetings for many years.¹²

Arthur Parker retired in 1964 after almost 41 years of denominational service.¹³ In 1983 he and Dorothy moved into the Kressville Retirement Village in Cooranbong, New South Wales, near Avondale College.¹⁴ After a cerebral haemorrhage, Arthur Parker died December 15, 1985.¹⁵ Dorothy Parker died July 1, 1987.¹⁶

SOURCES

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Dorothy Isabel Parker Biographical Records. South Pacific Division of the General Conference archives. Folder: 'Parker, Dorothy Isabel.' Document: 'Biographical Information Blank.'

"Parker-Stace marriage." *Australasian Record*, December 3, 1928.

Taylor, W. F. "Life Sketch of Pastor Arthur Parker." *Record*, May 28, 1988.

"The appointment of Brother L. J. Stace . . ." *Australasian Record*, January 20, 1939.

NOTES

1. W. F. Taylor, "Life Sketch of Pastor Arthur Parker," *South Pacific Record*, May 28, 1988, 13.
2. Arthur Frederick Parker Biographical Records; South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives; Folder: 'Parker, Arthur Frederick;' Document: 'Biographical Information Blank.'
3. "Parker-Stace marriage," *Australasian Record*, December 3, 1928, 7.
4. Harold E. Carr, "Joseph Stace obituary," *Australasian Record*, September 8, 1924, 7; "The appointment of Brother L. J. Stace . . .," *Australasian Record*, January 20, 1939, 8.
5. Muriel Stace, Letter to her sister, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale University College.
6. A. R. Barrett, "Sister Arthur Parker obituary," *Australasian Record*, June 16, 1930, 6.
7. Dorothy Isabel Parker Biographical Records; South Pacific Division of the General Conference archives; Folder: 'Parker, Dorothy Isabel;' Document: 'Biographical Information Blank.'

8. Ibid.
9. R. H. Abbott, "Dorothy Parker obituary," *Record*, August 22, 1987, 14.
10. Arthur Frederick Parker Biographical Records; South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives; Folder: 'Parker, Arthur Frederick;' Document: 'Biographical Information Blank.'
11. W. F. Taylor, "Life Sketch of Pastor Arthur Parker," *South Pacific Record*, May 28, 1988, 13.
12. Elma Coombe, interview with author, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia, May 12, 2020.
13. Arthur Frederick Parker Sustentation Records; South Pacific Division of the General Conference Archives; Folder: 'Parker, Arthur Frederick;' Document: 'Weekly Rates.'
14. R. H. Abbott, "Dorothy Parker obituary," *Record*, August 22, 1987, 14
15. W. F. Taylor, "Life Sketch of Pastor Arthur Parker," *South Pacific Record*, May 28, 1988, 13.
16. R. H. Abbott, "Dorothy Parker obituary," *Record* August 22, 1987, 14.

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