



A long range view of the memorial fountain outside the Kellogg Museum at the Sydney Adventist Hospital.

Photo courtesy of Milton Hook.

## Smith, Read (1875–1910)

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### 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.

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Read Smith was born in 1875 in Woolwich, London. Available records name only his thirty-five-year-old father, W. J. Smith, who eventually settled in America.<sup>1</sup> Smith's father was a devout Christian who did not believe in physical punishment for a child. Instead, when Smith did wrong he was taught by his father to pray to God for forgiveness. In his early teenage years, Smith aspired to be a medical missionary and obtained work with a

doctor to familiarize himself with the profession. Later, he spent some time in Canada before returning to England and sailing for Australia. He was engaged in a commercial business in Western Australia when he and his Australian wife, Lucy, became Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>2</sup>

During the months of June and July 1905, Read canvassed the port of Fremantle with *Ladies Guide*.<sup>3</sup> He and his wife then sailed for Melbourne to attend the Australasian Union Conference session.<sup>4</sup> Following the session, they entered the nurse's training class at the Sydney Sanitarium.<sup>5</sup> The three-year course of training did not culminate in a graduation service because during this era nurse trainees were given an appointment when hospital administration considered they were sufficiently qualified. It was at the September 1908 Australasian Union Conference session held in Avondale Church, Cooranbong, that Read and Lucy Smith were appointed to medical missionary work among the New Zealand Maoris.<sup>6</sup>

In November 1908, the Smiths arrived at Tolaga Bay in the North Island and began treating any sick Maoris in the district. It wasn't long before a Maori chief a little further north at Tokomaru Bay prepared a small European-style home for them to use while visiting and treating patients.<sup>7</sup> Typical ailments included ear troubles and wound infections.<sup>8</sup> They were welcomed wherever they went and some Maoris began to show an interest in attending worship services.<sup>9</sup>

During the southern winter of 1910, Smith contracted whooping cough, which significantly weakened him. He had partly recovered when he received a call for medical assistance in Tokomaru Bay. He set off on horseback to treat a number of cases, including five children in one family suffering from typhoid fever. Day and night, he worked to successfully bring them out of danger and then, after two months away, he returned home to Tolaga Bay. For nearly two weeks, his health appeared to be stable. Then he himself was struck with typhoid fever. The Tulloch family, friends of the Smiths, took him into their home where they and Lucy Smith provided twenty-four-hour care, but he succumbed a week later on Sabbath, September 3.<sup>10</sup> Read Smith was buried in the Tolaga Bay Cemetery.<sup>11</sup> Lucy Smith was given solace in the family home of the conference president, Elder Jesse Pallant, until she returned to relatives in Victoria, Australia.<sup>12</sup>

During his brief time among the Maoris, Smith had grasped some command of their language and it seemed the medical work was breaking down prejudice but visible results of evangelistic efforts were postponed.<sup>13</sup> He was the first trained male nurse of the Sydney Sanitarium to die in active mission service, a tragedy felt deeply by church members across the Australasian field and among the Maori population of North New Zealand.

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## NOTES

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2. W[illiam] R. Carswell, "In Memorium: Read Smith," *Union Conference Record*, October 3, 1910, 8.
3. E.g., "Monthly Summary of Australasian Canvassing Work," *Union Conference Record*, September 1, 1905, 4.
4. "The following are in attendance..." *Union Conference Record*, September 15, 1905, 8.
5. "Notes and Personals," *Union Conference Record*, September 15, 1905, 7.
6. "Distribution of Labour," *Union Conference Record*, September 21, 1908, 42.
7. Read Smith, "Among the Maoris," *Union Conference Record*, January 11, 1909, 8.
8. Read Smith, "Medical Missionary Work Among the Maoris," *Union Conference Record*, June 21, 1909, 4-5.
9. Read Smith, "In the Maori District of New Zealand," *Union Conference Record*, August 22, 1910, 4.
10. W[illiam] R. Carswell, "In Memorium: Read Smith," *Union Conference Record*, October 3, 1910, 8.
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12. "Since the death of her husband..." *Union Conference Record*, October 10, 1910, 8.

13. "A cablegram from New Zealand..." *Union Conference Record*, September 19, 1910, 8.

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