Booklet

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PRINTING AND SELLING

EARLY ADVENTIST PUBLISHING WORK IN AUSTRALIA

By Milton Hook

Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series

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A Heritage Series: Debut - Adventism Down Under before 1885
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Milton Hook is the author of "Flames Over Battle Creek", a brief history of the early days at the Review and Herald Publishing Association as seen through the eyes of George Amadon, printer's foreman at the institution. Dr Hook's doctoral dissertation researched the pioneering years of the Avondale School, 1894 to 1900, and he has published some of these findings.

He spent three years as a mission director in Papua New Guinea. His teaching years include primary, secondary and college level experience, especially in Bible subjects, in Australia, New Zealand and America. He is an ordained minister, married and the father of two sons.

He would welcome any information which may enhance the content of this series.

In the bedroom of Henry Scott the Australian Seventh-day Adventist publishing enterprise was born. Scott was an American printer who had arrived with the first group of Adventist missionaries. Crammed into his room at "Sumarlide", Richmond, Melbourne, was a small treadle printing press. Morning, noon, and night he inhaled the odour of printer's ink, paper supplies, and type-face. The press was capable of producing only advertising sheets for evangelistic missions, as well as small tracts, but it was sufficient for the pioneers' initial needs.

As the group scattered their American paper, "Signs of the Times", they found many who asked, "Why don't you publish it here in Australia?" The question tantalized Pastor Stephen Haskell, leader of the pioneer group. From the first he had anticipated the need of an independent journal. When the secular press began throwing jibes about "American preachers" and published little to defend the Adventists he knew it was time to take the initiative.

In November 1885 the pioneers issued a four-page sheet entitled "Bible Echo". Scott set the type and the galleys were wheeled in a handcart to a printer in Russell Street. This paper was planned as a supplement to be distributed with the American "Signs of the Times". After the trial issue it was decided that a better idea would be to combine the titles and have the entire magazine printed as one in Melbourne.

Thereafter it was known as the "Bible Echo and Signs of the Times".

After this prelude Haskell boldly resolved to set up a publishing house for the mission itself. It was barely six months after his arrival in Australia. He leased a two-storied former shop of nine rooms on the corner of Rae and Scotchmer Streets, North Fitzroy, and invested over $1600 to equip it. William Arnold, the American colporteur with the pioneers, donated the profits of his Christmas book delivery in Geelong to buy a large Wharfdale press. Pastor Mendel Israel donated money for a 21/2 horse-power gas engine, and Haskell gave a lesser amount for other equipment.

The Israel family lived and conducted Bible studies in the upstairs section of their hired premises which they called the "Bible Echo Publishing House", or, at times, simply the "Echo Publishing House". The business of the International Tract and Missionary Society was conducted from the front rooms downstairs and supplies were stored in the back rooms. The large press itself was housed in a brick building at the rear, normally used as the carriage shed. Scott's smaller press was transferred from his bedroom and set up in the horse stall. Folding and hand-stitching was done in the hay loft.

The first issue of the "Bible Echo and Signs of the Times appeared in January 1886. It was a monthly sixteen-page paper that included portions printed directly from stereotype plates sent from the American "Signs of the Times" press. The Australian content was edited by John Corliss, another of Haskell's American assistants. On the front page of the January issue one of the earliest Melbourne converts, Ada Miller, mused,

Echo of truth/God speed thee well,
And grant His blessing on thy track!
Go forth, the joyful news to tell, ...

Echo the welcome tidings back.
We send thee forth with many prayers,
That God will bless the scattered seed....
God grant that many an honest mind
May grasp the truth thou wilt impart.

At least six thousand were printed for the inaugural issue, nine hundred being sent to New Zealand. In later months the print run was reduced to three thousand. Almost a score of newsagents throughout Melbourne, Geelong, and Ballarat agreed to sell the paper and secure the annual subscriptions of thirty-five cents from which they received a small commission. However, this method did not prove very fruitful and the selling of the paper gravitated to a nucleus of converts, especially denominational booksellers. Adherents developed the habit of carrying receipt books with them and gaining subscriptions on the spot. Single copies were sold in the streets for a few cents each.

Early in 1886 Louis Romero, an early convert, joined the staff to help Scott on the presses. By September Miss Eliza Burnham had arrived from America with her proof-reading and editorial expertise. Before the end of the year Walter Miller and John Woods, more early converts, had sold their job-printing business and joined forces with the Echo Publishing House. Miller's brothers, Alfred and Herbert, were employed later.

In March 1887 Byron and Sarah Belden arrived from America to serve with the flourishing business. By 1888 a branch office was established in the city at 46 Little Collins Street and two travelling agents were engaged to obtain printing contracts from the general business community. A second jobbing machine was installed to handle the extra load. In mid-1888 Pastor George Tenney, with his wife, Elsie, and children, Ivers and Ruth, disembarked from America to become the chief editor for the institution.

Soon after Tenney's arrival the Echo Publishing House became much more Australian by nature. No longer was it directly under the management of the International Tract and Missionary Society. At that time, both the Australian Conference and the Australian Tract Society, were organized and accepted responsibility for the publishing enterprise.

Arnold, the pioneer canvasser, had embarked for England in May 1888 after a successful thirty months of selling, as well as training a small band of booksellers. Late in 1888 Jesse Pallant transferred from his canvassing in Auckland to promote and coordinate tract distribution and book-selling, using the Echo Publishing House as his base of operations. In effect, Pallant was the first official General Canvassing Agent appointed in Australasia to supervise the wholesaling of denominational literature.

As the publishing business developed other agents were strategically placed throughout the colonies and charged with the training of local canvassers. The Echo Publishing House would sell "Great Controversy", for instance, to the agents for forty cents. Then the agent would re-sell to the canvasser for fifty-four cents, tossing in an extra book as a bonus if twelve were ordered at a time. The door salesman would then retail the book for eighty cents. The door-to-door vendor became the backbone of the fledgling mission.

In November 1888 the lease for the publishing house was due for renewal. Tenney proposed some improvements to the primitive carriage-shed environment but the owner would not agree to renovations. This factor, together with the establishment's rapid expansion and the scarcity of suitable rental properties, forced church officials to consider erecting their own building.

A narrow plot of ground, ten-by-forty-eight metres, was bought nearby at 14 - 16 Best Street for $1400. Over the next decade

buildings were added piecemeal. A large shed clad with iron sheeting was immediately built at the rear of the property so that the presses themselves could be transferred as soon as the lease on the former building expired. This shed had to serve as the actual printing shop for the next ten years.

The contract for the main building at the street face was given to Melbourne church member John Hellier. Another member, David Sheppard, did much of the brickwork, excelling himself with a handsome frontage to the property. At first a section to the right of the plot was erected to house the office, type-room, and editorial department. They were settled in by about Christmas 1888. With fresh inspiration the "Bible Echo and Signs of the Times" began in February 1889 to be issued every fortnight instead of monthly.

The plan was to eventually erect a three-storied structure but finances were limited. For this reason only the facade was built to that height and stretching the full width of the block.

By July 1889 two storeys were completed behind the facade, providing Melbourne church members with their own meeting place, in the upstairs level named Federal Hall. The building itself, to that date, had cost $3,600.

Ownership of buildings and real estate made it imperative for the publishing work to become a corporation for legal purposes. This was effected in April 1889, taking the name Echo Publishing Company, Limited. The General Conference in America had given $2,680 towards the enterprise, so $2 shares to that total were issued in their favour. Church members were encouraged to 'buy' more and swell the share issue to $7,000. In reality, shares were donations because it was advertised no dividends would be paid out. However, it did entitle donors to one vote per share at stockholders meetings. Members did respond with approximately $1,000.

The first Board chosen was comprised of Tenney as President; Scott, Vice-president; Miller, Secretary; and Nathaneal Faulkhead, Treasurer. A Geelong church member, Alfred Carter, was their appointed auditor, internal audits being standard church practice.

Two men arrived from America in October 1889 who made a significant contribution during their twelve-month stint. An experienced stereotyper from California, Charles Driver, set up a stereotyping plant in a second iron-sheet building alongside the printing shed. During his stay Driver married Jane Fraser, one of the Company's employees. Enos Morrison, with his wife, Florence, and little daughter, also came with expertise from the Pacific Press. His specialty was book salesmanship.

There were about eight canvassers under Pallant's guidance when Morrison arrived to take over. More were recruited and two Canvassers Institutes were held as training sessions. From November onwards Morrison published ,'The Summary", a prototype of "The Gleaner", which later began to be issued in January 1895. "The Summary" was a simple in-house news sheet for the instruction and inspiration of the door-to-door salesmen. When Morrison moved on to South Africa then Charles Michaels inherited the mantle of General Canvassing Agent with diminishing success in the tough depression years of the early 1890's.

Apparently the hard times did not affect the expansion of the printing plant. There was a constant jostling for elbow room on the small suburban block. In mid-1891 the Melbourne church members had to find another venue for their services because the upper room, or Federal Hall, was needed by the Echo Publishing Company. Then, in the New Year (1892) the Tract Society moved out and leased a room in a cottage across the road to continue their business until their central office was transferred to Glebe Point, Sydney, six months later. During that time the third floor was completed on the Echo premises

and the first book-binding machinery was installed. Gradually they were becoming independent by adding equipment to handle all aspects of publishing.

The Company continued with a branch office in the heart of Melbourne, leasing a room at various addresses such a Flinders Lane, Elizabeth Street, and Collins Street. Contracts channelled through this means kept the presses working at a frenetic pace and revenue mounted. A profit of $550 was made in the financial year of 1895/96 and doubled the following year.

However, outside contracts did not crowd church projects. "The Bible Echo and Signs of the Times" continued to be printed, changing to an eight-page penny weekly in late 1893. Other papers, such as the "Herald of Health" and the "Australian Sentinel" promoting religious liberty; and the children's magazine, "Our Little Friend", were also issued in the 1890's. Only the latter became insolvent and was discontinued in early 1893. It was reintroduced some years later. Numerous tracts and a fine array of books we re also printed. Some early book titles were "Prophetic Lights" by Ellet Waggoner, and "The Coming King" by James Edson White. These doctrinal books, and others, were mainly sold door-to-door.

Authors, at first, were exclusively American. Australasian book authors were not published until well after the turn of the century. However, from about 1891 onwards the "Bible Echo and Signs of the Times" increasingly carried articles and poems by many colonial writers such as Thomas Philps, Stephen McCullagh, David Steed, Robert Hare, Jesse Pallant, Anne Muckersy, Agnes Bell, David Lacey, Thomas Whittle, Walter Miller, and Abraham Davis.

In the early years the editorial staff was principally American. Tenney left in 1892 and Burnham in 1896. Willard Allan Colcord served for three years from late 1895 to late 1898. Then Arthur Daniells, George Morse, Anna (Ingels) Hindson,

and Eugene and Vesta Farnsworth functioned at intervals in the same capacity. Robert Hare, originally from New Zealand, took over from Colcord and served until 1902. Albert Anderson, a Melbournian, began as editor of the 'Signs of the Times" (Australian) when the Farnsworths transferred to England in mid-1904.

At the end of 1894 it was decided to close the Australian Tract Society office in Sydney and once again centralize book distribution at the Echo Publishing Company itself. The Society returned to Melbourne and rented the first floor of the Company, but within two years their business doubled and the peripatetic Society was forced to lease substantial quarters nearby at 251 St Georges Road, North Fitzroy. The Echo Publishing Company was happy with this arrangement because their first floor space was sorely needed for their own use. But the following year (1897) they realised they needed even more room. It was finally decided to build another three-storied brick edifice covering almost the entire back portion of their property. This was started in February 1898, building around and over the iron sheds which housed the printing plant. It took only two months to build and doubled the capacity of their working space.

Printing continued almost uninterrupted and some new machines were installed, including two Cottrell presses from America. Lee Bond, with his wife, Retta, and two children, had arrived from America the previous year to be foreman of the press-room. With his expertise the new machines were installed without incident.

Book-binding machines also arrived from the Basel Publishing House, Switzerland. The Swiss enterprise had closed because Sunday laws in the country made activities too difficult. In addition, the Company was able to buy cheaply some second-hand electro-typing equipment in Melbourne. A larger power-generating plant was added soon after to cope with the

multiplying machinery. In the first fifteen years of operation the number of employees rose to approximately one hundred. Most were young colonial church members in addition to the few Americans imported with special skills. Among these were Frank Brainerd, with his wife and two children, who came from the Pacific Press in 1898 to work in the typesetting room. They returned home in 1902. Henry and Jenny Simkin, with their two children, arrived in 1901 for a three-year term after gaining experience in the Review and Herald Publishing House and as Manager of the church's London printing office.

The Governor of Victoria, Lord Brassey, in 1896 appointed the Company as his official publisher. By 1900 the Company had even printed tracts in the Rarotongan language. This kind of work only added to the growing complexity of the institution so all foreign-language printing, together with the publication of the "Union Conference Record", was centred at the Avondale Press, Cooranbong.

In 1901 a request came for a skilled man to take charge of the small printing works on the campus of the Kenilworth Mission School in Cape Town, South Africa. Harold Cammell, a twenty-six-year-old single man who had worked at the Echo Publishing Company for a decade, agreed to go. He was the first Australasian to enter the South African mission field. Tragically, tuberculosis forced his return to Melbourne and he died in 1903.

In many respects South Africa and Australasia were similar as mission fields. They shared the romance of being Down Under territories, isolated, with a pioneering brand of colonials who were essentially church goers. The settlers would read religious literature and the indigenous races provided an added challenge for gospel work. Wilbur Salisbury, the American Manager of the Echo Publishing Company, called in at Cape Town en route to the 1901 General Conference Session. He briefly assisted in establishing the Kenilworth Press and made

a donation on behalf of the Echo Publishing Company towards a small cylinder press. His mind began toying with the idea of establishing a branch office in South Africa. By 1901 shipments of books for re-sale were already being sent there from the Echo office. The "Bible Echo and Signs of the Times" had also been posted regularly to Australian soldiers fighting in the Boer War.

When Salisbury returned from the General Conference Session he wrote to the mission leaders in South Africa requesting permission to open a book depository at Durban, Natal. This was agreed to, with the proviso that as soon as the mission leaders in the Cape Province could make their own thrust into Natal and Transvaal then the Echo Publishing Company would pull out.

Arrangements were made for Harry Camp and Cecil Pretyman to set up the branch office in Durban. They arrived on June 3, 1902, just two days after the Boer War peace was declared. However, the country continued with military law for a time and the transportation of books on the railways still suffered under a low priority. Camp was an experienced canvasser and trained other salesmen. He virtually acted as the district colporteur leader. Pretyman, as clerk, conducted the office business as well as doing a little selling. Allowing time for the men to find housing, Mary Camp and her three children joined her husband in Durban. She was accompanied by "Katie" Judge who, soon after, married Pretyman in South Africa.

At the time some friction was developing between various Adventist publishing houses. Salisbury was smarting under the fact that the Pacific Press in California had captured much of his New Zealand market. Then, when Salisbury sent his men into South Africa the European publishing houses were peeved and regarded them as poachers. However, church leaders in Cape Town stood by their promises and allowed Camp and Pretyman to stay. The branch office remained until late1905.

Some church leaders increasingly voiced the opinion that the church presses should cease commercial contract work and concentrate solely on denominational literature. Salisbury echoed these sentiments at least as early as October 1902. When he visited America for the 1903 General Conference Session he discussed the Echo Publishing Company with Ellen White. She advised also its removal to a secluded rural environment as well as the discontinuance of commercial contracts. Lessons learned from the Basel Publishing House experience no doubt prompted her to warn that fearful struggles with labour unions were near at hand. Isolation for publishing institutions was therefore considered desirable.

When Salisbury returned to Melbourne he relayed these ideas. At the annual stockholders' meeting, September21,1903, it was agreed to move from the city into the woods, to close the city branch office, and phase out all secular printing. This momentous turn of direction was voted unanimously despite the fact that two-thirds of their work was commercial and the Company had bought the adjoining block of land back in 1898to guarantee space for further expansion.

Search parties reconnoitred the vicinity of Melbourne. Eventually an unworked property of almost seven hectares called "Wonwondah", in the big-timber country at Warburton, took their fancy early in 1904. The owner, George Thomson, was married to a Seventh-day Adventist, the former Essie Blunden. Isolation was without question. In those days the little timber-mill settlement was a full day's journey by slow train from Melbourne. Loggers huts, Mr Storey's grocery store, and a tiny Anglican church were all that nestled by the ferny stream dubbed Rocky Creek.

Power to drive the machinery was a more difficult question. Transport of furnace fuel would prove costly. Wood or charcoal-fired boilers were a possibility, but from the outset it was thought a water-driven dynamo would prove the most

economical. The maker of Pelton water-wheels was hi red to visit the property and advise on the engineering possibilities. He gave a favourable report.

Negotiations with property holders further upstream and permission from the government to divert two streams into the main creek all took over a year to finalize. Late in October 1905 active work began on the estate. In December the first families left Melbourne and spent the hot summer in tents at Warburton while they built crude sheds on the hill slopes before the winter set in. Albert Anderson transported his wife and five children (the twin boys being just six weeks old) in a phaeton bedecked with a few boxes of belongings. They started from North Fitzroy at eleven o'clock one evening, bivouacked by the side of the gravel road at Ringwood for a few hours, slept, and set off again at sunrise. Deep mud made the last few kilometres strenuous for the ponies. Frequently the animals had to be coaxed and pushed after sinking down in the middle of the mire.

One of the first tasks was to build the water reservoir. Lee Bond bought a huge Clydesdale horse, hitched him to a scoop and taught them all how to sink a dam as he had done in America. Two streams were blocked and the water diverted through a 23 centimetre stoneware pipe for more than a kilometre into a reservoir capable of holding 250,000 litres. From there the water dropped nearly one hundred metres through a spiral pipe which tapered from 23 to 4 centimetres in diameter before it spun the water-wheel. The wheel was regulated by a governor. In summer-time it would generate 35 horse-power, and in winter, when the water was deeper in the reservoir, it could reach up to 50 horse-power. It was sufficient for the press needs as well as the staff homes.

Donations raised throughout Australasia financed the $7,000 used in the changeover from Melbourne to Warburton. The factory itself cost $3,400. The front portion was a two-storied

wooden structure with storerooms downstairs and the editorial department and business offices upstairs. The presses and other equipment were housed in a high-roofed single storey at the rear. Glass partitions separated the upstairs offices from the printing works allowing a birds-eye view of the entire press floor from the business offices. The editors were no doubt delighted to move from their tents or shanties into the new rooms.

By February 1906 the new building was ready for the heavy machinery to be transferred from North Fitzroy. By July most of the equipment was in running order. About forty-two staff made the move to Warburton.

The previous year the name of the business had changed to the Signs of the Times Publishing Association. Technically, the Echo Publishing Company still continued to run because Miller and some senior staff stayed on in Melbourne until the end of 1906 doing commercial contracts. Efforts were made to sell the business but all proved fruitless and the building was leased to a shoe manufacturer. Remaining machinery was sold to the Avondale Press.

The new building at Warburton was situated on low ground near Rocky Creek in order to give the maximum drop for hydro-power efficiency. This proved to be a mixed blessing. Heavy logging and continuing settlement in the mountains reduced the tree cover and heightened flooding dangers. Exceptionally heavy rains in the winter of 1911 caused the creek to overflow and the torrent tore across the factory floor. All staff worked frantically to raise printing stocks and books above the water line and a massive clean-up operation followed.

A worse flood struck in 1934 resulting in considerable damage and loss of stock. Some higher ground was purchased immediately and during the following three years a substantial brick building was erected. After the transfer of machinery was

done piecemeal the original wooden building was demolished by volunteer labour. Much of the proceeds of the timber sale went into a fund for a new Warburton church.

The success of the publishing enterprise could be attributed largely to the dedication of the staff who, over the years, were prepared to work for minimum wages knowing that their labour was an integral part of spreading the gospel. These stalwarts were paralleled by the vast army of colporteurs who shared the same convictions.

In fact, in recognition of the vital role played by colporteurs a national training school was set up in Warburton in 1913 with the express purpose of training better booksellers. Just up the valley, a little way from the church, they located in a home surrounded by garden and farmland. Miriam Todd served as matron for the home. Her husband, John, together with Ludwig Lemke (the Principal) and Harold Blunden gave instruction in Bible doctrines, salesmanship, business methods, and English.

The first group of fifteen students spent eight weeks in this regimen which included two or three hours of door-to-door selling each afternoon. Pupils paid $2.10 per week for their board and instruction. This creative enterprise folded by the year-end due to lack of enrollees. Instead, the practice resumed of training booksellers on the job in their own States.

It would be difficult to pinpoint a percentage giving the proportion of church members who at some time in their life sold books door-to-door. The figure would be high. Many knocked on doors with their wares only weeks after their baptism. Some chose to canvass when they lost their regular job over Sabbath observance. Missionary nurses in the homeland and abroad sold books to support themselves. Primary school teachers went canvassing during school holidays because their meagre income was gained only from tuition fees received during school terms. College graduates

were expected to sell books on the dubious assumption that those endowed with the gift of preaching, teaching, or nurturing were also given the gift of salesmanship. Nevertheless, the calibre of these valiant people deserves the highest praise.

What woman would live in nothing but a hessian shanty enduring the extreme temperatures of Broken Hill? In 1890 Julia Steed did just that to enable her husband, Joseph, Sr., to sell religious books to hardened miners. In the process they converted Alfred Semmens and Harry Constandt who both became church workers.

Who would suffer the privations of living in a tent pitched among the cobwebs and dust in a ramshackle shed behind a saddler's shop? Robert and Elma Stewart did precisely that so he could canvass the byways along the Mitta Mitta River, Victoria. Married on Christmas Day 1907, they spent the first year of their married life pioneering territory in this manner and saving money to complete their studies at the Avondale School in 1909.

Think, too, of Jim Branford and Bill Hunt selling books in the West Australian desert. In 1909theyset off on bicycles determined to canvass every home between Kalgoorlie and Zanthus, the most easterly settlement in the sandy West. All the first day they rode camel tracks through the spinifex. That night they slept between two fires. Next morning, while the ground was still white with frost, they started peddling again. After eleven kilometres they came to the first house but didn't make a sale. On the third day, Friday, they travelled for at least sixty-five kilometres, the last ten at night in a desperate attempt to reach the next house. There they rested over Sabbath, made no sale, but were told of a Christian who lived forty kilometres further on. Sunday, they found their prospect and sold him three books. It was a further forty kilometres to the handful of shacks at Zanthus, but no sales were gained there. So, setting their compass for home, they pushed their bikes

through the same sand wastes. Why did they do it? Because they believed everyone needed to be told of the soon return of Christ.

Fairley Masters was the epitome of all plucky canvassers. When doing deliveries he would call on people who had refused him earlier and try again, often successfully. When staying in railway-gangers camps overnight he would sell books at breakfast time. On one occasion he was almost encircled by a bushfire when out on a delivery and came home with a singing. He would look at the initials "W.A.G.R." on West Australian locomotives and say to himself, that means, Work And Get Results.

Such was the mettle of the men and women who scattered the seed of Seventh-day Adventism by selling religious books and magazines.

Major sources for this booklet are the "Bible Echo and Signs of the Times", the "Home Missionary", the "Australasian Record", SDA Yearbooks (1886-1906), the Minutes of the Echo Publishing Company, and the author's personal collection of pioneer data.

Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series

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ADVENTIST EDUCATION