
Hermann Adolph HEINRICH 1895-1959

PRG 1559
History

Hermann Adolph (Dolph) Heinrich

Born Point Pass 1895

Died Gawler 1959

Married Hilda Lutzow 1924

Teacher at Nain Lutheran School (near Greenock) 1912-1917

Teacher at Hermannsburg Mission 1917-1932

Insurance salesman, milkman, & Gawler Institute librarian 1954-59

H.A. Heinrich grew up at Point Pass and after farming work, trained at Immanuel College to become a teacher. He taught in various church (Lutheran) schools in South Australia. In 1917 the SA government under Premier Verran closed the Lutheran schools due to anti-German feelings during the First World War.

Without a job, Heinrich successfully applied for the vacant teaching position at Hermannsburg Mission in Central Australia, under Pastor Carl Strehlow. Heinrich was present when Strehlow became sick, accompanying the pastor and others from the Mission on Strehlow's final journey, in search of medical attention, during which the pastor died and was buried at Horseshoe Bend.

Following Strehlow's death, Heinrich was in charge of the mission for several years while church authorities attempted to find another pastor. Eventually Pastor F. W. Albrecht arrived from Poland to take charge of the mission in 1925. Heinrich was married the year before, at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Adelaide, to Hilda Lutzow of Springton, who he had met while teaching at Nain (near Greenock) in South Australia. The two had corresponded for several years. Their honeymoon was spent touring country South Australia with Heinrich's collection of lantern slides, promoting the work of the Mission.

For a number of reasons some friction developed between Heinrich and Albrecht. The extreme isolation felt by the handful of Europeans on the Mission had also been an issue during Strehlow's time. Coupled with this, Heinrich and Albrecht took different approaches to their Mission work. Heinrich was taught by Strehlow to 'live' rather than 'preach' his faith, while Albrecht took a more traditional, and hard-line, approach. This culminated in an incident in which two Aboriginal women were whipped for misdemeanours, which was seemingly condoned by Albrecht against Heinrich's advice. Heinrich threatened resignation, and in the ensuing events, was dismissed. The Heinrichs and their children, including an Aboriginal/Afghan boy they had adopted, moved to Gawler. Subsequently Heinrich initiated two court cases against the church and specific individuals within it.

During his time at Hermannsburg Heinrich recorded significant Aboriginal customs and collected artefacts for Norman Tindale and the SA Museum, as well as individuals and institutions worldwide. He also, significantly, took several hundred photographs, largely for the purpose of publicising the work of the Mission, and attracting support, both financial and otherwise. Most of the photographs were transferred to lantern slides, being used to illustrate lectures by Heinrich, as he and his wife travelled South Australia – country and city - during sabbaticals.

The Heinrichs met a great range of travellers, anthropologists, writers, eminent people and entrepreneurs passing through Hermannsburg during their time there. Some of their friends from these times later visited them at Gawler, including the artist Albert Namatjira. They had been associated with John Flynn and Alf Traeger, entertained the Governor General, Lord Stonehaven, and were involved in the search for the missing Lasseter, for whom Adolph Heinrich wrote the final burial order. Writers including Ernestine Hill visited and wrote about the Heinrichs, and Bonds sought advice from them for proposed outback tours.

Mrs Heinrich taught sewing to the girls on the Mission, began the first choir, and typed translations of the Bible into Arrernte – at one shilling per page.

Following the move to Gawler in 1932 the Heinrichs purchased a house in Seventh Street, formerly owned by the Eckert family - Mrs Heinrich's aunt was Martha Eckert. After trying various alternative employments, the Heinrichs established a 'penny dairy.' They supported newly arrived immigrants, and were involved in other community work. Later Adolph Heinrich became the librarian at the Gawler Institute. When he was diagnosed with heart disease, Mrs Heinrich began accompanying him to his work to assist him. When Adolph Heinrich died in 1959, Mrs Heinrich became Institute librarian, and carried on in this position until 1987 aged 88. Mrs Heinrich was awarded an OAM for her services to the community, and the Gawler Council commissioned a portrait of her by artist John Dowie.

Much of the material in these records (PRG 1559) has been arranged and augmented by the Heinrich's daughter, Ilona Oppenheim, in preparation for a proposed biography of her father.

A Laube 9 July 2010

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