ANNIE LOCK  1875 - 1943

As a young lady living on her parents' farm at Riverton, S.A. in 1901, Annie Lock felt a "call to mission" among the Aboriginal communities of the Outback.
She and her family were devoted members of the tiny Methodist church at Woolshed Flat and her whole life up until that point centred on farm living and the work and worship of this small Christian congregation and their outreach into the rural community. She left her family and home in the country and spent time in Adelaide and Sydney attending Bible Colleges to equip herself for Christian teaching. Beside training for this type of ministry she included nursing practice, rudimentary medical work and some bookkeeping in her course.
Following the Bible College Course she linked up with the United Aborigine Mission, known as the U.A.M. an institution founded to tend the orphaned children and neglected Aboriginal adults outside of the capital cities. U.A.M. workers received no wages but depended on friends, relatives and churches visited while on furlough, for financial support. They were a non denominational society with assistance coming through prayer and deputation work among Methodist, Baptist and Churches of Christ.
From 1903 to 1911 she served in Missions in N.S.W. from here she travelled to W.A. where she spent a further 14 years often doing pioneer work usually reserved for men. In 1924 she was in Oodnadatta, S.A. commencing a small orphanage which later grew into the well known Colebrook Home situated in the Adelaide Hills. From here she continued on to Central Australia spending time at Harding Soak, Ryan's Well, Woodforde, Boxer Creek Katherine and other places.
When Fred Brooks was killed at Coniston Station in 1928 the Police party sent to arrest the two Aboriginals responsible, eventually killed many, many more, said to be between 17 and 70. A court case was held in Darwin and Miss Lock set out on the long journey to witness on behalf of the Aboriginal people. She took two little girls with her from the mission as they were in need of urgent medical attention, but this contravened the laws of the day regarding Aboriginals crossing state borders, so she gained unwanted notoriety in the newspaper on both counts. The case of the killing of the Walbiri tribe men filled the newspapers for many days. In 1983 Channel 9 screened a documentary entitled "A Shifting Dreaming" retelling the event and Babs McMillan played the part of Annie Lock.
Apart from her ministry to children Miss Lock had many brushes with the whites who resented her gathering together large groups of native people. They complained that they polluted the waterholes they needed for their stock, as well as using some of their cattle and sheep when "bush tucker" was scarce. Miss Lock deplored the use of black girls, as young as ten years old, by white men who left them with the resulting half cast children to face up to the wrath of the Tribal elders.
She had many gruelling experiences while living in the Outback. She was fiercely protective of the young, the sick and the elderly, but always insisted that the able bodied work for their rations and wherever possible share in the care of the less fortunate. She saw much debauchery of the young women by whites in those days and on one occasion told someone that many of the black men treated their wives better than the whites. This was translated to the newspapers of the day as "White woman living among blacks says she would prefer a black husband". This headline was eagerly taken up by her detractors who tagged her with this insult for many years to come.

Most white people scorned her for living in loneliness and poverty, believing that it was her intent to teach blacks races they were equal to whites, and she was slandered at every opportunity. But Miss Lock was a very independent woman and a strict disciplinarian. She was firmly resolute in her ways and believed that her way was the Way of the Lord and the only right way. This dominance worked better with the easy going Aboriginales than her fellow missionaries who frequently applied for transfers to other mission stations.

However, it was her firm attitude and strong confidence in her "calling", plus her immense Christian Faith that kept her working for 40 years in the most primitive conditions with poor provisions and very meagre support, caring for the people she grew to love.

One of Miss Lock's assets was her competence in sewing and literally thousands of garments, dresses, bloomers, shirts and trousers were completed on the old sewing machine she took from her Riverton home. She scarcely saw electricity for cooling or cooking, but she often catered for 120 or more on Christmas days when she baked all night to have food for all - meat, vegetables and pudding - in an open fire under a half of a corrugated tank. Each year the city church groups sent small gifts for all and she decorated gum tree boughs and tied the little presents up for the great day. Telling Bible stories, singing hymns and prayers were a major part of her religious education. Beside the treatment of severe burns, festering sores from yaws, pneumonia, battle wounds and birthing difficulties.

Although in poor health herself, due to the constant work, the monotonous diet and the stress of separation from her own family Annie Lock continued until she was 60 years old as an Orphanage Matron, cook, teacher, nurse, minister, marriage and funeral celebrant, ration distributor, preacher and administrator for the Government. Missionaries received no remuneration from the Government, but were as useful as public servants in the work of welfare officers, census takers and reporters on Aboriginal movements. Their camps were often used as a neutral zone for negotiations in the battles between the police and Aboriginales. Miss Lock was 100 years ahead of her time in her desire to bring Aboriginal races into assimilation with European society. She never saw herself as interfering with Pastoralists plans but rather as an aid in keeping the Aboriginales in rations to prevent stealing.
Her last appointment was to Ooldea on the East West railway line on 12th July 1933. Miss Lock left the home of her brother John Lock at Balaklava S.A. with a lady companion driving a horse and an old second hand buggy for a journey of over 400 miles. As in the Northern Territory she encouraged the men to work on artefacts for sale to white tourists as a means of support. She comforted the bereaved, stood between battered wives and angry husbands, acted as teacher, counsellor and friend in the name of the Lord and was invited to view corroborees allowed to be seen by women.

On her retirement in 1937 she surprised her family and the U.A.M. by marrying Mr. James Johansen a retired A.N.Z Bank manager and they lived in Cleve on Eyre Peninsular for 6 years. She died at Cleve on 10th February, 1943, and is buried in the local cemetery. Mr. Johansen erected a large concrete headstone on her grave on which is engraved in full I Thessalonians 4:16-18. This is the only known monument to a hard working pioneer of the Outback. Photographs of Miss Annie Lock are on view in the Battye Library in Perth.

In 1991 Catherine Bishop of New Zealand wrote a thesis for her Master's Degree at Canberra University. copies of which are in the Sydney and Canberra Libraries, entitled "A woman missionary living among naked blacks - Annie Lock".

The author, Violet Turner has written several books describing Miss Lock's adventurous missionary life such as "Lazarus At The Gate", "Pearls of the Deep". "Ooldea" and "Good Fella Missus". The Riverton Museum also has letters and reference to her early beginning in that town.