Forty Years in Our China Mission
Foreword

This little book is intended for a study book in our Women's Missionary and Young People's Societies. It is not a complete history but rather an outline sketch written by those former missionaries in this field, Drs. A. J. and J. R. Robb, and the Rev. Jesse Mitchel, and published in the form of these articles in the Conven- ter Witness in the year 1934.

Some things may have been overlooked and omitted which other missionaries recall and which to them may seem more important, but on the whole it is fairly accurate and covers the main points in the history of the South China Mission. This will serve as a permanent record of the main facts in the work of the Covenant Church in that field.

That the Church is developing a more intelligent inter- est in her missions is evidenced by the increased demand for historical and factual material that may be used in study groups. This booklet is published to meet that demand.

One is impressed with the brief periods of service rend- ered by some and the long periods rendered by others, but long or short, the work is the Lord's and its measure is the value of each act by its length but by its quality and the measure of time and sacrifice that enter into it.

Here too is the reminder that for the Covenant Church this is hallowed ground for here lies the dust of those who laid down their lives for Christ's sake in this service, e.g., Mrs. Ella Teresa Robb, Dr. Maud George, Mrs. Jane Tranquada, and the Rev. W. M. Robb, though the last was buried in Manila where he died. This should always be a challenge to the talented youth of the Covenant Church to carry on the work for which they were willing to give their lives.

If this brief history is used by the Holy Spirit to deepen this interest and call out the loving sympathy and fruitful support of some who can hardly understand, it will have served its purpose. "Eli, Eli! arouse and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

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THE BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS OF THE
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IN NORTH AMERICA
JANUARY 1936
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# SOUTH CHINA MISSION
## ROSTER OF MISSIONARIES
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* Transferred to Manchuria.
**Forty Years in Our China Mission**

**CHAPTER ONE**
**PREPARATION AND BEGINNING**
**1895-1909**

It was Dr. David Mclean of our Levant Mission, who started the movement to establish a mission of the Covenant Church in China. In the early nineties he placed several thousand dollars at the disposal of Synod for that purpose. After some consideration Synod authorized the Board of Foreign Missions to begin work in Kwang Tung Province, from which the Chinese in our Oakland Mission came.

On November 13, 1895, Rev. Elmore McBurney and Rev. A. L. Robb, with their wives, sailed from San Francisco for Hong Kong on the S. S. Fern. After a stormy voyage they reached Hong Kong December 10, and on the 12th landed at Canton, the great southern metropolis of China.

No little kindness was shown them by missionaries of other churches already there, who entertained them in their homes until they could find residence, aided them in finding teachers and helpers, took them on itinerating trips, and in innumerable ways added them to getting established in a new and strange environment.

In April, 1896, Mr. Robb passed through Tak Hing while on a trip with an older missionary (Rev. E. Z. Simmons of the Southern Baptist Mission) to Kwang Tung Province. The place was noticed as friendly, where we sold many books. The West River was opened to steam traffic shortly after, giving good communication with the outside world. In 1897 a chapel was rented on a main street, and the missionaries began work. They would spend several weeks at the chapel, preaching daily to great crowds who came to see the "foreign devils," and then go home to their families for a few days. They had in mind, of course, a permanent location to which they could move their families. On January 10, 1899, the deeds were signed for a tract of land about fifteen minutes walk from the center of the city and near the river. Quite extensive ruins of an ancestral temple stood on it. One section...
FORTY YEARS IN OUR CHINA MISSION

of this was remodeled for a temporary dwelling, and the rest torn down and the brick used to build a wall around a good sized yard.

Early in 1868 the two families had moved to Kowloon, opposite Hong Kong, in the hope that the seas breezes would be beneficial to one of their members in ill health. In this they were disappointed, and on February 25, 1869, Rev. and Mrs. McBurney sailed for home. That left the Robb's alone, and lonely, if truth be told. The work of transforming the new property at Tak Ying soon reached a point where they could stay in it, and on May 1st they left Hong Kong, and four days later were in their new home in Tak Ying, with Mrs. Robb and the baby the center of much interest, as they were the first white woman and child ever seen there.

Medical aid soon furnished an excellent point of contact. Carbolineum, quinine, salts and one pair of tooth forceps were the principal weapons of offense. But the crude aid given served to allay the fear of the foreigners that had made them a home to children and women.

In November, 1869, Mr. McBurney returned to China and engaged in building a dwelling suitable for two families. There were thirty or forty workmen there, and meetings were held with those in the evening, and preaching carried on in the chapel in the city.

The Boxer Movement

Then came the Boxer movement. Warnings came to the missionaries from different sources that this was no ordinary disturbance. The U.S. Consul advised care; missionary friends urged us to leave. But the local magistrate was friendly and assured protection. Locally all was quiet. On Saturday, July 7th, the captain of the only steamer then plying on the river sent word that he was making his last trip, and to be ready to go out on Monday. A note from the U.S. Consul that day ordered all women and children to the coast, men to stay at their own risk. On Monday, July 9th, they left, having placed the property under the care of the magistrate. The river front for a fourth of a mile was lined with crowds who silently watched them embark, all, perhaps, alike wondering if and when they would return. Only afterwards was it learned that as that fateful day, away in Shan Si Province the heads of one hundred and thirty missionaries, men and women and children, were severed from their bodies in the yamen of the bloodthirsty vicerey of that bloodthirsty province.

Being the last family, but one, to leave an interior station, they could find no comfortable place to stay in Hong Kong, and, on advice, went to Japan, where they waited two months, hoping to return to China. Disturbed conditions continued, people staying in the treaty ports. They came home, landing in Seattle, October 16, 1900. They had spent five years in China, and had not a single convert.

But the series of events, far from discouraging, had greatly increased the interest and missionary spirit of the home church. On September 12, 1901, we again sailed from San Francisco, this time accompanied by Dr. J. Blanche George and Miss Jennie B. Torrence. We reached Tak Ying October 22nd, and found everything as we had left it, thanks to our friendly magistrate, except what rust and white ants had damaged. Busy days followed. The house begun by Mr. McBurney was carried on to completion. A dispensary was opened in one of the downstairs rooms, and large numbers came for treatment. Services were again held in the street chapel. We soon began a Sabbath service in our home for those showing real interest. Soon a mat shed was built to accommodate the numbers who came. On March 16, 1902, the first convert was baptized, a woman seventy-five years old, and, a rarity then, one who could read. Her name was Yau Sin Hing, though all called her "Grandmother Tse." A wonderful spiritual quickening at her conversion gave her a wonderful memory. She absorbed the miracles and parables and Psalms at an astonishing rate, and, in that land of remarkable memories, I have never known her equal, regardless of age. She became a wonderful help in the work among the women, accompanying freely and as long as she lived. Our first communion was held July 9th, when the four missionaries and the one convert sat together at this first memorial service of the Cross, held in our China field.

Growth

The years that followed were characterized by steady progress in all directions. On October 25, 1902, Dr. J. M. Wright and wife, and Rev. J. K. Robb with wife and son landed in Hong Kong. A year later, on November 24, 1903, Dr. Kate and Dr. Jean McBurney reached that port. Rev. Julius Kempf came the following year, reaching Hong Kong October 23, 1904.

Buildings were needed to house the missionaries and provide places for their work. After a period of several years the following buildings were erected: A second dwelling for two families, a
CHAPTER TWO
EXPANSION
1900-1919

The period of time between the two dates mentioned above, may well be called the period of expansion in the history of our Church's work in China. The conditions existing during those years were, for the most part, favorable to such growth and development. The public attitude toward the Mission was not in any real sense hostile. The political disturbances that, a few years later so mired the country, and brought disquiet and violence even upon the people, had not yet begun to be felt enough to make them a real hindrance to the spread of the gospel. The way was opening up, and marked progress was made in different lines.

TERRITORY

From the time when the work in China was first started up to 1913, our field in China was what has come to be known as the Tak Hing district, consisting of a territory of about 5,600 square miles in area, lying partly on the north side and partly on the south side, of the West River, the city of Tak Hing being the largest center of population in the district, whose total population was estimated at from 1,500,000 to 2,000,000. But in 1913, the Christians and Missionary Alliance, which had been for a good many years carrying on work in a district adjoining ours on the south and west, and which has come to be known as the Lo Ting district, began making tentative proposals that our Mission take over their work in Lo Ting. The Alliance was concentrating its efforts in the province west of us, Kwang Sai, and the work at Lo Ting was their only station in our province, Kwang Tung. Their proposal was that our Mission should take over their work in Lo Ting in its entirety, territory, property, chapel, schools, etc. Negotiations were carried on for the greater part of a year, and finally resulted in our Church taking the entire plant at Lo Ting off the hands of the Alliance. This acquisition more than doubled our territory, added several out-stations, schools, etc., greatly enlarging our work, and opening the way for inaugurating work along some lines that the Alliance had not been stressing.

ORGANIZATIONS

Up until 1909 the Chinese membership of the Mission had not been organized. The native Christians were simply united in their common faith in their Lord. But in 1908, Synod appointed a Commission (see 1908 Minutes, p. 61) consisting of all the ministers on the field, and the one elder, "to organize a congregation in China." This organization was affected the following year at Tak Hing, the exact date being December 31, 1909. The officers chosen were all Chinese, with two exceptions, Dr. Wright being elected elder, and Mrs. A. L. Robb deaconess. Since that time the church at Tak Hing has been largely under the direction of its native officers, though during the period ending with 1910, the session was moderated by different ministerial members of the Mission's working force.

A second congregation was organized at Lo Ting on December 25, 1914, under practically the same conditions as those which led to the organization at Tak Hing; the only officer chosen who was not Chinese being Dr. E. J. M. Dickson, who was elected elder.

This period of the Mission's history thus witnessed the definite establishment of a native Reformed Presbyterian Church in China. What had before been only a small Christian community, now assumed a definite, organic form, officered and governed largely by the Chinese themselves. It was a definite step in the direction of a self-governing church.

NEW WORK

In the Tak Hing district some chapels had been opened before 1909, and both school and medical work had been started, and was under way. Do Sing station was opened, and foreign workers located there in 1909 and the following year, and evangelistic, medical, and school work were inaugurated. At Tak Hing a commodious hospital building had been erected, which made the growth of the medical work much more rapid than it could otherwise have been. In 1914 a hospital was erected at Lo Ting, the cost of the building being borne to a large extent by the Chinese themselves, the home Church being at no expense whatever in its construction. The educational work developed greatly, both the number of schools and their efficiency being greatly increased. So this period of our history saw very marked progress along all lines of growth. It was bright with promise for the future. And along with such favorable conditions on the field, there was deep interest and great enthusiasm being shown by the home Church.

WORKERS

The home Church's deep interest in the work was evidenced
by the almost continuous procession of new workers being sent out during this period of our history. As nearly as can be recalled, they are as follows:

1910—Rev. and Mrs. D. R. Taggart, Mrs. J. A. Kempf, Mrs. Margaret Duig (Mrs. Kempf’s mother), Miss Rose A. Hunton, Miss Annie J. Robinson.
1912—Miss Ella M. Stewart, Miss Mary R. Adams.
1913—Dr. and Mrs. E. J. M. Dickson.
1916—Miss Nellie Brownlee, Rev. and Mrs. W. M. Robb, returned after seven years’ absence.
1917—Rev. and Mrs. R. C. Adams, Rev. and Mrs. J. C. Mitchel, Dr. M. Ezna Wallace, Miss Inez Smith.
1918—Miss Lillian L. McCracken, Miss Jean Barr, R. N.

**WORK AMONG LEPROS**

It was during this period that the Do Sing Station was opened. On the river bank a colony of lepers made their headquarters, companions in tribulation. Being outcasts, feared and hated by fellow-men, and shut out from productive occupations, they lived by begging through the city on certain days when this was permitted, and from the river steamer passengers every day. With various parts of their bodies deformed away they were a sorry sight.

Yet their tribulations made them readily susceptible to the glad tidings of the gospel, and they readily responded to the call of the missionaries to receive inward healing. During a period of five years they were baptized almost unanimously, and their scarred faces revealed the glory that outshone their sufferings.

In 1916, much public feeling was stirred up against opium here and elsewhere, as a menace to public health, and cruel methods were used to exterminate them. This colony was thus treated with promises of food to come out into the middle of the West River, and here the boats were upset, and the entire colony (a score or more) were drowned. This atrocity seemed to have official sanction.

"And as they entered heaven they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. . . . Then I heard in my dream that all the bells of the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, 'Enter into the joy of thy Lord.' And after that they shut up the gates of which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them."—(J. Bunyan.)

**EDUCATIONAL WORK**

Many and great changes have taken place since 1919. The number of missionaries from the homeland has been greatly diminished, but the educational work done during these years had a way prepared the Chinese
for carrying on the work with less outside assistance, and it is well that the expansion came and had passed its peak before the financial depression of later years would have forced retrenchment.

During this period, five separate schools were carried on simultaneously in the Tak Hing Station alone, not to mention those carried on in Lo Ting, De Sing, and other outstations. There were a Women's School, a Girls' School, a Boys' School, a Medical School, and a Theological Training School.

Many and great changes have taken place since 1919. Many of the hopes and prospects of that time have not been realized. But the work continues, and He whose work it is is not discouraged. It cannot fail, because He shall not fail.

CHAPTER THREE
REORGANIZATION
1919-1935

The first period of this history, 1895-1909, was spoken of as a time of "preparation and beginning." The second, 1909-1919, as "Expansion," and the third, 1919-1934, we would like to call "Reorganization." Changes were many and of considerable import. Some of these changes grew out of the experience of the past, others became necessary because of new conditions, especially the changing attitude of the Chinese Government.

A striking fact was the decrease in membership of the Mission. In 1919 there were twenty-eight names on the Mission roster, of whom three were in Fuxian, while at present there are but eight on the field, two are on the way out and five in the homeland. However, this could hardly be called a retrenchment, as the Board has not been called upon to recall workers until recently. This serious reduction of workers has in itself necessitated from time to time a reorganization of the work.

MISSION POLICY

An outstanding event in this period was the change in the regular plan of mission work. From the beginning our plan or policy was similar to that of other missions laboring in China. The executive authority of the Mission work and legislation relative to the native church rested largely with the Mission. Then, too, the work on the field was almost entirely supported by the home church, thus relieving the native constituency of a responsibility which was rightfully theirs. After much prayerful consideration the Mission was led to request the Board to discontinue their regular contribution to the work on the field, except the missionaries' salaries and traveling expenses. This request was made in 1921 and granted by the Board the following year. The executive authority resting in the Mission was transferred to a Council, composed of representatives from the Chinese church and the missionaries. This organization was responsible for all work relative to the Chinese church and the work of evangelism in general. This council met at annual conferences; considering and acting on the work of the field. Committees on Evangelism, Education, Medical Work, Literature, Charity and Finance were appointed to carry on the needs of these departments during the
but was found to require time of workers and financial support
which could not be supplied. However, much work as weaving
of cloth, and towels, knitting of stockings, sewing, making of
shoes and many other things were continued even to the present
time.

A radical change was made in the schools when the government
in 1929 issued orders that all schools must register and comply
with their standards, else the property was liable to confiscation.
Among the objectionable demands of his order was one forbidding
schools to require compulsory attendance at Bible classes, and re-
ligious services. Rather than comply with this rule our schools
were united and changed into Bible schools. The Bible is the main
course of study. A few other subjects are required, which would
increase their general education. The purpose of the school is to
give training to Christian youth of both sexes in the Bible and
Christian service, with the hope that they may become better wit-
nesses in their home communities. They are taught some indus-
trial work, hoping that this will help them in their own support.
These schools have become a great joy and encouragement to the
Mission. Several students have shown great promise, and it would
seem that they take further training fitting them for definite
service. There are at present two of these schools, one located
at Lo Ting and the other at Tak Hing, with a combined enroll-
ment of about thirty-five young people.

Medical Work

At the beginning of this period all Medical work was on a self-
supporting basis, except for the salaries of the missionary doctors
and nurses. Much was done to extend the use of Western medi-
cine by Dr. Dickson in training a number of men nurses in diag-
nosis and treatment of the common ailments. Several of these
men have gone out and opened up drug shops, and have done very
well in their business. Several so trained have made their places
for preaching, and much good has been done. Dr. Wright
filled a wide field of service in Canton, teaching in three medical
schools, training the interns and nurses, supervising the hospital
staff, besides his regular work of surgery and practice.

Political Conditions

Political conditions have always played an important part in
mission work. The events of 1919 to 1928 will long be remem-
bered in South China. There was almost constant conflict among
the various political leaders, and much of the country was left
without much rule. Banditry was well nigh universal. Much of
our field was subject to the devastations of these armed bands of
bandits. Hundreds of villages were destroyed and burned.
Thousands of people were killed or held for ransom. Time after
time armies advanced and retreated through our district, but
fortunately without much fighting. The people were often in a
state of fear and anxiety. At these times of danger numbers of
those near at hand would flock to the Mission property for pro-
tection. Through it all we had no serious losses or had experi-
ences. Chapels and properties at distance places were occupied by
soldiers at times as camping places, but little damage was done.

About 1923 the influence of the Communist agitators grew to
an alarming degree. Boycotts against foreigners and foreign
goods were started. There were many anti-Christian demonstra-
tions, and attacks were made upon foreigners and foreign prop-
erty in places. The central order all Missionaries to leave the
country districts, to places considered more safe. For the next
two years the residence of the missionaries on the field was inter-
mittent, and all country itineraries ceased. Fortunately in our
field as demonstrations developed of a serious nature, that is,
injury to persons or loss of life, yet in places much anti-foreign
feeling was expressed, which was considerate of a hindrance to
schools and evangelistic work. Several of our native and Ameri-
can workers had serious and trying experiences with bandits and
armies, but through it all experienced the deliverance of the Lord.

During this period many of our Christians gave testimony of
very signal experiences of deliverance by the Lord in times of
crisis. This opposition has largely disappeared, and we are now treated
with courtesy and respect, although not now occupy the excited
position of former years.

Program of the Chinese Church

In 1919 the church in China reported five hundred seventy-one
members. For several years after that was a gradual increase,
though small. But due to the anti-Christian activities many were
carried away, so at present the membership does not exceed that
reported in 1919. However, the present membership is a more
active body of believers than formerly. The requirements for en-
trance into the church have been raised to a much higher standard.
We feel that there has been considerable growth in the feeling
of responsibility on the part of the Chinese church in recent years.

Forty Years in Our China Mission

largely due to our change in policy, as mentioned before. It is en-
couraging to see the interest manifested in teaching out with the
Gospel to those districts remote from places of regular preaching.
Ministers and evangelists are kept circuiting among the stations
with time for the new districts.

The value of Bible study and evangelistic meetings at the time
of the annual conference is keenly appreciated. Perhaps the out-
standing meeting of this kind was held in 1920 under the leader-
ship of Dr. Golightly. Our whole church was greatly stirred up
at that time, and many were blessed with conversion of sin.

Missionary Workers

At the beginning of this period, having so many workers on the
field, it was thought possible to extend our activities to a new
field. Investigations were made in the Kwang Si and Yunnan
provinces. It was finally decided to open work in the latter prov-
ince, and appointments were made to this new field, subject to
the approval of the Board. Soon after it was learned that the
Chinese Foreign Missionary Society planned to enter the same
field, so we immediately gave way to them. However, a reduc-
tion of workers began soon.

In 1919 Dr. J. K. Robb returned to America. The following
year Rev. and Mrs. E. C. Mitchell were compelled for physical
reasons to return home for a period of nearly five years. In 1921
Dr. A. J. Robb and family left the field for the same reason. In
1922 Miss Nelle Browder returned to America on regular furl-
ough, and was married. Dr. Kate McBurney resigned in 1923.
Following these, Misses Rose Hinton, Inez Smith, Lillian McCra-
ken, and Rev. and Mrs. R. C. Adams were detained in the
home field. Two new members were added to the Mission force.
Miss Pearl Weeks about 1922, and Alice Robb in 1923, but they
served only one term each.

The Mission force suffered a distinct loss in the death of Rev.
W. M. Robb, which occurred at Manila, July 23, 1929. He had
for some time been principal of the Theological Training School,
and was besides, an energetic itinerant evangelist. He was well
known throughout South China as a capable evangelist and Bible
teacher. In January, 1932, occurred the death of Dr. J. M.
Wright at Denison, Kansas. Dr. Wright had many years of
service both at Tsin Hing and Canton, South China. He was
known widely in China as a capable executive, a skilled surgeon, and a kind Christian gentleman.

Dr. and Mrs. E. J. M. Dickson were on leave of absence for more than a year in North China, deputed by the Board to open a new center of work in North China. The field chosen was Tsinshih in Manchuria and to this field two of the South China missionaries were transferred, Miss McCracken and Miss Huston. This was in 1930-31. Dr. and Mrs. Dickson came back to the South China field and began work in Tien Hsing but in the summer of 1933 were compelled to return home on account of the threatened loss of eyesight of their daughter Betty Jo. All of these losses seriously depleted the working force in the South China field.

In October of 1934 the Rev. and Mrs. Samuel Boyle sailed for the field. He was the first ordained minister to go out to this field in seventeen years. Their coming brought new life to this field and new hope to the hearts of the elderly missionaries.

As we close this history of the South China Mission we would express our gratitude to the Lord, to whom the work belongs, for His gracious care of the work and workers. We are trusting Him to continue the work until those for whom we as a church are responsible may come to know and experience His saving power.

largely due to our change in policy, as mentioned before. It is encouraging to see the interest manifested in reaching out with the Gospel to these districts remote from places of regular preaching. Ministers and evangelists are kept circuiting among the stations with time for the new districts.

The value of Bible study and evangelistic meetings at the time of the annual conference is keenly appreciated. Perhaps the outstanding meeting of this kind was held in 1920 under the leadership of Dr. Godfrey. Our whole church was greatly stirred at that time, and many were blessed with confession of sin.

MISSIONARY WORKERS

At the beginning of this period, having so many workers on the field, it was thought possible to extend our activities to a new field. Investigations were made in the Kwang Sai and Yunnan provinces. It was finally decided to open work in the latter province, and appointments were made to this new field, subject to the approval of the Board. Soon after it was learned that the Chinese Foreign Missionary Society planned to enter the same field, so we immediately gave way to them. However, a reduction of workers began soon.

In 1919 Dr. J. K. Robb returned to America. The following year Rev. and Mrs. E. C. Mitchell were compelled for physical reasons to return home for a period of nearly five years. In 1921 Dr. A. I. Robb and family left the field for the same reason. In 1922 Miss Nelle Brownlee returned to America on regular furlough, and was married. Dr. Kate McBurney resigned in 1923. Following these, Misses Rose Huxton, Inez Smith, Lillian McCracken, and Rev. and Mrs. R. C. Adams were detained in the home land. Two new workers were added to the Mission force, Miss Pearl Weeks about 1922, and Alice Robb in 1923, but they served only one term each.

The Mission force suffered a distinct loss in the death of Rev. W. M. Robb, which occurred at Mauza, July 21, 1929. He had for some time been principal of the Theological Training School, and was besides, an energetic itinerant evangelist. He was well known throughout South China as a capable evangelist and Bible teacher. In January, 1932, occurred the death of Dr. J. M. Wright at Denison, Kansas. Dr. Wright had many years of service both at Tien Hsing and Canton, South China. He was
known widely in China as a capable executive, a skilful surgeon, and a kind Christian gentleman.

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