Methodist Missionary Graves in Japan

by John W. Krummel

The equinoxes in Japan are occasions for visiting graves. Families clean the tombstones; make offerings of flowers, incense, food and drink; and may even themselves enjoy a quiet picnic lunch at the gravesite while remembering their deceased. I'm often drawn to Aoyama Cemetery near our home in Tokyo at such times remembering the many lonely missionary graves there. I usually stop first at the vault marked "Interboard Committee for Christian Work in Japan" which was erected after the Second World War to house the ashes of missionaries from North American churches working in cooperation with the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan). Among the few names engraved on the stone is that of Olive Ireland Hodges (1877-1964), the only missionary of Methodist Protestant background to die in Japan. She once heard James Ballagh, a pioneer Reformed Church missionary and one of the patriarchs of the Protestant movement in Japan in his later years, remark that Christianity would never take root in this nation until more missionary bones had been planted in its soil. Although his wife is buried in Japan he himself did not have that privilege. However, his words left an impression on Miss Hodges. After her arrival in 1902 she devoted most of her life to the development of the Methodist Protestant girls' school, now known as Seibi Gakuen, in Yokohama. Interned during the first part of the Second World War and repatriated in 1943, she returned to Japan after the war and lived here in retirement until her death. She was honored posthumously by the Emperor with the "Fourth Order of Merit."

If Methodist missionary graves in Japan are representative there have been enough bones planted here to assure that Christianity takes root. Some are here by chance, others by choice. In either case, they are a mute testimony to the love that missionaries have had for this land, even unto death. This

1. This organization has been superseded in recent years by the Japan-North-American Commission on Cooperative Mission.

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survey covers only the Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Protestant, Evangelical, and United Brethren Missions. The mission forces of the Canadian Methodists and the Southern Methodists were large and many of their members are also buried in Japan, but I have been unable to include them here. Nor are those who first came to Japan after the war under the Evangelical United Brethren or Methodist Boards included.

Until the mid-nineteenth century all cemeteries in Japan were connected with Buddhist temples and any foreigners who happened to die here were buried with Buddhist rites. However, with the modernization of the nation provisions began to be made for public cemeteries, at least in the larger cities. There are, as a matter of fact, many provincial areas even today where the only burial grounds are those of the temples. In any case, cemeteries for foreigners were soon established in the foreign concession areas of the open ports after the country was forced out of isolation in the late 1850's. The Yokohama Foreign General Cemetery at No. 96 Bluff traces its origins to 1848 when the graveyard of the Zotokuin Temple was designated by the government for the burial of foreign seamen washed ashore on the coast. It was here in 1854 that for the first time in over 200 years a Christian service was held openly in Japan in connection with the burial of a sailor aboard one of the ships of Commodore Perry's squadron. After Yokohama became a treaty port this cemetery was gradually expanded up the slope of the Bluff and from 1864 was under the administration of the foreign consuls in that city. In 1900 it was incorporated as a private association. There is a panoramic view of the city and the harbor from this quiet spot and among its over 3,600 graves of persons of many nationalities one can retrace something of the role that foreigners have played in the history of modern Japan.

No provision for the burial of foreigners was made in Tokyo until the early 1880's when a public cemetery was created in the Aoyama area, at that time still in the outskirts of the city. This spacious site, today completely engulfed by the city, is located in Minato Ward and is intersected by two broad avenues running north-south and east-west. The foreign section of the cemetery lies in the northwest quadrant about midway along the north-south avenue. The cemetery is famed for its flowering cherry trees which begin to bloom about the time of the vernal equinox, and is crowded with the graves of many illustrious Japanese — writers, financiers, scholars, and statesmen.
Many of the pioneer missionaries made their graves in Japan. Frederick C. Krecker, M.D. (1843-1883), founder in 1876 of the Evangelical Association Mission, lost his life as a result of typhoid fever contracted from a poor fish monger's son whom he was treating. He left a young wife and three small children to mourn him. His grave is in a plot facing the north-south avenue in Aoyama Cemetery. To the right of Krecker's stone is the grave of Mrs. Franklin Clarence (Alice Louisa Hauptfuehrer) Nietz (1862-1892) who had arrived in Japan in 1890 with her husband. She died as a result of small-pox contracted in the course of her missionary activities in the Kanda Church in Tokyo.

The only other missionary of Evangelical background to die in Japan was Gertrud Elizabeth Kuecklich (1897-1976), a German, who came to Japan in 1923 and achieved widespread recognition for her contributions to kindergarten education and social work. After the war she helped to establish the Ai no Izumi (Spring of Love) Social Welfare Foundation where she lived after retirement. She was honored by the Emperor in 1964 with the Fourth Class Order of the Sacred Treasure. Her remains are held at Aisen Church in Kazo City, Saitama Prefecture.

Paul S. Mayer (1884-1962) and his wife, Frances L. Frank Mayer (1886-1974) are representative of those missionaries who were forced by circumstances to retire to their homeland but whose love of Japan was such that they made special arrangements for their remains to be returned here after death. The Mayers served in Japan from 1909 to 1957 including a period of internment at the beginning of the war. He was a member of the first group of missionaries to return to Japan in 1946 to prepare the way for the coming of others. Evangelist, educator, editor and mission administrator during his career, after the war he was associate secretary of the National Christian Council. At the time of their retirement he received an Imperial decoration, and he and Mrs. Mayer were granted an audience with the Emperor and Empress. Their ashes are deposited at the Shimizugaoka Church in Yokohama. An infant son, David, is buried in Aoyama Cemetery, but the grave is unmarked.

The only United Brethren missionary to die in Japan was the young Monroe Crecelius, a native of Indiana, who had come to Japan in the fall of 1906, and died of scarlet fever at Otsu, December 20, 1907. He was buried in the Christian cemetery on
the hillside east of Kyoto. His death was the occasion for another missionary on leave of absence to experience a renewed call to evangelism in Japan; and for a Japanese youth hospitalized in Dayton with the same disease to hear a call to the ministry.

Five couples pioneered the work of the Methodist Episcopal Mission established in 1873 and each of these families made its contribution to the saga of Methodist missionary graves in Japan. Mrs. Robert Samuel Maclay, wife of the founder and superintendent of the Mission, died of a stroke while playing the organ for church services. This was during the final hymn which was "Rest for the Weary." Her grave is near the front entrance of the Foreigners' Cemetery in Yokohama. The inscription on her stone, much dimmed by time and weather, reads: Henrietta Caroline Sperry/ The Beloved Wife of the/ Rev. R. S. Maclay/ during twenty nine years/ a missionary of the/ Methodist Episcopal Church/ Foochow, China, 1850-1872/ Yokohama, Japan, 1873-1879/ Born March 21, 1823,/ in Bristol, Conn., U.S.A./died July 28, 1878/ in Yokohama, Japan/ "Faithful Unto Death" Rev. 2.10. Immediately to the right of Mrs. Maclay's grave is a memorial stone erected for Irvin Henry Correll (1851-1926) and his wife Jane (Jennie) Long Correll (1848-1933), although neither of them died in Japan. He led the work in Yokohama from 1873 and served as presiding elder there, in Tokyo, and in Nagasaki. They later joined the Protestant Episcopal Church and labored under it in Japan from 1900. He died on board the S.S. President Monroe, June 26, 1926, en route to Japan, and was buried in the ocean. Mrs. Correll died in New Jersey in 1933. To the right of their memorial is the grave of their daughter, Birdie, who died in Yokohama at the age of four in 1886.

Also near the front entrance of the Yokohama cemetery are the graves of Susan B. Higgins and Maude D. Simons, missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. Higgins (1842-1879) arrived in Yokohama in 1878 to establish a training school for Bible women but died of a painful illness a year later. It is recorded, "In her last moments she requested that those around her should sing 'Jesus can make a dying bed feel soft as downy pillows are,' and before the notes of the last line had died away her spirit was at rest." Simons (1865-1898) came to Japan in 1889 and served the girls' school, Kwassui Jo Gakko, in Nagasaki until 1893 when she was transferred to Yokohama to the training school which had its
roots in the work of Higgins. She was killed in an accident in Yokohama harbor when a steam launch in which she was riding collided with a Japanese junk. Bishop Earl Cranston preached her funeral sermon and she was buried near the grave of Higgins.

A little further from the main entrance to the Yokohama cemetery and near the imposing monument on the grave of Edmund Morrell, the English engineer who assisted in designing and constructing Japan's first railway, are the graves of two of Julius and Mary Frances Davison Soper's children both of whom died in Tokyo where their parents pioneered Methodist Episcopal work. They were Lena Isabel (1874-1875) and James Preston (1878-1879). Their tombstone is a particularly poignant reminder of a sorrow which often visited missionary homes in those days. Mr. and Mrs. Soper returned to America in 1911 because of her health and worked among the Japanese in California. Grant, the two-year-old son of U. G. Murphy who was a Methodist Protestant missionary, is also reported to have been buried in the Yokohama cemetery but I have never been able to locate his grave. He died in 1896.

John Carroll Davison (1843-1928), the brother of Mrs. Soper, and his wife began the Methodist work on the southern island of Kyushu in 1873 and spent most of their life there until retirement in 1922. Presiding elder continuously from 1884 to 1921, hymnody was one of his interests and he prepared the first Japanese Methodist hymnal. Mrs. Davison (Mary Elizabeth Stout) (1850-1915) died in Nagasaki and is buried in the foreigners' cemetery on a hill overlooking the city and the harbor. Mr. Davison died in California and his ashes were brought back to rest next to his wife.

Also buried in Nagasaki is Mrs. Epperson Robert (Kate Josephine Strong) Fulkerson (1867-1903). She came to Japan with her husband in 1887 and after a couple of years in Tokyo they served the boys' school, Chinzei Gakuin in Nagasaki, where he was principal from 1894. She is buried in Urakami Cemetery. Mr. Fulkerson returned to the U.S. in 1908 and served as field representative of the Methodist Episcopal Board until he retired in 1933. He died in 1941. Next to Mrs. Fulkerson's grave is that of the infant son of Herbert Buell and Clara Elvira Richardson Johnson who died in 1891. Mr. Johnson was principal of Chinzei Gakuin at that time. He later became dean of the boys' school, Aoyama Gakuin, in Tokyo and in 1904 returned to America to
become superintendent of the Japanese Mission on the Pacific Coast.

Merriman Colbert Harris (1846-1921) and his wife Flora Best Harris (1850-1909) were the fifth pioneer Methodist Episcopal couple and they opened the work on the northern island of Hokkaido. They were in Japan until 1886 when he was appointed the first superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Japanese Mission on the Pacific Coast of the U.S. In 1904 he was elected missionary bishop for Japan and Korea and lived in Tokyo at Aoyama Gakuin from that time until his death. He was twice decorated by the Emperor, in 1905 with the Third Class, and in 1916 with the Second Class Order of the Sacred Treasure. The impressive stone which marks their grave in Aoyama Cemetery is inscribed in both English and Japanese. However, it is so overgrown by shrubs as to be almost inaccessible. Next to it is the grave of their only child, Florence, who died as an infant at sea while being brought to Japan by her mother in 1878. It was an unusual dispensation on the part of the captain of that ship which spared the mother the pain of disposing of her child's corpse in the cold waters of the ocean. Florence was originally buried in the Yokohama cemetery but her grave was evidently moved to Aoyama after Mrs. Harris' death. Her stone is inscribed, "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

The grave of Mrs. Charles (Olive Whiting) Bishop (1847-1914), the second missionary sent to Japan by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society is in the plot immediately to the right of that of Bishop Harris. She arrived in 1876 and did evangelistic and educational work in Tokyo both before and after her marriage in 1880 to Charles Bishop, another Methodist Episcopal missionary. He remained in Tokyo after retirement in 1926 and died shortly after returning to America in 1941. Immediately to the right of Mrs. Bishop's grave is that of Mary E. V. Pardoe (1844-1892), who arrived in Japan in 1888 and after less than four years at the Methodist girls' school in Tokyo died of stomach cancer.

To the rear of the graves described above is another plot with several Methodist Episcopal graves. The tombstone of Mrs. John Franklin (Mary A. Vance) Belknap (1858-1892) is in it. She arrived in Japan in 1887 under the woman's society and taught music in the girls' school in Tokyo. She married the Methodist Episcopal missionary Belknap in 1890 and died less than two
years later after giving birth to a daughter. In this same plot is a memorial erected by Japanese friends for Herbert Woodworth Schwartz (1857-1921). Clergyman and medical doctor, he served in Japan from 1884 to 1916. The stone inscribed in Japanese states that he died in Syracuse, New York. This is an error. He died in Washington, D.C., and was buried in Syracuse. The graves of two sons born to him and his wife, Lola Reynolds Schwartz, are also here. They were Warren Reynolds (1888-1892) and Karl (1900-1909). Next to Mrs. Belknap's grave lies John Frazier Schwartz who died at birth in 1897. His parents were Henry Butler and Mary Frazier Schwartz, missionaries in Japan from 1893 to 1915.

The Canadian Benjamin Chappell (1852-1925) came to Japan in 1889 and served his entire career as a teacher and administrator at Aoyama Gakuin under the Methodist Episcopal Board. In 1890 he married missionary Mary J. Holbrook (1852-1912) who had been on the field since 1878 serving the Mission in Tokyo. All three of their daughters became missionaries in Japan. Mr. and Mrs. Chappell's grave is to the right of those of Mrs. Belknap and the Schwartz family. However, it is nearly hidden by camellia bushes which have overgrown it through the years.

Another Methodist missionary gravesite of unusual interest in Aoyama Cemetery is that of the Draper family containing as it does the remains of four generations of one family. It is on the first lane facing the north-south avenue a few steps south of the Evangelical Association plot. The Rev. Gideon Frank Draper (1858-1951) and his wife Mira Enid Haven Draper (1859-1935) came to Japan in 1880. He had a long and distinguished career as missionary teacher and presiding elder. Mrs. Draper, the daughter of Bishop Erastus Otis Haven, was instrumental in the inauguration of "Mothers' Day" in Japan. In 1886 they lost a two-month old son, Gideon Clarence, and his grave is in this plot. In October 1889 Mr. Draper's parents, the Rev. Gideon (1828-1889) and Mrs. Charlotte Pinckney Brown Draper (1832-1899) came to Japan to visit their son. The father died that December. The mother continued in Japan taking an active role in mission work until her death. They are both buried in this plot. Mrs. Gideon F. Draper was also buried here after her death in 1935. All of the five children who survived her, two sons and three daughters, were missionaries in Japan at the time of Mrs. Draper's death. Of these, her daughter Charlotte Enid (1881-1961) had married
Protestant Episcopal missionary Percy Almerin Smith (1876-1945) in 1903. Three of their children, all sons, who died in Japan are also buried in this plot. Their stone reads: Draper Almerin/Smith/ Sept. 1, 1905 May 26, 1908/ Hubert Haven/ Smith/ Feb. 22, 1907/ Apr. 11, 1908/ Haven Gardner/ Smith/ Apr. 9, 1918/ May 13, 1921. There is also a large stone over the graves of Mr. and Mrs. Smith in this plot. They died in America but their ashes were returned to this family plot in Tokyo. Gideon F. Draper and his two unmarried missionary daughters, Marian (b. ? -1950) and Winnifred Frances (1889-1951), returned to America in 1939, and because of the war were unable to return to Japan. They made a home together in Ventura, California, and all three died within two years of each other.

Tama Cemetery, another public burial ground in Tokyo, is located in the suburbs near the Tama River and was opened early in this century. It is the resting place of the first bishop of the Japan Methodist Church, Yoichi Honda, who died in 1912. There is a section to the right of the main entrance designated for foreigners. The only Methodist missionary graves here are those of Robert Percival Alexander (1862-1940) and Frances (Fanny) Grey Wilson Alexander (1868-1957). However, a contract teacher at Aoyama Gakuin under the Methodist Board from 1913 to 1931, Mira Belle Moon (1881-1935), is buried in another part of this cemetery. She died in Tokyo as a result of a traffic accident. Alexander, a Canadian, came to Japan under the Methodist Episcopal Board in 1893 and served in evangelistic and educational work for nearly half a century. He died in Tokyo. Mrs. Alexander first came to Japan in 1887 with her family on what was supposed to be the beginning of a trip around the world. Finding there was a shortage of missionaries she stayed and taught for nine months in mission schools. She came to Japan again in 1896 under the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society, and was principal of the Aoyama Girls' School when she married Mr. Alexander in 1902. She died in Colonie, New York, and her ashes were brought back to be laid beside those of her husband in Tama Cemetery. Beside their tombstone is a memorial inscribed in Japanese and erected in their honor by former students at Aoyama Gakuin.

Alexander's first wife, Mary Christine Vroom (1867-1899), was the victim of a fire which destroyed the missionary home in Hirosaki on the night of January 19, 1899, at which time Mr. Alexander barely escaped saving their four-year-old son. Her
remains have a lonely resting place in a Buddhist temple graveyard in that city. Another Methodist missionary who has a solitary grave is Lora C. Goodwin (1886-1925). She came to Japan under the woman's society in 1915 and was serving in kindergarten work in Hakodate when she died August 30, 1925, while vacationing in Karuizawa. Her funeral was held in Hakodate and her remains interred there in the British concession.

Methodist missionary graves in Japan speak to us of the sorrows shared by all men — the loss of little children, of spouses, of parents; and of the dangers and tragedies which lurk in the unknown just beyond the circle of today's light — accidents and diseases that strike down both the young and the old. In their isolation and neglect the graves remind us of the painful loneliness experienced by many persons — separation from family, friends, and the scenes of one's youth. However, they also remind us of that special joy, that peculiar confidence, and that sure sense of fellowship with Him which is shared by those who live in service in our Lord's Name. The inscription on the tombstone of Frederick Krecker makes an appropriate conclusion for our survey of Methodist missionary graves in Japan.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Psalm 116:15.